

The Grocer

Focus On Chocolate Confectionery

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Feature 1: How are chocolate brands responding to cost hikes?

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The cost of cocoa has hit record highs in the past 18 months thanks to short crops caused by climate change in west Africa. This, in turn, has led to big spikes in chocolate prices in UK retail. How are chocolate manufacturers and retailers responding to the sky-high cost hikes? To what extent have prices risen? Are we likely to see further price rises? What other tactics – such as recipe changes, shrinking packs and range changes – are being employed? And what impact is all this having on consumer demand?

Cocoa sourcing: This feature will explore how the global market has responded to shortfalls in cocoa crops in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. To what extent have other countries planted more cocoa to make up for the shortfall? What caused the short crops and how likely are future shortages?

Other ingredients: We will also be looking at how the cost of other key chocolate ingredients – including milk, sugar and, in the case of viral sensation Dubai chocolate, pistachios – has changed in recent years and the factors at play here. How agile are manufacturers' supply chains in coping with price fluctuations?

Reformulation and shrinkflation: Some brands have been busy changing recipes and shrinking packs over the past year as they try to mitigate the impact of cost hikes on their bottom lines. How widespread are these practices? Who's shrinking packs? Who's changing recipes? And what impact is this having on consumer demand?

Innovation: Innovation can be the best response to cost inflation because ultimately people will be prepared to pay more for the right products. This feature will explore the latest trends in chocolate and how this is playing out in terms of product innovation. 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.

Feature 2: X-rated chocolate ads

By Niamh Leonard-Bedwell (N.Leonard-Bedwell@thegrocer.co.uk)

Successive governments' plans to give ads for junk food an X-rating by banning them on TV before a 9pm watershed (and banning them outright online) have had more twists and turns than your average movie plot. The latest came in May, when the government said it was delaying the ban (again), which was due to come into force in October, until January 2026 following legal challenges from manufacturers. Then, in July, the advertising industry launched a voluntary code for less healthy food advertising. What does this mean for the future of chocolate advertising? Will the ad ban ever come into force? What kind of ads will be banned? How much impact is this likely to have on sales? And who's signed up for the voluntary code?

Innovation: 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.