



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

## **Ultra-Processed Foods (UPF) Public Dialogue Oversight Group Meeting #1**

**Date of meeting: 21 January 2025, 10:00 to 12:00**

**Attendance:** Michelle Patel (Food Standards Agency), Tazeem Bhatia (Department of Health and Social Care), Lucy Foster (Defra), Anne Ferguson-Smith (BBSRC), Ciarán Forde (Wageningen University and Research), Ortwin Renn (University of Stuttgart), John Mathers (Newcastle University), Anna Taylor (The Food Foundation), Dan Crossley (Food Ethics Council), James Toop (Bite Back), Lizzy McHugh (IGD), Kate Halliwell (The Food and Drink Federation)

**Chair:** Dame Theresa Marteau (University of Cambridge)

**Apologies:** Julie Lovegrove (University of Reading), Bob Doherty (University of York)

**Also in attendance:** Representatives of Hopkins Van Mil (Henrietta Hopkins, Sophie Reid), M·E·L Research (Ruth Gosling), URSUS Consulting (Anna Macgillivray, Hilary Livesey), Sciencewise (Diane Beddoes), Food Standards Agency (Sophie Watson) and UKRI-BBSRC Secretariat (Riaz Bhunnoo, Ashleigh Sladen)

### **Agenda item 1: Welcome and apologies**

Representatives from the UKRI-BBSRC secretariat, Sciencewise, Hopkins Van Mil, URSUS Consulting and members of the Oversight Group introduced themselves and their area of expertise. The agenda was agreed with no additional items added.

The UKRI-BBSRC secretariat introduced the commission of this dialogue and the Chair briefly summarised the Oversight role. Oversight Group members suggested edits for the Oversight Group Terms of Reference, including emphasising the UK-wide focus of the UPF Public Dialogue.

### **Agenda item 2: Introduction to Sciencewise and public dialogue**

Diane Beddoes (Sciencewise) gave an introduction to Sciencewise and a deliberative public dialogue.

### **Agenda item 3: An introduction to the UPF Public Dialogue plan and process**

Henrietta Hopkins and Sophie Reid (Hopkins Van Mil) presented an overview of the project and highlighted areas where they require input from OG members including scope, content and recruitment. Sophie Reid presented a summary of findings from Hopkins Van Mil's topic review on UPFs, which builds on existing reviews, research and deliberative processes.

Oversight group members provided the following advice for the project's scope:

- 1) **Trade-offs** – Oversight group members suggested that people's realities should be included. Language should be carefully considered and information given to participants should be clear and equitable. As an example of a trade-off, the dialogue might consider how people value ease of preparing a meal versus personal health impacts. Oversight group members also emphasised ensuring participants are not framed as passive recipients, rather citizens in the food system, and suggested using images of retail environments (e.g., food on sale in hospitals to highlight contradictions).

- 2) **Environment** – Oversight group members suggested that alternative proteins and milks should be included in the dialogue, as they are growing in popularity and some of these products can be “healthier” UPF products in terms of nutritional content and reduced carbon footprint. There was general support for considering environmental impacts of UPFs as well as health impacts.
- 3) **Marketing** – Oversight group members mentioned that young people’s experience is heavily tied with corporate power such as marketing; this should be considered in the dialogue to further understand young people’s relationship with food. Other suggestions included focusing on diets instead of individual food items but perhaps using the latter as case studies.
- 4) **Balance of information** – Oversight group members suggested situating UPFs within the wider food system and diets. For instance, the dialogue should be clear about the differences between UPFs, HFSS foods and whole foods, rather than looking at UPFs in isolation. Other suggestions included avoiding the introduction of UPF terminology during recruitment and balancing the perceived “positives” and “negatives” of UPFs.
- 5) **Building on existing and emerging evidence** – Oversight group members advised that the public dialogue will progress more rapidly by building on existing evidence such as extracting available information on what the public feels most important in terms of research questions (e.g. [British Science Association report on “Public views on ultra-processed foods”](#); [Food Standards Agency rapid review of the consumer evidence](#)). There was also a suggestion that, to an extent, people's responses will depend on the emerging evidence they are given as part of the dialogue process and to ensure this is balanced and any limitations clear.
- 6) **Focus of the dialogue (research questions vs. policy)** – Oversight group members advised on striking a sensible approach when engaging participants with the focus of dialogue. For example, while the focus of the dialogue is on the research questions, the policy aspect may be conducive to public conversation. There was also a suggestion in revisiting how we position global policy examples from other countries and frame them. For example, some countries (e.g. UK) are moving forward with HFSS, while others are addressing both UPF and HFSS.

Oversight Group members agreed to provide offline comments on what issues need to be explored in the nationally representative survey.

#### **Agenda item 4: Stakeholder engagement**

Oversight group members advised on broad categories of stakeholders that might be included in the design workshop planned for the end of February. Members mentioned that to some degree the stakeholders to invite will depend on how strongly the focus is on research or policy. Other suggestions included considering a wide-ranging spectrum of views, and avoiding duplication of the evidence provided in the [House of Lords - Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system report](#).

#### **Agenda item 5: UPF Public Dialogue Evaluation plan**

Anna MacGillivray (URSUS Consulting) summarised the focus of the evaluation.

#### **Agenda item 6: Close**

The Chair summarised key discussion points. The next meeting will take place on **Monday 10 March 2025**.