



Quarterly Spotlight Trend

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KEY INSIGHTS



Wizard of Lightbulb Moments:

Consumers are increasingly aware of the need to cut back on processed foods for healthier eating, yet many lack clarity on what qualifies as "processed." This ambiguity leads to uncertainty and fear in decision-making. Despite this, over half recognize that processed foods can still be part of a healthy diet, indicating a nuanced understanding.

The findings stress the necessity of clearer education on processed foods to enable informed choices and promote balanced nutrition. Without such guidance, consumers may rely on vague ideas of healthfulness, impacting their ability to achieve optimal nutrition.



Are Consumers Avoiding Processed Foods?

According to new research by the International Food Information Council (IFIC), one out of every five consumers believes that reducing their consumption of processed foods is a key strategy for healthier eating.

Moreover, 70% admit to a lack of complete understanding or ability to define what constitutes a processed food. IFIC conducted this study to gauge consumer knowledge and sentiments regarding processed foods, given that healthy eating remains a top priority for many individuals.

Additionally, researchers queried participants on the indicators they use to determine whether a food is beneficial, with responses such as "no artificial ingredients" (34%), "no additives" (26%), "organic" (22%), "no added sugar" (19%), and "natural" (19%) ranking highest.

However, they also reveal persistent gaps in understanding how to achieve this balance. For instance, approximately half (53%) of respondents acknowledge that processed foods can still be part of a healthy diet.



70% lack understanding / ability to define processed food



65% believe UPFs are unhealthy and can lead to health problems



UPF consumption linked to 50% increased risk of CVD deaths



46% extremely concerned about level of processed food in plant-based meat

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Source: IFIC

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Wizard of Lightbulb Moments:

The study "Consumer perceptions unwrapped: ultra-processed foods" unveils a significant concern among consumers regarding the health implications of ultra-processed foods (UPFs). A substantial majority believe UPFs are linked to future health issues like obesity, diabetes, and general unhealthiness.

This dual concern for personal health and environmental impact raises important questions about consumer behavior and the broader implications of food choices. It underscores the need for clearer education about the health and environmental impacts of UPFs, as well as potential shifts in consumer preferences towards more sustainable and health-conscious options.

Here is a glimpse of this trend:



Consumers Believe Ultra-Processed Foods Are Damaging To Health And Environment



A study titled "Consumer perceptions unwrapped: ultra-processed foods" revealed that 65% of respondents believe UPFs are unhealthy and can lead to health problems later in life. Additionally, 67% think that UPFs contribute to obesity and diabetes.

Despite these concerns, only 56% said they actively avoid purchasing these foods, citing convenience as a significant factor in their choices. Many consumers (67%) also stated that they prefer not to consume foods with unfamiliar ingredients, and 40% lack trust in the regulation of UPFs by authorities, expressing concerns about long-term safety and health.

Ultra-processed foods typically contain five or more ingredients, often including additives not commonly used in home cooking, such as preservatives, sweeteners, and artificial colors and flavors. Examples of UPFs include crisps, mass-produced bread, breakfast cereals, biscuits, carbonated drinks, fruit-flavored yogurts, and instant soups.

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Wizard of Lightbulb Moments:

Deakin University's latest research review confirms consumer concerns about ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and health. UPF consumption consistently correlates with higher risks of cardiovascular disease-related deaths, anxiety, common mental disorders, and type 2 diabetes. There's also a heightened risk of overall mortality, heart disease-related death, obesity, sleep problems, and cancer.

UPFs are prevalent across different economic landscapes, posing significant health risks. A WHO-supported study highlights a link between UPF consumption and increased multimorbidity risk. Urgent public health interventions and consumer education are needed to address UPF consumption and curb their adverse health effects.

Here is a glimpse of this trend:



Ultra-Processed Foods Harm Multiple Body Systems, New Research Review Finds

A new research review from Deakin University highlights the harmful effects of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) on multiple body systems. UPF consumption is consistently linked to a 50% increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related deaths, as well as a 48-53% higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders, and a 12% increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

The review analyzed 12 meta-analyses with 45 distinct pool analyses from 430 de-duplicated articles. The study also reveals a 21% greater risk of death from any cause, a 40-66% higher chance of heart disease-related death, obesity, and sleep problems, along with a 22% increased likelihood of developing cancer.

The global trend of UPF consumption is concerning, with high-income nations like the US and Australia deriving 58% and 42% of dietary energy from UPFs, respectively. In contrast, Italy and South Korea have lower UPF consumption at 10% and 25%. In low and middle-income countries such as Colombia and Mexico, UPFs constitute 16% and 30% of dietary intake, respectively.



This increasing availability of UPFs across various economic levels of development poses a significant risk. A WHO-backed study from last year, observing 266,666 participants from seven countries over 11.2 years, found a link between UPF consumption and increased multimorbidity risk (heart disease, cancer, or type 2 diabetes). However, it noted that not all UPFs were associated with higher risk.

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Wizard of Lightbulb Moments:



The "Trend to Table" report by Ardent Mills unveils consumer preferences gravitating towards foods perceived as beneficial. Most are willing to pay extra for whole and less-processed ingredients, there's a clear preference for simplicity and trustworthiness.

Moreover, the report highlights the intertwining of food with identity, with consumers associating food with their sense of self. Consumers prioritize "good-for-you" foods and align their choices with dietary goals. Rather than vilifying certain foods, consumers seek to explore new flavors and ingredients, embracing those that align with their health and sustainability values.



Ardent Mills Sees Five Trends Shaping Purchasing Decisions



Ardent Mills has identified five key trends that shape consumer decisions when it comes to purchasing and consuming food, as revealed in its inaugural "Trend to Table" report. One of the trends highlighted in the report is the significance of ingredients in food choices. Ardent Mills found that 85% of consumers consider ingredients when selecting foods, and nearly 60% are willing to pay a premium for products made with whole and/or less-processed ingredients.

The second trend, termed "heritage is hero," revolves around the idea that food is intertwined with identity. According to the survey, 51% of consumers agree that food is a part of their identity, and 63% stated that their upbringing influences their dietary preferences. Additionally, 60% of respondents expressed a willingness to try new foods, flavors, and ingredients to expand their culinary horizons.

Ardent Mills's survey also revealed that 80% of consumers prioritize seeking "good-for-you" foods in line with their dietary goals. Furthermore, 52% believe that grain-based foods offer an affordable way to eat healthily, and 46% of respondents aged 18 to 24 consider plant-focused eating as a dietary objective.

Nutrition labels play a significant role, with 84% of consumers indicating that they check package information at least occasionally. Nutritional (76%) and ingredients (75%) are the top two sources of information checked. Fifty-three percent of consumers believe that their food choices can positively impact the planet, and 49% consider foods grown using sustainable or regenerative agriculture practices as important to their dietary goals.

Sources: Ardent Mills

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Wizard of Lightbulb Moments:

The spotlight on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) is impacting sales, including plant-based alternatives, as consumers perceive them as harmful. GlobalData advises brands to highlight genuine health benefits. Their survey revealed significant concern: 46% were extremely concerned about the level of processing in categories like plant-based meat, seafood, and dairy alternatives, with another 45% quite concerned. This data suggests a need for brands to address consumer apprehensions and emphasize the healthfulness of their products to regain consumer trust and boost sales. Moreover, consumers are turning away from ultra-processed foods and towards simple, whole foods, indicating a shift in preferences that may not revert, especially since the initial driver for plant-based alternatives was curiosity.

Here is a glimpse of this trend:



Ultra-Processed Image Hinders Plant-Based Alternatives

GlobalData suggests that brands offering ultra-processed foods (UPFs), such as plant-based meat alternatives, should emphasize their genuine health benefits.

According to a survey conducted by GlobalData, 46% of consumers expressed extreme concern about the level of processed food in categories like plant-based meat, plant-based seafood, and plant-based dairy alternatives. Another 45% indicated they were quite concerned.

The survey, which was published in February, involved 6,800 consumers across various countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



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Sources: Global Data

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