Science & Technology · GS - III

“Rising concern over ultra-processed foods highlights the complex relationship between scientific evidence, commercial interests and public health policy.” Discuss the challenges involved in regulating such foods in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
Daily Practice 20/10/2026	GS - III	Science & Technology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Define ultra-processed foods; assess health evidence and its limitations; examine food-industry influence, labelling, affordability, advertising and regulatory capacity; suggest evidence-based standards, consumer awareness and equitable access to nutritious alternatives.

Model Answer

Ultra-processed foods are industrial formulations often containing refined ingredients, additives and flavouring agents. Research associates their high consumption with obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. A controlled trial also found higher calorie intake and weight gain among participants consuming an ultra-processed diet. However, observational evidence does not establish that processing alone causes every adverse outcome.

In India, regulation faces several challenges. Food labels may not clearly communicate nutritional risks, while aggressive marketing influences children and young consumers. Commercial interests can shape public debate, whereas inconsistent definitions and evolving evidence complicate policymaking. Moreover, affordable packaged foods provide convenience to time-constrained households, making blanket restrictions potentially inequitable.

India should strengthen evidence-based food labelling, monitor misleading health claims, regulate advertising targeted at children and improve nutrition education. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India should coordinate with public-health institutions to develop transparent standards and evaluate health outcomes. Affordable access to fruits, vegetables, pulses and whole grains must accompany regulation. A proportionate

approach can protect consumers without treating all processed foods as equally harmful.

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