

# COMPANY INTERVIEW

## REFORMULATING FOR HEALTH: A Q&A WITH FLORA FOOD GROUP ON iTFA ELIMINATION

### ABOUT FLORA FOOD GROUP

Flora Food Group ([previously Upfield](#)) was [formed in 2018](#) and is one of the largest plant-based food and beverage (F&B) companies in the world. The company's flagship brand, Flora, first [launched in the UK in 1964](#) selling margarine products marketed as 'the lighter, healthier way you want to eat today, it's Flora, the new margarine'. It remains a widely popular product today and is among the top five best-selling brands of margarine in the world.<sup>a</sup>

Flora Food Group is [committed to creating healthy and nutritious foods for consumers](#) and has established a *Nutrition Benchmarking Programme* to ensure that the nutritional composition of its products supports healthier diets and improved public health outcomes. The company shows evidence of actively seeking to improve recipes and to meet nutrition benchmarks for saturated fat and ensure that no product contains trans-fats from partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. In its [Nutrition Policy](#) (ratified March 24 2025), Flora Food Group states that the company achieved the aims of the World Health Organization's (WHO) REPLACE Initiative by eliminating the use of partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO) from its portfolio across all markets over ten years ago.<sup>b,c</sup> Flora Food Group is committed to delivering the highest quality products and [works with its suppliers to achieve this goal](#) by ensuring responsible sourcing, resource management, and production.

In June 2025—after the launch of the Edible Oil Supplier Index—ATNi interviewed Paul Whitehouse, who was the Head of Scientific Affairs at Flora Food Group. Paul has since transitioned to a different role outside the company.

to understand their positions on iTFA. As a buyer, Flora Food Group is not familiar with suppliers' broader portfolio of edible oil ingredients and whether they all comply with the WHO iTFA limits, as the company focuses on requesting and procuring ingredients that meet its specifications.<sup>d</sup>

### Q&A WITH FLORA FOOD GROUP

- 1 The Edible Oil Supplier Index found that only one company, Cargill, has committed to eliminating iTFA across its global edible oils portfolio. Why do you think other global suppliers have not made similar commitments yet?**

A number of the companies assessed on the Edible Oil Supplier Index are some of Flora Food Group's strategic partners. Flora Food Group plans on using ATNi's Edible Oil Supplier Index to discuss the findings with ingredient suppliers and

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- <sup>a</sup> Based on Retail Sales estimates for margarine and spreads from Euromonitor International for the financial year 2024.
  - <sup>b</sup> In 2018, WHO launched the REPLACE initiative, which called on countries and industry to eliminate iTFA globally by 2023. WHO recommended limiting iTFA levels in all fats, oils, and foods to less than 2% of total fat. This can be achieved through proper refining processes and by stopping the production and use of PHVO.
  - <sup>c</sup> iTFA are formed by partial hydrogenation—an industrial process that involves adding hydrogen to vegetable oil, converting it from a liquid to a solid— and poor refining of edible oils. On average, TFA concentrations in PHVO range from 25% to 45%.
  - <sup>d</sup> WHO best-practice limit of 2g of iTFA per 100g of total fat in all foods.

**2 What would encourage global edible oil companies to adopt WHO best practices for eliminating iTFA?**

Flora Food Group has not used PHVO since the company was formed in 2018, continuing Unilever's legacy of eliminating PHVO over 15 years ago. Reasons include **increased regulations on iTFA** (citing the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) ban on PHVO in foods as of 2018](#)) as well as **rising demand from consumers for healthier products on the market.**

Paul mentioned that despite the significant progress made by industry over the last 30 years in eliminating PHVO from margarine products, there is a lingering "myth" that margarine contains trans-fats. He noted that the "myth" seems to persist in Europe and less so in Asia, explaining that in Europe, nutrition labels are not allowed to disclose trans-fat content, whereas in many Asian countries, trans fat labelling is more commonly mandated.

Flora Food Group believes that food products should be clearly labelled and present all facts necessary for consumers to make informed choices, suggesting that if consumers were aware of the TFA content in their margarine, the prevailing "myth" would no longer hold. If this were the case, industry may be more incentivized to eliminate iTFA from their products if there were more **opportunities to promote positive messaging** and **highlight the progress made by companies** in supplying products that are TFA-free.



**3 Looking back at Flora Food Group's iTFA elimination journey, what were key factors that enabled the company to succeed in iTFA elimination? And what would you recommend for other companies pursuing the same goal?**

When Flora Food Group eliminated iTFA from its food products in 2018, technological solutions were already well-established and widely available—unlike 30 years ago—greatly facilitating the reformulation process. Paul stated that technological solutions now exist for nearly every reformulation challenge, enabling companies to achieve desired product properties while maintaining quality. Flora Food Group believes that **any company that is beginning its iTFA elimination journey today is in a much stronger position than in the past** due to increased availability of evidence-based science, proven technological solutions, and clear guidance on recipe reformulation.