

# Food Packaging Market Trends, Statistics, Growth, and Forecasts

*Consumers across the world are leading increasingly busy lives and as such many have reported a desire to spend less time cooking*

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## Market Overview

Folding cartons, by far the leading primary pack type in ready meals, continued to gain share over the forecast period 2021-2026. This pack type is commonly used in chilled ready meals and frozen ready meals. In addition to being easily recyclable, folding cartons also offers cost-effective packaging for manufacturers. A shift away from plastic packaging among manufacturers is expected to further benefit folding cartons in the forecast period.



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Metal food cans are only a significant pack type in shelf stable ready meals and are seeing ongoing sales decline, as this pack type is mostly associated with economy ranges. With consumers increasingly seeking healthy and premium options, this pack type is thus suffering. Shelf stable ready meals will continue to face competition from other types of ready meals that are perceived as healthier and more convenient, including prepared salads, chilled pizza and chilled ready meals. These are mostly offered packaged in rigid plastic, flexible plastic or folding cartons.

The level of diversity of ready meals is therefore high and is expected to continue to develop

over the forecast period, leading to a requirement for a wide range of different pack types and sizes in order to provide each product with its optimal packaging. Larger, multinational packaging players in particular will try to turn this into a competitive advantage by supplying their clients with relevant packaging solutions on a flexible per-case basis.

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Little major innovation was however observed in ready meals packaging and this is unlikely to change during the forecast period 2021-2026. Ready meals packaging has already reached a relatively high and sophisticated level after many years of innovative improvements of packaging products for the many different categories within ready meals. Therefore, manufacturers of both branded goods and private label products, will likely prefer to focus on optimising the packaging they use for their brands and products by updating the layouts and designs from time to time in order to appeal to their target consumers and to adapt to current trends.

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Some pack types are expected to decline during the forecast period, notably metal food cans for shelf stable ready meals. First, shelf stable ready meals in metal food cans have not completely recovered from the horsemeat contamination scandal of 2013. The metal food cans pack type represents the majority of total shelf stable ready meals volume units; nonetheless volume units maintained their steady fall in 2019. Shelf stable ready meals in metal food cans are seeing rising competition from food perceived as healthier and more convenient, eg fresh alternatives such as prepared salads, chilled pizza and chilled ready meals, which are generally packaged in rigid plastic or paper-based containers

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