



## **Making Sense of Ultra-Processed Foods: A Public Dialogue Oversight Group Meeting #2**

**Date of meeting: Monday 10 March 2025, 13:00 to 15:00**

**Attendance:** Michelle Patel (Food Standards Agency), Tazeem Bhatia (Department of Health and Social Care), Lucy Foster (Defra), Ciarán Forde (Wageningen University and Research), John Mathers (Newcastle University), Julie Lovegrove (University of Reading), Bob Doherty (University of York), 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), Anne Ferguson-Smith (BBSRC)

**Apologies:** Ortwin Renn (University of Stuttgart)

**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**

The Oversight Group agreed on the revised Terms of Reference and the agenda was agreed with no additional items added. Members were also asked if there were any additional declarations of interest since the last meeting.

### **Agenda item 2: Updates on the UPF Public Dialogue**

Henrietta Hopkins and Sophie Reid (Hopkins Van Mil) introduced the new title for the dialogue “Making Sense of Ultra-Processed Foods: A Public Dialogue”. The project team presented an overview of the recruitment strategy and the dialogue process, which included a brief update on the nationally representative survey being delivered.

Oversight group members provided the following advice for the dialogue process:

- 1) **Survey** – Oversight group members advised on ensuring there are processes in place to prevent the survey from being hijacked by bots.
- 2) **Stimulating Critical Thinking of Ultra-Processed Foods** - Oversight group members advised on explaining ultra-processed foods to participants by presenting key definitions, noting that the NOVA definition is debated in the UK. Members also suggested unpacking current theories on mechanisms of action to support discussions, including on health impacts and pathways such as additives, processing, and marketing. Members also suggested using case studies to clearly illustrate the journey from non-processed to ultra-processed foods (example: Katharine Jenner’s presentation for the House of Lords Food, Diet and Obesity Committee).
- 3) **Explaining the R&I and Policy Landscape** - Oversight group members highlighted the importance of framing existing evidence and using precise language to help identify research gaps and clarify the difference between causality and association. They recommended presenting uncertainties surrounding ultra-processed foods within the research and policy landscape, covering chemical risks, behaviours, and marketing. Considerations for timescales, complexity of research, and how research is applied in industry were also suggested to help participants understand that some gaps can be addressed quickly and inexpensively, while others require long-term, costly programmes. Members also advised on presenting broader policy surrounding UPFs and discussing the precautionary principle as a policy approach.
- 4) **Understanding Public Opinions** – Oversight group members advised on understanding current public opinions and facilitating dialogue to inform the research agenda, such as understanding participants’ views on additional research needed for a better understanding of UPFs.
- 5) **Avoiding Stigmatisation of Food Choices** – Oversight group members advised on striking a sensitive approach to ensure that participants do not feel self-conscious about their food choices, which could lead to situations that feel stigmatising.



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- 6) **Speakers' Declaration of Interests** – Oversight group members advised on workshop speakers declaring any interests before their presentations to ensure the dialogue process avoids bias, including the influence of workshop speakers on participants' perceptions.
- 7) **Engaging Both the Digital and Physical Domains** – Oversight group members advised on considering engaging participants in both the digital and physical domains, as older and younger participants may not view promotions in the same format and therefore may engage differently. For the digital domain, members suggested considering how social media algorithms work differently for various populations.

**Agenda item 3: “Hopes and fears for the UPF Public Dialogue” discussion**

Oversight group members shared their views on hopes and fears for the public dialogue. This exercise will also be included in the agenda for the stakeholder design workshop Hopkins Van Mil have organised for Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> of March.

**Agenda item 4: Close**

The Chair summarised key discussion points. The next meeting will take place on **Monday 14 July 2025**.