



Abel & Cole's Ultra Processed Food Statement

With our roots in organic, we've always championed whole foods. Since 1988, we've been helping UK shoppers come together at their kitchen table over food and drink that's grown as nature intended. As we've grown our range over the years, real, top-quality food has stayed at the heart of what we do. Whether that's filling our Fruit & Veg Boxes with farm-fresh, seasonal highlights, or creating organic Recipe Kits that add more nourishing, scratch-cooked meals to weekly menus. For every part of our range, we've put thorough policies in place to help us scrutinise ingredients, and to ensure that we only work with farmers and makers who share our high standards. All so that our customers can enjoy a balanced, delicious diet that's centred on unprocessed foods.

With little agreement in the wider world on what should be classed as ultra-processed foods (UPFs), it's been difficult for us to claim an official position on such a subjective topic. A growing body of research is linking the increasing consumption of UPFs to the rise in serious health conditions in the UK. And so, we challenged ourselves with a difficult question. With no universal classification in place, what is our definition of a UPF? And how can we continue helping our customers enjoy a balanced diet that prioritises unprocessed whole foods? We created a UPF Working Group to take on this task.

Our UPF Working Group has identified a series of characteristics that could indicate whether a product is ultra-processed. Primarily, if the product contains at least one ingredient intended to make it more palatable or appealing but that's rarely used in home or restaurant kitchens. Other flags include manufacturing processes with no domestic equivalent, or high levels of added salt, sugar or fats. Products from our range that match these criteria have been identified and their ingredients and processing reviewed for necessity and potential alternatives. Overall, we stock very few products that could be considered ultra-processed, largely thanks to organic certification prohibiting controversial ingredients and processing. To maintain this position, we have implemented a Prohibited Additives Policy, further protecting our range from ingredients like aspartame or trans fats. This is in addition to existing policies that all products already comply with, such as our Policy on Genetically Modified Materials keeping our range free of products, ingredients and packaging containing GM materials. When launching new products, our Buying Team are using even greater scrutiny when reviewing ingredients and the manufacturing methods used to make them.

However, difficult questions remain to be asked. Items such as meat alternatives, or those reformulated with lower levels of fat, salt or sugar, can often be classified as UPFs. If someone has made a choice in favour of these products, either to improve their health or environmental impact, we need to ask if encouraging people away from these choices is the right thing for us to do. We support a wide variety of requirements and preferences, such as providing gluten-free options. That's why we'll continue to stock some specific food and drink that match our criteria of UPF. As with all of our products, these will all meet our thorough policies on responsible sourcing and ingredients, so our customers can keep making positive choices when exploring our entire range.

At Abel & Cole, we believe in Food Done Right. We'll continue to challenge ourselves to make decisions that are best for the health of our shoppers, and the planet. That means delivering food that's nutritious and delicious, with whole foods grown as nature intended, at the heart. Which means asking ourselves challenging questions, working with honesty and integrity and never thinking our job is done.



abelandcole.co.uk

16 Waterside Way, Plough Lane, London, SW17 0HB
Email organics@abelandcole.co.uk Tel 03452 62 62 62