



TRIPTOLEMOS FOUNDATION

ULTRAPROCESSED FOODS

Need for a rigorous definition (1)

- [“Report on Food Classification: the concept of ultra-processed foods” \(2020\)](#)
- [“Update of the Report on Food Classification: the concept of ultra-processed” \(2024\)](#)

The definitions that describe the concept of “Ultra-processed food” today are confusing and not very rigorous, but the use of the term is widespread and rooted in the media and in society in general (social networks, influencers, nutritionists, dieticians, even doctors and other health professionals and administration). This lack of rigour and concretion increases uncertainty, misinformation and fake news, whether due to ignorance or economic or ideological interests.

This confusion has led to the assimilation of the term "ultra-processed food" with "processed food", and with a pejorative connotation of unhealthy food.

This contributes to creating confusion for the producer or processor and the consumer by not having precise information with scientific and objective criteria, which helps them choose the products that best suit their diet. Distrust and anguish are created in the population, and even more so if we take into account that eating is a biological need that must produce physical and psychological satisfaction. It is important to note that, as of today, there is no regulation or legal provision regarding ultra-processed foods.

A **paradox of ultra-processed foods** is created: on the one hand, there is no objective rigorous and agreed definition by the scientific community, and on the other, their use is widespread in society and in the scientific community itself. It should be noted that, despite the confusion of the term and the lack of rigour and precision in its definition, there are many observational studies and clinical trials that use it, and it is beginning to be common in international dietary guides, increasing consumer confusion.

Faced with this current panorama, it seems logical to highlight the **need to have a precise and rigorous definition**, based on scientific criteria and quantifiable and objective technical parameters before legislating.

It is discussed and AGREED:

Raise scientific institutions at both a national and international level (Universities, Higher Council for Scientific Research and counterparts, food and nutrition research centres, scientific societies) and competent public and private agencies and organizations, including professionals, the need to debate and specify the parameters and technologies that allow defining and describing the concept of “ultra-processed food” based on the initial composition of the product, the characteristics of the process with the operations involved and the results obtained, all according to scientific criteria, not economic, nor emotional.

Likewise, and consequently, that the results and the criteria derived be transmitted to the relevant legislative administrations, national and international, with the request to develop clear standards in accordance with technical criteria.

Finally, that these data and agreed criteria be disseminated in a clear and rigorous manner, and easy and understandable reading to the consumer and society in general.

All of this for the benefit of improving the availability and production of food for the entire population, guaranteeing quality and food safety and ensuring responsible consumption, providing consumers with adequate food and nutritional information, which generates citizen confidence in a safe and sustainable global food system.

(1) The working group, made up of 23 researchers who are authors of the “[Report on Food Classification: the concept of ultra-processed foods](#)” (2020) from the Triptolemos Foundation and with the addition of other researchers to the group, to do the “[Update of the Report on Food Classification: the concept of ultra-processed](#)” (2024) given the current validity of the topic.

Triptolemos Foundation, June 2024

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