

The Grocer

Focus On: Soft Drinks by Natalie Brown (natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

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The Story

- **In March the chancellor dropped a bombshell on the UK soft drinks industry: the imposition of a levy on sugary drinks. What impact is this going to have on an already struggling sector? Who's going to be clobbered? Who's exempt? And just how much sugary pop do Brits drink compared to other countries in Europe anyway?**

Key themes:

Sugar - the European picture: Central to this feature will be a discussion of the steps the UK soft drinks industry has taken to lower sugar content and how they compare with efforts in overseas markets. Which trends in other markets could take off here? How successful have low/no sugar NPD and reformulations in the UK and abroad been?

Health, redefined: We'll be exploring how definitions of 'healthy' products are changing. Two consumer camps are developing: those who think all sugar is evil and prefer drinks with artificial sweeteners; and those who'd prefer more natural drinks that contain some sugar. How are brands catering for these two groups? How are changing definitions of health fuelling the development of new types of soft drinks, such as protein shakes?

Innovation: This will be key to this 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 2016. We will be profiling several of the most interesting launches in separate innovation panels for Carbonates, Squashes & Cordials, Sports & Energy Drinks, Juices & Smoothies.

Formats: The industry's major players have unveiled a host of new formats, designed to hit specific price points and suit particular retail channels. This feature will explore how successful these new formats have been in driving growth for brands and what's in store for the coming year in terms of new formats.

Flavours: This feature will explore in detail how the flavour of British soft drinks is evolving through new product development. What will be the hot new flavour trends of 2016 and how are brands looking to cash in?

Carbonates: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Bottled water: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Sports & energy drinks: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Juices & smoothies: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Squashes & cordials: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Dairy drinks: This feature will explore the factors that have led to this market's performance over the past year and weigh up what brands and own label manufacturers are doing to kickstart or maintain growth.

Packaging: This feature will explore in detail the latest innovations in soft drinks packaging from around the world, weighing up what's next for how soft drinks are packaged here in the UK and the benefits of such innovations for suppliers and consumers.

Promotions: This feature will explore how the promotional strategies of retailers and brands have changed over the past year. Attention will be paid to the promotional strategies of retailers and how this has affected average prices over the past year.

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.

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?