

## **INSTITUTE OF FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - WRITTEN EVIDENCE (FDO0053)**

1. The Institute of Food Science and Technology is the UK's leading professional body that aims to advance the application of food science and technology for the benefit, safety and health of the public, and support the development and maintenance of professional standards and science-based food standards that underpin the success of British food manufacturing, retail and regulation. As an independent, charitable body, we bring professional expertise from across academia, industry and the public sector, centered around the professional, sustainable advancement of the UK food system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to this consultation:

The definition of a) ultra-processed food (UPF) and b) foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) and their usefulness as terminologies for describing and assessing such products.

2. IFST strongly agrees that there is a global obesity challenge, driven by diet and lifestyle factors. The observed associations between ultra-processed foods and adverse health outcomes are concerning but it is not clear if these associations represent a direct impact of UPF or whether these observations can be explained by the well understood effects of overconsumption of high fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) foods.
3. Better understanding of possible mechanisms linking UPF to health outcomes, independent of the well understood effects of HFSS foods is needed. IFST agree with the recommendation of the UK Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition that further assessment is needed to determine the level of relationship between (ultra-) processed foods and health outcomes.
4. There is a risk that definitions of UPF characterize all food additives and food processing as being negative, this is not necessarily the case and can be misleading for the consumer. For example, some additives listed on food labels can be found in home cooking processes. Additionally, food additives undergo strict safety assessment and regulatory approvals and contribute to the production of safe foods for consumers and support wider efforts relating of sustainability and

resilience of the food system through extending shelf-life and product quality.

The effectiveness of Government planning and policymaking processes in relation to food and drink policy and tackling obesity.

5. As identified above, IFST strongly agrees that diet and lifestyle factors are a major contributor to the obesity challenge and there is strong evidence that overconsumption of HFSS foods and drinks are major contributors to obesity and associated health impacts. Policy making should address the key challenges and be targeted to effect changes in consumption based on this scientific evidence.
  
6. There are multiple Government departments and agencies with individual responsibilities for regulation across the food system and related to diet and health. Furthermore, these responsibilities lie in different departments across the four nations. IFST advocates for a coherent food policy within Government to ensure holistic policy development that does not lead to unintended consequences and considers the need to address diet and health alongside food safety and food security within the food system, sustainability, welfare, economic factors and food and nutrition education as examples.

IFST hope that these comments are useful within the context of this enquiry.

*5 April 2024*