Focus On: Plant-based Food & Drink
By Jimmy Nicholls jdenicholls@gmail.com

Publishing: 11 November 2023
Advertising deadline: 26 October 2023
Submissions deadline: 19 October 2023

Plant-based meat alternatives might have had a pruning in recent months as the supers tried to maximise profits, but the dairy alternatives fixture is looking somewhat overgrown. "We're seeing more and more brands enter the market, which is highly competitive and starting to see growth plateau," says Kantar. How many new products have hit shelves in the past year? Are they likely to get cut back in future range reviews? What does it take to create a point of difference and maintain shelf space as growth stalls? And what can be learned from the fake meat sector?

Inflation: This feature will explore to what extent plant-based food & drink has been hit by cost inflation and how much of this has been passed on to consumers through price hikes. What can manufacturers and retailers do to mitigate inflation? Which areas – i.e., raw materials, packaging, labour, logistics – are under most pressure?

Own label v brands: Analysis from Kantar shows strong growth in sales of own-label dairy alternatives. This feature will explore how retailers' own-label ranges have changed over the past year and the ranges that have seen most growth and loss. To what extent is the growth in own-label being driven by shoppers switching to the discounters?

Raw materials: Another area of interest will be the factors that are driving sharp declines in dairy-alternatives made with rice, coconut and nuts, while sales of oat-based products continue to rise. To what extent is this being driven by cost inflation? What else is driving this? And are any new ingredients (pea, fava beans, etc) coming to the fore?

Rationalisation: We will also be exploring how retailers are likely to rationalise ranges in coming months to drive profitability. Which brands and products are performing best? Which are in trouble? And what does it take to stand out from the crowd in terms of marketing and product differentiation?

Research: Consumer research into plant-based to gauge how likely people are to switch from plant-based back to dairy products in response to economic pressure, as well as the ingredients, sustainability claims, price points, etc, that resonate most with people.

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