

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 14

CAC48/CRD44

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE OF FOOD TECHNOLOGISTS (IFT)

AGENDA ITEM 14

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) supports the development of a science-based food classification system to improve human health. Such a system would need a consensus definition that is supported by robust scientific data beyond epidemiological studies.

IFT thanks IUFoST for proposing that the topic be discussed at CAC48 in CRD26 and recommends the following for consideration by CAC48 regarding the ultra-processed classification.

- IFT agrees with IUFoST that it is imperative to address the confusion regarding the use by different parties of the term “ultra-processed” that has been derived from the NOVA framework and how this potentially is or could be applied in food standards and restrictions to food trade, both of substantial concern to CAC. Therefore, we support efforts by CAC to set up a mechanism for global discussion of scientific evidence-based healthful food classification.
- IFT believes that the classification of foods regarding healthfulness for consumers should be based on scientific consensus, evidence-based and consider food safety, nutrient content, and bioavailability, as well as the factors that impact them, including the potential role of food formulation, ingredients, and processing methods.
- IFT notes that currently, there is no established, scientific consensus definition of “ultra-processed” and varying definitions are being used in research and that the most recognized definition (NOVA) does not directly consider a foods nutritive value nor address food formulation directly.

WHO is proceeding with work on guidelines for consumption of “Ultra-Processed” foods that was announced to Codex in 2024. However, IFT is concerned that the purpose of this work, and the definitions it is using, differs in focus from, the “coordinated, evidence-based framework for food classification” that Codex requires, as noted by IUFoST in CRD26. Therefore, IFT encourages CAC48 to initiate its own work on a scientifically based, consensus driven approach to developing food classifications focused on consumer health.

- IFT believes the current definitions of “ultra-processed” are imprecise for scientific classification of foods regarding their healthfulness for global consumers and instead recommends that CAC consider setting up an ad hoc task force as a mechanism to address the topic of scientifically based healthy food classification, as its impact cuts across the scope of responsibility of multiple Codex committees (i.e., CCNFSDU, CCFL, CCFA, CCFICS). IFT recommends that such a CAC initiated ad hoc task force could include input from the WHO guidelines being developed but would not be dependent upon them and should be organized independently of that efforts’ timeline.
- IFT believes a global consensus definition for the classification of healthful foods is essential for CAC to undertake to address the confusion regarding the use of “ultra-processed” foods by following the established scientific approach used regularly within Codex.