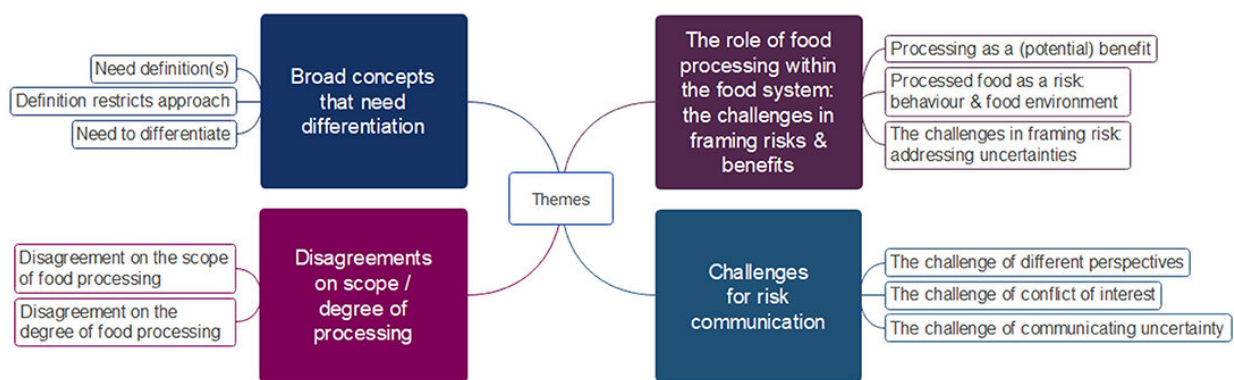


Lack of professional consensus hinders public health communications about processed foods

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Themes generated from group discussions about the conceptualisation of processed food, agreements and disagreements among professionals, and the challenges in communicating to the public. Credit: *Frontiers in Nutrition* (2022). DOI: 10.3389/fnut.2022.826162

Food, nutrition and health experts don't always agree on terms and concepts surrounding processed foods, according to new research from the University of Surrey.

The research, published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*, suggests that [food](#) scientific experts and stakeholders need to quickly reach a consensus when it comes to processed foods to benefit consumers and improve

[health outcomes](#).

The research highlighted the ambiguity and confusion surrounding terms such as "processing," ultra-processed," and even "healthy" foods.

Christina Sadler, a postgraduate researcher and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Surrey and Senior Manager at the European Food Information Council, said:

"There is agreement that [food processing](#) can be part of the solution to provide enough food for the population's nutritional needs and reduce the [environmental impact](#) on the planet, but confusion still exists among experts on what role it should play in the food system. A lack of consensus about the classification of food processing and processed food may lead to conflicting information and hinder progress towards these goals. That is why we are recommending further collaboration between all those with a professional interest in food, particularly if they want to be seen as trustworthy sources when offering advice to the wider public."

"We need to quickly identify the root issues, while viewing food processing as part of a complex food system, to understand how processing can be optimized towards the goal of equitable, safe, sustainable, and healthy diets."

The research also identified a lack of consensus about the scope of processing, the degree of processing and the aspects used to evaluate the healthiness of processed foods. Perceived [conflicts of interest](#) and different areas of expertise within this broad topic may be why clear communications about processed foods are hard to come by and why it is difficult to frame the risks and benefits of food processing.

More information: Christina R. Sadler et al, "Even We Are Confused": A Thematic Analysis of Professionals' Perceptions of

Processed Foods and Challenges for Communication, *Frontiers in Nutrition* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fnut.2022.826162](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2022.826162)

Provided by European Food Information Council

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