

B.C.'s new trans fat rules don't go far enough: foodservices association

By HELENA ZHU
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VANCOUVER—One of Canada's largest business associations says British Columbia's new trans fat regulations will do little to improve public health because they focus solely on the foodservices sector.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association (CRFA) says that to be effective, the new regulations should span the entire food supply chain, from farmers, processors and manufacturers to grocery retailers and restaurants.

"It would make a lot more sense to have a comprehensive, national regulation that deals with the whole supply chain, which is national in scope and not regional," says CRFA regional vice-president Mark Von Schellwitz.

"You have to recognize that 84 percent of meals are bought from grocery stores, so how much of a health impact is this going to have?"

On September 30, B.C. limited industrially produced trans fat in foodservice establishments requiring a permit to operate, including restaurants, delis, cafeterias, educational institutions, healthcare institutions, schools, special events, and most bakeries.

A comprehensive national regulation that encompassed the entire food supply chain—which is what Health Canada's Trans Fat Task Force recommended—would also have made it easier on restaurants to make the change, says Von Schellwitz.

"The problem with the regulation is that it's going to force thousands of British Columbia food service operators to eliminate



BAD FAT: Industrially produced trans fat can be found in a wide range of products, including margarines, donuts, French fries, cookies, and taco shells. THE EPOCH TIMES

trans fat from their menus when they don't really have control over the supply of those trans fat-free products."

Small restaurants in particular may have trouble complying with the regulations, he says.

"They now have to reformulate their menus, and for a while this may result in less choice for the consumer because they have to take some items off the menu until they can figure out how to make that same product trans fat-free."

The new trans fat regulations will be enforced through inspec-

tions and fines for those who don't comply.

The federal government has a national trans fat monitoring program in place through which restaurants can voluntarily reduce the use of trans fats, and Canada's restaurant industry has already made "significant progress" in reducing or eliminating trans fats, says Von Schellwitz.

"So we're lowering it, but what we say is we need the entire food industry involved."

Nationwide trans fat bans have been introduced in several Euro-

pean Union countries in recent years. In 2003, Denmark became the first country to pass legislation strictly controlling trans fat throughout the entire food chain, banning all food with trans fat over two per cent of total fat content.

Switzerland followed suit with a similar ban in 2008. The legislation effectively limits people's trans fat intake to less than one gram per day.

B.C. is the first province in Canada to restrict trans fat in all prepared foods. Von Schellwitz says the province did what it could since

it only has control over the issuing of food permits. Trans fat regulations dealing with the entire food chain would be up to the federal government.

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Trans fat comes in two forms, one being the naturally occurring kind found in meat and dairy products. The other is industrially produced, and can be found in a wide range of products, including partially hydrogenated oils, margarines, donuts, French fries, cookies, and taco shells.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. and Yukon, which worked with B.C. government on the new regulations, trans fat is responsible for an estimated 3,000 heart disease-related deaths in Canada each year.

Von Schellwitz says the trans fat regulations do not pose a problem for large restaurant chains such as McDonald's, which has voluntarily

gone almost trans fat-free.

Neither does it concern Peter Kokinis, owner of Moderne Burger in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighbourhood.

"We have never used trans fat in anything here," said Kokinis. "We've always used olive and canola oils. And we don't use our fryer for anything other than potatoes... Since we opened in 2001, we've always used the same method."

Kokinis says that while using better quality ingredients drives up the cost, he believes "people are happy to pay a little more to eat healthier."

Since it is technically impossible to eliminate trans fat entirely, the B.C. regulations restrict the amount of trans fat in oils and spreadable margarines to two per cent of total fat content and limit trans fat in all other food to five per cent. This follows the recommendations of the Trans Fat Task Force.

Foods that contain naturally occurring trans fat are exempt from the restrictions and do not pose the same harmful effects as industrially produced trans fat.

Industrially produced trans fat increases the risk of coronary heart disease by raising levels of low-density lipoprotein known as bad cholesterol and lowering levels of good cholesterol, leading to clogged arteries and heart disease.

"Ironically, with this regulation it is possible to use saturated fat. You may recall a couple of decades ago, trans fat came in because at that time the saturated fats were the bad things. Now I think we've come full circle," says Von Schellwitz.



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Shen Yun brings a taste of ancient Chinese culture to Toronto



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"I'm very touched; I am leaving with a lot of music in my soul and my heart. Tonight's show has touched us deeply," said renowned Romanian tenor Mircea Nedelcescu after seeing Shen Yun in Berlin.

In order to express the purity and richness of Chinese traditional culture, Shen Yun's dancers train rigorously to perfect their technique but place even greater importance on cultivating their heart and improving their moral character, according to performers interviewed by The Epoch Times.

"The dances were graceful, delicate, and beautiful. There was something pure and bright and also very dignified about them. This show gave me a real sense of goodness and meaning in life," said Anna Liceica, soloist with the American Ballet Theatre.

Other audience members spoke of a similar feeling, including James Perkins, a visual design artist from Philadelphia.

"It was incredible how graceful and how skilful those dancers were. With the women in the show, you can sense flowers blowing in the breeze, or when the young men danced, like the Tibetan dances, you can really see snowflakes."

As well as the harmony and impeccable coordination of the dancers, other aspects that characterize Shen Yun include originally designed costumes, unique digital animated backdrops, and an orchestra that combines Western and Chinese instruments.


The colourful hand-made costumes have inspired some fashion designers who have seen the show, including Dan Liu, creator of the Tatsuki fashion line sold at Holt Renfrew.

"Basically I'm stunned," said Liu who first saw Shen Yun last fall in Toronto. "The costumes are beautiful, I loved them. They gave me a lot of ideas for my next collection."

Since making its debut on Broadway in 2006, Shen Yun has expanded to three companies—each with its own full orchestra—and played in over 100 cities on 5 continents during the 2009 touring season.

Shen Yun Performing Arts returns to Toronto for a limited engagement this Thanksgiving weekend from Oct 9-11 at the Canon Theatre.

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