

Protein & functional foods

NO.1 FOR PROTEIN IN CHEESE*

+184%

SURGE IN SALES OF CHEESE PRODUCTS CARRYING A CLEAR 'PROTEIN' CLAIM**



*37g Protein per 100g - the highest level of protein found in the UK cheese marketplace as of July 2026

**Circana 52 W/E 6th September 2025

Eatlean

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Closing the protein gap

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Eatlean Protein

The past twelve months have been transformative for Eatlean Protein. Following the rebrand in November 2025, the brand fully embraced a protein-first positioning, capitalising on the growing dairy protein market while aligning with its core U40 consumer base. Success in the UK market led to an international rollout across Spain and Germany, where the rebrand has already delivered significant sales growth, with Australia set to follow in January 2027.

As both pioneers and challengers within their category, Eatlean Protein continues to the position of highest protein cheese globally¹. From this position, the brand has pushed to close the protein gap within cheese, with consumer demand for high-protein cheese at 18%², yet only 1% of shelf space dedicated to it³.

“Consumer demand for high-protein cheese presents a huge opportunity for retailers,” explains Bethan Lamont, head of brand at Eatlean Protein. “We’ve seen protein-first approaches drive growth across yoghurt, milkshakes, puddings and milk, and we know that same opportunity exists in cheese. Our innovative approach to cheesemaking delivers a product with 40% more protein and 90% less fat, meeting the macros consumers are looking for.” Recent innovation launches demonstrate the brand’s belief in cheese as a leading protein source. These include the first protein bar made solely of cheese, Eatlean Protein Cheese Bites as a challenger in the crisp category and a new range



“We aren’t just another brand capitalising on protein, we’re a brand that harnesses the true potential of our protein”

of protein snack pots targeting the bestselling egg protein pot in food-to-go. “We believe consumers should have greater choice, we believe in the power of natural protein, and we see the true potential that cheese has to deliver that, with longevity,” notes Lamont. “We aren’t just another brand capitalising on protein, we’re a brand that harnesses the true potential of our protein,” she adds. With a strong innovation pipeline into 2027, Eatlean Protein’s focus again turns to accelerating awareness. The brand has built a reputation for experiential marketing through its distinctive blue Eatlean Cheese Machine, delivering national and international sampling campaigns. During 2026 it sponsored the Snowboard World Cup, exhibited at FIBO, and activated at major sporting events across the UK, Germany, Australia and Spain.

The momentum continues into Q4 with further sampling campaigns supporting the brand’s US market entry and an omnichannel campaign to amplify product launches in three new national convenience retailers, reinforcing Eatlean Protein’s ambition to make high-protein cheese a mainstream choice.



Source

- ¹ Eatlean Protein cheese contains 37g Protein per 100g
- ² Vypr survey of 1,877 UK adults, August 2025
- ³ Independent UK retailer store audits 2026

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Walk down any UK supermarket aisle today and protein is no longer confined to a shelf of whey tubs. It is stamped on coffee, cereal boxes, cheese wrappers and sparkling water cans. A macronutrient that once belonged almost exclusively to gym-goers has become a mainstream shorthand for health, and the industry building around it is being forced to answer some questions: has the growth already run its course or is this still the early stage of something bigger? Can a category built on gym-floor credibility survive its own mainstreaming?

And what happens now that a new, medicated cohort of shoppers – those on GLP-1 weight-loss drugs – are eating less but demanding more from every bite? What emerges is a category in transition less interested in shouting

about grams per serving and more focused on proving what protein actually does for the person drinking, eating or spreading it.

The old playbook, built on a “more is better” narrative is giving way to something more demanding. Brands now have to explain not just how much protein a product contains, but why that matters, to whom, and at which moment in the day.

Is protein peaking? The verdict is no

Ask whether UK protein demand has topped out, and the response is almost uniformly the same: not yet – though what ‘growth’ means is shifting under everyone’s feet.

At Arla, brand director Stu Ibberson describes it as a change of gear rather than a slowdown. “We’re not at peak

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protein yet; we're entering the next phase of maturity... the opportunity now is less about 'more protein' and more about 'better protein' that genuinely earns a place in everyday routines." This, he says, is built on "personalisation by need-state and life stage" rather than chasing grams per serving.

"The next phase of growth will come from helping consumers find the right nutritional solutions for their individual goals, whether that's performance, recovery, healthy ageing, weight management or everyday wellbeing," notes Anna Hale, CMO at Glanbia Performance Nutrition.

Nowhere is that combination of confidence and unmet demand more visible than in cheese. "We operate in a category where demand remains high, but retail availability sits low," says Bethan Lamont, head of brand at Eatlean Protein. "Just last year, The Grocer commissioned a Vypr study which cited demand for added protein cheese at 18% – the highest across all dairy categories, yet on average only 1% of shelf space is dedicated to a healthier high protein offering" – a gap she sees closing not through novelty, but through trust in familiar ingredients. "Products focused on natural protein will stand the test of time... 68% of UK adults prefer to get their nutrients from food and drink rather than pills and powders²," she notes.

"In the ready-to-drink (RTD) shake aisle, where protein is the core benefit not an add-on, value is growing +44% YoY³," says Nigel Marchant, head of brand at For Goodness Shakes, tracing the audience shift over the past decade "from largely 'gym-bro' and professional athlete associations, to becoming more mainstream".

However, he cautions there are "varying levels of knowledge beyond 'I know I need protein' regarding types of protein, the amount needed and what it does".

"RTD protein value sales are up 39% and category sales now sit over £4m a week⁴... around one in seven UK households are now buying protein shakes, and the frequency they're doing so has risen by over 40%⁵," reveals Angie Turner, head of marketing at Ufit, where the growth curve now looks less like recruitment and more like repetition. "Protein has already become mainstream," she says.



"The opportunity now is to make it habitual."

Ganesh Jillah, marketing manager at Nutrabort, agrees the ceiling is nowhere in sight, but locates the next wave somewhere beyond the traditional fitness shopper altogether. "The UK protein market is far from reaching its ceiling. Rather than a fitness trend, protein is continuing to become an everyday nutrition solution, creating significant headroom for growth as it expands into wellness, weight management, healthy ageing and

satiety occasions," he says, pointing to how "brands like Bloom are making protein more accessible within daily wellness routines, while C4 is combining protein with benefits such as energy, focus and recovery".

"There is still headroom for protein in the UK, particularly within chilled dairy," notes Heloise Le Norcy-Trott, group marketing director at Lindahls. "Consumer demand is continuing to build, with 23% of consumers now searching for foods high in protein, up 75% versus 2021⁶," she adds. The same expansion is happening through formats shoppers already trust rather than new ones they have to learn.

The GLP-1 effect

No single force came up more often across these conversations than GLP-1 weight-loss medication – a shift that is quietly rewriting what "enough protein" even means, pushing brands to think in smaller, denser servings

“Consumer demand is continuing to build, with 23% of consumers now searching for foods high in protein, up 75% versus 2021⁶”



Why novel proteins aren't catching on

Sustainability gets a lot of airtime in food innovation circles, but mycelium, precision fermentation and cultivated protein are still a hard sell to the average UK shopper.

"Consumers ultimately buy products, not technologies," notes Glanbia's Hale. "While sustainability is an increasingly important consideration, taste, trust, nutritional quality and value remain the primary purchase drivers."

"Novel protein sources will gain broader adoption when they can deliver comparable taste, functionality, affordability and nutritional benefits to

established proteins," she adds. Consumers need confidence that these products offer a genuine improvement rather than simply a different production method." Nutrabolt's Jillah diagnoses the same gap in almost identical terms – the lack of ability to make new science feel familiar. "The gap between industry enthusiasm and shopper adoption comes down to a failure to translate innovation into products that feel familiar, reliable and worth changing established habits for," he says.

"While sustainability resonates, UK

consumers still prioritise taste, price and simplicity, meaning novel proteins struggle to move beyond curiosity.

"The opportunity lies in embedding them into accessible, great-tasting formats – with the C4 whey protein Hershey's flavour collaboration it helps hero taste while delivering functional performance attracting a broader audience."

"One of the key principles of marketing any product or category is being 'externally-oriented' – i.e. consumer-driven," acknowledges For Goodness Shakes' Marchant.

"Consumers care about sustainability to varying levels, across different criteria, be it from recyclable packaging and CO₂ emissions to ethical sourcing or animal welfare," he adds.

"But when it comes to the purchase decision itself, products need to deliver consumer-centric value. Do they taste good? Do they fit my budget? Are they natural versus being ultra-processed? "Education and reassurance will be key moving forwards if the products of these technologies are to grow in any meaningful way with mainstream consumers."

rather than bigger ones. "A recent NIQ report projected GLP-1 household penetration to rise from 12% in 2026 up to 30% by 2030," notes For Goodness Shakes' Marchant, who nonetheless warns the industry against chasing the trend indiscriminately. "We need to be careful not to fall into 'GLP-1 washing' territory with every product category jumping on the GLP-1 bandwagon – and clearly some products are more naturally suited than others." His response has been reformulation rather than repositioning. "For Goodness Shakes' 330ml RTD protein shakes offer 35g of high-quality protein in a 330ml serving, which not only supports consumers' protein intake, are fat-free and high in calcium, but recognise the need for higher-density nutrition in smaller serve sizes," he says.

Glanbia's Hale frames the same shift in more structural terms, arguing GLP-1 is less a trend than an accelerant for something already underway.

Meanwhile, Nutrabolt's Jillah notes: "Research consistently shows that protein is one of the nutrients GLP-1 users actively prioritise because of its role in supporting muscle maintenance, satiety and overall nutritional quality. We see GLP-1 not as a niche trend, but as part of a broader evolution in how consumers think about nutrition."

That "more from less" principle is showing up in unexpected places. Ufit's Turner describes it as "functional stacking" – shoppers wanting several benefits bundled into a single format rather than isolated in separate products: "Consumers have become more deliberate about what they eat and drink, and they want products that will work harder for them... it also means fibre, vitamins, low sugar, low fat and controlled calories all in one convenient format." But she flags a real limit to how far that logic can be pushed. "A product can look impressive on protein content, but if the size or

taste make it feel too heavy for daily use, it narrows the audience."

Even beyond the shakes aisle, the ripple effects are visible in texture as much as in nutrition panels.

Clean label versus high functional

Clean labels and strong nutritional credentials are often presented as complementary goals rather than competing priorities. The focus is on including only ingredients that add genuine value and clearly communicating their role.

"We start with high-quality milk proteins that are inherently functional for satiety and recovery, then add familiar, naturally derived components... only where they provide a clear, evidence-backed role," says Arla's Ibberson.

"Consumers expect both transparency and efficacy, and we don't believe those objectives are mutually exclusive... as brands need to explain

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why ingredients are included and the role they play,” notes Glanbia’s Hale.

For Goodness Shakes took that logic furthest, rebuilding its whole range to prove the point rather than simply asserting it. “We increased the protein content in our recipes to deliver 35g of protein in a 330ml bottle – 40% more protein than other branded competitors,” says Marchant.

“The reformulation not only increased protein content, but also reduced the number of ingredients including stabilisers. We had to reduce our shelf life slightly as a result, but this was a step worth taking.”

“Clean label and high functionality don’t have to be opposing forces for consumers – but they do require simplification and smarter formulations,” explains Nutrabolt’s Jillah. “The balance can be found in delivering meaningful, proven benefits using ingredients that are easy to understand and clearly recognised by consumers,” she adds. “For C4, this means focusing on performance-led efficacy with transparent, purposeful ingredient choices... For Bloom, it’s about leading with simplicity, gut-first credentials and accessible wellness cues that build trust.”

From the gym bag to the coffee cup

Protein’s spread into coffee, cereal and sparkling water divides opinion sharply – between brands who see fresh growth in every new occasion and those who see the seeds of consumer scepticism in every unearned claim.

Arla’s Ibberson lands firmly on the side of caution. “Mainstreaming has unlocked meaningful growth, taking protein from niche to everyday and driving value in convenience-led categories like ready-to-drink beverages, yoghurts, and snacks. But breadth alone isn’t a strategy; ‘protein’ as a badge without purpose risks fatigue and erodes trust among core users who expect efficacy,” he explains. His test for whether a format deserves the badge is simple: “When protein is tied to a clear need – managing hunger between meals, avoiding energy dips across the day, or supporting post-activity recovery – it adds value. When it’s added without a clear role, it dilutes credibility.”

For Goodness Shakes’ Marchant arrives at the same warning from consumer research rather than



principle: “we must avoid ‘protein washing’ to safeguard credibility and trust,” he says. “A recent report by Stickybeak found UK consumers want protein in familiar, convenient formats – not novelty – and for some categories such as protein coffee or wine, there is far less interest,” he adds.

Not everyone shares that caution. Glanbia’s Hale is unambiguously optimistic, provided the fundamentals hold: “We see this as one of the most exciting developments in the category. If brands continue to focus on quality and efficacy, format innovation will grow the category rather than dilute it.”

Nutrabolt’s Jillah frames the format shift as an overdue expansion into

audiences the category has historically ignored: “The biggest opportunity for protein isn’t selling more shakes to gym-goers; it’s making protein relevant to millions more consumers, more often.” He points specifically to women as a blind spot only now being corrected: “Bloom Clear Protein delivers protein in a lighter, more refreshing format that fits naturally into everyday wellness routines.”

However, for others, credibility can be earned rather than assumed. “The more it appears in familiar everyday formats, the less intimidating it becomes,” says Ufit’s Turner, “but if the benefit feels tokenistic, shoppers will see through it” – an advantage she believes dairy starts with by default, since it “has a natural role to play because it is already associated with nutrition, satiety and everyday consumption.”

Lindhals’s Heloise Le Norcy-Trott strikes much the same balance from

“Convenience-led missions punch above their weight in protein”



Is functional food becoming confusing?

Gut health, brain health and longevity are all growing consumer obsessions, but stacking them all into one aisle risks losing shoppers rather than winning them. “These trends are expanding performance nutrition far beyond traditional sports nutrition, attracting consumers who are increasingly interested in supporting long-term health alongside physical performance,” says Glanbia’s Hale. “The challenge is preventing complexity. Consumers think in terms of outcomes, not ingredients, so brands and retailers have

a responsibility to simplify the category and communicate benefits clearly.”

Nutrabolt’s Jillah sees the category tipping from single-benefit products into something more ambitious, and more precarious. “Growing interest in gut health, brain health and longevity is pushing functional foods beyond single-benefit products towards holistic wellness solutions,” he says. “Brands like C4 are combining energy, focus and performance benefits, while Bloom is helping lead the shift towards gut health, hydration and everyday wellness. The risk

isn’t a lack of demand – it’s a lack of clarity. As more ingredients and claims enter the category, shoppers can quickly become overwhelmed.

“Consumers don’t shop for probiotics, adaptogens or nootropics; they shop for better energy, digestion, focus or overall wellbeing.”

For Goodness Shakes’ Marchant points to a shift in consumer mindset as the root cause: “Consumers are becoming more proactive about their wellbeing and holistic health. They’re increasingly looking at nutrition to support not just performance, but

longer-term wellbeing too. This has driven demand for products that support multiple wellbeing goals, either individually or simultaneously, and we can see that manifest itself on supermarket shelves and across social media, with the likes of TikTok fuelling demand for trend-driven products.” His conclusion echoes Hale and Jillah almost word for word: “The choice is vast though – and complex... making informed decisions requires simple and effective education and benefit-led communication, whether on-pack or in broader consumer communications.”

the dairy side of the aisle: “The shift into more everyday formats can support category growth, provided the proposition remains clear and credible. The risk is that protein becomes too broad or loosely applied. It works best when linked to clear shopper benefits, familiar formats and real eating occasions.”

Capturing spend before it goes online

With quick-commerce and online grocery eating into impulse spend, the retail conversation kept returning to one idea: merchandise around the mission, not the category label and let the physical store do the one thing a screen can’t, which is solve a need in the moment.

“Convenience-led missions punch above their weight in protein,” notes Arla’s Ibberson. Much of what looks like spontaneous buying has already been decided before the shopper reaches the shelf, he points out. “Many ‘impulse’

choices are now pre-influenced by digital touchpoints before shoppers enter the store,” he notes. “Winning in-store means making protein easy to find, easy to understand and easy to add to basket. And merchandising that maps to real occasions like breakfast on-the-go, lunch solutions and recovery.”

“My local train station coffee shop, for example, has an array of sugary soft drinks and milkshakes but no protein shake, which would open up an alternative, healthier on-the-go option for commuters,” says For Goodness Shakes’ Marchant. Before pointing to a newer gap opening up directly because of the GLP-1 trend: “GLP-1 drugs have now become available in tablet form. This provides a huge opportunity for physical stores to offer complementary products such as protein shakes, to be located adjacent to pharmacies.”

Glanbia’s Hale frames the retailer’s job in almost identical terms but at

category level. “One of the biggest opportunities lies in helping consumers navigate an increasingly fragmented category,” she says. “Shoppers are looking for solutions rather than products. Retailers can unlock growth by merchandising around consumer needs such as healthy ageing, hydration or high-protein snacking.”

Nutrabolt’s Jillah agrees that convenience stores have an advantage that online cannot easily replicate – immediacy. “The retailers that succeed will be those that make functional nutrition easy to find, easy to understand and easy to purchase,” he says.

Lindahls’ Le Norcy-Trott’s sees the opportunity spanning both planned shops and quick top-ups, but with an extra hurdle for less familiar products. “Clear benefit-led messaging around high protein, low fat and everyday usage can help shoppers quickly understand the role of a product in

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their basket,” she explains. “This is particularly important for emerging categories such as quark, where awareness and understanding are still relatively low. Retailers can also encourage trade-up by connecting products to real eating occasions. Cottage cheese and quark are both versatile across sweet and savoury uses, from breakfast bowls and smoothies to dips, wraps, salads and cooking. Bringing those uses to life in-store can help convert interest into trial and repeat purchase.”

Private label

Retailer own-brand ranges are becoming harder to ignore on protein shelves, yet brands largely see this not as a threat, but as a sign of a healthy, maturing category. “Private label plays an important role in increasing accessibility and encouraging category trial, which ultimately supports category growth,” says Glanbia’s Hale. She sees the two camps as complementary rather than competing, with branded and own-label products “serving complementary roles within a healthy category ecosystem”.

“It can expand the category and reset expectations on value and accessibility,” argues Nutrabort’s Jillah. “Own-brand ranges help mainstream functional nutrition, bringing in new shoppers and normalising usage, while branded players still lead on innovation, trust and distinctiveness.”

For Goodness Shakes’ Marchant believes it’s “a sign that protein and functional nutrition have become more mainstream, which is positive for those categories, and ultimately for the nation’s health and wellness”.

At Eatlean, meanwhile, the line between branded and own-label is less a battle than a business model. As Lamont puts it: “Other brands, and retailers have turned to us to protein-power their meals, snacks and cheese ranges,” a brand playing both sides of the aisle at once.

The shift the industry needs to make

Pressed to name the single change that would turn protein from a trend cycle into a permanent fixture of the UK diet, the answers converged on the same idea. Stop making claims, start proving outcomes.

Arla’s Ibberson notes: “Long-term growth won’t come from repeating



‘high in protein’; it will come from proving what protein does in real life. Formulate for benefits consumers can feel. Build trust through outcomes, not just claims, and the category becomes a reliable part of everyday nutrition.”

“Move from selling ingredients and formulations to selling outcomes and occasions,” adds Nutrabort’s Jillah. “Most consumers are simply asking a much more practical question: How will this help me today?” he says.

The category needs to move from simply adding protein to their products, towards delivering meaningful everyday benefits. “Protein alone is no longer enough,” notes Ufit’s Turner.

“Consumers today have access to more health and fitness information than at any point in history”

At For Goodness Shakes, Marchant believes the gap standing in the way of that shift is education; while protein has become more ubiquitous, there are still gaps in consumers’ knowledge around why protein matters. “And for some, still a view that it’s more for sports people or the younger ‘gym’ generation,” he says. “More education around protein’s role throughout life, communicating its broader role in supporting healthy ageing, maintaining muscle mass, staying active and promoting satiety, could help build life-long engagement with the category.”

Hale points to a related but almost opposite problem – not too little information, but too much of it, none of it trusted: “Consumers today have access to more health and fitness information than at any point in history. Yet despite having more information available to them, many consumers feel more confused than

Savoury protein's quiet rise

While much of the industry chases sweet RTD shakes and bars, Eatlean Protein's Lamont sees a different opportunity building in savoury snacking, aimed squarely at cost-conscious shoppers. "One key challenge that we are hearing from consumers is cost and affordability, something we were mindful of when we launched a challenger to sweet protein bars," she says. "Our savoury cheese protein bar retails in at almost half the price of most protein bars, yet still offering 20g protein per serving." The early results echo a pattern already proven elsewhere in

the fixture, she adds. "The sales success of our challenger product within the protein bar space demonstrates the shift to natural, unprocessed, savoury snacking – ROS remains strong and growing for our Eatlean Protein Cheese Bar as a protein offering within the meal deal space. Mirroring the egg pot effect, where trusted, natural sources of protein sit as preferred choices within healthier snacking." "Cheese is a fantastic natural source of protein, and, as a brand, we have found a way to unlock that protein by reducing the fat by 90% in comparison to

other full fat cheeses. That innovation took considerable time, and is a continued effort to maintain," she adds. "We took that approach to deliver an authentic natural product from day one, and we look to stay true to this as we continue to innovate in line with evolving consumer demand." That confidence extends to how she sees Eatlean's role in the wider market: "Our cheese still remains the healthiest cheese on the market, that's why other brands, and retailers have turned to us to protein power their meals, snacks and cheese ranges. Nobody can create

healthy cheese at the nutritional levels that our brand has achieved, and that unique position enables us to take a central role in growing our category as a whole, both through branded and private label." "We're full advocates for the widening accessibility of protein, and believe that consumers should have greater choice for healthy, clean deck protein offerings across all meal and snacking occasions throughout their day... Protein should be more accessible, but not at the compromise of its source," she concludes.

ever. The brands and retailers that succeed will be those that simplify complexity and build trust."

Lindahls' Le Norcy-Trott makes the same case for plain communication, using quark as her clearest example of an opportunity going to waste: "Long-term success depends on helping shoppers understand what products are, how to use them and how they fit into everyday routines. Quark is a good example," she explains. "The category is growing, but awareness remains low, and many shoppers are still unsure what it is or how to use it. For protein to avoid becoming a trend cycle, the industry needs to move beyond simple claims."

The bottom line

UK protein demand has not peaked, it has matured. Growth from here won't be won by whoever shouts 'high in protein' the loudest, but by whoever can prove in plain language, in formats

that fit real life, on shelves that make the right choice the easy one – what their product actually does.

GLP-1 medication has sharpened that mission rather than replaced it, pushing brands towards smaller, denser, more purposeful formulations.

Clean label and functionality, once framed as opposites, are being reconciled through smarter formulation rather than sacrifice, a shorter ingredient list no longer has to mean a weaker claim.

And as protein keeps turning up in stranger corners of the supermarket, the brands still standing in years to come are likely to be the ones that resisted adding it for its own sake, building instead around a benefit shoppers could actually feel.

Consumers walk in with a need rather than a brand in mind and the stores that solve that need easily will take a share from the ones that don't. That leaves the industry with a harder

job than the one it started with. Adding protein to a product used to be enough of a story on its own. It isn't anymore.

The category's next chapter, in other words, will be written less by formulators chasing a bigger number on the pack and more by marketers willing to answer a much simpler question honestly: what does this actually do for me, today?

Who's spent the last few years proving that answer will keep growing once the trend cycle moves on. None of this is really about protein anymore. It's about whether an industry that grew up on bold claims is willing to slow down and prove them instead.

Sources

¹ Vypr survey of 1,877 UK adults, August 2025

² The Global Trends Driving the Evolution of Health Eating, Feb 2024

³ Nielsen, Latest 52wks to 13/6/26

⁴ Nielsen 52 w/e May 2026 – Total Coverage

⁵ Nielsen Homescan 52 w/e 13th

June 2026

⁶ Worldpanel by Numerator March 2026

⁷ How GLP-1 is Reshaping Consumer Behavior and CPG Growth Strategies, Nov 2025

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Arla Protein

➔ Arla Protein continues to capitalise on the mainstreaming of protein in the UK, evolving from a gym-led proposition into a trusted, great-tasting choice for everyday satiety, recovery and energy.

“Built on high-quality milk proteins and Arla’s farmer-owned heritage, the range delivers naturally high protein in accessible, convenient formats,” notes Stu Ibberson, brand director at Arla Foods. This dairy-led proposition resonates strongly with shoppers seeking simple, familiar products that deliver clear functional benefits without compromise on taste or quality, he says.

“Over the past 12 months, Arla Protein has delivered strong growth in the UK, supported by continued momentum across innovation, distribution and brand engagement,” explains Ibberson. “In yogurts, the growth of pouches has accelerated, with repeat purchase driven by great taste and the convenient on-the-go format. Arla Protein Shakes are also gaining traction, benefiting from both increased distribution and secondary sitings in high-footfall areas, where the ready-to-drink format serves immediate consumption missions.”

Digital and in-store activations continue to work in tandem to drive conversion. “Pre-store inspiration through recipes, meal ideas and targeted content encourages category



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entry, while in-store secondary siting and simple cross-category pairings help drive incremental basket spend – particularly within convenience and impulse channels,” notes Ibberson. “Clear messaging has helped shoppers navigate the category and helped build brand trust.

“When it comes to NPD, Arla Protein expanded its ready-to-drink range in March 2026 with the launch of a 482ml Banana Shake, adding a naturally flavoured variant designed to deliver a more filling, on-the-go option within the growing ready-to-drink segment,” he adds.

Looking ahead, Arla Protein has a strong innovation pipeline, focusing on delivering great tasting, natural products with added functional benefits. Ibberson concludes: “By combining dairy’s natural strengths with formats designed for real-life consumption moments, the brand is making functional nutrition more accessible – supporting its ambition to make high-quality protein an easy, everyday choice for UK shoppers.”

THE UK'S NO.1 DAIRY PROTEIN BRAND*



*Kantar | 52 Weeks | 14-06-26

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KEY BRANDS

For Goodness Shakes
– Protein 27g, 35g
– Elite 50g
– **GLOW** – winner of
the 2026 Mintel Most
Innovative Award - Food
& Drink Category

For Goodness Shakes (FGS) is the Original Gangster (OG) ready-to-drink (RTD) protein shake, creating the category in 2003. It's now the fastest-growing established brand, with an impressive +78%¹ value increase year on year – almost double that of the total category – and 21% market share². Its flagship Chocolate 35g is the No.1 RTD protein shake in the market³.

But the picture a year ago was very different: against double-digit market growth in 2025, FGS was underperforming with value down -10.3%⁴ and the brand's No.2 position under threat. Extensive consumer and market insights identified the causes, and a course-correction plan was devised. Its transformation over the past year is testament to the brand's category understanding, being consumer-centric and passionate about delivering the best-quality shakes.

The turnaround strategy

"Research⁵ identified that protein content was the most important category entry point, closely followed by taste," explains Nigel Marchant, head of brand for FGS. "Our 435ml bottle contained too much liquid for many people. So we created a new recipe and reduced the serve size, delivering 35g of high-quality protein (from skimmed milk concentrate) in a more manageable size (330ml). Meanwhile, the protein content in our smaller 250ml bottle was increased from 20g to 27g. This reformulation means FGS is ideally placed to leverage the rise in GLP-1 usage, projected to reach 20% penetration by 2030⁶, where users need nutrient-dense products in smaller quantities to support their weight loss journey."

Responding to consumer demand and macro trends, the new recipe is fat-free, lactose-free, and has no added sugars, with the number of ingredients, including stabilisers, being significantly reduced, says Marchant. "Our new White Chocolate 35g for example, contains just four ingredients and no stabilisers."

While product was the first step, the business also embarked on a major pack redesign in October



The transformation of FGS over the past 12 months is testament to the brand's category understanding and passion for quality"



2025, bringing in strong branding, clear flavour delineation and clear benefit communication. This, says Marchant, has been a key contributor to performance turnaround, building on the protein and pack size changes. "For greater sustainability our bottles are now all at least 75% rPET – unique in this category," he adds.

Meanwhile, as the third pillar of the turnaround, innovation is central to FGS' future growth plans. "Having identified the need for protein with added benefits, in September 2025 we launched Glow, the UK's first collagen protein shake aimed at beauty-conscious consumers. Glow broadens category appeal by building on the 'beauty from within' trend particularly among Gen Zs, but also the rising demand for menopause-friendly products.

More to come

The FGS story is one of exciting transformation, as more people appreciate its market-leading quality, attracting more shoppers to the category, says Marchant. "The brand has ambitious plans for the coming years; central to these will be consumers, value-added innovation and uncompromising quality."

Source

¹⁻³ NIQ Total Coverage Value & Unit Sales RTD Protein Shakes 12 w/e 13.06.26 vs YA
⁴ NIQ Total Coverage Value Sales RTD Protein Shakes 52 w/e 05.07.25 vs YA
⁵ Vypr/FGS Protein Category Research, Oct 2025
⁶ NIQ GB Homescan Panel GLP-1 Survey, Field: 08.06.26, 24,282 respondents

THE GOODNESS KEEPS GROWING



Value sales
+78%*

UK's
No.1
RTD Protein
Shake SKU†

Unit Sales
+77%*

FOR
**GOODNESS
SHAKES**

*Source: NIQ Total Coverage Value & Unit Sales RTD Protein Shakes 12 w/e 13/06/26 vs VA. †Chocolate 35g Protein 330ml No.1 RTD protein shake SKU

Driving category growth

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Optimum Nutrition
& **Isopure**

For more than 35 years, Optimum Nutrition has been at the forefront of sports nutrition, helping shape the category through industry-leading quality, science-backed innovation and trusted performance.

“Today, as the world’s leading sports nutrition brand and the world’s No.1 sports nutrition brand¹, we continue to set the benchmark for products that consumers and retailers trust,” notes Anna Hale, CMO at Glanbia Performance Nutrition International. “Our focus remains unchanged: developing best-in-class products, driving meaningful innovation and helping more consumers access the benefits of protein and performance nutrition.” Fitness today is no longer defined by the weight on the barbell or the number on the stopwatch, she points out. Consumers are redefining what performance means to them; training for a first Hyrox, running to improve mental wellbeing, balancing parenthood with personal goals or simply striving to become healthier and stronger. “That shift inspired The Optimum Advantage, our flagship campaign featuring McLaren Mastercard F1 driver Lando Norris and England rugby international Marcus Smith,” she reveals. “The campaign celebrates everyday ambition and the pursuit of continual progress. As category leader, our responsibility extends beyond growing market share. We believe our role is to help grow the category itself by making performance nutrition more accessible and easier to navigate.” Innovation remains central to that ambition, she adds. “Gold Standard Whey continues to set the benchmark for quality and trust within protein supplementation, earning its



“We believe our role is to help grow the category itself by making performance nutrition more accessible, more relevant and easier to navigate”

reputation as one of the world’s most trusted and reviewed protein powders,” she says. “Alongside this, our expanding Clear portfolio, including Clear Whey Protein and Protein Water, reflects changing consumer behaviours and demand for lighter, refreshing and convenient formats. By unlocking new consumption occasions throughout the day, these innovations are helping to expand the category.” The same philosophy underpins Glanbia’s approach to creatine. “Consumers are seeking trusted brands that can deliver proven efficacy and consistent quality,” adds Hale. “Optimum Nutrition has helped establish creatine as one of the fastest-growing segments within performance nutrition while reinforcing its position as the UK’s leading creatine brand², notes Kristie Holloway, UK general manager at Glanbia Performance Nutrition International. “As sports nutrition enters its next phase of growth, the brands offering the greatest value to retailers will be those that recruit new consumers, create new occasions and build trust across the category.”

“As a leading sports nutrition brand, Optimum Nutrition remains committed to setting that standard through science-led innovation, category leadership and an unwavering commitment to helping more people unlock their performance potential.”



Source

¹ Circana (UK) Ltd, All Outlets incl. Chemists & HB, UK, Sports Nutrition, Value Sales, MAT to 3 Jan 2026

² Circana All Outlets, Creatine Powders Category, Value Sales, 52 weeks to 19/01/2025



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you
choose
the best.



The UK's
#1 sports
nutrition
brand*

*Circana (UK) Ltd, All Outlets incl Chemists & HB, UK,
Sports Nutrition, Value Sales, MAT to 3 Jan 2026

Grenade

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Making protein indulgent

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KEY BRANDS

Grenade

Protein has firmly moved beyond sports nutrition competing with traditional confectionery, crisps and milkshakes as permissible indulgence.

“Shoppers are no longer willing to compromise on taste; protein snacks must deliver on flavour, satisfaction and convenience to win repeat purchase,” notes Tom Murphy, CEO at Grenade. “Within the category, there are two key shopper groups: those with active lifestyles and those seeking healthier alternatives to everyday snacks. Where these audiences overlap is demand for snacks that are convenient, filling, high in protein and critically, indulgent enough to replace a chocolate bar.”

For the protein category to continue recruiting shoppers, visibility, education and innovation remain essential. As the UK’s best-selling protein bar brand¹, Grenade recognises the importance of these and continues to drive category forward working alongside retailers to support on each of the vital pillars of growth.

The role innovation plays

“As a category leader, Grenade’s innovation not only drives incremental sales but recruits new consumers into protein,” says Murphy.

After the break-out success of its limited-edition Creme Egg protein bar, Grenade returns with a new three-flavour range of Soft Core Protein Bars. These combine a soft core, with a gooey centre and a thick chocolate outer later, delivering all the indulgence of a treat while packing 15g of protein and less than 2g of sugar per bar. As shoppers continue to look for convenient protein options that do not compromise on taste or texture, Grenade Soft Core Protein Bars are designed to help retailers tap into the growing demand for 10-19g protein snacks².

With 75% of UK snack eaters saying that snacks combining different textures appeal to them³ and 70% interested in filled snack bars⁴, the new range of flavours offer an elevated taste and texture



“Shoppers look for convenient protein options that don’t compromise on taste and texture”

beyond traditional protein bars.

The chocolate peanut butter bar combines peanut butter flavour dough with a smooth peanut butter style centre and milk chocolate coating, while the golden caramel pairs caramel flavour dough with a rich, indulgent caramel flavour centre and smooth white chocolate coating.

Trends and formats

Health and wellness trends continue to support protein growth, with protein now appearing across categories such as yogurts and cereals.

However, protein bars and shakes remain the primary entry point for shoppers. The range of Grenade Protein shakes is comprised of flavours including chocolate fudge brownie, chocolate salted caramel, cookies & cream, strawberries & cream, and white chocolate.

The range offers UK consumers the very best in high-protein, low-sugar liquid that delivers functionality and flavour. Each 330ml bottle has over 25g of protein, is low in fat and sugar and is made from natural flavours and colours.



Source

- ¹ NIQ data ending 52 w/e P5, 16th May 2026
- ² Market Measure UK 2025, Protein bar category
- ³ Mintel 2025 UK Consumer Snacking report
- ⁴ Mintel 2025 UK Snack bars and breakfast, biscuits, report

NEW



GRENADE SOFT CORE

FROM THE UK'S BEST-SELLING PROTEIN BAR BRAND*

*NIQ data ending 52 w/e P4, 18th April 2026 - Total Protein Market

Lindahls

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How Lindahls is shaping the rise in protein

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Lindahls Protein

As demand for high-protein dairy accelerates, Lactalis UK & Ireland is using its scale and dairy expertise to help retailers unlock one of the biggest growth opportunities in chilled dairy.

Part of Lactalis Group, the world's largest dairy company, Lactalis UK & Ireland has a portfolio spanning the category's most recognisable cheese and dairy brands. Within this, Lindahls Protein is helping bring high-protein dairy further into the mainstream, encouraging shoppers to add protein through familiar chilled formats.

According to H  lo  se Le Norcy-Trott, group marketing director at Lactalis UK & Ireland, protein is no longer a specialist claim reserved for sports nutrition. "Consumer demand is moving in the brand's favour, with 23% of consumers now searching for foods high in protein, up 75% versus 2021¹, reinforcing protein's role as a purchase driver across everyday food and dairy."

Now worth £40m RSV², Lindahls Protein – the only UK protein dairy brand spanning cheese, milk drinks, yoghurts and desserts – is providing retailers a platform to build a clear high-protein dairy destination. Within the range, cottage cheese and quark are bringing high-protein dairy into more everyday occasions.

Cottage cheese shows how a traditional dairy product can be reappraised when it meets shopper demand for health, versatility and meal inspiration. Its comeback has been accelerated by TikTok and recipe-led social content, which have helped reposition cottage cheese from a diet-led product into a versatile ingredient for high-protein meals. Lindahls Protein cottage cheese brings cottage cheese into a broader high-protein dairy platform by giving shoppers



“Consumer demand for protein is moving in the brand's favour, with 23% of consumers now searching for foods high in protein, up 75% versus 2021¹”

a simple entry point into functional dairy, says Le Norcy-Trott.

Alongside this, quark is an underdeveloped, fast-growing opportunity that Lactalis UK & Ireland believes could become the next major growth driver in high-protein dairy. Currently worth £5.3m and growing 13.3% year on year³, quark is now the fourth fastest-growing cheese⁴ type over the past two years, behind burrata, cottage cheese and paneer. Yet awareness remains low, meaning the category is still only at the start of its growth journey. "Quark has many of the same fundamentals that helped cottage cheese scale, particularly around health, protein and versatility, but remains at an earlier stage of development," says Le Norcy-Trott.

Since launching in March 2025, Lindahls Protein quark has recruited new shoppers, with 77% new to quark⁴. Where listed, category growth has increased by 132%⁵.

Looking ahead, Lactalis UK & Ireland will continue to use its dairy expertise, category insight and brand investment to build understanding of high-protein dairy and support the growth of Lindahls Protein. Its 'Good Move' creative platform helps make high-protein dairy feel more accessible to everyday lifestyles, celebrating the small choices that can support a more active lifestyle while reinforcing the brand's balance of health and enjoyment.



Source

- ¹ Worldpanel by Numerator March 2026
- ² Circana, All outlets 52 w/e June 2026
- ³ Circana, 52 w/e 21.02.26
- ⁴ Numerator, Feb 26
- ⁵ Lactalis UK & Ireland sales data

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W: www.cellucor.uk
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Anticipating consumer needs

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C4 Pre-workout
– C4 Original
– C4 Sport
– C4 Ripped
– C4 Ultimate
C4 Original Pre-workout shots 60ml
C4 UltimatePre-workout shots 60ml
C4 Whey protein
C4 RTD Protein
REESE'S®
HERSHEY'S®

At C4, the standout moment of 2026 has been securing a multi-year partnership as the official energy drink partner of the NBA Europe, reveals Paul Coppin, VP marketing at Nutrabolt. “This partnership allows us to connect to the growing basketball community in Europe, bringing energy to moments that matter most,” he says. “The multi-year deal goes beyond courtside visibility by delivering unforgettable fan events as well as opportunities for in-store activation and scaled brand visibility through pan-European broadcasts.”

“At its core, C4 stands for performance for all – from everyday athletes striving towards their daily wellness and fitness goals to elite and professional athletes,” he adds. “We continue to invest behind a more accessible portfolio that reflects evolving consumer needs, with a strong emphasis on convenient, on-the-go formats. Without losing focus on the role our core/lead SKUs play when it comes to recruiting shoppers and helping drive in-store sales and conversion, at C4 we proactively align our NPDP pipeline to consumers’ evolving needs, particularly as we expand into ready-to-drink (RTD) protein, one of the fastest-growing sports nutrition segments¹.”

Building on the success of the business’ C4 Whey Protein partnership with Hershey’s, which has already fuelled over 3.6 million recovery sessions, the company is bringing fan-favourite Reeses Peanut Butter & Chocolate & Herseys Milk Chocolate



REESE'S trademark and trade dress and the REESE'S Orange Color and Crown Design are used under license.

“We are expanding into ready-to-drink protein, one of the fastest-growing sports nutrition segments”

flavours into a convenient RTD format. “Delivering 25g of protein in a 330ml bottle,” says Coppin. “The result is the same unrivalled taste consumers love, now in an even more convenient format with no added sugars.”

“We’re also seeing growing demand for products with dual functionality that combine performance with broader wellness benefits,” he notes. “This is reflected in innovations such as Bloom clear protein and collagen, positioned towards female consumers that are seeking a lighter, more refreshing, zero-sugar formula. Bloom combines 20g of protein from whey protein isolate and bovine collagen peptides to support lean muscle maintenance and beauty.”

For C4, the story is about fuelling everyday performance without compromising on taste. “In a category where functionality is often expected, great taste is what truly sets us apart and keeps consumers coming back,” notes Coppin. “One of the most exciting channels helping us tell that story is TikTok Shop, which has become a key platform for reaching Gen Z,” he explains. “Since launching on TikTok Shop earlier this year, we’ve generated over 18 million views. By combining creator partnerships, engaging social content and seamless commerce, TikTok Shop is helping us build relevance, drive trial and turn consumer attention into action.”



HERSHEY'S trademark and trade dress are used under license.

Source

¹ Circana, Total Market, Value Sales, L12W to 16.05.26

C4
PROTEIN

GRAB, SHAKE, PROTEIN, REPEAT

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**FASTEST
GROWING**
SEGMENTS,
RTD PROTEIN IS
POWERING TOTAL
CATEGORY
GROWTH¹

FLAVOUR
IS THE
#1
DRIVER OF
PROTEIN SHAKE
PURCHASES²



¹Circana, Total Market, Value Sales, L12W to 16.05.26

²International Food Information Council (IFIC) 2025 Food & Health Survey

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Protein for the people, not the elite

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**UFIT 25g High Protein
Milkshake**
**UFIT 50g High
Protein Milkshake**

Ufit brings protein beyond the gym bag, helping retailers win everyday food-to-go missions with a simpler, more accessible shopper proposition. Protein has travelled a long way from its sports nutrition roots, but the category still has work to do if it wants to become a truly everyday grocery purchase.

The opportunity now lies in making protein feel less specialist. Half of breakfast and two-thirds of ‘snack’ occasions are occurring out of home, bought for breakfast, lunch, after exercise, as an afternoon pick-me-up, or simply because shoppers want a more filling and nutritious drink on-the-go¹. This shift matters because the next stage of growth will come from frequency, not just more shoppers trying protein for the first time.

Ufit is acting directly on this change. Rather than presenting protein through perfect routines, extreme discipline or technical claims, the brand is making it feel more human, says Angie Turner, head of marketing at Lacka Foods. “Protein drinks are not for the elite and can be useful even if you’re not training for a marathon, tracking every macro or starting the day with an ice bath,” she says. “Protein has spent years being marketed as something for people with perfect routines. And do most shoppers really live like that? They’re dealing with early starts, long commutes, packed inboxes, school runs and days



“RTD protein value sales are up 39% with the category now worth £177m and weekly sales above £4m²”

when breakfast gets missed. They want products that feel useful without feeling intimidating. That’s where Ufit comes in, making protein feel like it belongs to more people, more often.”

Ready-to-drink (RTD) protein value sales are up 39%, with the category now worth £177m and weekly sales above £4m². “RTD protein is no longer relying on occasional gym missions alone,” says Turner. “Shoppers are finding more reasons to buy through the week, whether you’re grabbing breakfast on the go, powering through a busy afternoon, or just looking for a smarter snack,” she explains.

“Ufit has grown with that shift. As the UK’s No.1 RTD protein brand, with a 27% value share³, it gives retailers a familiar name in a fixture that is becoming busier. It also shows why protein drinks should not be treated only as sports nutrition. Brands like Ufit can work across chilled drinks, food-to-go and healthier snacking, where shoppers are already looking for convenient choices.” The entire range gives retailers flexibility too. “Ufit 25g has particular strength in convenience and front of store, while Ufit 50g has strong relevance in supermarkets, helping retailers match format to mission without over-complicating the fixture⁴. For retailers, Ufit is providing a trusted way of making protein easier for your shoppers to understand and to buy whatever the mission.”



Source

¹ Lacka Foods Consumer Research & Kantar September 2025
² Nielsen, Total Coverage, 52 w/e May 2026
³ Nielsen Homescan 52 w/e 13.06.26
⁴ Nielsen, Total Coverage/ Convenience/Supermarkets, 26 w/e May 2026

FOR



ALL

KINDS



UK'S #1 RTD
PROTEIN BRAND*

OF

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*Source: Nielsen 52 w/e May 2026 – Total Coverage

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