Buyer Channel Map — Romania

Who actually buys food in Romania, 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

Modern trade is still being built. Lidl, Kaufland, Carrefour, Auchan and the proximity operators Profi and Mega Image keep opening stores, increasingly in smaller cities — Lidl alone is investing to add dozens of stores a year toward roughly 200 more by 2030. Every new store is a new frozen and grocery listing to win.

Buyers add range rather than defend it. Unlike a saturated Western shelf, Romanian buyers are often *building* their assortment — a well-timed approach meets a buyer with slots open, not one protecting a full shelf.

Price-driven but volume-rich, inside the single market. The shopper is value-led and discounters set the price, but the volumes are real — and a growing ready-meal and processing sector adds industrial buyers. Romania is in the EU, so delivery from Central-European plants clears no customs.

The channel map

Buyer type	Who they are	What they want first	Realistic role for a CE producer
Expanding retail desks	Frozen/grocery buyers at Lidl, Kaufland, Carrefour, Auchan	IFS/BRCGS, Romanian labelling, sharp price, reliable volume	Brand listing or own-brand supply
Proximity operators	Profi, Mega Image — dense small-format networks reaching smaller cities	Formats that fit small stores, dependable delivery	Brand listing into growing proximity trade
Distributors	Frozen and cold-chain distributors placing imported ranges	Certification, cold-chain reliability, category fit	Brand placement into retail + foodservice
Cash-and-carry / HoReCa	Metro, Selgros, supplying Bucharest and larger cities	Catering/bulk formats, steady supply	Foodservice supply
Discount	Lidl, Penny	Sharp price, action volumes, private-label capability	Private-label / promotional volume
Industrial / ingredient buyers	Romania's growing ready-meal and processing sector	Spec sheets, food-safety docs, bulk semi-finished formats	Ingredient / semi-finished supply

Named retail groups (public knowledge)

Kaufland — hypermarkets; among the biggest grocers by turnover (Schwarz Group).

Lidl — hard discount; among the largest by store count, fast-expanding.

Carrefour — hypermarkets and supermarkets; absorbed the former Billa Romania.

Profi / Mega Image — proximity and convenience; dense small-format networks.

Auchan / Penny / Metro / Selgros — hypermarket, discount and cash-and-carry wholesale.

Trade calendar hooks

Romanian buyers walk the German shows (**Anuga**, Cologne) and regional fairs, but their range decisions follow store-opening and promotion schedules. Honest line: because modern retail is actively expanding, the most valuable timing isn't a fair week

— it's reaching a buyer while a chain is adding stores and needs to fill new shelves. The buyer set is reachable directly, year-round, in English or Romanian.

Three mistakes CE producers make in Romania

Dismissing it as "too price-driven." It's a value market — but a growing one. New stores need new listings, a value shopper buys frozen in volume, and the processing sector adds a second buyer for the same product as an input. Price for the market; volume does the work margin can't.

Missing the expansion window. The advantage here is timing an approach to a buyer actively building range. Turn up when the shelf is already full and you're fighting for a slot that no longer exists.

Treating it as a one-channel market. Proximity operators, cash-and-carry and the processing sector are separate buyers from the big-box desks — a single distributor rarely covers them all.

This map shows *where* the buyers sit. ProspectX gets you in front of the named ones — in English or Romanian, while the shelves are still being built. → Book a Discovery Call.

Sources

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

Lidl the largest chain by revenue; ~€285m 2026 investment, 40+ new stores in 2026 and ~200 more by 2030: Romania Insider, "Lidl plans major expansion in Romania" — https://www.romania-insider.com/lidl-expansion-plans-romania-march-2026

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Sources verified July 2026