

The Grocer

Focus On: Protein and functional foods

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Feature 1: Protein and functional food by Rob Brown
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Lockdown is over, and the gyms have re-opened. After a year largely spent at home, with exercise rarely more exciting than a walk in the park, people can again pump iron or hit the sports pitch. So can nutrition-packed food capitalise on this trend? Will protein powders and other sports nutrition return to mainstream dominance? And will people's heightened health concerns translate into more sales?

Broader audience: Protein powders and sports nutrition have traditionally been targeted towards sporty types who spend their evenings at the gym. With the launch of limited edition summer whey powder with a Love Island themed contest, is the category seeking to broaden its audience? And how will non-bodybuilders respond?

On the go: Protein-packed bars suffered during lockdown amid the decline of on-the-go snacking and the extra time that people had to cook at home – to say nothing of the closure of gyms. Now the UK has opened up again, can the category reverse these trends? Will we be tempted to pick up a meal bar as we rush off to work? And what about nutritionally-complete instant meals?

Functional pivot: Outside of powders and other regular functional foods, many mainstream brands are now extolling the functional benefits of their products, flagging a “protein kick” on packaging or repositioning as a health and wellness brand. Will these new types of functional foods draw away custom from traditional ones? Or are we about to see more blurring of categories?

Land grab: Functional food brands are also moving beyond the traditional categories of powders and meal bars by moving into ice creams and instant meal pots in a departure from shakes and bars. What category is next?

Vegan: In June Huel launched what it claimed to be the world's first nutritionally complete vegan protein powder, containing all 26 essential vitamins and minerals. As many other categories see free-from launches, could other nutrition companies make similar moves? And will it entice new buyers to the category or convert existing fans?

4 x innovations: we will profile four new products or ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each.

Feature 2: CBD by Megan Tatum

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Having operated in something of a grey market for several years, CBD suppliers were required to submit novel food applications to the Food Standards Agency earlier this year or have their products pulled from the shelves. That deadline has passed, but the slew of new products suggests the food and drink industry's enthusiasm is undimmed. So what can we expect from this market as it becomes more legitimate? What is the consumer appetite for the oils, alcoholic drinks, soft drinks, or whatever else? And are cannabis ingredients about to become a staple in our diets?

Legal environment: Now that the novel foods registration deadline has passed, what changes can we expect around the CBD market? Has it made innovators more nervous about investing and developing the category? And what effect has it had on consumer and retailer confidence?

Categories and formats: CBD oil has been used for its medicinal and psychological benefits. Now food and drink manufacturers are experimenting with CBD in all kinds of contexts. Coffee and chocolate are staples for the substance, but it can also be found in beer, cocktails, and canned soft drinks. What categories is CBD likely to prove most popular in?

Consumer perception: Many Brits will have had experience with cannabis, whether or not they chose to inhale. With CBD stores popping up around the country and the prospect of CBD-infused products in mainstream supermarkets, what do we think about it all? Will people be eager to try it? And how can brands overcome any scepticism?

Top 4 companies: We will profile the four biggest companies working in the CBD market in the UK, including when they started operating in the market and how much business they are doing.