The Grocer

Focus On: canned goods by Emma Sturgess (emma-sturgess@hotmail.co.uk)

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The Story

Sales of canned goods continue to go, well, down the can, down on volumes & value. Nevertheless there are still some noteworthy pockets of growth, including ambient soup, prepared beans & peas and canned fish (the latter has seen volumes grow but value dip). What's driving their growth and the category's overall decline? What can be learnt from the strongest performers? And how are other ambient, non-canned categories performing?

Key Themes

Canned fish: Branded offerings are in strong growth thanks to a raft of NPD but own label losses are dragging the sub-sector down. Why? And what are brands doing to maintain growth?

Baked beans: Beans suffered the biggest losses of any sub-category, with brands taking the biggest hit. So, why are Brits falling out of love with beans? And, what are the biggest players doing to turn this around?

Other categories: Canned tomatoes are doing well, as are prepared peas & beans. Meanwhile, cold canned meats and pasta are suffering. This feature look at the performance of other canned and ambient categories and what is affecting their performance.

Discounters: Bargain Stores, Aldi and Lidl are showing strong growth in canned and ambient as is Waitrose. What are the mults doing to fight back? And what's driving the discounters' growth?

Convenience: Canned goods are in decline as shoppers switch to chilled convenience products. What are the category's biggest players doing to tap into the convenience market?

Innovation: This will be key to the feature. We will be investigating how new product development has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2015. We will be profiling eight of the most interesting canned and ambient launches in a separate innovation panel.

Advertising and marketing: This feature will also investigate how the marketing and advertising strategies of the category's biggest brands have evolved over the past year and how they will develop in the coming year to sustain growth or return brands to growth.

Prices and promotions: Prices have fallen by 0.5%. To what extent is this due to an increase in promotions? What mechanisms are most popular? How important are deals to consumers?

Soup: Despite a mild winter, value and volume sales of soup are up. Own label is behind this growth, so how have the retailers and their suppliers achieved this? And, what are the branded players doing to boost sales?

Innovations: Eight new products or product ranges that have not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP, and a hi-res picture of each. Please note: these do not all need to be canned, so long as they are ambient and demonstrate how alternatives to cans are being used.

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?