

Improving wet cat food palatability

AFB International's strategic initiative to improve the palatability performance of wet cat food.

Premiumisation of wet cat food

The humanisation trend in pet food presents opportunities and challenges for cat food manufacturers. Cat owners are increasingly willing to spend more on their cats, as they are viewed as family members. As a result, many are demanding tailored nutrition, and are also scrutinising ingredients more closely. This has led to the launch of more premium products, especially in wet cat food.

Retailers and manufacturers have been able to grow revenue faster than the cat population is driving consumption of wet cat food. As shown in the table, kilograms sold is flat to declining, while retailer and manufacturer pricing continues to grow.

A challenging task

Making a palatable premium wet cat food is a challenging task. "Wet cat food palatability

drivers and detractors are much harder to understand due to more diverse processing conditions and formulations coupled with the inherent complexity of cat food palatability," says Han Laumen, Director of R&D at AFB International in Europe.

Always up for a challenge, AFB International launched a long-term, strategic initiative to advance its knowledge of wet cat food development and understand how wet cat food palatants can help deliver the palatability performance that owners expect from a premium product.

"AFB created a dedicated global team to expand its expertise and accelerate its product development efforts to bring palatant solutions to the wet cat food market," says Punya Mohapatra, Senior R&D Manager at AFB International in North America. These efforts included:

- Intensive collaboration with innovation partners to increase the speed to market
- Data driven product design to generate hypotheses in order to understand the drivers and detractors of wet pet food
- Multiple pilot plant trials to identify processing parameters that contribute to palatability
- Industry benchmarking to understand the wet pet food landscape
- New feeding and behaviour trial methods to assess feline palatability

Continuing this strategic initiative, AFB welcomes opportunities to collaborate with wet cat food manufacturers on a solution that improves palatability, using their own unique processing conditions and formulations. ♦

(Western) Europe wet cat food growth

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (FC)
kgs	1.95%	0.17%	-0.89%	-0.40%	-0.06%
Retail selling price	3.25%	1.14%	0.29%	1.36%	2.11%
Manufacturer selling price	3.28%	1.13%	0.23%	1.25%	2.03%

Source: Euromonitor



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