

(2004/C 84 E/0578)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3109/03**by Phillip Whitehead (PSE) to the Commission**

(17 October 2003)

Subject: Hydrogenated fats

In view of reservations expressed regarding the safety of hydrogenated fats, is the Commission prepared to launch an initiative which would see the potential health risk of hydrogenated fats being clearly indicated on product labelling? Furthermore, has any consideration been given to the outright ban of this substance?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(14 November 2003)

Hydrogenation enables vegetable and animal oils to be transformed into solid fat, also making it saturated. The result of the hydrogenation process, together with other practices such as the de-odorisation process of oils and fats, is a change in the shape of fat molecules. Therefore, the natural configuration of the fatty acids molecules, known as *cis* configuration, very often changes into a different one, known as *trans* configuration. The above practices, which are used for many product applications, may lead to unacceptable amounts of *trans* fatty acids.

It is known that high intakes of certain saturated fatty acids are associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease. Recently, reservations have also been expressed regarding *trans* fatty acids in the diet. Consequently, the Commission has asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to evaluate the evidence on the effect on health of *trans* fatty acids and how the effect, if any, compares to the effect on health of other types of fatty acids in the diet. The EFSA has been asked to provide a scientific opinion by the end of May 2004.

Regarding the labelling of foods, Directive 2000/13/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 20 March 2000 on the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs⁽¹⁾ indicates that when a food contains hydrogenated oils or fats the description 'hydrogenated' must accompany the indication of a hydrogenated oil or fat in the labelling of the food. Council Directive 90/496/EC of 24 September 1990 on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs⁽²⁾ includes the possibility for the declaration of the saturated fatty acids in the nutrition labelling. The question of the inclusion or not of *trans* fatty acids in the nutrition labelling on foods is being considered within the context of an ongoing review of Directive 90/496/EC.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 109, 6.5.2000.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 276, 6.10.1990.

(2004/C 84 E/0579)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3170/03**by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(27 October 2003)

Subject: Problems regarding the Attica suburban railway project

Great concern is being expressed in Greece regarding progress made by the suburban railway project with numerous reports recently appearing in the Greek press describing the situation as extremely serious. It is regarded as unlikely that the project will be completed in time for the Olympic Games. In particular, the Doukissi Plakentia – Olympic Stadium section is a very long way behind schedule because of work being carried out simultaneously on the Attica Highway and the metro. Serious problems are arising regarding the Neratziotissa station where the suburban line will meet the HSAP electric line, designs having failed to take account of the Attica Highway running below the station, which is now creating major construction problems.