

# SoyConnection

By U.S. Soy

Brought to you by U.S. Soy & Soy Nutrition Institute Global

Volume 34, Issue No. 2 | Spring 2026

## Processed Foods, Demystified: Scientific Insights to Put into Practice

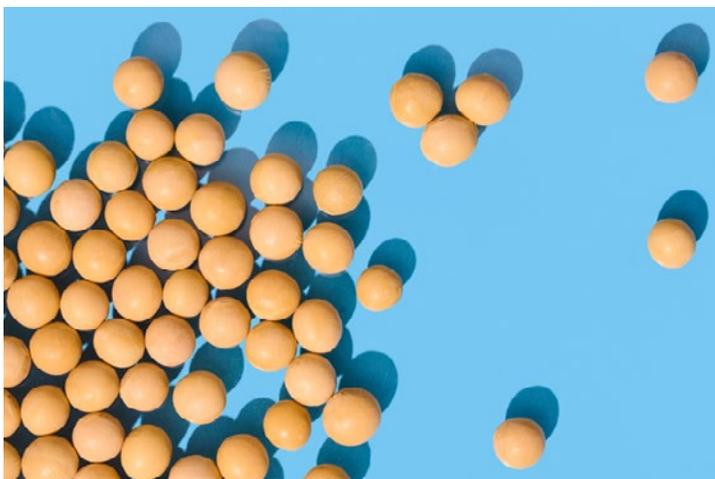


### THE SCIENCE AND PURPOSE BEHIND FOOD INGREDIENTS AND PROCESSING

By Dennis P. Cladis, PhD, and Mario G. Ferruzzi, PhD

#### Counseling Tips:

- 1. Processed foods can be safe, nutritious, and part of a healthy diet.** Food processing helps keep foods safe, affordable, and available year-round by reducing spoilage and food waste.<sup>4</sup>
- 2. All foods are processed to some degree.** Washing, cooking, freezing, fermenting, and canning are all forms of processing – many done at home every day.<sup>4</sup>
- 3. Ingredients serve a purpose.** Added ingredients can help foods stay fresh longer, maintain quality, and deliver consistent taste, texture, and nutrition.
- 4. Nutrition matters more than processing level.** Foods with similar processing can vary widely in nutrients – look at protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and overall balance.
- 5. Processed foods can fit into a healthy diet.** Many provide convenient sources of key nutrients, especially when fortified or made with whole-food ingredients.



## UNDERSTANDING SOY'S IMPACT ON THE GLOBAL FOOD SUPPLY

By Mark Messina, PhD, MS

### Counseling Tips:

- 1. Soy is used for much more than tofu and veggie burgers.** Most soybeans are used to produce protein and oil that support both human food and animal agriculture, making soy a key contributor to feeding the global population.
- 2. Soybeans are uniquely nutrient-dense.** Soy is a high-quality protein that contains all the essential amino acids the body needs.<sup>1</sup> Compared with other beans, soy is higher in both protein and healthy fats, making it an efficient source of energy and high-quality protein worldwide.<sup>2</sup>
- 3. Soybean oil is a key source of essential fats.** It's the most widely consumed oil in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> and provides essential omega-6 and omega-3 fats;<sup>10</sup> replacing saturated fat with soybean oil can help lower cholesterol.<sup>11</sup>
- 4. Soy ingredients support food quality and nutrition.** Components like soy protein and lecithin help improve texture, stability, and nutrient delivery in foods while also contributing nutrients such as choline.<sup>14</sup>
- 5. Soy's benefits aren't defined by its form.** Whether eaten as traditional foods or used as ingredients, soy contributes affordable, safe, and nutritious protein and fats – what matters most is overall diet quality, not the form alone.



## FOOD RATING APPS: HELPFUL SHORTCUT OR OVERSIMPLIFIED SCORECARD?

By Kacie Barnes, MCN, RDN

### Counseling Tips:

- 1. Food rating apps are a shortcut — not the full story.** A single color or score can't capture portion size, how often you eat a food, or how it fits into your overall diet.
- 2. "Good" or "bad" labels can be misleading.** Foods work together over time; one product doesn't make or break healthy eating.
- 3. Additives can be misunderstood.** Many help keep foods safe, fresh, and affordable, and are used in amounts shown to be safe.<sup>4</sup>
- 4. Focus on key nutrients, not just the score.** Fiber, protein, sodium, added sugars, and fats often matter more than an app's overall rating.
- 5. Use apps as conversation starters.** They can increase awareness — but they can't replace nutrition knowledge, context, or professional guidance. Your best choices come from looking at eating patterns, preferences, and personal health needs.