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Government steps up to cut nation's intake of saturated fat

Eating a diet high in saturated fat and calories can contribute to developing a range of serious diet-related illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. The Cabinet Report published in January 2008 estimated that up to 3,500 deaths could be prevented by reducing average population intakes of saturated fat by about 20% (from the current UK intake level of 13.3% to below 11% of food energy) to meet Government recommendations. Rosemary Hignett, Head of Nutrition at the Food Standards Agency, said: 'Reducing our intakes of saturated fat is a major challenge but would have clear important health benefits. Therefore reducing average intakes of saturated fat is now a Government priority for cardiovascular public health benefits.'

At the beginning of February 2008, following a period of consultation and research, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) announced the first steps of its activity to help people in the UK reduce the amount of saturated fat they eat. The FSA aims to achieve this by working with industry to reduce saturated fat and added sugar levels in foods, reducing portion sizes and providing clear information to consumers, including honest nutrition information on labels.

This FSA programme outlines future work in the following areas:

❖ **Building on partnerships with the food industry to:**

- encourage further voluntary reformulation of specific food groups to reduce the amount of saturated fat and added sugar they contain
- increase the ranges of healthier options and step up the promotion of healthier products to consumers
- make smaller portion sizes more readily available
- publish food industry commitments to reformulate
- ensure that reformulation to reduce trans fats should not increase saturated fat levels in food

- ❖ **Increasing consumer awareness activity** to raise the profile of saturated fat as part of our overall efforts to encourage people to choose a healthy diet

- ❖ **Holding an independent academic workshop** to examine evidence on portion sizes.