

The Grocer

Focus On: Sports Nutrition & Energy by Rob Brown (rob.brown@thegrocer.co.uk)

Publishing: 24 September

Advertising deadline: 2 September

Submissions deadline: 26 August

The Story

Another strong year for sales of sports nutrition products in the supermarkets: overall market value bulked up by 10.5%; volumes grew by an even stronger 14.5%. What's driving this growth? Which brands and retailers are cashing in? And with a growing number of whole foods players – most notably nut butter brands – aligning their marketing with sports and fitness trends, how is the market evolving?

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 returned to growth in the past year, after losing out to smaller, more convenient and cheaper packs in the previous year. What's going on?

Convenience items: We've seen a huge amount of new product development over the past year as sports nutrition brands have sought to enter the mainstream with RTD protein drinks and sports snacks. 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 players – attempt to cash in 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?

Retail channels: We will also explore how different retailers' share of the market has changed. Are the multiple grocers stocking as many bulk sports nutrition SKUs as they were prior to the imposition of VAT or have they delisted as shoppers have gone online to get a better deal? We will explore the different approaches of conventional grocers and online specialists in a separate box out.

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 have 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?

The paleo movement: This feature will include a separate box out on the growing number of brands that are producing products with claims that they fit a paleo diet. Are such products destined to remain in a niche or do they really have mainstream potential? Who's most active in this area and what is their strategy?

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?