

Food NPD - France - November 2009

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What is this report about?

Pressures of modern living are forcing more and more French to reluctantly forgo the tradition of cooking from scratch. As a result, the sales of prepared food products are slowly picking up after years of near stagnation. Those that still allow consumers some involvement in preparation have a head start in the market although ready meals successfully play on convenience and speed.

But there are more challenges facing NPD. The product must not only taste good, but also be healthy, environmentally-friendly, preferably be locally-sourced but also exotic, equitable, sustainable and inexpensive.

What have we found out?

- Following years of stagnation due to low consumer interest, prepared foods sales achieved moderate growth in 2008 as a result of sustained innovation in new product development by the leading manufacturers.
- Although sales growth dipped in 2009 as a result of the recession, the market continued to be supported by intensive NPD and new product launching which focused on winning combinations of quality, healthiness, convenience and environmental best practice.
- The climate of insecurity caused by the recession led to restricted consumer spending in most areas, although surveys show that spending on food was the least affected. French consumers are fairly interested in trying new products and pressure on purchasing power in the past five years has not discouraged this trend. However, this has promoted a culture of discounting and created the expectation of added value at a low price.
- The French have not abandoned their passion for home cooking but time pressures increasingly force them to use prepared ingredients. The growing number of women in employment increases the demand for prepared food products. At the same time, the ageing of the French population increases consumer conservatism but also a preoccupation with wellness which favours NPD positioned to benefit health.

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