

The Grocer

THE DAIRYMEN 2024

Cover Feature

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Deadline: 2 August 2024

After years of turmoil, the outlook in the dairy industry has changed over the past 12 months to one of confidence. This has been demonstrated by a series of large, strategic investments and acquisitions. So, what's sparked this confidence – and how is it reshaping the industry? Which businesses have been pivotal in reshaping the sector? And how? Which sectors are changing most? How different is dairy looking now? What did it look like before? Crucially, how resilient is it now? What is there to celebrate about the industry? And what can it look forward to in the next 12 months?

On the flip side, the difficulties of the past continue to emerge at times. What's creating these issues – and what can a more confident industry do to minimise further problems?

Box: New rules and the creation of an Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator are set to shake up producer-processor relationships. After more than a decade of campaigning and countless pricing disputes, new legislation paving the way for radical reform in how dairy farmers are paid for their milk was finally laid before parliament in March. How would the new set-up work?

Box: Defra announced the expansion of an "improved" Sustainable Farming Incentive in May, which now contains 102 sustainability-led actions farmers can be paid for. How has the dairy industry reacted to it?

Focus On: British Cheese

By Patrick McGuigan pat_mcguigan@yahoo.co.uk

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

There's a new and improved generation of plant-based cheeses in stores. What's driving these listings, launches and revamps? Which other dairy-free options are making meaningful moves?

Plant-based: How are cheese alternatives performing in grocery? How is the vegan segment evolving and advancing in terms of formulations, products, consumer base and so forth? Which are the standout brands and ranges? What have they been up to in the past 12 months – and why? How are traditional dairy suppliers responding to the latest tranche of vegan options in supermarkets?

Traditional cheese: While plant-based alternatives spark excitement, how have regular British cheeses performed amid the cost-of-living crisis of the past year? Which varieties were a hit with shoppers – and why? Which ones flopped – and, again, why?

Own label: Volume sales in own label British cheeses have fallen, while brands are up. What are the reasons behind private label's decline? It seems surprising given OL's lower average prices – but is it really? How come mature cheddar has declined in volumes? And what's pushed up sales of branded British cheeses? How large a part did pricing play in the performances?

Specialty producers: The likes of Cheesegeek and The Chuckling Cheese Co are attracting the interest of investors and retailers. How so? Who are the other trendy specialists disrupting the category?

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

Focus On: Continental Cheese

By Pola Lem pola.lem@thegrocer.co.uk

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

Whipped feta is a TikTok online and in cafés and restaurants? And it's now hitting grocery. What is it – and what's its appeal? To what degree is it driving sales of regular feta – and, indeed, of Greek-style salad cheese? What other trends are driving interest in continental cheeses?

Spending on continental cheese has been at an all-time high in the past year – and price increases have played a part. What drove them? Which varieties prices grew fastest? But volume gains have also helped the category's performance. Across which types of cheese? What's behind this positive change? How can suppliers and retailers maintain growth?

Focus On: Butter, Margarine & Spreads

By Harry Holmes holmesharry99@gmail.com

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

Margarine – a typically dairy-free spread – fell out of fashion some years ago, as shoppers switched to spreadable and block butters. But now marge is back with a bang, in the guise of dairy-free spreads. So, how different is it now from its previous heyday? How did it become one of the biggest successes of the plant-based revolution.

Margarine: What's the recent history of marge? Where was it – and where is it now? How has it evolved? Who are the star players in dairy-free spreads? What's the secret to their successes? What obstacles have they overcome? How have they positioned and marketed themselves? What do the most recent sales numbers look like? And what have been the key product launches? What, if any, impact is the UPF debate having on marge?

Packaging: The evolution of margarines/spreads hasn't focused exclusively on the product itself. The packaging has evolved, too. How so? Who's been doing what?

Pricing: Some key sectors in BSM have lost value as the result of falling prices. What's led to these lower prices? Can they be maintained?

Innovation: What have been the notable launches of the past year across BSM outside of marge?

Marketing and ads: What have been the standout pushes from BSM suppliers in the past 12 months?

Tech: A new type “butter” that doesn’t require animals or large areas of land to produce could soon be on sale in the US. Startup Savor has created the product made from carbon. What’s the story here? And is there any other cutting-edge work being carried out in the BSM arena?

Focus On: Dairy Drinks

By Vince Bamford vjbamford@googlemail.com

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

The dairy drinks category is seeing an influx of NPD sporting protein claims. What are the reasons for this trend? And how is it shaping the category?

Protein: Why all the protein-centric innovation of late? Who’s been doing what – and why? To what degree is the protein trend driving category sales? How blurry are the lines getting between dairy drinks and sports nutrition? What other functional benefits are dairy drinks leaning into? And why?

Plant-based: What room is there in dairy drinks for plant-based options? Who’s doing what in this space?

UPF: What – if any – impact is the debate about ultra-processed food having on dairy drinks? How are suppliers responding to criticism – actual or potential?

Performance: Dairy drinks’ volume sales are in healthy growth, in spite of higher average prices. What’s driving this performance? Which flavours, brands and formats are most benefiting? And which are losing out? How’s own label doing compared to brands? Who are the hottest challenger brands?

Sustainability: The growth in volume sales means more cartons and plastic bottles potentially entering the waste stream. How are suppliers and retailers tackling the issue?

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

Focus On: Milk

By Rob Brown rob_j_a_brown@hotmail.com

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

Barista milk launches just keep on coming – in traditional dairy as well as plant-based. But what is it? How does it differ from regular milk? And why is it so popular?

Barista launches: Who’s been launching barista milk lines of late? And why? Who else offers such products? What exactly is barista milk – and how is it different from regular milk? What other hot beverages are being serviced by milk suppliers? And are there any other speciality milks on the market – either in dairy or dairy alternatives?

Performance: Branded milk has outperformed cheaper own label. How come? Which types of milk have performed best – and worst?

Pricing: What's the state of milk prices this year? How have they been affected – and by what?

Marketing: Alpro's teamed up with Peter Crouch for a campaign. What will it involve – and what other eye-catching pushes have been evident in the milk/milk alternatives category over the past year?

Focus On: Ice Cream

By Daniel Selwood daniel.selwood@thegrocer.co.uk

Submissions deadline: 12 August 2024

Own label: How have sales performed in the past year? What have been the most notable success, launches and, indeed, failures? Which retailers are making the most of their ice cream offers? And how? What trends have they tapped?

How are they working with brands to perfect their ice cream offers?

Brands: Which ones are bringing a point of difference to the freezer aisle? How are brands innovating to bring excitement to fans of ice cream – and challenge own label?

UPF: As with other dairy sectors, ice cream is part of the debate about ultra-processed food. How are suppliers responding? How much of an opportunity is the issue for healthier ice cream-style snacks and desserts?

Science & tech: From Unilever's 'warmer' ice cream recipes to University of Wisconsin-Madison's recent finding to stop scoops melting – what are the most significant breakthroughs in the category?

Focus On: Yoghurts & Potted Desserts

By Rob Brown rob_j_a_brown@hotmail.com

Submissions deadline: 5 August 2024

Functional claims in yoghurts are moving beyond protein and gut health. What other benefits are products offering – and who's leading this step up?

Functional: What are the functional needs being met by yoghurt brands nowadays – and why are they moving beyond the longstanding high protein and gut health claims? Which brands and retailers are the forefront of this trend? And who is it aimed at? Will there still be room for protein and gut health in the future?

Plant-based: What room is there in yoghurts for plant-based options? Who's doing what in this space? And how is the sector performing?

UPF: What impact is the debate about ultra-processed food having on flavoured yoghurts? How are suppliers and retailers responding? How much of an impact could the UPF issue have on the buoyant fruited big pot segment? How could natural yoghurt suppliers capitalise?

Potted desserts: Give an overview of potted desserts' year. How are they performing? What trends have been seen? What notable NPD has hit chillers? What marketing moves have been made?