

COMMITTEE ON CARCINOGENICITY OF CHEMICALS IN FOOD, CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Ultra-processed food – SACN position statement (for information)

1. At the COC horizon scanning discussion in November 2025, Members noted that it would be informative to consider the ultra-processed food and the link with cancer.
2. It was noted in November that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) had considered processed food and health, and it would be useful for the COC to have sight of this in the first instance.
3. SACN first considered processed food in 2023, and published a position statement, which is attached in Annex A. In 2025, SACN undertook a rapid evidence update and this is attached at Annex B.
4. In summary:
 - SACN concluded that the observed associations between higher consumption of (ultra) processed foods and adverse health outcomes are concerning.
 - There continues to be significant limitations in the evidence base.
 - It is unclear whether these foods are inherently unhealthy due to processing or because a large majority of processed foods are high in sugar, calories, saturated fat, and/or salt.
 - SACN recommended that on balance, most people are likely to benefit from reducing their consumption of processed foods high in energy, saturated fat, salt and free sugars and low in fibre. This is based on the nutrient content of many ultra processed foods (UPFs) and concerns raised in relation to health.

This is a background paper for information.
It does not reflect the views of the Committee and should not be cited.

Questions for the Committee

5. The Committee is invited to consider the SACN publications and consider whether there are any specific aspects on which the COC would wish to provide further input.

Secretariat
March 2026

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CC/2026/03 Annex A

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SACN statement on processed foods and health (2023) – summary and full report

These papers are attached for Members; they are not reproduced here for copyright reasons, but can be obtained from: [SACN statement on processed foods and health - GOV.UK](#)

**Secretariat
March 2026**

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CC/2026/03 Annex B

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Processed foods and health: SACN's rapid evidence update (2025) – summary and
full report

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**Secretariat
March 2026**