

# Spring Conference 2025

## POLICY MOTION

# Ultra-processed Foods

## MOTION AS AGREED BY CONFERENCE

This conference notes that:

- A. As defined by the Nova food classification system, ultra-processed foods can be characterised as industrial formulations produced using chemically-modified substances extracted from foods along with additives to enhance taste, texture, appearance and durability.
- B. Data on food sales and consumption shows a shift globally towards an increasingly ultra-processed diet. Many of the foods and drinks we consume regularly have increasingly come under this category – including (but by no means exclusively) staple foods such as bread; cakes; biscuits; breakfast cereals; confectionary; flavoured-yoghurts; ready-made sauces; ready meals and other pre-packaged produce; ice cream; and soft drinks.
- C. There is growing concern about the potential harms that may be caused by excessive consumption of certain ultra-processed foods, particularly those high in fat, salt, and sugar, while recognising that not all UPFs are inherently harmful, and that convenience and affordability often drive consumer choices.
- D. According to a systematic umbrella review published in the British Medical Journal in February 2024, evidence suggests a direct association between exposure to ultra-processed foods and higher risk of all cause mortality; cardiovascular disease related mortality; common mental disorder outcomes; overweight and obesity; and type 2 diabetes.
- E. The industrial agriculture and monoculture farming practices required to produce key ingredients for many ultra-processed foods – including soy, palm oil, and sugar – are major drivers of deforestation, biodiversity loss, and increased carbon emissions, further exacerbating the climate emergency.
- F. Promoting access to minimally processed, locally produced, and sustainable food options can contribute to healthier diets, support local economies, and reduce the carbon footprint associated with long food supply chains.

This conference therefore calls on the Welsh Government to:

1. Review its current strategy for obesity, Healthy Weight; Health Wales, which relies on a review of ultra-processed foods undertaken by Public Health Wales in 2018 when less evidence was available, to determine whether this strategy should account for:
  - i. Reducing consumption of ultra-processed foods that are high in fat, salt, and sugar.

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- ii. Reducing consumption of foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.
  - iii. Promoting a shift towards more sustainable, minimally processed, and locally produced foods that can benefit both public health and the environment
2. Consider improvements to food labelling to ensure consumers have clearer, evidence-based information about the types of food they are buying, while avoiding overly simplistic messaging that frames all UPFs as unhealthy. Labelling should empower consumers to make informed choices that align with their health, values, and environmental concerns.
3. Work with other governments in the UK, including the UK Government, to consider whether greater regulation of the food industry may be warranted to reduce the growing prevalence of unhealthy ultra-processed foods in our shops and supermarkets, recognising that the food industry is largely driven by the need to increase profit and market share which leads it to promote foods which can drive over-consumption.
4. Consider what could be done to promote further research into understanding the harms to health that are being caused by ultra-processed foods and the mechanisms by which this occurs while also exploring the role of food systems in shaping dietary patterns and environmental sustainability.
5. Prioritise investment in local food systems by supporting farmers, food producers, and cooperatives to promote locally sourced, sustainable, and minimally processed foods, recognising that strengthening local supply chains can improve food security, reduce carbon emissions, and support community resilience in the face of the climate emergency.