



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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The problem with ‘ultra-processed’ foods - definitions, difficulties, and deleting them from our diet

A lecture by Professor Marion Hetherington

Wednesday 12th February 2024, 6.00pm-7.00pm

(Tea and coffee served from 5.45pm)

Lillingstone Mind and Body Zone, ek robotics Sports Campus, Royal Latin School

For many decades governments around the world have based their dietary guidelines on nutrient and energy intake goals. The guidance at a population level aims to achieve a healthy, balanced diet for all. However, with new ways to classify foods depending on their level of processing, some governments are advising consumers to avoid so-called ‘ultra-processed foods’ (UPFs). At the same time, attempts to avoid all highly processed foods are problematic if they remove affordable, available, and sustainable sources of nutrition for consumers. During a period in our history where people face food insecurity, how should we approach the issue of food processing and what is the science behind the recommendation to avoid UPFs? In this presentation, we will consider the NOVA classification of food processing, discuss the evidence of the potential harm they present, and suggest solutions to balance this against affordable, sustainable and safe foods for all.

Marion Hetherington is Professor Emerita in Biopsychology, University of Leeds, and is Affiliate Professor in Nutritional Sciences, Pennsylvania State University. Marion trained as an experimental psychologist at the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford, then spent several years in the USA as a researcher at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine then the National Institutes of Health. She has more than 30 years of experience researching human appetite across the lifespan and is a specialist in the psychology of food choice and the development of food acceptance in early life. She sits on the UK Government Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) Subcommittee on Maternal and Child Nutrition.