NEW ZEALAND

# PRIVATE LABEL OPPORTUNITIES IN UK GROCERY RETAIL

Understanding opportunities for New Zealand exporters.

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# Introduction to this report

## Background

The UK grocery retail landscape offers a dynamic environment for international exporters. UK retailers are increasingly prioritising the development of distinctive, high-quality private label products that appeal to a diverse range of consumers. For food exporters from New Zealand, this presents a significant opportunity to capitalise on their reputation for premium, sustainable products. By forming private label partnerships with UK retailers, New Zealand exporters can help these retailers stand out in a highly competitive market, while also expanding their own market presence.

## Purpose

The purpose of this research is to provide New Zealand food exporters with insights into the private label FMCG product space in the UK. This research also aims to equip New Zealand exporters with understanding of the private label consumer in the UK and routes to market via a private label strategy.

## Methodology

This report was generated using desktop research, with NZTE subscriptions and publicly available information and a primary consumer survey. Key sources of data are listed below:

- Euromonitor International
- ITC Trade Map
- Statista
- NZTE Survey via Toluna (November 2025), n=607 *(see page 16 for further details)*
- Expert interview with Mark Field via NZTE's Beachhead Network *(see page 30 for further details)*

## Limitations

Some of the information provided in this report was sourced from secondary data sources. Due to the nature of secondary data, all values and figures should be treated as indicative, rather than absolute. The latest information available at the time of research was used, however present values may differ.

This report also uses primary data collected through a consumer survey. While surveys offer valuable insights into consumer attitudes and preferences, they are subject to certain limitations. This includes that it is a sample of the population and biases.

# Contents



# Key takeaways

### UK private label is large and premiumising

Private label accounts for over half of UK grocery sales, with rapid growth in premium and “premium plus” ranges. Exporters can target both value and high-end segments, as retailers are investing across different tiers to attract diverse shoppers.

### Understand retailer strategies and category nuances

Major UK retailers have distinct private label structures and strategies, from entry-level to premium. Research each retailer’s approach and tailor your pitch to their specific needs and category focus for the best chance of success.

### Price and quality drive consumer choice

UK shoppers overwhelmingly see private label as offering lower prices without sacrificing quality. Demonstrate product quality and value to win consumer loyalty and justify price premiums.

### Everyday staples and ready meals lead private label adoption

Private label is strongest in low-risk staples like dairy, fresh produce, and pantry items, but ready meals and proteins also see meaningful adoption. Focus on these categories for easier market entry but consider premium and health-focused segments for growth.

### Build direct relationships and innovate continuously

Success depends on concise, compelling engagement with category managers and ongoing innovation. Direct supply is preferred; invest in relationship-building and be ready to adapt your offer to changing retailer and consumer needs.

### Use New Zealand origin and certifications strategically

Labelling products as “from New Zealand” is most effective in categories where origin matters (e.g., wine, red meat, honey). Ethical and sustainable certifications (Fairtrade, Red Tractor) are highly valued by UK shoppers and can be used to address concerns about air miles and sustainability.

SECTION 1

# THE PRIVATE LABEL GROCERY LANDSCAPE

## The growth of private label FMCG products is influenced by several macro trends globally.

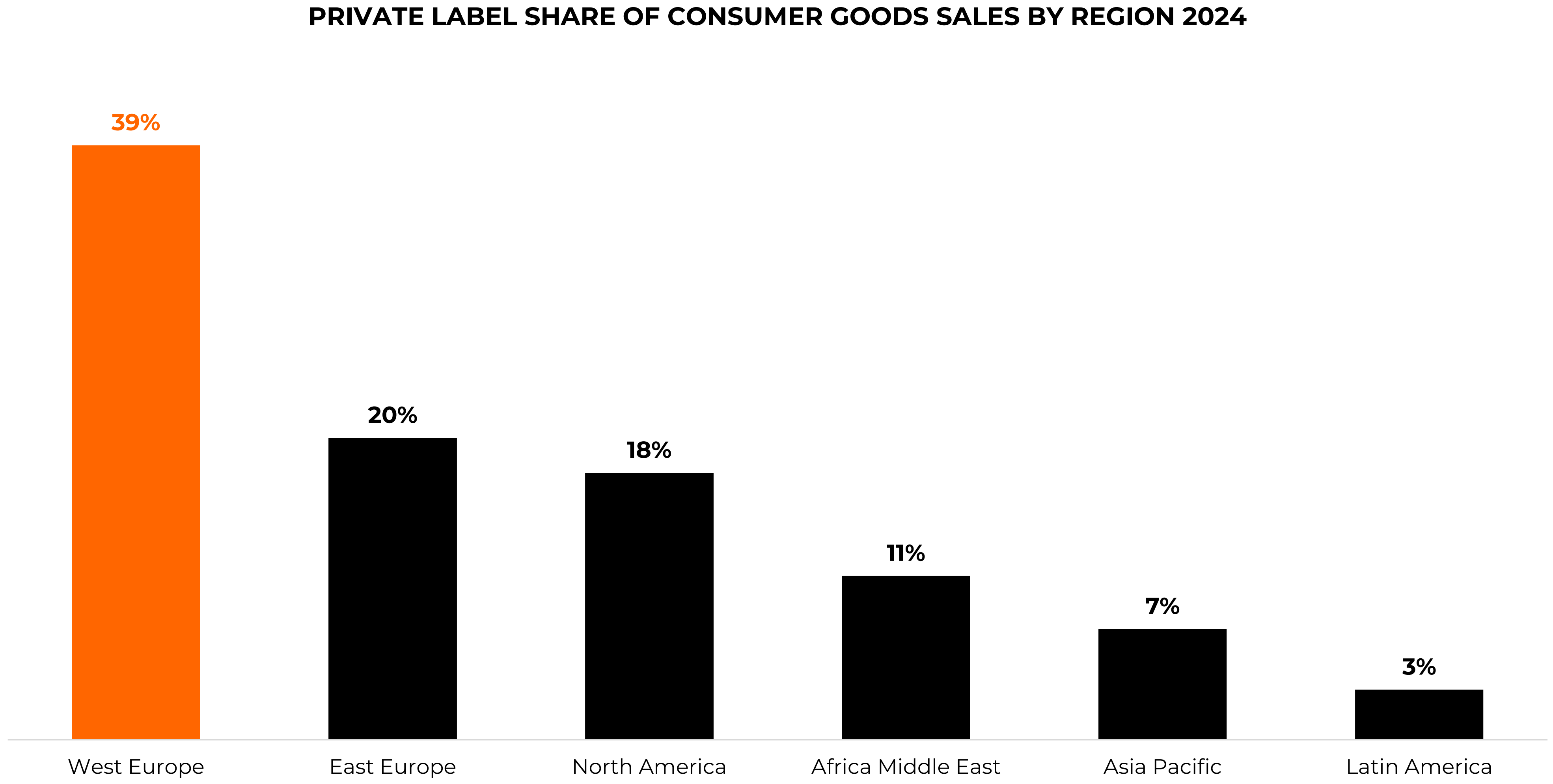
Rising inflation and economic uncertainties have led consumers to seek cost-effective alternatives, boosting the popularity of private label products.

As well as this, there is a growing acceptance and preference for private label FMCG products, especially among younger generations. These consumers are more open to trying store brands and often find them comparable to national brands in terms of quality.

Private label products have significantly improved in quality and innovation. Retailers are investing in product development to ensure their private labels can compete with national brands.

Many retailers are also offering private label brands that compete at a more premium, high-quality end than they have traditionally.

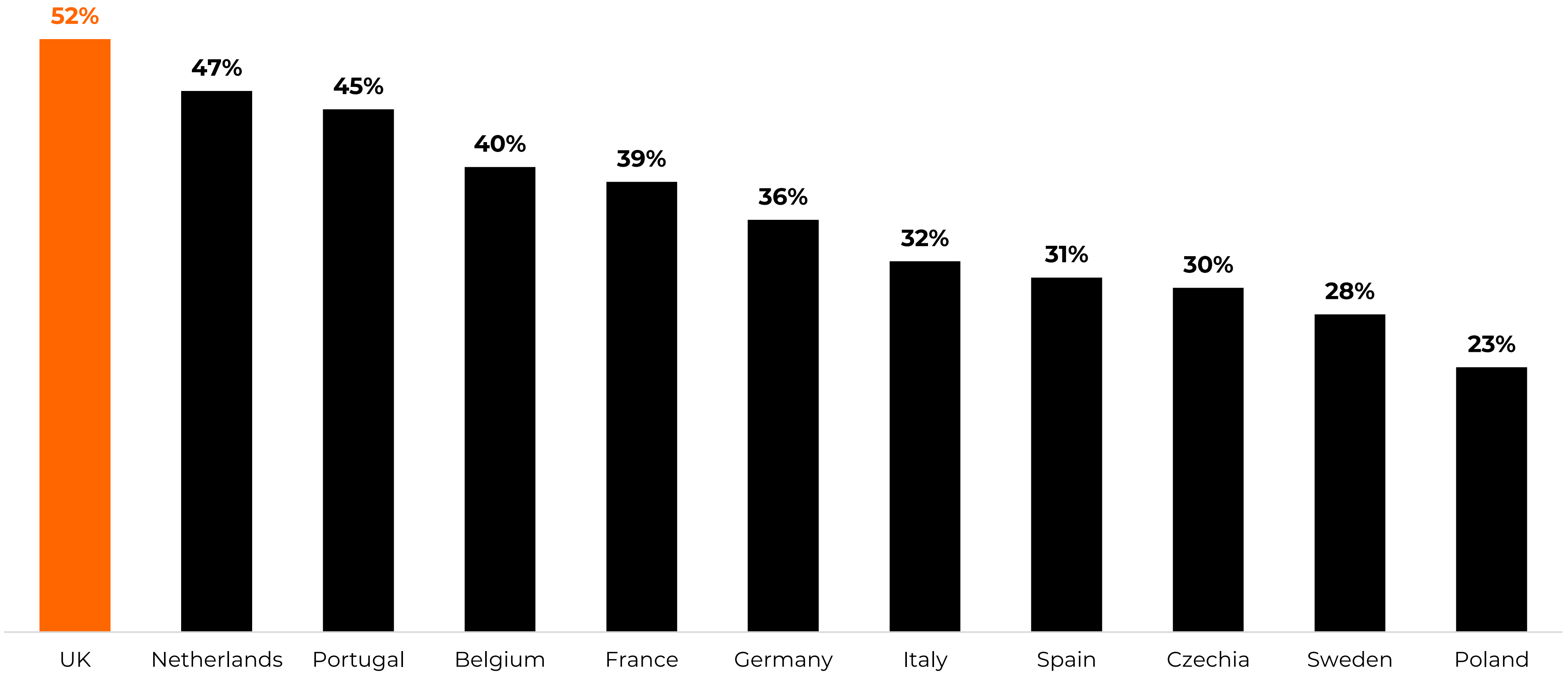
# Western Europe leads the charge in terms of private label as a share of total consumer goods sales.




Source: NielsenIQ (2024).

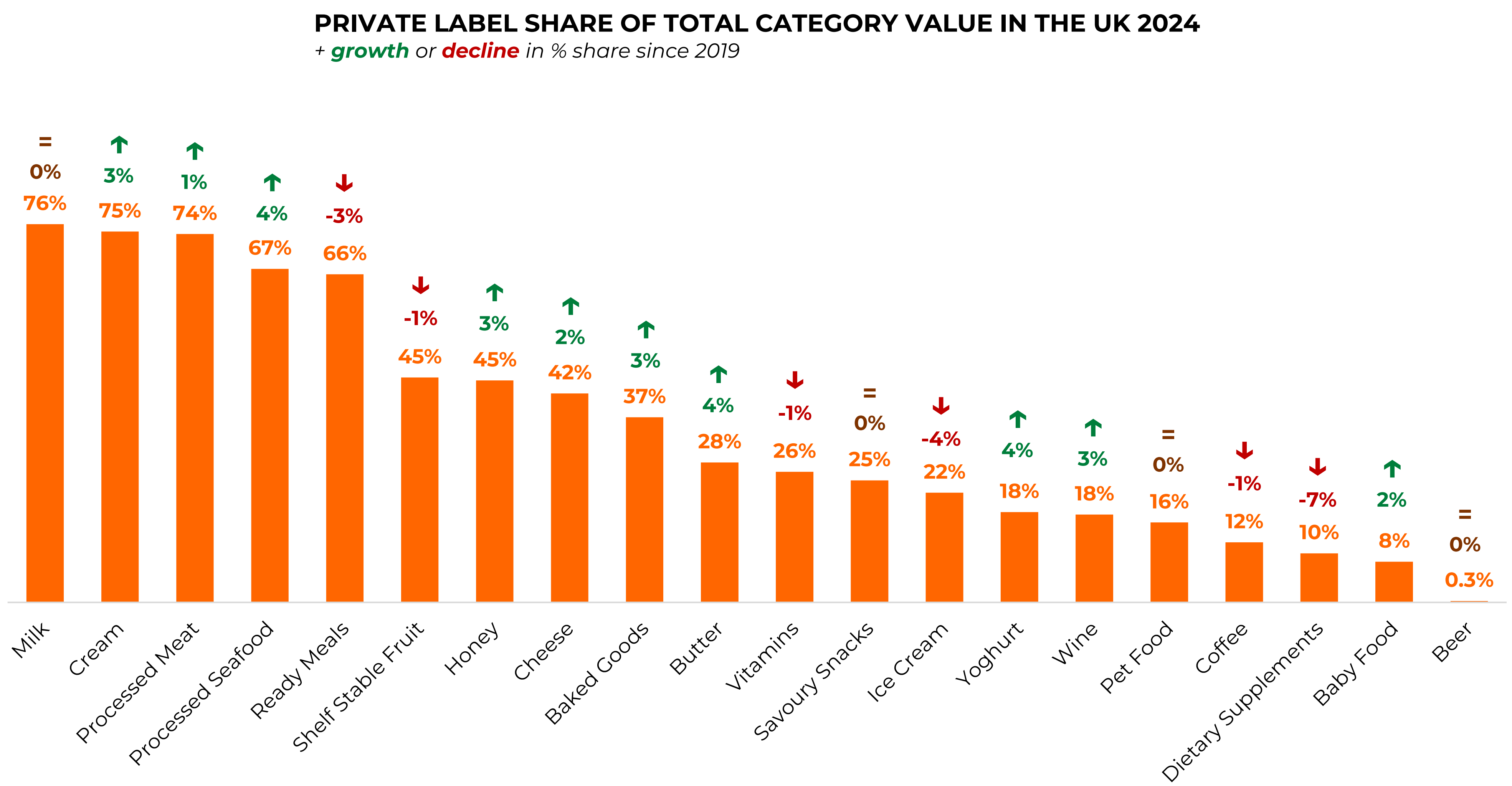
# Over half of all grocery retail sales in the UK can be attributed to private label products.

**PRIVATE LABEL SHARE OF GROCERY RETAIL IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES 2024**




Source: McKinsey (2024).

# In the UK, private label holds over 70% share in milk, cream, and processed meat.

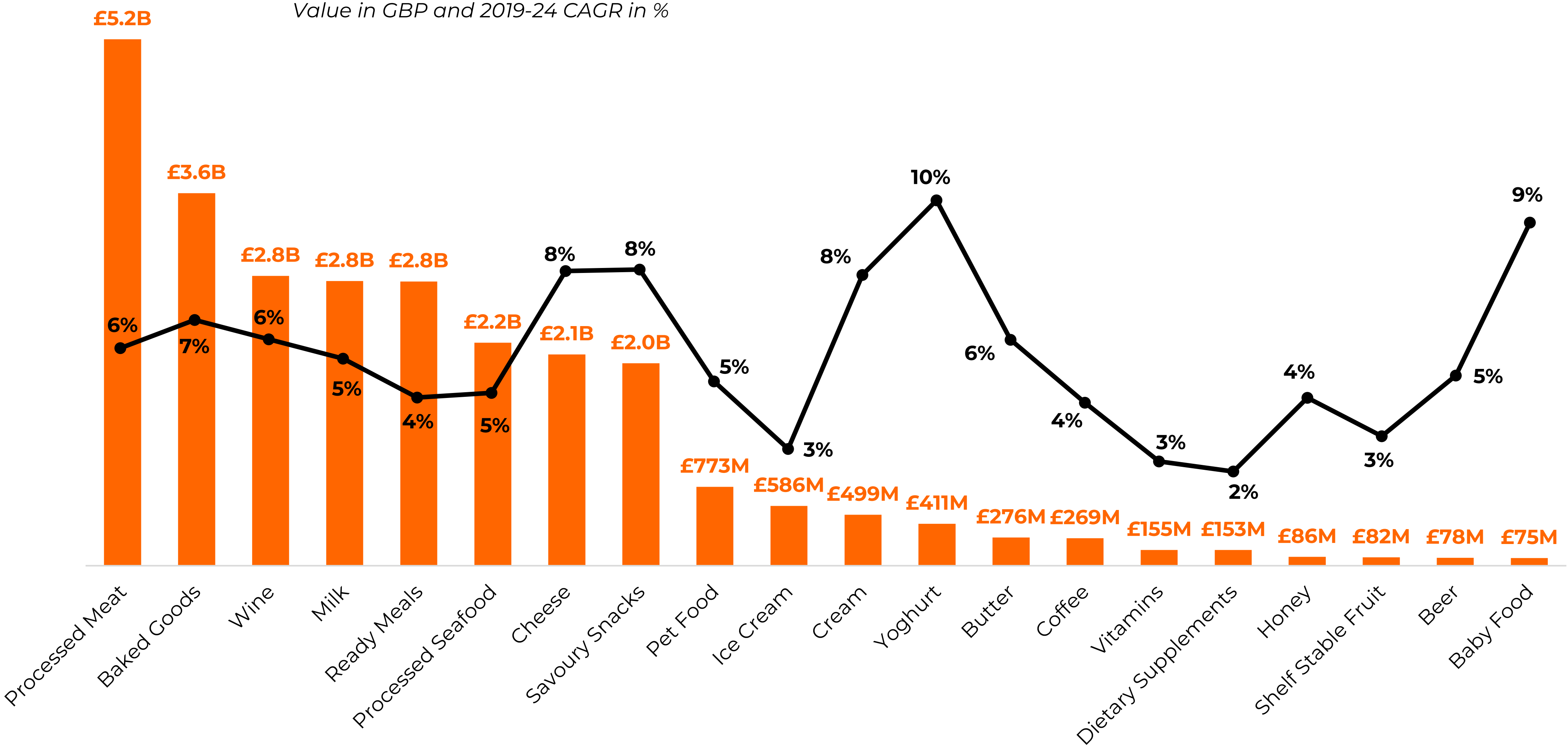



Source: Euromonitor International (2024).

# The fastest growing private label segments have been yoghurt and baby food.

**PRIVATE LABEL TOTAL VALUE AND GROWTH BY CATEGORY IN THE UK 2024**

*Value in GBP and 2019-24 CAGR in %*

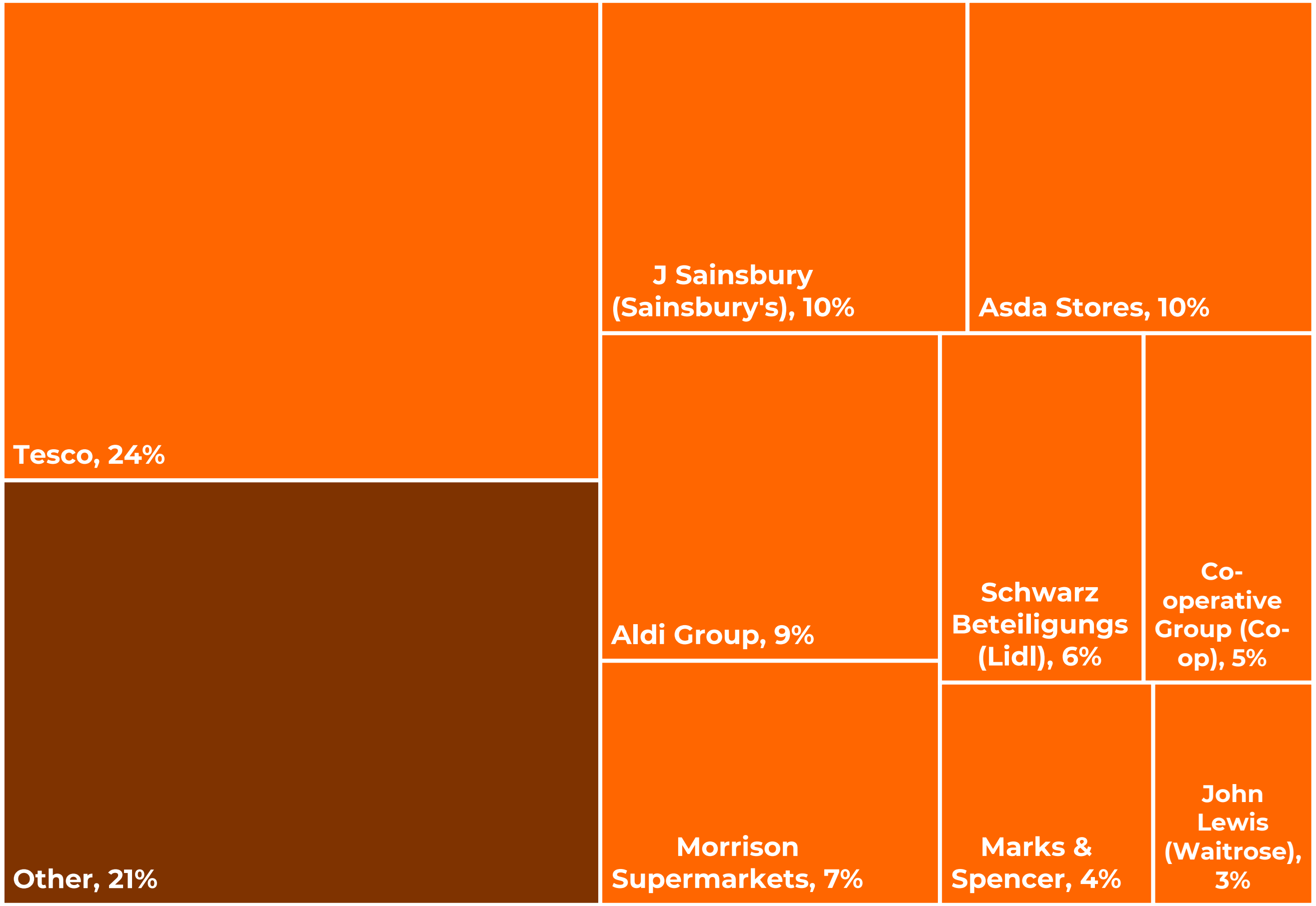



Source: Euromonitor International (2024).

# Tesco and Asda dominate UK grocery retail, while premium players like Waitrose, Marks & Spencer, and Ocado hold niche positions in high-end and e-commerce segments.

## GROCERY RETAILER COMPANY SHARE

*% of sales*




## PREMIUM GROCERY RETAILERS

Waitrose

- **3%** of the grocery retail market
- **16%** of the supermarket channel

MARKS & SPENCER

- **4%** of the grocery retail market
- **11%** of the general merchandise channel

ocado

- **13%** of the grocery e-commerce channel

WHOLE FOODS MARKET

- Whole Foods Market, the premium US-owned supermarket, has a very small market share in the UK.
- It has **six stores** in prime central London locations, with one more set to open.

Source: Euromonitor International (2024).

# UK grocery retailers are doubling down on private label strategies, with Tesco and Sainsbury's focusing on premiumisation, Asda on value positioning, and Aldi reinforcing price leadership.

## UK GROCERY RETAILERS PRIVATE LABEL STRATEGIES

### Sainsbury's

**Structure:**
- Stamford Street (entry-level)
- By Sainsbury's (core)
- Taste the Difference (premium)
- Specialist tiers e.g. Plant Pioneers

**Strategy:** Private label target of 50% of sales by 2030. Premium ranges positioned as equal or superior to branded goods. Recent focus on health, sustainability, and plant-based lines. Offering Aldi Price Match with value range.

**Differentiation:** Premiumisation and innovation (e.g., frozen ready meals, organic). Loyalty integration via Nectar.

**Goal:** To become the first choice for food with strong value credentials, premium quality and sustainability leadership. Compete with discounters but delivering additional value.

### TESCO

**Structure:**
- Tesco (core)
- Tesco Finest (premium)
- Venture Brands (standalone brands without Tesco name, e.g., Creamfields)

**Strategy:** Heavy investment in premiumisation (Finest range relaunched with 400 SKUs in 2025). Also focusing on value defence against discounters.

**Differentiation:** Combines Clubcard Prices with private label to lock in loyalty. Venture Brands aim to attract customers who avoid retailer-branded goods.

**Goal:** Defend share against discounters by balancing value and aspiration.

### ASDA

**Structure:**
- Just Essentials (entry-level)
- ASDA (core, mid-tier)
- Extra Special (premium)

**Strategy:** Aggressive price positioning with Just Essentials launched in 2022 to replace Smart Price. Private label expansion drove 14.7% growth in 2024; focus continues in 2025.

**Differentiation:** Focus on value perception while improving quality; leverages ASDA Rewards app for loyalty and cashback.

**Goal:** Retain cost-conscious shoppers and regain share by being UK's best-value full-service supermarket, while improving availability and customer satisfaction.

### ALDI

**Structure:**
90%+ private label under streamlined portfolio:
- Aldi (core) (refreshed in 2025)
- Several retained sub-brands e.g. Specially Selected (premium) and Clancy's (snacks), all of which will have 'an Aldi Original' branding.

**Strategy:** Private label dominates; benchmarking against leading brands to deliver similar quality at lower prices. Recent consolidation from 90+ sub-brands to ~26 for clarity.

**Differentiation:** Strong price leadership combined with quality cues through packaging redesign and premium sub-brands.

**Goal:** Reinforce cost leadership while elevating perceived quality and brand trust.

Source: Retailer websites (2025).

# Premium retailers like M&S, Waitrose, and Ocado emphasise quality, sustainability, and innovation in private label strategies, while Morrisons targets affordability with lifestyle-driven ranges.

## UK GROCERY RETAILERS PRIVATE LABEL STRATEGIES

### Morrisons

**Structure:**
- Savers (entry-level)
- Morrisons (core)
- The Best (premium)
- Lifestyle/specialist ranges: Market Street (premium fresh food), Free From, V Taste.

**Strategy:** Shift from "good-better-best" to lifestyle-driven ranges; rebranding to make own-label "destination brands" with emotional appeal.

**Differentiation:** Emphasis on quality, provenance, and design; leverages vertical integration for cost control.

**Goal:** Improve quality perception and compete with branded leaders while maintaining affordability.

### Marks & Spencer

**Structure:**
Over 95% private label:
- M&S Food (core)
- Specialty ranges: Plant Kitchen, Gastropub.

**Strategy:** Focus on innovation, sustainability, and provenance; uses digital product testing and 3D design to accelerate development and reduce waste.

**Differentiation:** "Trusted value" promise; strong ethical sourcing under Plan A sustainability program.

**Goal:** Maintain leadership in premium quality and ethical sourcing while modernising processes and appealing to younger demographics.

### Waitrose

**Structure:**
- Essential Waitrose (entry-level)
- Waitrose Core
- Waitrose No.1 (premium)
- Specialty ranges: Duchy Organic, Free From.

**Strategy:** Essentials launched to broaden appeal without diluting brand; premium and wellness ranges target affluent, health-conscious shoppers.

**Differentiation:** Emphasis on quality, provenance, and ethical sourcing; exports private label globally.

**Goal:** Retain upmarket positioning while adapting to price-sensitive trends and sustainability demands.

### Ocado

**Structure:**
- Ocado (core)
- Exclusive collaborations e.g., M&S Food partnership.

**Strategy:** Leverages M&S partnership for premium positioning while expanding Ocado ranges for value and mid-tier. Focus on convenience, innovation, and online exclusivity.

**Differentiation**: Strong digital-first approach; combines broad branded assortment with curated private label. Premium perception reinforced through M&S and specialty ranges.

**Goal:** Drive growth in online grocery by offering a mix of trusted brands and differentiated private label, appealing to both value-seekers and premium shoppers.

Source: Retailer websites (2025).

# Premium private label is growing quickly in UK grocery, with retailers expanding high-end ranges to meet demand for quality and dine-in experiences.

## Premium private label is the next growth frontier in UK grocery retail.

**Premiumisation accelerates:**

- Major UK grocers (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons) are rapidly expanding premium and "premium plus" private label ranges.
- Premium private label sales are growing at double-digit rates, with flagship ranges (e.g., Tesco Finest, Sainsbury's Taste the Difference) each surpassing £2bn in annual sales.

**Redefining value and quality:**

- Premium private label products now command price premiums of 100%+ over standard private label (e.g., Wagyu steaks).
- Retailers are investing in taste, provenance, and innovation to rival or exceed branded alternatives.

**Shopper behaviour shifts:**

- Shoppers are trading down from brands but trading up within private label, seeking affordable luxury and restaurant-quality at home.
- The "dine-in" occasion is a key battleground, with premium ranges positioned to capture spend from out-of-home dining.

**Retailer strategies evolve:**

- New "premium plus" tiers (e.g., Asda Exceptional, Sainsbury's Discovery) offer curated, limited-edition, or chef-inspired products.
- Packaging and design upgrades reinforce quality cues and brand differentiation.

**The likes of Sainsbury's and ASDA have launched new "premium plus" tier private label brands i.e. a level beyond their existing premium brands.**


*Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Discovery range*


*ASDA's Exceptional range*

*Morrisons' The Best Signature Collection*

**Tesco, on the other hand, has taken a slightly different approach. Tesco has released a number of extra premium sub-brands under the Tesco's Finest premium branding.**


*Tesco's Finest Chef's Collection range*


*Tesco's Finest Steakhouse range*

Source: IGD Retail Analysis (2025).

SECTION 2

# CONSUMER INSIGHTS

**The following section contains insights from a primary consumer survey conducted by NZTE in November 2025.**

## NZTE SURVEY: UK PRIVATE LABEL CONSUMER INSIGHTS

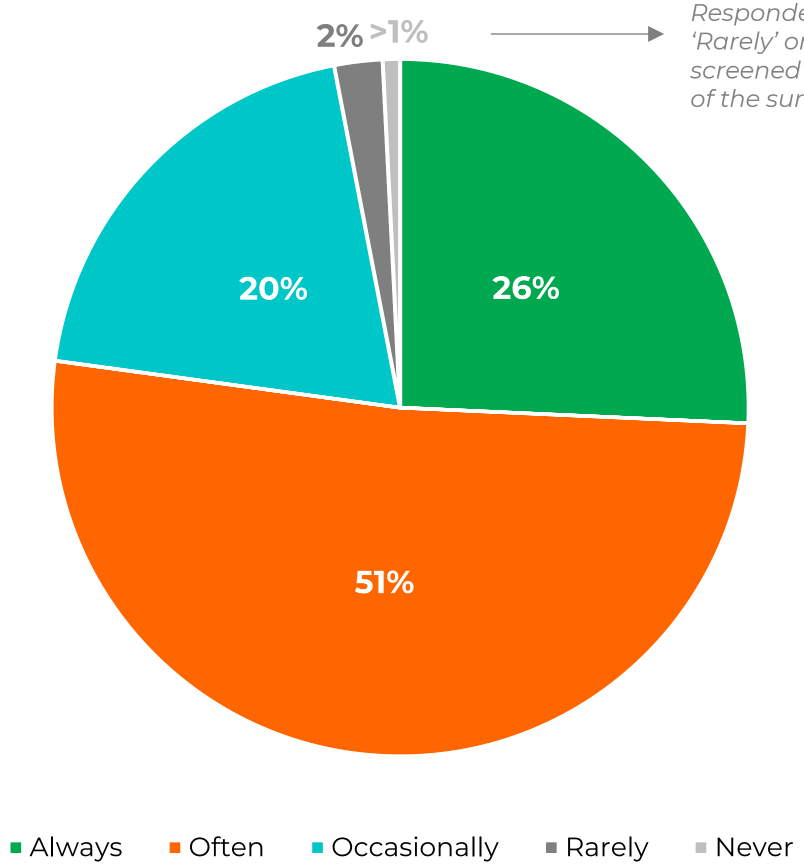
- The survey was conducted with a sample size of N=607 consumers in the United Kingdom who:
    - Shop for groceries themselves
    - Purchase private label products at least occasionally
- Additionally, a screener question was used to filter out anyone who could not identify what private label products are, after being provided a definition.
- Respondents included a spread across age bands, gender and region.
- All respondents were 18 years old and over.
- The fieldwork was carried out in November 2025.
- The survey was built and carried out using the Toluna Start platform.

*Survey results are tested for significance at the 95% confidence level, with a minimum base of n=100 per group. This means there is only a 5% chance that any reported differences are due to random variation rather than real patterns in the wider population. Confidence intervals show the range in which the true value is expected to fall.*

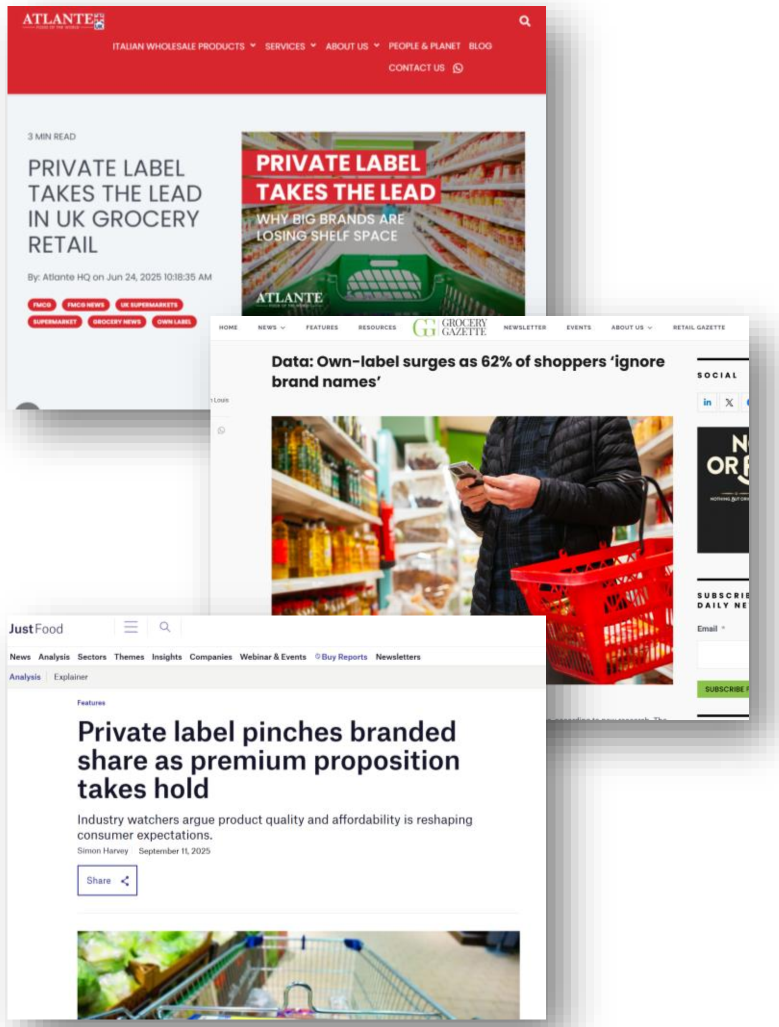
# Private label is deeply entrenched in UK grocery, with over ¾ of shoppers buying it always or often.

## PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE FREQUENCY

*'As an estimate, how frequently do you buy private label products when doing grocery shopping?' (single choice, n=626)*




*Respondents who answered 'Rarely' or 'Never' were screened out of the remainder of the survey.*

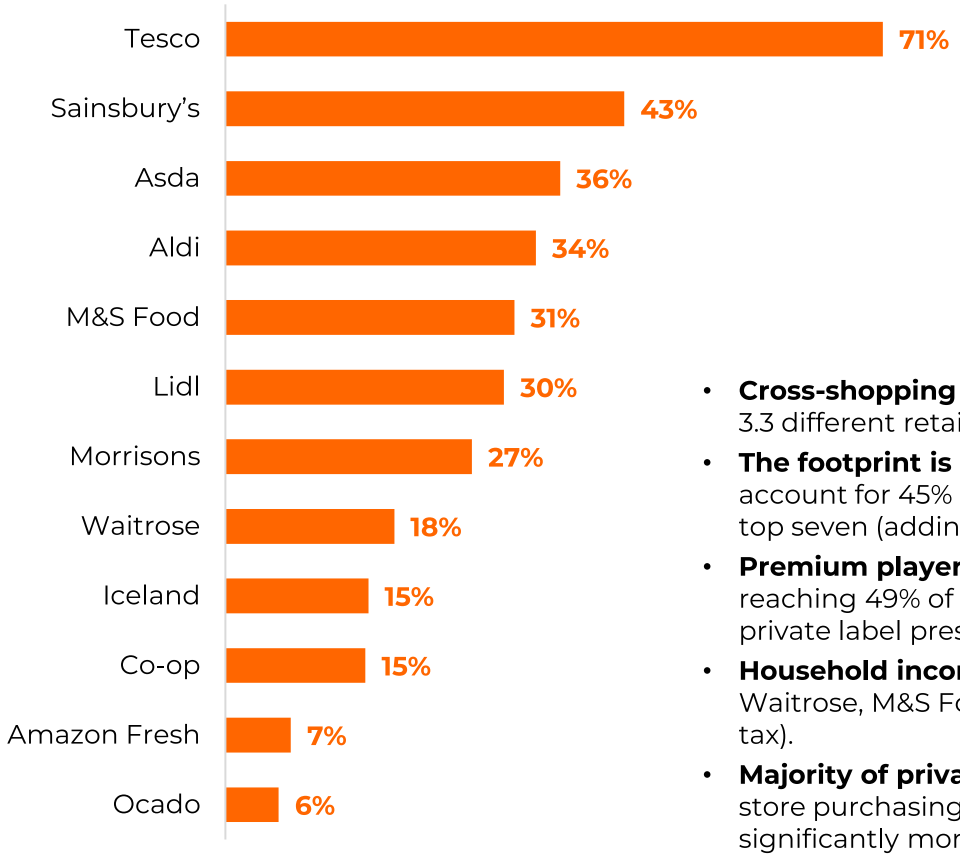



Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Private label purchasing in the UK is highly concentrated, and aligned to overall market share, with Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Asda leading, and 68% of shoppers buying mostly in-store.

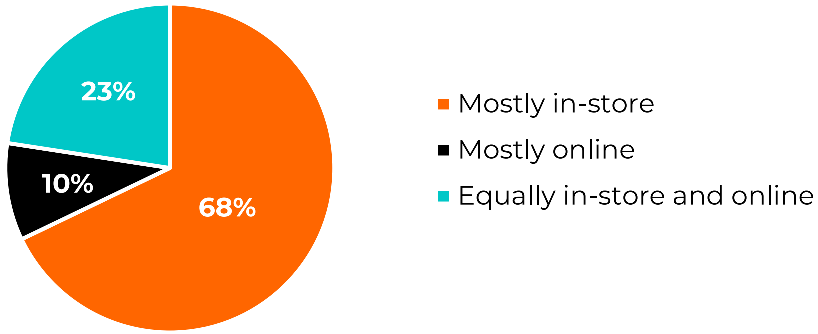
### PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE RETAILERS

*'From which UK grocery retailers do you usually purchase private label products?' (multi-choice, n=607)*




### PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE CHANNELS

*'Where do you usually buy private label products?' (single-choice, n=607)*



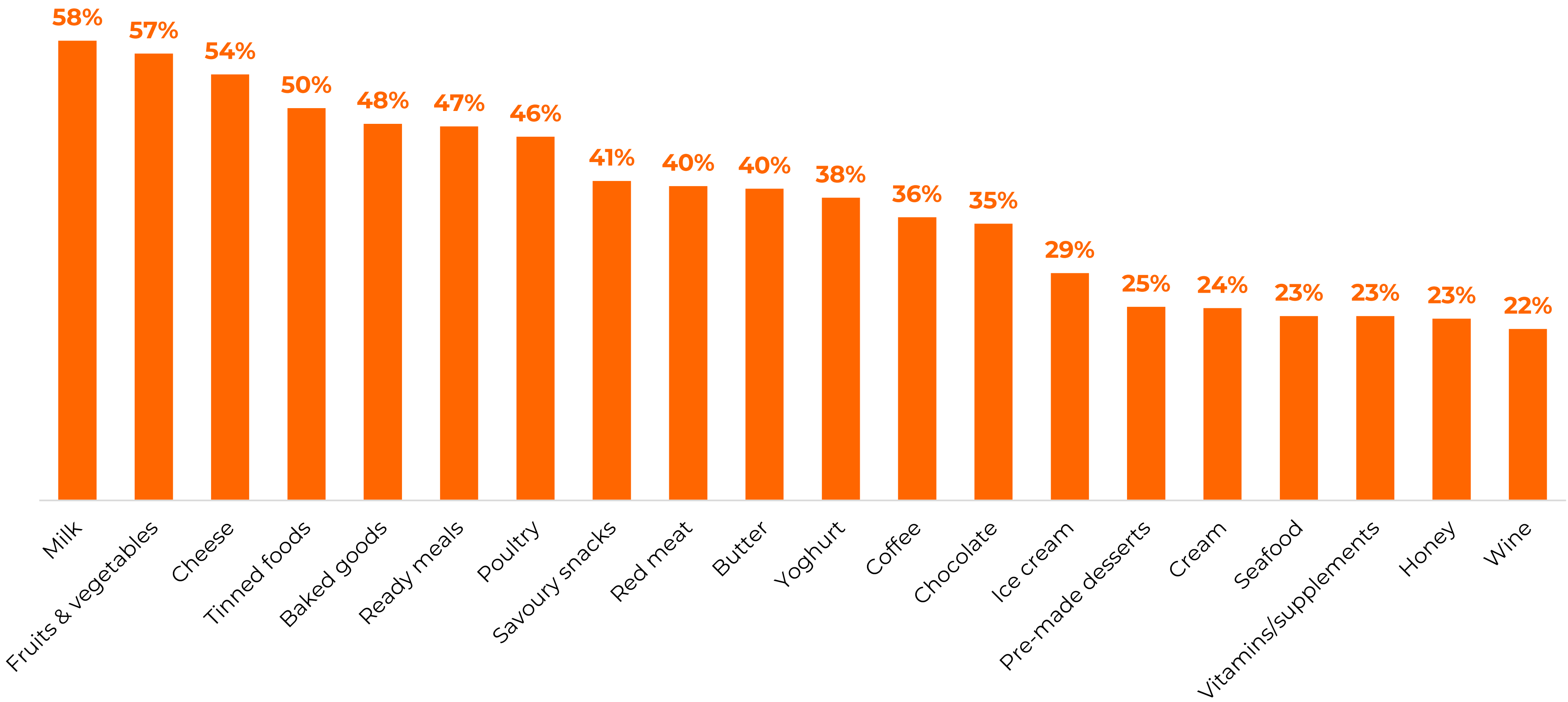

- **Cross-shopping is common**, with shoppers buying private label from an average of around 3.3 different retailers rather than sticking to just one.
- **The footprint is highly concentrated**: the top three retailers (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda) account for 45% of all mentions; the top five (adding Aldi and M&S Food) reach 64.6%; and the top seven (adding Lidl and Morrisons) reach 81.7%.
- **Premium players are far from niche**, with M&S Food (31%) and Waitrose (18%) together reaching 49% of respondents and accounting for 14.7% of mentions, showing meaningful private label presence at the quality end.
- **Household incomes have some impact** on where shoppers go for private label groceries. Waitrose, M&S Food and Morrisons all over-index with high income households (£6,000+ after tax).
- **Majority of private label purchasers shop in-store** (91%); 23% of which also shop online. In-store purchasing should be the primary focus for private label. However, those aged 25-44 are significantly more likely to shop via both channels than those in older age groups.

Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Private label is strongest in everyday, low-risk staples such as dairy, fresh produce and pantry items, however other categories are still strong.

**PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE CATEGORIES: FOOD & BEVERAGE**

*'In which food & beverage categories do you most often purchase private label?' (multi-choice, n=607)*

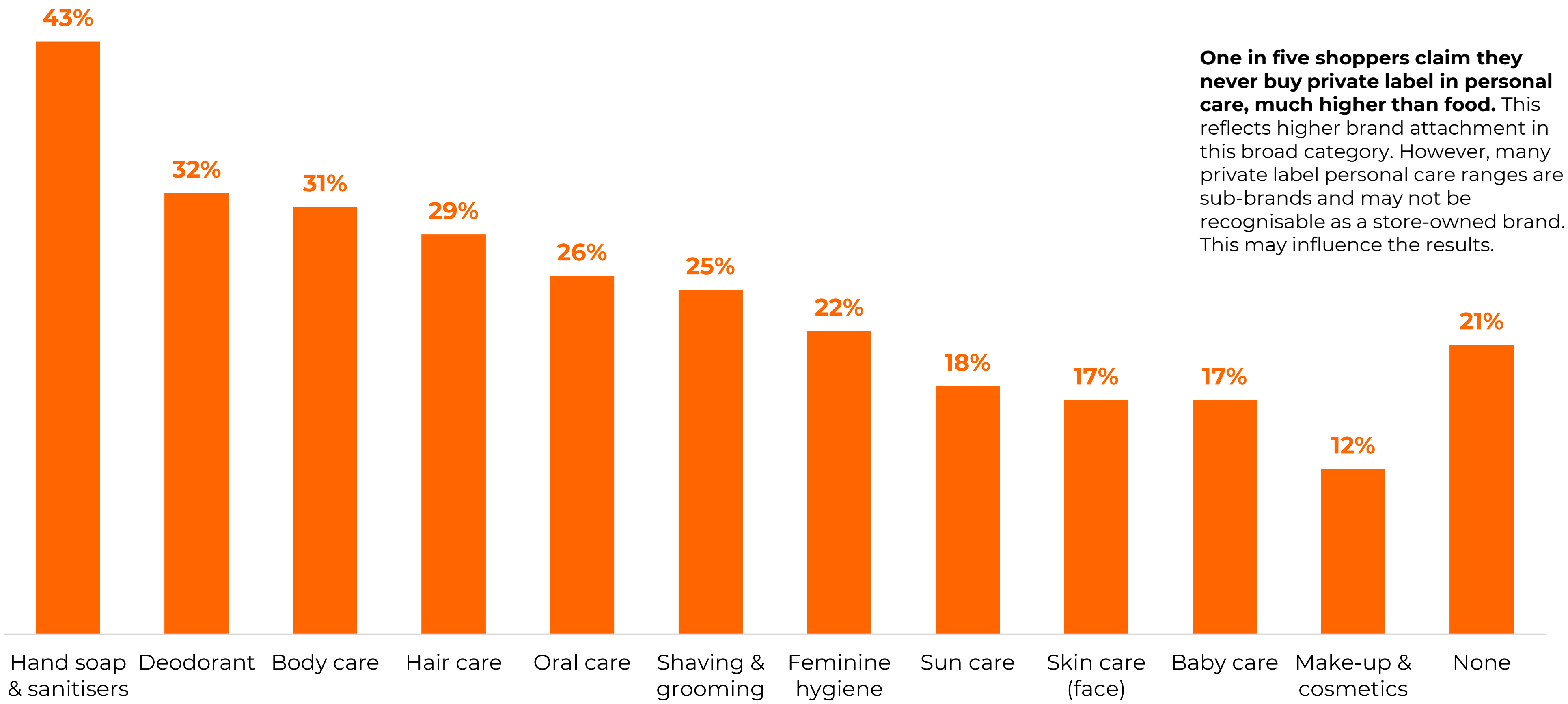



Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Private label personal care is strongest in functional categories, such as hand soaps and sanitisers, where efficacy is perceived as standard and brand equity is weak.

**PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE CATEGORIES: PERSONAL CARE**

*'In which food & beverage categories do you most often purchase private label?' (multi-choice, n=607)*

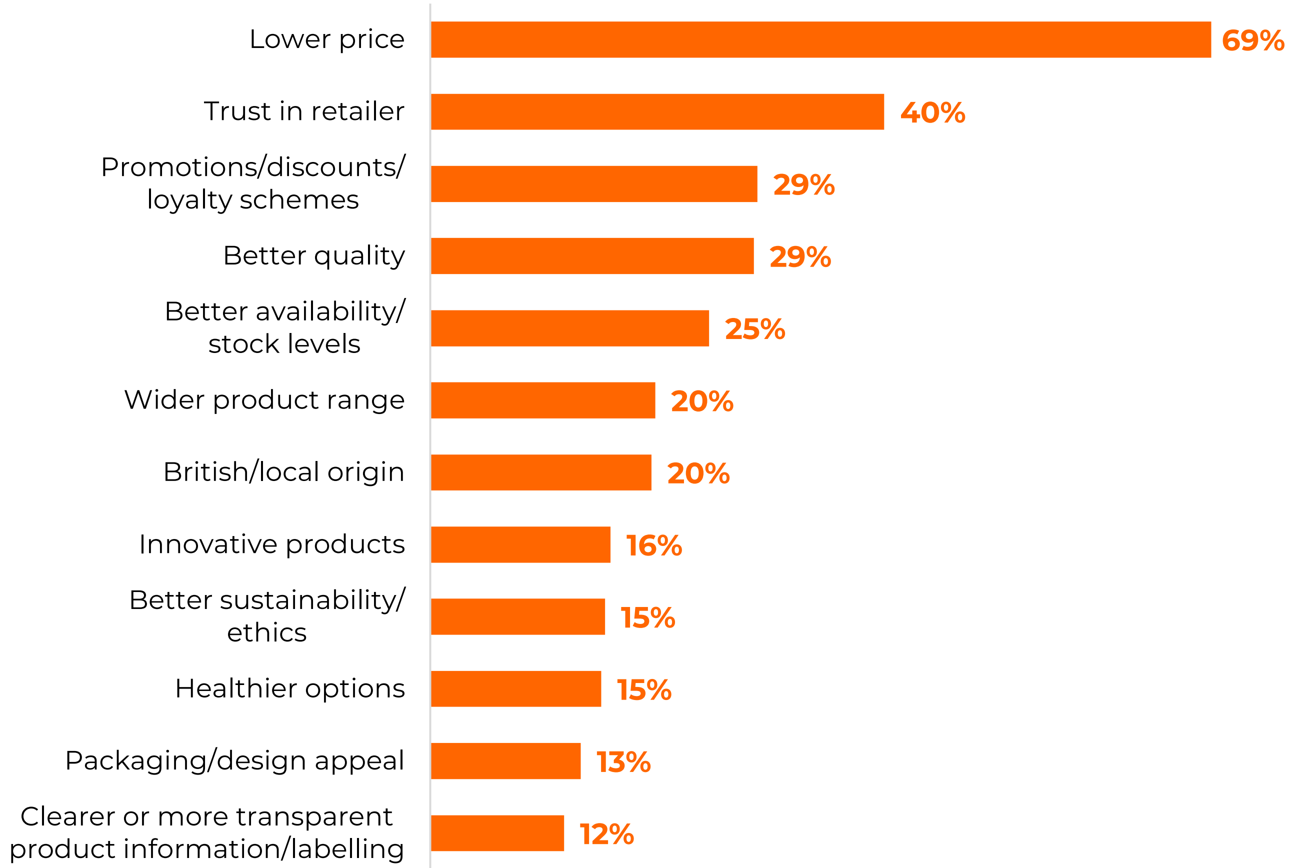



**One in five shoppers claim they never buy private label in personal care, much higher than food.** This reflects higher brand attachment in this broad category. However, many private label personal care ranges are sub-brands and may not be recognisable as a store-owned brand. This may influence the results.

# Price is the dominant driver of private label purchasing in the UK, cited by 69% of shoppers, followed by trust in retailer and promotions.

## PRIMARY REASONS FOR PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASING

*'What are your main reasons for choosing private label products over other products?' (multi-choice, n=607)*




**Older age groups are more likely to consider private label products to have a low-price benefit.**

Respondents aged 45+ were statistically significantly more likely to select 'Lower price' as a key reason for purchasing private label, compared to those aged 18-44.

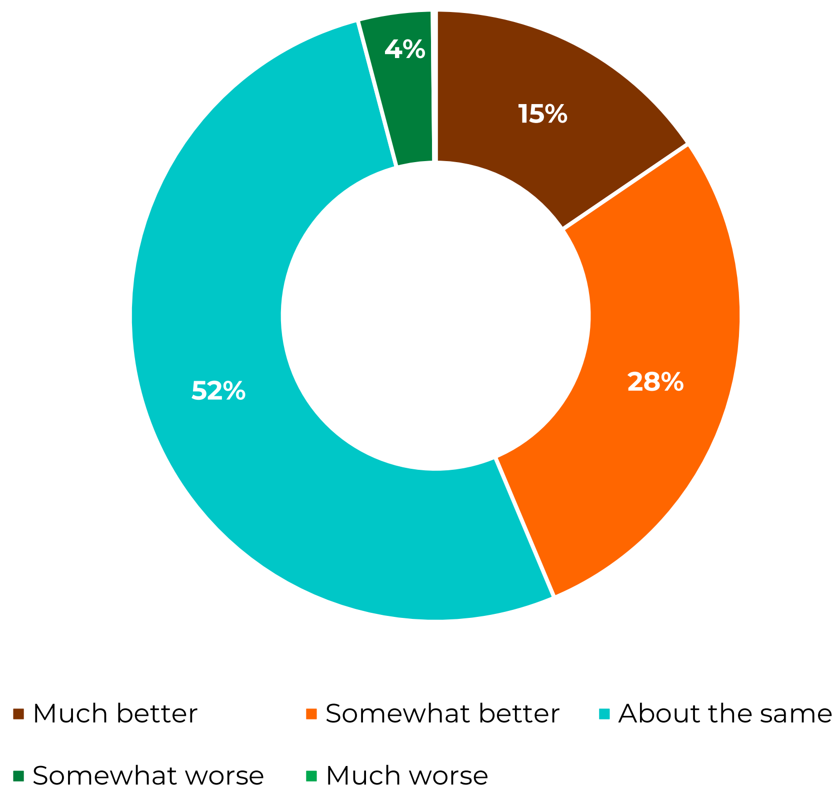
This may reflect traditional private label products which were often viewed as basic, budget-friendly alternatives to branded goods, typically prioritising affordability over attributes such as quality, innovation, or premium positioning.

Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# The old trade-off of lower price = lower quality doesn't apply: UK shoppers overwhelmingly see private label as cheaper without sacrificing quality.

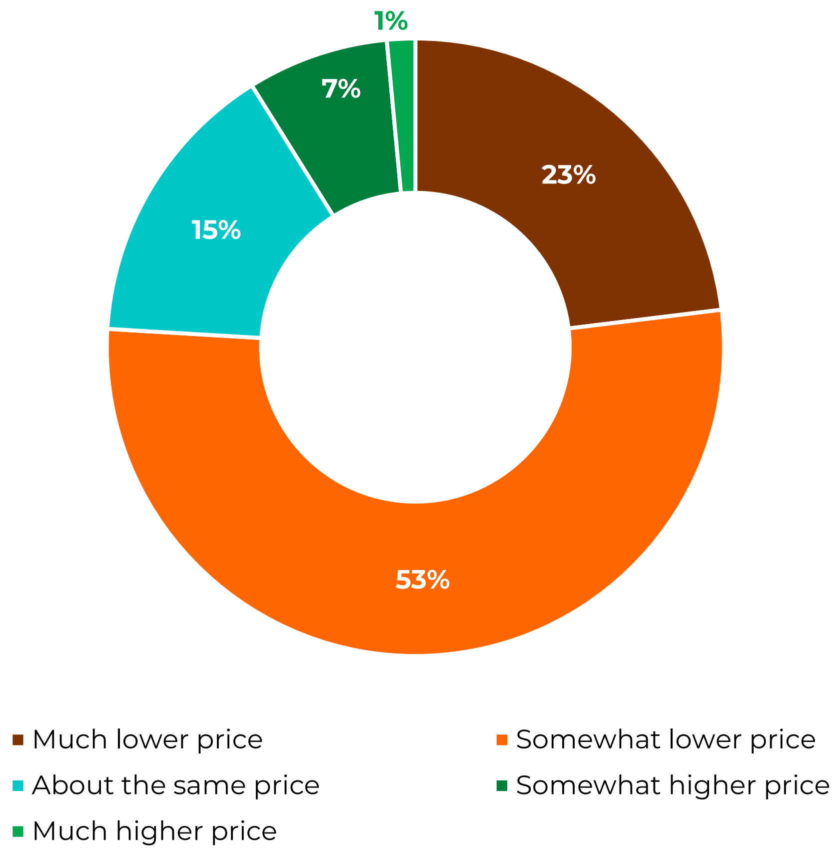
## PRIVATE LABEL PERCEPTIONS: QUALITY

*'How do you perceive the quality of private label products compared to other brands?' (single-choice, n=607)*




## PRIVATE LABEL PERCEPTIONS: PRICE

*'How do you perceive the price of private label products compared to other brands?' (single-choice, n=607)*




Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Over half of UK shoppers say they will pay more for private label if the product is higher quality, with healthier options and local origin also key drivers of price premium.

## DRIVERS TO PRIVATE LABEL PRICE PREMIUM

*'For private label products, which of the following attributes would make you willing to pay a higher price?' (multi-choice, n=607)*

1

**53%**

### Higher quality product

Over half of UK shoppers will pay more for private label if quality improves. 24–44-year-olds are significantly more likely to do so than those aged 55+.

2

**30%**

### Healthier options

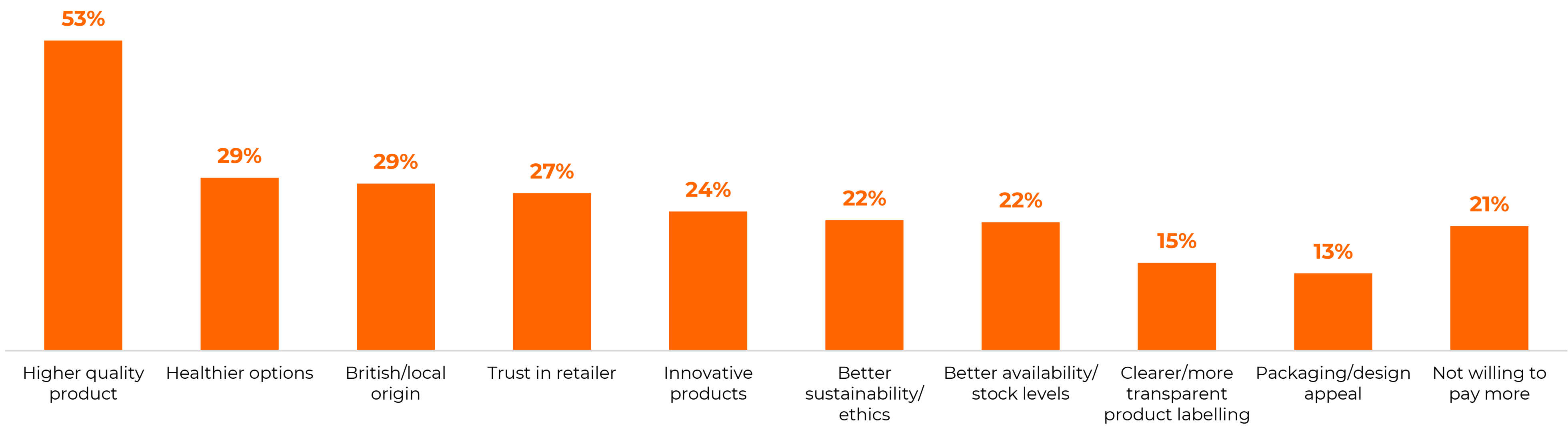
30% of shoppers are willing to pay more for private label products that offer healthier choices. Those in the higher income brackets are significantly more likely than lower-middle household incomes.

3

**29%**

### British/local origin

Almost 3 in 10 UK shoppers would pay a higher price for private label products with local provenance. This appears to be a stronger sentiment in England than in other parts of the UK.




Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Fairtrade and Red Tractor are the most sought-after certifications for UK private label, reflecting strong consumer focus on ethical and sustainable sourcing.

## PRIVATE LABEL CERTIFICATION CONSIDERATION

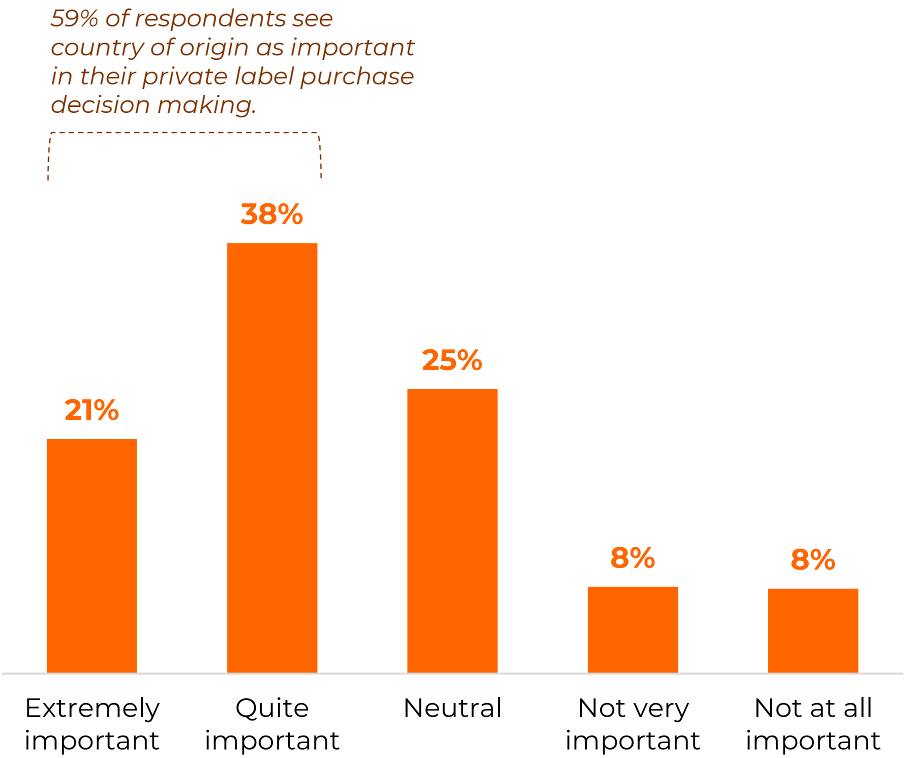
*'Which sustainability or ethical certifications do you look for on private label products?' (multi-choice, n=607)*


Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Labelling private label products as "from New Zealand" mainly helps with origin-conscious shoppers and may be best used selectively by category.

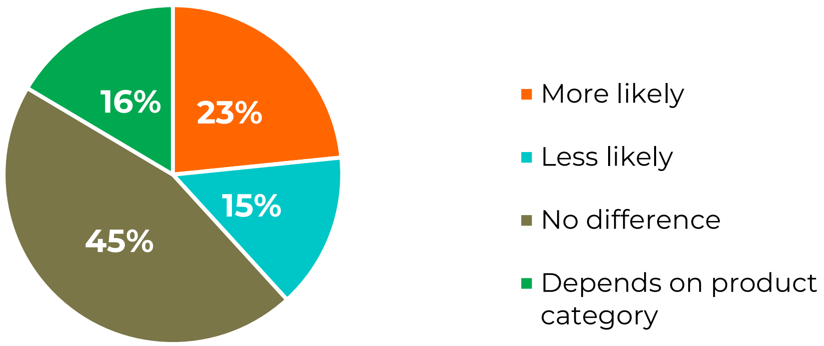
## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMPORTANCE FOR PRIVATE LABEL

*'When purchasing private label products, how important is the product's country of origin to your decision?' (single-choice, n=607)*




## NEW ZEALAND PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE INTENT

*'Would you be more or less likely to buy a private label product if it was clearly labelled as being from New Zealand?' (single-choice, n=607)*




**Cross-tabulation results between the two questions on this slide:**

- Shoppers who view country of origin as extremely important are far more likely to buy private label products clearly marked as from New Zealand.
- For those who find origin quite important, impact is mixed: about 25% are more likely to buy, while 20% are less likely.
- Shoppers who are neutral or indifferent mostly say New Zealand labelling makes no difference and sometimes reduces purchase likelihood.
- Overall, "from New Zealand" labelling offers a modest net positive, mainly among origin-conscious shoppers. Consider applying labelling by category.

Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

# Country of origin matters to many UK shoppers, but it's rarely the main reason for buying private label. Though it can justify a price premium for some, especially in categories where provenance is valued.

## The role of country of origin in UK private label perceptions and purchasing

Country of origin plays a nuanced role in UK private label purchasing. While 59% of shoppers say origin is important to their decision-making at an attitudinal level, it is rarely the main driver of purchase (slide 25).

When forced to choose their top reasons for buying private label, only 20% select "British/local origin," with most prioritising price, trust in retailer, and promotions instead (slide 21).

However, origin can justify a price premium for a significant minority: 29% of shoppers say they would pay more for private label if it had British or local provenance (slide 23).

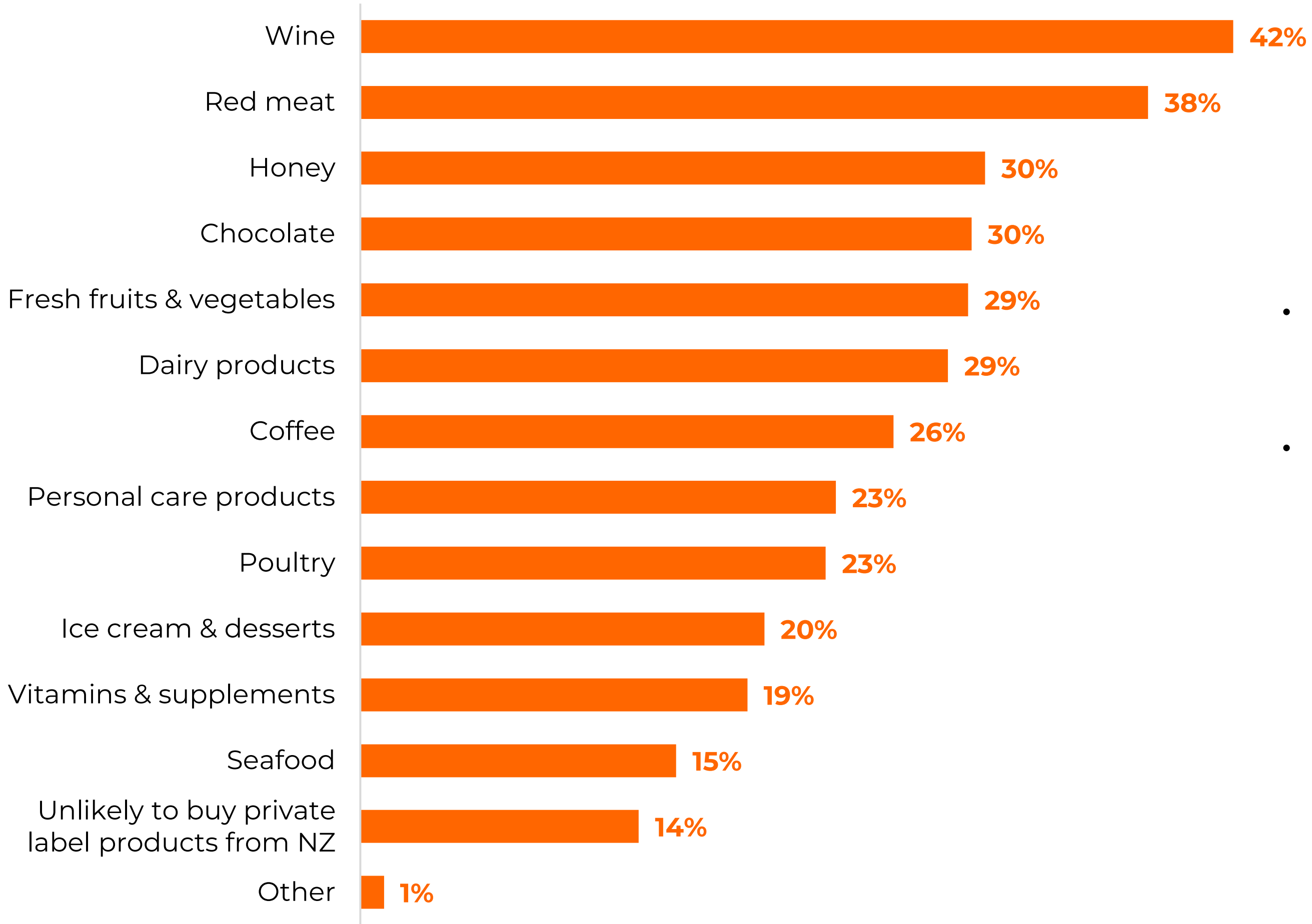
This effect of country of origin is strongest in categories where provenance matters, such as wine, red meat, and honey, and among shoppers seeking premium or local products.

**In summary, country of origin is important to many UK shoppers in principle, but it is not usually the primary purchase trigger. For exporters, leveraging origin can add value and support premium positioning, especially when combined with quality, sustainability, and category relevance.**

# UK shoppers show the strongest purchase intent for NZ private label in wine and red meat, followed by honey, chocolate, and fresh produce. However, age and income demographics show differences.

## CATEGORY LEVEL NEW ZEALAND PRIVATE LABEL PURCHASE INTENT

*‘If a private label product was clearly labelled as being from New Zealand, which of the following categories would you be likely to purchase?’ (multi-choice, n=607)*




- Younger adults (25–34) and higher-income groups (£6,000+) consistently **over-index** on premium or health-related categories (personal care, vitamins, seafood).
- Older adults (65+) tend to **under-index** on indulgent or health categories but **over-index** on traditional staples like red meat.

Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

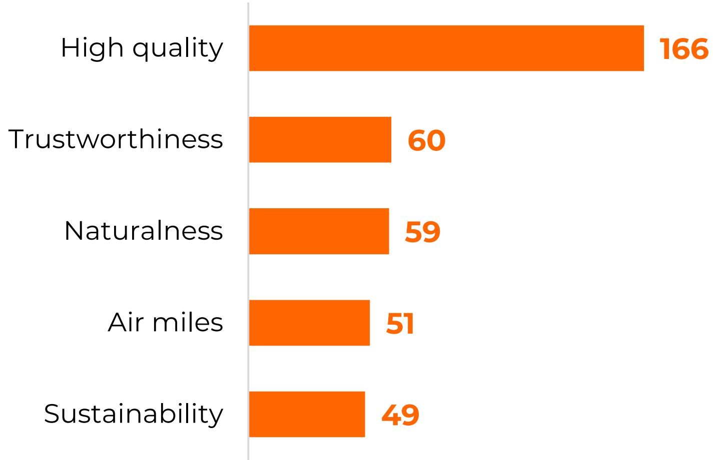
# UK shoppers perceive New Zealand private label as high quality and trustworthy but concerns about air miles and sustainability can influence purchase decisions.

## UNPROMPTED PERCEPTIONS OF NEW ZEALAND PRIVATE LABEL

*'What thoughts or impressions would come to mind if you saw a private label product clearly labelled as being from New Zealand?' (open-end, n=363)*

### *Top five themes*

*(Number of mentions)*




- Respondents mainly perceive private label product labelled from New Zealand as high quality, natural and trustworthy.
- Environmental concerns about air/sea miles and a preference for local UK origin alternatives are common and can deter purchases.
- Certification, traceability and competitive pricing influence willingness to buy New Zealand private label.

### *Sentiment coded themes*

# The biggest barrier for New Zealand private label in the UK is preference for local origin and sustainability concerns, so products must address these issues in other ways to win consumer trust.

## UNPROMPTED PERCEPTIONS OF NEW ZEALAND PRIVATE LABEL: QUOTES

*'What thoughts or impressions would come to mind if you saw a private label product clearly labelled as being from New Zealand?' (open-end, n=363)*

### HIGH QUALITY:

***"A product clearly labelled as being from New Zealand would make me think of something natural, clean, and high-quality."***

### AIR MILES:

***"It has had to travel a long way which produces CO emissions."***

### CATEGORY DEPENDENT:

***"New Zealand produces some quality products, but it would depend what products they were."***

### ENVIRONMENT:

***"They have pasture-fed dairy, stringent biosecurity and a clean green image."***

### CATEGORY KNIOWLEDGE:

***"I know New Zealand produces great lamb products. The only other [product] I know is wine."***

### ANIMAL WELFARE:

***"I believe New Zealand has high animal welfare standards".***

### CERTIFICATIONS TAKE PRIORITY:

***"As long as it's certified or approved by the appropriate regulatory bodies, I trust its quality and safety."***

### PREMIUM IMAGE:

***"New Zealand products are extremely unique and premium."***

### TRUST IN PRIVATE LABEL:

***"I buy Tesco's Finest and Sainsbury's Taste the Difference. If their meat or dairy products were these premium own labels and organic, I would consider it, regardless of where it was from."***

Source: NZTE Survey via Toluna Start (November 2025)

SECTION 3

# PROCUREMENT & ROUTES TO MARKET

**The following section draws on the expertise and insights of an NZTE Beachhead Advisor, based on an expert interview conducted in December 2025.**

## PRIVATE LABEL EXPERT: MARK FIELD

Mark Field is a senior executive and consultant with over 25 years' experience in international food manufacturing and retail, including extensive work with UK grocery retailers during the rapid growth of private label.

Formerly the head of Australia's largest food brand for Coles Supermarkets, Mark now leads Prof. Consulting Group, advising global clients on private label strategy, procurement, and supply chain optimisation. Mark's expertise is grounded in hands-on experience supplying every major UK retailer as a manufacturer, and now as an advisor to both retailers and international suppliers targeting the UK market.

Mark is part of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise's Beachhead Advisor Network, supporting New Zealand Exporters in this space.

# Success in UK private label relies on early planning, concise engagement, and developing strong retailer relationships.

## EXPERT INSIGHTS FROM MARK FIELD: ROUTE TO MARKET AND GETTING LISTED

### Retailer procurement is inconsistent and category-driven

There is no standard procurement process for private label in the UK. Each retailer and category operates differently, with processes shaped by the size and nature of the category. In large categories, category managers are often time-poor, so exporters must present a clear, differentiated offer to get noticed.

### Initial engagement must be targeted , concise & memorable

The first approach to a retailer, usually via the category manager, should be sharp and compelling. Avoid lengthy presentations; a few clear slides that quickly communicate your unique value are most effective. The goal is to get on the retailer's radar and be included in future briefs for private label supply.

### Timing is dictated by the range review calendar

Product listing opportunities are tied to each retailer's range review calendar, which varies by category and retailer. Some categories review twice a year, others less frequently. Exporters must plan well in advance, as missing the review window can mean waiting another year or more. Early groundwork and relationship-building are essential.

### Multiple routes to market, but direct relationships are best

While cold emails and trade shows can help, the most effective route is having someone on the ground with established relationships or using a business development partner who can represent your interests directly. Distributors add less value in private label, as the retailer dictates product requirements.

### Negotiation is less flexible, but pricing is clear

Private label contracts in the UK typically offer less room for negotiation on price, payment terms, and delivery schedules compared to branded supply. However, the pricing is usually "net-net," the agreed price is what you receive, with fewer deductions for marketing or other costs. This can simplify the value chain and improve predictability.

Source: Expert interview with Mark Field via NZTE's Beachhead Network (December 2025).

# UK private label growth requires robust supply chains, cost-efficient production, sustainable focus, innovative capabilities, and consistent delivery of quality and food safety. Origin matters less than quality.

## EXPERT INSIGHTS FROM MARK FIELD: QUALITY, PROVENANCE AND GROWTH LEVERS

### Quality, supply chain robustness, and accreditations are critical

UK retailers expect high standards for food safety (e.g., BRC accreditation) and may require additional audits or factory visits. Robust supply chains and the ability to hold stock in the UK (typically 2–4 weeks' worth) are essential to avoid out-of-stocks and maintain retailer confidence.

### Country of origin is less of a barrier than expected

While there is political and consumer support for British origin in some categories (e.g., dairy, red meat), UK retailers are open to sourcing globally if the quality and commercial offer are strong. New Zealand's reputation for quality and food safety is an advantage, and NZ products are already visible in many UK stores.

### Innovation and ongoing partnership are key to longevity

Winning a private label contract is not a guarantee of long-term supply. Exporters must continue to innovate and invest in their offer to remain competitive, as contracts can be lost to better or cheaper suppliers. Strategic partnership, not just transactional supply, is valued.

### Lean into growth spaces in health, wellness, and premium categories

Growth is strongest in health and wellness, convenience, and premium private label segments. There is demand for innovative NZ products in categories like healthy snacking, functional beverages, and gluten-free. Premium private label (e.g., Tesco Finest, Sainsbury's Taste the Difference) is expanding.

### Private label is no longer just 'value' anymore

UK consumers increasingly see private label as equal to or better than brands, especially in premium and "pseudo-brand" ranges. Retailers are investing in private label brand innovation and marketing, making private label a credible and attractive channel for exporters.

Source: Expert interview with Mark Field via NZTE's Beachhead Network (December 2025).

# Winning UK private label business requires thorough category research, strong supply chain capability, clear pricing, and proactive relationship-building backed by compliance and innovation.

## EXPERT INSIGHTS FROM MARK FIELD: SUPPLIER CHECKLIST FOR APPROACHING UK PRIVATE LABEL BUYERS

1. **Due diligence: understand the category & retailer**
   - Research the specific category you want to supply.
   - Identify the key retailers and their private label strategies, generally and in that category.
   - Know the range review calendar for your target category and retailer.

2. **Prepare a compelling offer**
   - Develop a clear, concise pitch (no lengthy decks – focus on a few impactful slides).
   - Highlight your unique selling points: quality, innovation, sustainability, certifications.
   - Benchmark your offer against existing products in the retailer's range and on the market.

3. **Ensure compliance & accreditation**
   - Obtain required food safety accreditations (e.g., BRC or equivalent).
   - Prepare for possible factory audits and visits.
   - Meet ethical sourcing and animal welfare standards as relevant.

4. **Demonstrate supply chain capability**
   - Set up UK-based stockholding (typically 2-4 weeks' cover).
   - Ensure robust logistics for on-time delivery to UK distribution centers.
   - Be ready to discuss your ability to scale and maintain supply.

5. **Pricing & commercials**
   - Prepare a net-net price offer (transparent, with no hidden costs).
   - Understand that negotiation is limited. Be ready with your best price.

6. **Market entry strategy**
   - Decide on your route to market. Direct supply is preferred for private label.
   - If using a partner, ideally, they are a business development agent as opposed to a distributor.
   - Attend trade shows and/or arrange meetings with category managers.

7. **Build relationships**
   - Identify and target the right category manager or buyer.
   - Personalise your approach and show knowledge of their range and needs.
   - Plan for ongoing engagement, not just a one-off pitch.

8. **Prepare for risk management**
   - Understand contract terms, including exit clauses and stockholding requirements.
   - Have a plan for innovation and continuous improvement to avoid delisting.
   - Be aware of the risk of being replaced by a better or cheaper supplier.

9. **Leverage New Zealand's reputation**
   - Emphasise NZ's strengths: quality, food safety, sustainability, and provenance.
   - Tailor your narrative to address any concerns about distance or food miles.

10. **Documentation & samples**
    - Have all technical documentation ready.
    - Prepare product samples that meet UK specifications and preferences.

Source: Expert interview with Mark Field via NZTE's Beachhead Network (December 2025).