

# The Grocer

**Focus On: Pasta and Pasta Sauces by Daniel Woolfson**

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**Empty pasta shelves were among the most notable features of the early pandemic, caused by panic buying and the lockdown in Italy. Now the category is threatened by durum wheat shortages, with rising transport costs another concern. At the same time Brits are venturing out more, with home cooking likely to be less popular than last year. So is the pasta category due a slump after a bumper 18 months? Will we see shoppers turn to more convenient formats, including ready meals and stir in sauces? And how are brands and retailers innovating, given previous warnings of range rationalisation?**

**Wheat shortages:** With durum wheat shortages forecast across the globe, supermarkets face the potential for pasta shortages, with consumers looking at higher prices. And that's combined with rising transport costs. Given the changing climate, can we expect to see more poor wheat yields constricting supply? Will consumers switch to cheaper staples as a result? And what might this mean for products usually paired with pasta?

**Convenient sauces:** Lockdown saw many investing more time in home cooking. So as people go back to the office or spend more time out in the evenings, will convenient stir-in sauces prove more alluring? What about ready-made pasta dishes in the chilled aisle? And what effect might this have on scratch cooking ingredients for pasta dishes, such as canned tomatoes and passata?

**Range rationalisation:** Last year saw more niche pasta cut from retailers' shelves as stores focused on bestsellers. Brands warned that this would hamper innovation, especially at a time where consumers were experimenting with home cooking. So what's happened since? Are we seeing a similar approach from retailers? And did the predicted lull in innovation occur?

**Packaging:** Napolina has recently cut plastic waste by rolling out 100% cardboard packs across its most popular pasta lines, without affecting the shelf life, RSPs, or promotional activity. Retailers like Asda and Aldi have gone even further by eliminating packaging through pasta dispensers in trial stores. So are consumers embracing these formats, having called on the industry to reduce its environmental impact? And can we expect further rollouts of refill stations in retailers?

**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.