

The Grocer

Focus On: Rice & Noodles by Natalie Brown (Natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

Publishing: 15 Aug
Advertising deadline: 24 July
Submissions deadline: 17 July

The Story

- **Ethnic food purists will be up in arms: for quick and convenient pouched rice has become the bestselling sector in the rice & noodles market after a year of astonishing growth. Why? Which brands, new products, retailers and trends are behind this growth? How is the rest of the market holding up? And what does the coming year have in store?**

Key themes (this list is not exhaustive; new angles will be investigated as they arise):

Innovation: Key to this feature will be a discussion of the latest NPD from the category's brands and own label players, large and small. The feature will explore the market trends that have inspired recent innovations and weigh up which new launches are most likely to encourage future growth in the market.

Pouch rice: This sector has become the market's biggest in the past year with growth and volumes up. This feature will canvas the opinions of the sector's biggest and most interesting players on how factors such as new products, changing consumer trends, price promotions, merchandising and so on are driving this growth.

Prices, promotions and pack sizes: Our research shows that average price per kilo across rice & noodles have fallen in the past year. This feature will explore the reasons for this, from price and promotions to base prices and pack size changes. Plus: how has the market been affected by the ongoing price war?

Noodles: Noodles are in growth as well, even if not at such a blistering rate as rice. Why? This feature will canvas the opinions of the sector's biggest and most interesting players on how factors such as new products, changing consumer trends, price promotions, merchandising and so on are driving this growth.

The retail mix: This feature will pay close attention to how different retailers are performing in this category and how their strategies differ. The article will include a separate buyers supermarket Q&A on what's going on and how the coming year is likely to pan out.

Ramadam and ethnic consumers: Some retailers say this year's Ramadam is likely to be the third biggest seasonal event of the year after Easter and Christmas for the first time. What are retailers doing to realise the opportunities of this event? Plus: how are brands looking to target ethnic consumers at Ramadam and throughout the year?

Discounters: Sales of rice & noodles through the discounters are flying. This feature will explore exactly how they are competing with the mainstream multiples in terms of price, product range and own label offerings. How important are the discounters becoming for the big name brands of this market?

Ready to eat lunch formats: This feature will include a separate box out on ready to eat rice and noodle formats for the lunchtime market. How much of a growth opportunity is this area and who's getting in on the action?

Authenticity: There are growing concerns around the quality and authenticity of Basmati and Risotto rice coming into this country. This feature will include a box out looking at these concerns and the measures being taken to allay them.

Health concerns: According to Diabetes UK, South Asians are six times more likely to contract type-two diabetes than Europeans. Some players have suggested that there is growing concern among the Asian community over the perceived high GI of Basmati rice. How much of a challenge is this? What are players doing to allay the concerns?

Kids rice products: Could rice products aimed at kids be a big sales opportunity? One major player in the market has already made moves in this area; how are they performing? Is anyone else eyeing the market?

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.

Box-outs

4 x rice innovations: We profile four new rice products or product ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP.

4 x noodle innovations: We profile four new products or product ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP.

Authenticity concerns: There have been concerns raised about the quality and authenticity of Basmati and Risotto rice coming in to the UK. Are these concerns valid? What's being done to allay the fears?

Ready to eat lunch formats: This feature will include a separate box out on ready to eat rice and noodle formats for the lunchtime market. How much of a growth opportunity is this area and who's getting in on the action?

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?
- We profile four new products or product ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP.