The Grocer

Focus On: sports nutrition by Rob Brown (rob.brown@thegrocer.co.uk)

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The Story

Supermarket sales of sports nutrition have passed the £100m mark in the past year. Sales are up by nearly a fifth to £110.5m, on volumes up 7.2%, as the price gym-goers pay for their sports nutrition grows. What's driving this? Which retailers, brands and formats are winning? Who's losing? And is sports nutrition still only for gym goers or is its appeal widening?

Key themes:

Bulk items: A central theme of this feature will be the performance of the larger items in the market, such as bulk packs of whey protein and supplements that can sometimes sell for as much as £50 a pack. Our analysis shows that sales of larger packs have surged by more than 40% in the past year and average price of pack has fallen significantly. Why?

Retail channels: This feature will explore how different retailers' share of the market has changed and why. Of particular interest will be how ranges have changed in the major retailers and whether they are devoting more shelf space to the sector. Of course our sales figures only reflect part of the market (grocery); how have sales through online and high street specialists fared in the past year?

Convenience items: Of course we cannot ignore the huge amount of new product development we've seen over the past year as sports nutrition brands have sought to enter the mainstream with sports snacks and drinks. Who's winning in this market? Where have brands won listings for their products? And what's next?

Wholefoods: In the past year we've seen a number of wholefood brands – particularly nut butter and soft drinks players – attempting to cashing on the health and fitness trend through marketing, sponsorship and product and format innovation. Who's doing what? And is it paying off?

Merchandising: With the development of more mainstream products, sports nutrition products are leaving the niche sports nutrition fixture in store and entering chillers and convenience stores. Some are even being stocked alongside mainstream soft drinks in the food to go section. Which brands are benefitting from this and in which retailers? Is this an ongoing trend? What's next?

Price/promotions: This feature will investigate how big a part price and promotions have played in the market over the past year. It will explore how spend on this area has impacted brands' spend on other areas such as advertising and NPD and how promotional mechanics employed evolved and are likely to continue to evolve.

The next big thing? As well as looking at the NPD that has made the biggest splash on the market over the past year, this feature will investigate in detail the new trends that are likely to shape new products over the coming 12 months. We will profile four of the most interesting new products in a separate box out. What will be the next big functional ingredient?

Innovations: eight new products or product ranges (We profile four impulse and four bulk items/supplements that have not appeared in The Grocer before, including including launch date, RSP and image of each.

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers’ strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What’s next for the category?