

Prepared Meals - UK - May 2013

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"For the frozen ready meals segment there has been a marked effect for brands implicated in the horse meat scandal, as one in ten buyers plan to avoid frozen ready meals as a result. The scandal is likely to ingrain current scepticism of prepared meals' content and further alienate lucrative user groups such as over-55s and ABs."

– Amy Price, Senior Food & Drink Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- What is the impact of the horse meat adulteration scandal?
- How can the industry overcome the health barrier facing prepared meals?
- How can the market provide a convenient solution to home cooking?
- What NPD opportunities are there for ethnic meals?

Prepared meals continue to enjoy high levels of popularity, with three in four consumers having bought into the category. Sales are estimated to reach £3.8 billion in 2012, with the market forecast to grow by 28.4% to a total of £4.9 billion in 2017.

The category benefits from its positioning as a convenient and relatively affordable meal solution, particularly appealing to consumers when they are pressed for time. Usage is skewed towards 25-34s, who are more likely to rate convenience highly.

The horse meat scandal has had a negative effect on some of the brands implicated in the scare, although a sizeable minority of consumers say that it will have no effect on their behaviour. The scandal is, however, likely to fuel current scepticism of prepared meals' quality and further distance lucrative (and growing) user groups such as the over-55s and ABs.

Continuing investment in NPD and above-the-line support from own-label and branded players such as [M&S](#), [Heinz](#) and Old El Paso will play a key role in keeping the category front of mind with the consumer going forward, while an emphasis on transparency will help to mitigate concerns over sourcing.

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