

The Grocer

Focus On: Cheese by Kevin White (kevin.white@wrbm.com)

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The Story

Lockdown's closure of the foodservice and hospitality sectors meant nervous times for cheesemakers – but happier ones are in the offing. Pubs and restaurants are likely to reopen soon, an industry-backed consumer campaign is promoting dairy consumption, and new products are jostling for shelf space. Is this the beginning of a renaissance for cheese? How are suppliers and retailers working to ensure good fortunes for the category post-Covid-19? And who are the leadings players?

Key Themes

Demand: some cheese brands have been reporting soaring sales as locked down Brits fill their fridges with cheese for sandwiches and cooking – leading to shortages of some brands in the supermarkets. Which styles of cheese have benefited most, and what have suppliers done to capitalise on demand? And which ones have struggled to create interest?

Small suppliers: artisan cheesemakers were especially hard hit by lockdown. How did they weather the Covid-19 crisis? They were supported by the likes of Waitrose with its special British cheese selection box – and by what other moves by grocery retailers? Some small suppliers ramped up their marketing activity, even appearing on TV for the first time. Who did what? And how successful were their efforts?

Stilton: sales of stilton fell by as much as 30% as a result of the coronavirus-driven collapse of the foodservice, hospitality and export markets, producers of the cheese warned in May. How did stilton makers respond to the crisis?

DTC: with online grocery shopping soaring during the pandemic, many cheesemakers launched or expanded their direct-to-consumer channels. How successful were their efforts? What brands and products enjoyed greatest demand?

The future: what's next for the cheese category? How do suppliers and retailers expect the next 12 months to bring, with Brexit kicking in and a recession on the cards? How is the sector preparing?

Shopper Intelligence: How do Brits shop the cheese segment?

Kantar data: using Kantar commentary, we explain the reasons behind the rise and fall of the main cheese categories.

Nielsen: using Nielsen commentary, we explain the reasons behind rise and fall of the leading cheese brands.

Innovations: We identify four new products that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before including launch date and RSP, and a picture of each.