

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Tuesday, 28 September 2021 12:00 GMT +01:00
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Ultra-Processed Foods and the 'corruption' of the UN Food Systems Summit
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Cathy Cliff, Soil Association
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/44285/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/44285/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Independent
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

# 1. PARTICIPATION

## TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

150

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

Male

Female

Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

### HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

Our Dialogue covered a subject requiring urgent action. There is a growing body of evidence that ultra-processed foods are detrimental to human and planetary health. As ultra-processed diets have become more prevalent globally, the Summit must address the risk they pose to healthy, sustainable, equitable food systems. Our Dialogue asked a number of experts to propose solutions that addressed these risks, recognising that a systemic approach might best address them, and sought attendee participation in discussion of them. Our Dialogue brought together a number of different speakers from varying fields of expertise and attendees from across the world from government, academia, industry and civil society. It championed existing work to address the health and nature crises posed by food systems and provided a safe and transparent environment in which to discuss ultra-processed foods.

### HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Our Dialogue reflected the urgency of addressing the impact of ultra-processed foods and diets on human and planetary health. It reflected the Summit's vision of healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Reflecting on the risks posed by ultra-processed diets to the health and well-being of individuals, communities and the good stewardship of natural resources, it brought together stakeholders from different fields of expertise to propose solutions to the crisis and invited attendee participation in the design of policy options to encourage transparency and motivation to act.

### DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

# 3. METHOD

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The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

**DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?**

Yes

No

Our Dialogue was an online event held on Microsoft Teams from 12:00-13:15 BST on Tuesday 28th September. A registration system was set up using Eventbrite, which provided a summary of the event and details about how to join. It was advertised on the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Dialogues' web page, the Soil Association website, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram pages and at the Soil Association AGM. Invitations were also sent to stakeholder contacts in public health, government and civil society. We convened speakers from the Soil Association; First Steps Nutrition Trust; University College London; Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and Landworkers Alliance to present perspectives on ultra-processed foods and the UNFSS 'corporate capture' debate, proposing policies to address the over-consumption of ultra-processed foods and the industrialisation of farming. Presentations, in most cases accompanied by Powerpoint slides, were followed by a curated discussion with a Chair from the Soil Association informed by questions provided by Dialogue attendees. Questions were posed both in the Microsoft Teams chat or on Mentimeter and attendees could 'like' questions posed, enabling the most popular questions to be given priority by the Chair. Presenters' microphones and videos were switched on during the event. Attendees had their microphones and videos switched off, to avoid technical difficulties. Attendees were sent an email following the event, thanking them for their participation and providing a number of materials linked to the event. The recording of the event will be made available via the Soil Association You Tube channel.

# 4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

## MAJOR FOCUS

A growing body of evidence shows that ultra-processed foods can be detrimental to human and planetary health. As ultra-processed diets have become more prevalent globally, a wave of chronic disease has washed across the globe, and this health crisis has accelerated in parallel with the climate emergency and the destruction of the natural world.

These crises demand an urgent response, but some food industry actors have sought to stymie such a response. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has warned that “corporate concentration of power remains the elephant in the room” at the UNFSS, with critics warning that industry lobbyists have sought to sway the UNFSS away from a robust stance on ultra-processed foods.

Our Dialogue outlined and considered whether fears of corporate capture at the UNFSS were founded, and proposed policies needed to fix our increasingly ultra-processed planet.

### ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

### KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

## MAIN FINDINGS

Our Dialogue added to the evidence that ultra-processed foods can be detrimental to human and planetary health. Systemic change is required to address the complexity of risks that they pose.

A number of different options should be considered to encourage government action to address the over-consumption of ultra-processed foods. These include 'front of product' labelling to help consumers identify ultra-processed foods, similar to the approach taken in Chile; stronger regulations on the labelling and marketing of infant milks and foods marketed for up to three years of age; a tax on ultra-processed foods alongside investment in fruit and vegetable production and consumption and community food systems; support for low-income households to enable healthier diets and limits placed on corporate power over the right to food.

Our Dialogue created an open and transparent forum in which to discuss a subject central to the considerations of Member States to the UNFSS. It brought together a range of stakeholders from different fields of expertise to present a range of views and proposed policy solutions with online attendees able to pose questions and comments on them to provoke discussion and debate.

It is envisaged that the policies proposed and attendee reaction to them will form part of policy input by the Soil Association and others to the National Food Strategy and Good Food Nation recommendations proposed for England and Scotland, respectively. Further such stakeholder discussions are envisaged to collectively advance debate and refine possible solutions to the over-consumption of ultra-processed foods.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

Inappropriate marketing and UPFs in the diets of infants and young children

Despite infant formula providing nutrition in the absence of breastfeeding, it is ultra-processed and has lower health outcomes than breastfeeding at a population level. Other ultra-processed formulas including “follow on milk” and “growing-up milk” are non-essential, expensive and contain a lot of sugar. An enormous array of snacks are also being marketed for babies, despite it not being recommended that babies under 12 months old are given any snacks. Pouches, jars and ready-meals for children are also marketed.

Ultra-processed use in the early years is ubiquitous and has important health consequences, with formula-fed babies missing out on the protective properties of breastmilk. Ultra-processed foods may displace unprocessed and minimally processed food and drinks and poor quality diets in infants are associated with excess weight gain by school age. Commercial baby foods may encourage overeating and dental decay.

A key driver of ultra-processed foods in the diets of infants and young children is inappropriate marketing by the baby food industry. Unfounded claims are made by the marketers of these products. Parents are being misled.

Baby foods are marketed as being for use from four months, when public health guidance recommends introducing solids from six months. Processing also releases free sugars in fruit-based products.

Stronger regulations were recommended on the labelling, marketing and composition of infant milks, foods and drinks marketed for 0-36 months old. Existing regulations should be meaningfully enforced and measures should be introduced to better support women to breastfeed.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

### Front of Package Labelling of UPF products

The food industry is confined by the need to make a profit. Front of package labels are a necessary but not sufficient way of restraining the industry. The obesity pandemic is a disease caused by UPF.

A range of different labelling systems exist around the world. In the UK there is the optional 'traffic light' system based on the idea of nutrient profiling of sugars, salt and fat. There is enormous variation in portion size attributed to these nutrients on package fronts and consumption is often higher than the portion size listed, increasing the figures attributed to each nutrient. Traffic light labelling is not helpful to parents or consumers.

Nutritional information is mandatory but consumers should use the numbers displayed to guide food intake for it to be meaningful and humans don't tend to eat by numbers.

High fat, salt, sugar is a designation used by the UK broadcasting regulator, Ofcom, with no particular basis in public health.

Chile has taken a very aggressive stance to its obesity pandemic. It's Food Labelling and Marketing law requires front of package warning labels for foods that are high in sugars, saturated fat or sodium. This has resulted in profound changes in attitudes to food purchases. It also resulted in reformulation of many products such that the warning label could be removed, with other possible negative consequences such as the over-consumption of non-caloric sweeteners which may be as harmful as sugars. Tighter definitions of UPFs are therefore probably needed.

Ultra-processed foods should be labelled according to the extent, level and purpose of its processing.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Ultra-processed foods. Why do policies focus on nutrients and what can be done?

The food system is ever pushing us towards more packaged and processed food. They are hard to turn down for a whole host of reasons, including their affordability, the marketing that keeps us coming back for more and the fact they are so convenient. Dietary recommendations, meanwhile, tell us to eat more whole foods, fruits and vegetables, nuts and pulses. The entire food system needs to be realigned so healthier, more sustainable foods are the affordable, widely available option.

Most policies to date have focused on the nutrients in foods rather than the foods themselves for a number of reasons. Changing food systems would require a big, coordinated effort. Food companies hold a lot of power. Reformulation, where nutrients are reduced or changed in a product is easier to gain political support for than policies which aim to fundamentally change the way we eat. Reformulation allows business as usual.

Reformulation has its limits. It depends on which nutrient is being reduced and what it's being replaced with. There is good evidence that salt reduction has worked well but ingredients such as sugar and fat are going to be much harder to remove because they often play a functional and structural role in addition to taste. Substitutes used may not be much healthier and could be more damaging to the environment as the switch to palm oil in a lot of products has shown.

Stark dietary inequalities exist in countries like the UK. Those on lower incomes are more reliant on ultra-processed foods and consume significantly fewer whole foods like fruits and vegetables. This has important negative impacts on health but also provides some important motivation for system change. Research with focus groups talking about the unaffordability of healthy food resulted in calls for the food system to work better for everybody and for government and big companies to be more fair.

Policies should be reframed away from nutrients and towards whole system change, with a tax on ultra-processed foods, labelling ultra-processed foods, ensuring investment in fruit and vegetable production and consumption and in community food systems and support for low income households.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

### Ultra-processed foods, social justice and agroecology

La Via Campesina is a network of small family farms working across the world, a huge social movement representing civil society.

Ultra-processed food is at the heart of what's wrong with the food system, from the ground up. Agroecology is a term defined by social movements to define the food system we want to see. It encompasses diverse farming systems that don't rely on pesticides, encourage good soil health, limit the destruction of biodiversity and work to mitigate climate change. It's also about the social matrix.

How power fits into the food system is hugely important. Peasant farming uses local resources to produce whole grains within a diverse farming system connected to the landscape to feed the local community varied, nutrient rich diets. It also encompasses local markets and provides skills and livelihoods across the community. Industrialised farming for commodities destroys all of this.

80% of food security is provided by the peasant farmer web, while the industrialised food chain uses 70% of the agricultural resources. It is the industrialised system which creates ultra-processed foods, which people don't actually need for their own good health and wellbeing. This system is highly wasteful.

From the 1960s onwards, there has been a continuous destruction of local, diverse, traditional food structures and markets, knowledge and skills and our relationship with food. People used to eat so many different things. Now farmers are pushed into monoculture production to create products that are shipped all over the world. WTO rules means countries can't protect their localised food systems. Corporate power has become more and more entrenched.

Hard limits should be placed on corporate power with regard to their ability to influence policies linked to the right to food. The concept of free trade should be re-examined. Trade deals need to take into account their impact on small-scale farming.

All countries should be able to have minimum support prices for products. They should have the power to influence corporate behaviour to protect the right to food.

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

A diverse range of topics was discussed in relation to ultra-processed foods as a result of the varied fields of expertise from which the presenters came, as well as the questions and comments posed by attendees that helped informed discussion.

While the focus of our Dialogue was on what the UNFSS should have done and what national governments should do to address the over-consumption of ultra-processed foods, our Dialogue presented concerns about the inappropriate marketing of UPFs and other snack products to infants and young children and how information on packages makes it difficult for consumers to understand what they are buying and how they should be eating it. It addressed reformulation, food inequalities and the destruction of small-scale, traditional agriculture at the hands of corporates focused on profit-making.

Overall, our Dialogue exposed how the ultra-processed food system impacts particularly starkly on vulnerable groups, including babies and young children, low-income households and peasant farmers. Priority should be given to addressing the risks posed to these stakeholder groups in particular and on the Earth's climate and biodiversity, which are under such enormous strain.

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# ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

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## RELEVANT LINKS

- **What can we do about the impact of ultra-processed diets on climate, nature and health?**  
<https://www.soilassociation.org/causes-campaigns/ultra-processed-planet/>
- **Ultra-processed foods: The case for re-balancing the UK diet**  
[https://www.soilassociation.org/media/21669/ultra-processed-foods\\_soil-association-report.pdf](https://www.soilassociation.org/media/21669/ultra-processed-foods_soil-association-report.pdf)
- **Ultra-Processed Planet**  
<https://www.soilassociation.org/media/23032/ultra-processed-planet-final.pdf>
- **First Steps Nutrition Trust**  
<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/>
- **What are we feeding our kids?**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000wgcd/what-are-we-feeding-our-kids>
- **Food, Farming and Countryside Commission**  
<https://ffcc.co.uk/home>
- **Landworkers' Alliance**  
<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/>