



CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

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MEDIA RELEASE

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CASE tests trans fat levels of margarine and vegetable oil-based spreads sold in Singapore

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) commissioned a test on 20 common household margarine and vegetable oil-based spreads sold in Singapore. The test found that the trans fat levels in all samples to be within the statutory limit of 2%. However, trans fat contents were detected in four samples despite the products having declared zero trans fat on their labels.

Background

Trans fat is produced as a by-product in the industrial manufacture of margarines and vegetable oil-based spreads.

According to the United States Food and Drug Administration, the consumption of trans fat raises the level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol in the blood. Research suggests that a high LDL cholesterol level in an individual increases his risk of developing heart diseases. The consumption of trans fat has also been associated with a higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

According to recommendations by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the daily average consumption of trans fat should be kept below 2g. However, findings from the National Nutrition Surveys in 2004 and 2010 showed that three in 10 Singaporean adults exceeded this recommended limit. It was also found that the most common fat spreads used by adult Singapore residents was soft margarine.

As such, CASE commissioned a test in July 2016 to find out if the levels of trans fat in margarines and vegetable oil-based spreads sold here satisfy the limit allowed by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA). Based on the Food Regulations administered by AVA, pre-packed edible fats and oils should not contain trans fatty acids at levels exceeding 2%.

Scope and methodology

CASE mystery shoppers purchased 20 types of common household margarines and vegetable oil-based spreads from different countries of origins in July 2016. The list of samples can be found in the Annex.

The samples were sent to our designated laboratory and tested using accredited trans fat analysis.

Outcome of the test

According to the test results, the trans fat levels in all 20 samples were found to be within the statutory limit of 2%.

Additionally, we observed that for some samples, our test results showed a higher trans fat content than the declared values on the food label. Following that, we sought clarification from the relevant manufacturers and/or importers. Insofar as the manufacturers and/or importers were able to substantiate their declared values, the differences between their declared values and our test results can be attributed as variance due to sample handling and analytical methodology.

Furthermore, our test found four samples declaring themselves “zero trans fat” when they were not. The four samples are S07 Flora Light 500G, S08 Flora Original 500G, S18 Sunny Meadow Spread with Canola Oil 500G and S19 Sunny Meadow Spread with Olive Oil 500G.

Under the AVA rules, which are in line with international norms, food that has less than 0.5% of trans fat may be labelled “trans-fat free”. But they cannot be labelled as having zero trans fat unless they have none. The exact value should still be indicated on the food label and not be rounded down to zero. CASE has shared these findings with AVA and they will be investigating this matter.

Recommendations

We encourage all consumers to take into consideration the trans fat content in the composition and/or ingredients that make up the spread by checking the food label when shopping. Consumers are also encouraged to go for spreads with the Healthier Choice Symbol administered by the Health Promotion Board.

Lim Biow Chuan
President
Consumers Association of Singapore

About the Consumers Association of Singapore:

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is an independent, non-profit organisation that is committed towards protecting consumers’ interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of its key achievements is in advocating for the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA) which came into effect on 1 March 2004.

For more information, please visit the CASE website at www.case.org.sg or follow us on:

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Annex – Samples of Margarines and Vegetable Oil-based Spreads

S/N	Name of Sample	Imported By	Manufactured By	Food Label	Trans Fat Per 100g (as declared)	Test Results (%) ¹
S01	Buttercup Gold Canola Light 500G	Auric Pacific Marketing Pte Ltd 2 Enterprise Road Singapore 629814	Made in New Zealand	Naturally Cholesterol Free Omega 3 Vitamin A & D 33% Less Fat	Less than 0.5g	0.06
S02	Buttercup Gold Canola Original 500G	Auric Pacific Marketing Pte Ltd 2 Enterprise Road Singapore 629814	Made in New Zealand	Naturally Cholesterol Free Omega 3 Vitamin A & D	Less than 0.5g	0.17
S03	Cowhead Dan Delion Fresh Buttery Taste Margarine 250G	Ben Foods (S) Pte Ltd 1 Fishery Port Road Singapore 619729	Melody Sdn Bhd (Food Service) 70, 70A, 72 & 4 Jalan Seroja 12 Taman Johor Jaya 81100 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia Hock Leck Marketing Sdn Bhd (Retail) Lot 65 Jalan BP5 Bandar Bukit Puchong 47100 Puchong Selangor Darul Ehsan, West Malaysia	Contain Polyunsaturated Fat	Less than 2g	0.41
S04	Cowhead Dan Delion Soft Margarine 400G	Ben Foods (S) Pte Ltd 1 Fishery Port Road Singapore 619729	Mills Oslo, Norway	Contains Omega 3 & 6	1g	0.15
S05	Emborg Spreadable Salted 250G	Cold Storage Singapore (1983) Pte Ltd 21 Tampines North Drive 2 #03-01 Singapore 528765	Product of Belgium	-	1.7g	0.76
S06	FairPrice Margarine 375G	NTUC FairPrice Co-operative Ltd No 1 Joo Koon Circle Level 13 Singapore 629117	Product of Australia	Trans Fat Free Naturally Cholesterol Free	0.1g	0.24
S07	Flora Light 500G	Unilever Singapore Pte Ltd 20 Pasir Panjang Road #06-22 Mapletree Business City Singapore 117439	Unilever Australasia 20-22 Cambridge Street Epping NSW 2121	Reduced Fat, Reduced Salt Healthier Choice (Health Promotion Board) Contains 1g Omega 3 30% Less Fat and 34% Less Salt than Floral Original	0g	0.09

¹ The test results (%) can be interpreted as trans fat content in grams per 100 grams.

S08	Flora Original 500G	Unilever Singapore Pte Ltd 20 Pasir Panjang Road #06-22 Mapletree Business City Singapore 117439	Unilever Australasia 20-22 Cambridge Street Epping NSW 2121	-	0g	0.13
S09	Lurpak Spreadable Slightly Salted 250G	Angliss Singapore Pte Ltd Pastry Global Singapore Pte Ltd 232 Pandan Loop Singapore 128420	Arta Foods amba DK-8260 Viby J	-	1.7g	1.05
S10	Meadow Lea Canola Omega 3 250G	Auric Pacific Marketing Pte Ltd 2 Enterprise Road Singapore 629814	Goodman Fielder 39 Delhi Road North Ryde NSW 2113 Australia	A Natural Source of Omega 3 No Artificial Colours or Flavours	0.5g	0.14
S11	Meadow Lea Salt Reduced 250G	Auric Pacific Marketing Pte Ltd 2 Enterprise Road Singapore 629814	Goodman Fielder 39 Delhi Road North Ryde NSW 2113 Australia	30% Less Salt than Meadow Lea Original Contains 1% Salt which is 30% less than Meadow Lea Original spread	0.5g	0.14
S12	Naturel Reduced Salt Margarine 500G	Lam Soon Singapore Pte Ltd 3000 Marsiling Road Singapore 739108	Made in Malaysia	Contains Omega 3 & 6 Naturally Cholesterol Free About 43% Lower in Sodium than Naturel Soft Margarine	0.8g	0.10
S13	Naturel Soft Margarine 500G	Lam Soon Singapore Pte Ltd 3000 Marsiling Road Singapore 739108	Lam Soon Edible Oils Sdn Bhd Wisma DLS 6 Jalan Jurunilai U1/20 Hicom-Glenmarie Industrial Park 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia	Contains Omega 3 & 6 Naturally Cholesterol Free	0.9g	0.07
S14	Nuttelelex Original 500G	Ad-East Enterprises Pte Ltd 28 Jalan Selaseh Singapore 808446	Nuttelelex Food Products Pty Ltd 2 Millennium Court Knoxfield VIC 3180	Dairy Free Nut Oil Free Gluten Free Soy Free Lactose Free Cholesterol Free Artificial Additives Free Salt Reduced Contains Vitamin D	0.1g	0.05
S15	Olive Grove Lite Mild Tasting 500G	-	Goodman Fielder 39 Delhi Road North Ryde NSW 2113	Olive Grove Lite contains 55g/100g Fat which is 30% Less Fat than Butter	0.2g	0.23

S16	Praise Spread 500G	Auric Pacific Marketing Pte Ltd 2 Enterprise Road Singapore 629814	Goodman Fielder 39 Delhi Road North Ryde NSW 2113 Australia	Naturally Cholesterol Free Trans Fat Free Healthier Choice (Singapore Health Promotion Board)	0.3g	0.09
S17	Snow Brand Neo Soft Spread 320G	F & N Foods Pte Ltd 214 Pandan Loop Singapore 128405	Produced in Japan	More Polyunsaturated Fats Lower in Cholesterol	1.4g	0.05
S18	Sunny Meadow Spread with Canola Oil 500G	Cold Storage Singapore (1983) Pte Ltd 21 Tampines North Drive 2 #03-01 Singapore 528765	Atlantic Pacific Foods Pty Ltd 21 Gardiner St Rutherford New South Wales 2320 Australia	No Added Artificial Colour & Flavour Omega 3 & 6 Omg Cholesterol Vitamin E	0g	0.12
S19	Sunny Meadow Spread with Olive Oil 500G	Cold Storage Singapore (1983) Pte Ltd 21 Tampines North Drive 2 #03-01 Singapore 528765	Atlantic Pacific Foods Pty Ltd 21 Gardiner St Rutherford New South Wales 2320 Australia	No Added Artificial Colour & Flavour Omega 3 & 6 Omg Cholesterol Vitamin E	0g	0.19
S20	Table Lands Olive Oil Spread 500G	RCM Consumer Marketing 8 Kaki Bukit Road 2 #04-26 Ruby Warehouse Complex Singapore 417841	Peerless Holdings Pty Ltd 21 Evans St Braybrook, Vic 3019 Australia	65% Less Saturated Fat than Butter	0.2g	0.11