

Pasta, Rice and Noodles - UK - March 2011

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What is this report about?

This report assesses the performance of the UK noodles, rice and pasta market. Value sales have grown by 9% and 2.9% in 2009 and 2010 respectively, with market value reaching £1.47 billion in 2010. Global shortages of wheat – the result of extreme weather conditions in key supply countries and rising demand from emerging economies – have led to rising commodity prices, and while this has, as yet, only affected the retail prices of wheat-based products (including pasta and noodles), there are fears that the cost of rice may also escalate. To date, however, stockpiles of rice have helped to buoy the market, and in addition, value growth of both pasta and rice has been constrained by a high level of discounting and promotional activity.

What have we found out?

- Pasta brands need to focus on premiumisation in order to raise awareness as currently only 30% of pasta consumers prefer to buy well-known brands and just 28% are prepared to pay more for premium products.
- Consumers remain largely unconvinced as to the merits of fresh pasta, with only just over a third of consumers (34%) believing that fresh pasta tastes better than dry pasta, which poses a challenge for the premium segment within the pasta market.
- Over a third of consumers who have increased their consumption of pasta over the past year believe that there are not enough healthy options available, and two out of five of those who already eat wholewheat pasta share that opinion.
- Under pressure from own-label, rice brands should look to added value formats such as microwavable rice for growth opportunities, where almost half of buyers prefer to buy well-known brands.
- Almost three in five consumers are interested in trying out new rice dishes and two in five “like trying out different rice varieties”, highlighting an opportunity for retailers and brands alike to develop a broader specialist and premium rice offer.
- Noodle brands need to focus more on their health credentials as while both consumers of pasta and rice largely view the products as healthy and nutritious (74% and 73% respectively), fewer noodle consumers – 58% – consider noodles to be a “healthy meal option”, and more than half believe that instant and pot noodles are too high in salt.

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