

Unilever's Position on Processed Foods



Unilever

UNILEVER'S POSITION ON ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS*

Key messages

- We believe that processed foods play an essential role in sustainable and healthy diets as they increase accessibility, provide affordability, taste, enjoyment and enhance food safety.
- Healthiness of foods, whether fresh, prepared at home, or made in a factory, should be evaluated on scientific evidence-based factors like nutritional quality and role in the diet.
- The current (NOVA) definition of ultra-processed foods (UPF) lacks scientific consensus and therefore should not be used in policy and regulations.
- We support further research into mechanistic insights of the observed associations between UPF consumption and health, as UPFs constitute a wide variety of food products.

Unilever's Position on UPF

We believe that the healthiness of foods is determined by its nutritional quality, portion size and frequency of consumption and not by the level of processing.

Food processing covers a wide range of processing conditions and methods. Almost all foods and drinks require some form of processing before consumption be that at home, in a restaurant or by a food manufacturer. Processed foods can complement the diet and provide consumers with variety, valuable sources of nutrition (e.g. fortification), convenience, access, affordability and enhanced food safety.

The term UPF is poorly defined and may marginalise processed foods that are nutrient dense. We encourage the development of government-led definitions that are far more nuanced than current definitions and urge governments to invest in research to address the gaps in mechanistic insights, especially of the NOVA 4 class (UPF) which consists of food products with a wide variety of nutritional quality.

Unilever supports research to further advance the science in this field, as we believe more research is needed to establish whether any particular (ultra) processed foods or product group is associated with adverse health outcomes and the biological pathways driving this.



Our Actions

As a food company, it is our responsibility to ensure that our products are safe and meet all regulatory requirements. Unilever complies with all relevant regulatory requirements for food additives and the processes applied by Unilever are safe for consumers. If there are no local regulations, we follow the Codex Alimentarius guidelines.

Being mindful of consumer concerns on the use of certain additives, we only use additives where necessary. We clearly indicate their presence in the ingredients list; therefore, consumers can make an informed choice.

*As defined by the NOVA classification.

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