Are Processed Foods Safe and Healthy? - by Ms. Richa Mattu

Ms. Richa Mattu enlighted the participants regarding how processed foods can be healthy and safe. Here are some of the highlights from her presentation-

- Food preparations and processing can be defined as any change that is made to food to alter its eating quality or shelf life. Food processing includes anything that changes food's original form be it at home or industrially.
- Food is processed for increasing availability, altering antioxidant levels, for convenience, tailoring for specific needs, safety, increasing diversity, changing texture and flavour, fortification and enrichment, reducing waste, preservation, etc.
- There are various barriers when it comes to processed foods. E. g. Consumers expect processed foods to have recognizable and fewer ingredients. Also, consumers avoid purchasing products with too many additives and processed foods are considered to be less healthy
- The evidence indicating the negative impact of ultra-processed foods on health is based on data and not on the level of processing. So, according to the WHO obesity data, there was no correlation between ultra-processed food availability and obesity.
- Rather than eliminating ultra-processed foods, we should acknowledge their utility and consider that their reformulation might have a more meaningful impact on improving the nutritional quality and health at the population level.

Ms. Richa Mattu concluded her presentation by emphasizing the fact that the healthiness of a product is determined by its nutritional quality and not the level of processing. So, processed foods can be a part of a healthy and sustainable diet.