

Paper 12.10 Ultra-Processed Food Research Questions (February 2024).

Summary

This paper is for information and provides background on UPFs, the proposed consumer research questions, and the ask of the ACSS in this space.

Background

What are ultra-processed foods?

Alongside contributing to technical research into the health impacts of additives and processing, the FSA is seeking to develop a better understanding of consumer perceptions, behaviours and information needs relating to Ultra-Processed Food (UPF), to ensure the consumer voice is heard in the political and technical debates. Other research in the UPF space includes the IGD's work around consumer's awareness, understanding and perceptions of ultra-processed foods. As background reading, members are asked to review the IGD research: [Ultra processed foods: a consumer perspective, a summary of which is provided at figure 1.](#)

How the ACSS can contribute

The FSA is looking to increase awareness of consumer understanding, knowledge, behaviours and information needs, around UPFs to support agency activity in this area.

The ACSS Wider Consumer Interests (WCI) Working Group is invited to conduct a rapid evidence review to explore how well this research aim can be met with existing evidence, identifying key findings, and to make recommendations for further research work.

Workshop

Members are asked to consider and discuss the 8 initial themes/high level research questions outlined below, in terms of how well these inform the research aim to: Increase awareness of consumer understanding, knowledge, behaviours and information needs around UPFs. Following this discussion, if necessary, a revised set of questions will be developed. The WCI Working Group is then invited to produce a rapid evidence assessment, exploring how well the revised set of research questions are answered in the literature, incorporating recommendations for next steps and how best to fill identified evidence gaps.

Initial Research Questions

1. What do consumers understand by the concept of UPF?
2. Do consumers understand the current classifications of UPF? Are they aware of the distinctions between the different levels of processing?
3. What concerns do consumers have about the nutritional, health and other implications of UPF and how do these concerns differ across categories of UPF?
4. How do these concerns impact consumer behaviour with respect to UPF?
5. What are the key drivers and/or influencing factors of consumer concerns about UPF?
6. Is there a relationship between UPFs and HHFI and if so, what is the relationship?
7. What are the information needs of consumers in the context of uncertainty over the nutritional and health impacts of UPF and what is the role of risk communication in this context?
8. How can the FSA best support consumers with respect to their concerns and related behaviour when it comes to UPF?

Next Steps

- March - May: ACSS members are invited to produce a rapid evidence assessment, exploring how well the revised set of research questions are answered in the literature, incorporating recommendations for next steps and how best to fill identified evidence gaps. This is required by the end of May.
- TBC: Depending on FSA activity in this area, ACSS members may be invited to provide commentary on the FSA consumer statement/messaging in terms

of how well it meets the aims of this communication.

- May onwards: ACSS members will be invited to provide support to help the FSA develop and refine research questions around consumer understanding, knowledge, behaviours and information needs, for possible further research. This will include informing the development of any additional questions added to the Consumer Insights Tracker.

Figure 1

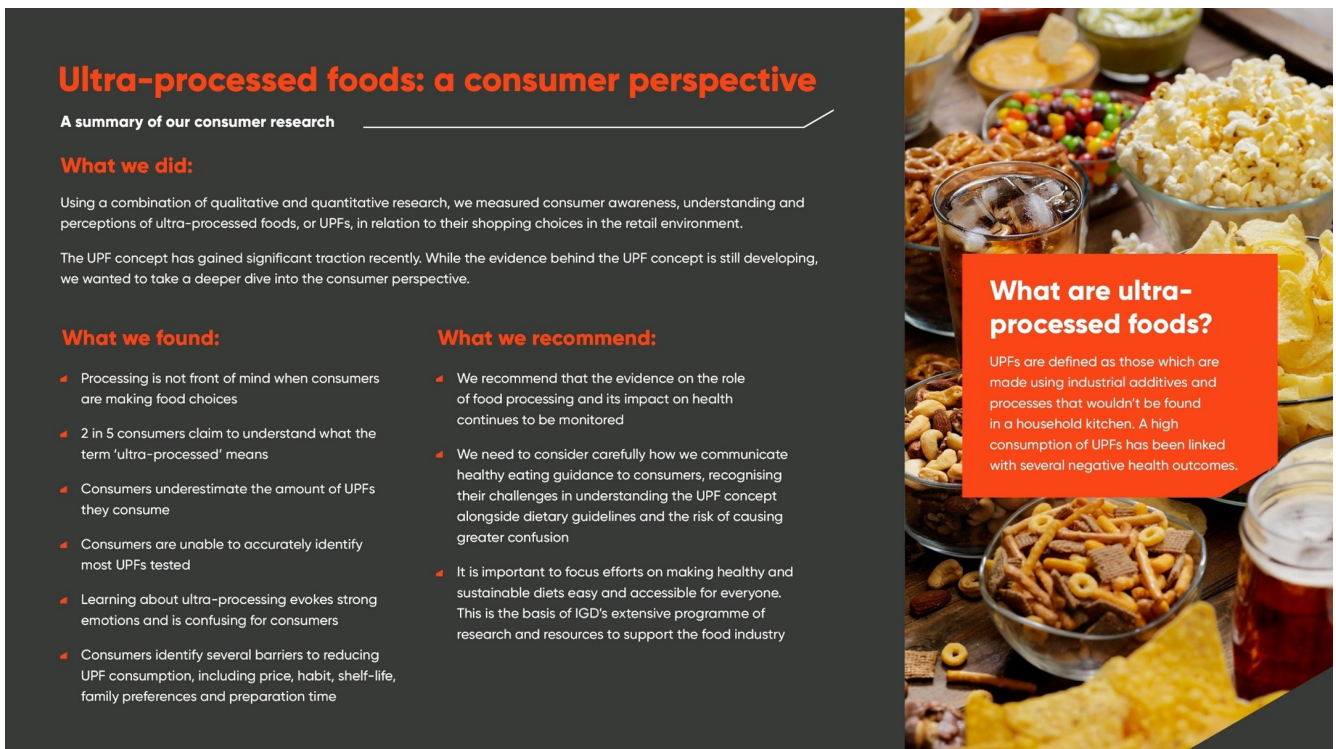


Figure 1_IGD 2023 - Ultra-processed foods, a consumer perspective

<https://www.igd.com/Social-impact/Health/Ultra-processed-foods-a-consumer-perspective>