

The Processed Puzzle:

Unpacking Perceptions of Ultra-Processed Food (UPF) and Health



Introductions



Who I am

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Why I am here

Discuss perceptions and potential impact of UPFs in the diet on health.



My aim for the session

We learn from each other: Define and identify UPFs, discuss considerations or actions we can take to improve our diet. Finally, current review of UPF.



UPFs: A Recipe for Health Overview

The Food, Diet and Obesity committee was appointed by the HoL to assess the impact of UPFs and HFSS foods on public health and consider regulatory approaches to reduce their prevalence in diets.

What Are UPFs?

- Defined using the NOVA classification, UPFs are foods subjected to extensive industrial processing, often containing additives for taste and shelf life.
- Typically characterised as calorie-dense, high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats, and aggressively marketed for affordability and convenience.

Recipe for health:
a plan to fix our broken food system





The Processed Puzzle:

Unpacking Perceptions of UPF and Health

Step 1:

Line Up: two questions - ice breakers to get us started

Step 2:

1-2-4 ALL: one question - learning from each other in groups

Step 3:

35: keeping score - reflection on group insights



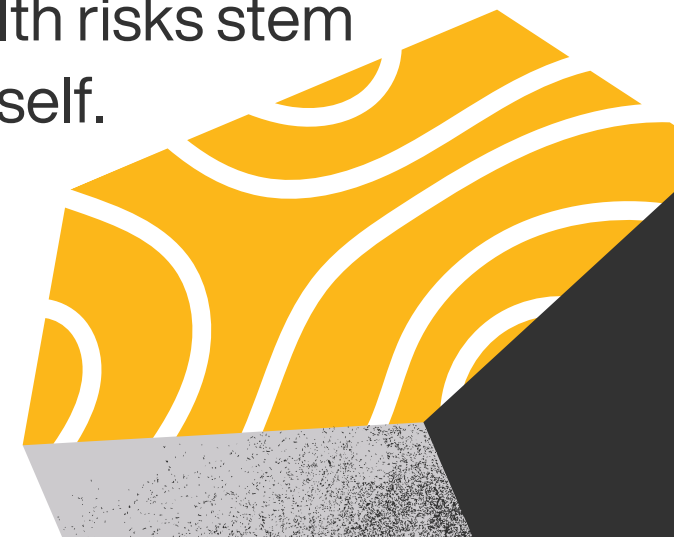
Health Impacts of UPFs

Evidence Linking UPFs to Health Issues

- Recent reviews and meta-analysis show strong correlations between UPF consumption and health issues like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) highlights that UPFs are generally high in harmful nutrients (sugar, salt, fat), though more causal research is needed.

Current Research Gaps

- Most studies are observational; therefore, causation isn't fully established.
- Further research is necessary to understand if health risks stem solely from UPFs' composition or the processing itself.



Challenges in Defining and Regulating UPFs

Limitations of the NOVA Classification

- Lacks precision; for instance, it categorises some fortified and nutritious foods (like wholemeal bread) as UPFs.
- Critics argue that NOVA's broad criteria would complicate regulation.

Industry Perspectives

- The food industry advocates that processing offers convenience, shelf stability, and affordability, emphasising that not all processed foods are unhealthy.

Public Health Advocates' Position

- Highlight the need for cautious consumption of UPFs and call for immediate action to protect public health.



Policy

Current Policy Recommendations

- Stricter regulations on HFSS (high-fat, salt, sugar) foods, many of which overlap with UPFs.
- Consideration of health taxes on salt and sugar, alongside stricter marketing restrictions.
- Calls for mandatory reformulation to make HFSS and UPF products healthier.

Immediate Action vs. Long-Term Research

- While research on UPFs continues, the report stresses the importance of immediate regulatory action to reduce public exposure to unhealthy foods.





Key Takeaways

UPFs Present Health Risks

Evidence of a link between UPF consumption and poor health outcomes.

Regulation & Reformulation Needed

Immediate steps, including reformulation and regulation of HFSS, are essential to curb health risks.

Further Research is Crucial

Scientific research must continue to refine understanding and ensure effective policy decisions in the future.





I'm launching a podcast to dive deeper into the work we're doing in SHEPE, exploring sustainable healthy eating practices and the perceptions, attitudes, and impacts surrounding them.

Find me today:

During networking breaks and lunch where I'd like to capture your thoughts on SHEPE.

Contact me:

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Podcast