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## NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### How well do consumers understand their dairy purchases?

*New research in the Journal of Dairy Science® examines consumer knowledge of dairy processing terms on product labels*

**Philadelphia, July 13, 2021** – Consumers may have less trust in food processes that they don't understand, and animal-based foods may be subject to more uninformed scrutiny than other foods due to consumers' perception of higher risk. Dairy producers can benefit from understanding how consumers interpret unfamiliar terms and claims on dairy product labels. In a new [study](#) appearing in the [Journal of Dairy Science®](#), scientists from North Carolina State University conducted interviews and surveyed more than 1,200 consumers regarding their knowledge of and attitudes toward dairy processing terms that may appear on product labels.

Only about a third of respondents reported that they always or often read labels before purchasing dairy products; however, product labels are the primary source of information about food purchases used by consumers. This is reflected by the fact that only 24 percent of respondents were familiar with microfiltered milk, and no respondents could recall seeing the term on dairy product labels. Despite this, 20 percent expressed a negative opinion of it.

“Our survey data align with previous work that suggests the majority of dairy product consumers find both milk and cheese healthy and natural,” said corresponding author MaryAnne Drake, PhD, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA. “However, adding processing-related terms to ‘milk’ lowered average agreement that the resulting product was natural or healthy.” Overall, agreement responses suggest that although overall dairy product consumers have a positive view of milk, processing terms introduce uncertainty that may lead to questioning this evaluation.



Caption: New study concludes that providing education about dairy processing terms on dairy food labels, like ultrafiltration and microfiltration, improves consumer understanding of those terms and increases positive perception (Credit: iStock.com/fcafotodigital).

Providing education about processing terms improves consumer understanding and perception of those terms on labels. Before reading a definition of ultrafiltration and microfiltration, 83 percent of respondents were unfamiliar with the terms. After reading the definition, 97 percent of participants indicated that their understanding had changed. The majority of participants viewed ultrafiltered and microfiltered milk more positively and were more likely to purchase these products.

“Processing-related descriptors in ingredient statements are likely to be overlooked, especially on the labels of products with which consumers already feel familiar. However, consumers may express caution when they are made aware of unfamiliar processing terms,” added Drake.

The study suggests that explaining processing-related terms using simple terms may increase positive perception among consumers. On-package education and other marketing messaging should be investigated further.

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#### **Notes for editors**

The article is “Consumer understanding of fluid milk and cheese processing and composition,” by Angelina Schiano and MaryAnne Drake (<https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2020-20057>). It appears in the *Journal of Dairy Science*, volume 104, issue 8 (August 2021), published by FASS Inc. and [Elsevier](#).

Full text of the article is available to credentialed journalists upon request. Contact Eileen Leahy at +1 732 238 3628 or [jdsmedia@elsevier.com](mailto:jdsmedia@elsevier.com) to obtain copies. Journalists wishing to interview the authors should contact the corresponding author, MaryAnne Drake, North Carolina State University, at [mdrake@ncsu.edu](mailto:mdrake@ncsu.edu).

### **About the *Journal of Dairy Science***

The *Journal of Dairy Science*® (JDS), an official journal of the American Dairy Science Association®, is co-published by Elsevier and FASS Inc. for the American Dairy Science Association. It is the leading general dairy research journal in the world. JDS readers represent education, industry, and government agencies in more than 70 countries, with interests in biochemistry, breeding, economics, engineering, environment, food science, genetics, microbiology, nutrition, pathology, physiology, processing, public health, quality assurance, and sanitation. JDS has a 2020 Journal Impact Factor of 4.034 and five-year Journal Impact Factor of 4.354 according to *Journal Citation Reports* (Source: Clarivate 2021). [www.journalofdairyscience.org](http://www.journalofdairyscience.org)

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The American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) is an international organization of educators, scientists, and industry representatives who are committed to advancing the dairy industry and keenly aware of the vital role the dairy sciences play in fulfilling the economic, nutritive, and health requirements of the world's population. It provides leadership in scientific and technical support to sustain and grow the global dairy industry through generation, dissemination, and exchange of information and services. Together, ADSA members have discovered new methods and technologies that have revolutionized the dairy industry. [www.adsa.org](http://www.adsa.org)

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