

**BUSINESSHQ**

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## Dryathalons and Veganuary boost unappetising grocery sales in the UK

By Victoria Masterson



Grocery market share is down at Tesco and other big supermarkets, despite growing sales of non-alcoholic and vegan products. Nick Ansell, PA Wire

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ABSTINENCE from alcohol and meat in January helped to boost UK grocery sales in healthier categories, new figures reveal.

But the sector's overall performance has been muted, with only 0.3% sales growth in the 12 weeks to 26 January compared to the previous year.

“Many **people** start the year with good intentions and pledges to make healthier choices following the excesses of the festive period,” said Fraser McKeivitt, head of retail and consumer insight at research consultancy Kantar, which compiled the data.

“Those who committed to drinking less in January helped the retailers boost sales of non-alcoholic beer by 37% and adult soft drinks by 3%, as shoppers reached for alternatives to their favourite tipples. Of course, not everyone has been abstaining, and more than 15 million households still bought alcohol during the past four weeks.”

Retailers welcomed the return of Veganuary by launching a number of new product lines, Kantar said. These include ‘Gro’ from Co-op, ‘Plant based’ from Asda and Waitrose & Partners’ vegan range.

“It’s clear the Veganuary campaign is having an impact,” McKeivitt continued. “More than twice as many consumers bought one of the supermarkets’ explicitly labelled plant-based products in January 2020 compared with the festivity-filled December 2019.”

Sales of meat substitutes such as soya mince or vegetarian burgers and sausages were 14% higher than January last year, while sales of lentils were up 6%, lettuce 10% and aubergine 14%.

But subdued overall consumer demand saw the major grocery chains lose market share, with Tesco down to 27.3% from 27.7% a year earlier, Sainsbury’s falling to 15.8% from 15.9%, Asda dropping to 14.9% from 15.3%, and Morrisons falling to 10.3% from 10.6%.

Online supermarket Ocado was the UK’s fastest growing grocer, with sales 11.2% higher than a year ago.

Discounter Lidl saw double digit growth of 11.1% year-on-year, with Aldi sales up by 5.7%. Co-op grew sales by 2.7% and Iceland’s sales grew ahead of the overall market at 1.4%.



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