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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

30.1.2009

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

(01/2009)

Question for Question Time in committee 2009/01
under Rule 187 of the Rules of Procedure
by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety as decided by the
coordinators on 12 January 2008

Subject: Trans Fatty Acids and Health: A Review of Health Hazards and Existing
Legislation - Dr. Alexandra Krettek, Dr. Stefan Thorpenberg, Prof. Göran
Bondjers - Nordic School of Public Health / Study requested by the European
Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
(IP/A/ENVI/ST/2008-19)

1. General question

Does the Commission share the main findings of the above mentioned study and considers a
ban on trans fatty acids in all ingredients intended for human consumption?

2. Detailed questions

a) MEP Satu Hassi

Does the Commission agree with the authors of the study that the rationale for using TFA in
food products is no longer valid, "as refrigeration during transport and storage has improved
and alternatives exist"? In this context: Is the Commission aware that, according to a study
conducted in Denmark in 2006, the content of industrially produced TFA varied from 1g to
24g in the same fast food servings of the same trade chain?

Does the Commission agree with the authors of the study that the broad public health issue
would be to concentrate on the intake of industrially produced TFA?

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Does the Commission agree with the authors of the study that, in order to prevent especially low-income groups from an overly intake of TFA, labelling of TFA is not sufficient?

b) MEP Jens Holm

In the report made by the Nordic School of Public Health it says "*In their Opinion of 2004, EFSA concluded that TFA might be associated with an increased risk for heart disease. Since then, further evidence has been presented and the epidemiological evidence for a link between TFA intake and the risk for heart disease must now be considered strong.*"

The report also mentions a number of other serious health hazards that according to studies made suggest that there may be a link with TFA intake.

On page 21 the report concludes that "*Based on the review of policies adopted by different countries to address intake of TFA, it is clear that the most effective approach is to introduce a ban*".

In 2003, Denmark introduced legislation that prohibits the use in foods destined for human consumption of fats and oils containing more than 2% of industrially produced TFA. Later that year, two Danish companies filed an appeal to the European Commission saying that the Danish legislation goes against the EU rules on free movement of goods. This case has not yet been settled.

Is the European Commission considering proposing an EU ban of TFA and if so when is the Commission planning to do so? If not, could the Commission give the reasons why?

Would the Commission consider it to be against the rules on the free movement of goods if a single Member State decides to introduce a ban of TFA?