Buyer Channel Map — Germany

Who actually buys food in Germany, channel by channel — and what each buyer type wants before a first meeting. A structural map for Central-European food producers, not a contact list.

The 60-second read

Germany is the prize and the most concentrated shelf in Europe. Four groups — Edeka, Rewe, the Schwarz Group (Lidl, Kaufland) and Aldi — hold roughly three-quarters of food retail, so the people who decide are a finite, findable set of category buyers and the distributors who serve them.

Hard discount is a channel of its own. Aldi and Lidl don't behave like supermarkets — they buy fewer lines, in bigger volumes, mostly own-brand. Private label runs around a third of German grocery by value and over half by unit, which is a direct route in for producers who supply own-brand.

It's a documentation market. German buyers expect precise specs, reliable year-round supply and clean paperwork (IFS/BRCGS, German labelling) *before* a first meeting — not after interest is shown.

The channel map

Buyer type	Who they are	What they want first	Realistic role for a CE producer
Retail category desks	Buyers at Edeka, Rewe, Kaufland who own a shelf segment	IFS/BRCGS, German labelling, EAN retail packs, consistent specs	Brand listing or own-brand supply
Hard discount	Aldi (Nord/Süd), Lidl, Penny, Netto	Sharp price, big dependable volumes, private-label capability	Private-label / tender volume
Distributors & importers	Cold-chain and ambient wholesalers who place ranges with their own customers	Certification, trade terms, clear category fit	Brand placement into retail + foodservice
Cash-and-carry / HoReCa	Metro and delivered-wholesale supplying restaurants, canteens, hotels	Catering/bulk formats, steady supply	Foodservice supply
Private-label sourcing	Central own-brand desks at the groups	Higher-tier IFS, audit readiness, capacity	Own-brand manufacture
Industrial / ingredient buyers	Convenience & ready-meal producers buying inputs by the pallet	Spec sheets, food-safety docs, bulk formats	Ingredient / semi-finished supply
Feinkost & beverage-specialist trade	Staffed delicatessen counters, food halls; the Getränkefachgroßhandel (GFGH) for drinks	Provenance story (Feinkost); DPG deposit mark + Mehrweg bottle-pool (beverages)	Premium brand listing / on-trade drinks supply

Named retail groups (public knowledge)

Edeka — largest grocery group; full-range supermarkets + Netto discount.

Rewe — full-range supermarkets + Penny discount.

Schwarz Group — Lidl (hard discount) + Kaufland (hypermarkets).

Aldi (Nord / Süd) — hard discount, a channel of its own.

Metro — cash-and-carry wholesale; the HoReCa and independent-trade gateway.

Trade calendar hooks

The German fairs are the ones the whole industry references: **Anuga** (Cologne), **Fruit Logistica** (Berlin), **ISM** for confectionery (Cologne), **BrauBeviale** for drinks (Nuremberg), **iba** for bakery. Honest line: Anuga runs every two years and buyers walk it with packed calendars. A German range decision runs on the buyer's own review window, not the fair schedule — the fair is a useful touchpoint, not the door.

Three mistakes CE producers make in Germany

Treating "a distributor in Germany" as national coverage. Most single partners cover a few chains in one region. The discount, Feinkost, foodservice and industrial channels each have their own buyers you have to reach separately.

Bringing the paperwork *after* the buyer bites. German buyers filter on IFS/BRCGS, German labelling and proof of steady volume up front. Showing up without them ends the conversation before it starts.

Ignoring the deposit machinery on drinks. A foreign beverage can't reach a shelf without the DPG deposit mark (one-way) or a Mehrweg bottle-pool (returnable) — which is why the GFGH, not the retailer, is usually the first door.

This map shows *where* the buyers sit. ProspectX gets you in front of the named ones — in German, in the channel that fits your range. → Book a Discovery Call.

Sources

(Only facts not already published on getprospectx.com/export are sourced here.)

Top four groups control the clear majority of German food retail (individual 2024 revenues per group): "German Grocery Market Share 2025," Grocery Trade News — https://www.grocerytradenews.com/german-grocery-market-share/

Private label ~36% value share / over half by unit (2024): Statista, private-label market share Germany — https://www.statista.com/statistics/1230786/private-label-market-shares-by-product-category-germany/ ; Circana, "Private Label Reaches Record 50% Unit Share" — https://www.circana.com/post/private-label-reaches-record-50-unit-share-across-europe-s-six-biggest-grocery-markets

Germany among the world's largest food importers (3rd largest importer of consumer-oriented agri products; imports ~USD 92bn, 2024): USDA FAS, "Germany: Retail Foods Annual" (2025) — https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/gain/2025/09/germany-retail-foods-annual

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Sources verified July 2026