The European Retail Range-Review Calendar

When grocery buyers decide, and when to start talking to them

A planning guide for owners and export directors at Central-European food manufacturers.

The single most common reason a good product doesn't get listed isn't the product, the price or the certification. It's timing. European grocery buyers reset their shelves in defined windows, and a perfect offer that lands after the window has closed waits a year for the next one. This guide maps those windows — the annual range reviews, the seasonal decisions, the private-label tenders and the promotion planning — across the nine markets we work in. Where a specific date is publicly documented, we cite it. Where it isn't, we say so plainly and show you how to find it. The aim is simple: help you start the conversation while the buyer's range is still open.

How to read this calendar (three confidence tiers)

Not every claim about buyer timing carries the same weight. Retailers rarely publish their exact review windows, so this guide separates what is documented from what is convention. Every entry is tagged:

SOURCED — backed by a public source (retailer supplier page, trade fair organiser, trade press). The source is listed at the end.

INDUSTRY CONVENTION — how the trade generally works, drawn from widely-understood practice. Treat as a strong default, not a published fact. Verify with the buyer.

HOW TO VERIFY — where no public window exists, the practical way to find *this* retailer's timing (supplier portal, the buyer's assistant, a distributor who already ships to them).

When in doubt, the honest move is to ask the buyer directly when their category is next reviewed. Most will tell you — and asking signals you understand how their year works.

Part 1 — The universal mechanics

These patterns hold across most of Western and Central Europe. The markets differ in the details; the machinery is broadly the same.

1. The annual range review

Every grocery retailer runs **category reviews** — fixed windows in which a product group (frozen, bakery, confectionery, dairy, ambient) is re-evaluated and new products are considered against the ones already on shelf. Outside those windows, the shelf is largely frozen.

Frequency varies by retailer and category: some categories are reviewed **twice a year**, others **once**, and a growing number of retailers evaluate products **year-round** rather than on a fixed calendar. *(SOURCED — RangeMe)*

Review schedules are typically communicated to suppliers **around two months before** the window, and are subject to change. *(SOURCED — RangeMe)*

Discounters run the most codified version of this. Lidl, for example, operates a **seven-step product lifecycle** — range review, quality benchmarking, commercial negotiation, product setup, final checks, listing and launch, then ongoing monitoring — and decides its **permanent listings at the annual range review**. Before any listing, a supplier must pass an **unannounced audit** and hold the relevant manufacturing accreditation. *(SOURCED — SPS Commerce / Lidl GB)*

The implication for you: the work isn't sending one more message. It's reaching the named category buyer *before* their review window opens, with the spec, certification and price already in order — because once the window closes, the decision is made for a year.

2. Seasonal windows

Seasonal ranges are decided far earlier than shoppers imagine. The product is on shelf in autumn; the decision was made in spring.

Christmas confectionery and seasonal grocery. Holiday inventory planning generally begins in **Q2**, with major range decisions locked in by **early Q3**. Deep-planned seasonal lines (Christmas crackers, premium confectionery) are often committed in **Q1** — roughly nine to twelve months before the shelf. *(SOURCED — Netstock; JollyCracker)*

Easter confectionery. Roughly half of Easter confectionery sells *before* Easter Sunday, and ranges are built over months rather than in the final weeks — so buyer decisions sit in the **preceding autumn/winter**. Note that Easter moves each year, so the run-up shifts with it. *(SOURCED — Log-hub; Talking Retail; Hancocks)*

BBQ / summer. New summer ranges hit shelves in **spring**; the buying decisions behind them are taken over the **preceding autumn and winter**. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION — consistent with grilling-season retail practice)*

Veganuary (January). Retailers plan plant-based January launches **months ahead**: Lidl, for instance, introduced new own-brand plant-based products in the **autumn** ahead of a national January rollout. First conversations for a Veganuary slot realistically belong in the **spring/early summer** of the year before. *(SOURCED — The Grocer; Vegan Food & Living)*

The implication for you: for any seasonal window, count backwards from the shelf date, not the calendar season. If you want to be in the Christmas range, the conversation is a first-half-of-the-year conversation.

3. Private-label tenders

Own-brand supply runs on its own clock, separate from branded listings — and it is often the fastest route to serious volume for a producer whose strength is production rather than brand.

A retailer defines its private-label range, then **puts supply out to tender**, sending a submission document (product spec, pricing, process, timelines) to potential suppliers, who return paperwork plus a **physical sample**. *(SOURCED — SPS Commerce SupplierWiki)*

The new-product-development process **takes months**, and is **longer for imported products** because production run-up is longer. *(SOURCED — SPS Commerce SupplierWiki; Bowen Consulting)*

Own-brand contracts typically run for a **set period — often one or two years** — which means missing a tender means waiting for the next cycle. *(SOURCED — Bowen Consulting)*

The implication for you: private-label decisions cluster around the same category buyer or a dedicated own-brand sourcing desk. Getting on the tender list is the goal — and that happens before the tender is issued, not after.

4. Promotion (Aktion) planning

The promotional calendar — the weekly flyer, the Aktion, the end-of-aisle — is planned well ahead of the promotion date, and for many chains it is a distinct listing route.

Retailers commonly lock promotional-flyer items **as early as eight weeks out**, with **one to two months** a normal planning run-up. *(SOURCED — Cognira)*

Lidl treats short promotions as a formal channel: its **Food Specials** (one-week promotional slots across ambient, chilled and frozen) require suppliers to **engage 10 to 13 weeks in advance**, then confirm full volume one to two weeks before. *(SOURCED — SPS Commerce / Lidl GB)*

The implication for you: in promotion-heavy markets (Czechia, Hungary, Romania especially), promotional capacity and sharp pricing are practically a listing requirement — and the planning run-up is measured in weeks-to-months, not days.

5. Trade-fair alignment (the timing trap)

Trade fairs are where the industry gathers — but they rarely coincide with any given buyer's review window, which is why relying on them alone disappoints so many exporters.

- **Anuga** (Cologne) — the world's largest food & beverage fair — is **biennial**: it ran **4–8 October 2025**, so the next edition is 2027. A once-every-two-years event cannot line up with an annual or twice-yearly review cycle. *(SOURCED — Anuga / Koelnmesse)*
- **ISM** (Cologne) — confectionery & snacks — is **annual**; the 2026 edition ran **1–4 February 2026**. Useful, but a February fair sits *after* many Christmas decisions for that year are already taken. *(SOURCED — ISM Cologne)*
- **BioFach** (Nuremberg) — the world's foremost organic fair — is **annual**, **10–13 February 2026**. *(SOURCED — Organics Europe / NürnbergMesse)*
- **Fruit Logistica** (Berlin) — fresh produce — is **annual**, **4–6 February 2026**. *(SOURCED — Fruit Logistica)*

The implication for you: a fair is a good place to meet a buyer you've already identified — but the buyers are reachable year-round, and their review windows don't wait for the fair. Plan around the review calendar, and use the fair as a checkpoint, not the starting gun.

Part 2 — The nine markets

Each market section covers how the trade plans, what is known about timing, and the "start talking N weeks before" implication. Market structure below is our vetted baseline; retailer-specific windows are labelled by confidence tier.

Germany (DACH)

How the trade plans. German grocery is unusually concentrated — Edeka, Rewe, the Schwarz Group (Lidl, Kaufland) and Aldi run most of it, and hard discount is a channel of its own. That concentration means the decision-makers are a finite, findable set of category buyers. Edeka and Rewe decide at **both national and regional level**, so a regional listing can be a realistic first step; the discounters decide centrally. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. The discounters run the most codified windows — Lidl's permanent listings are set at the **annual range review**, with seasonal listings for Christmas, Easter, summer and winter, and unannounced audits before listing. *(SOURCED — SPS Commerce / Lidl GB.)* National-chain review windows per category are **not published**. *(HOW TO VERIFY — Edeka Partnerportal at partnerportal.edeka.de; REWE Supplier Portal at supplier.rewe-group.com; or ask the category buyer directly when their group is next reviewed.)*

Start talking: for Christmas confectionery, first contact in **Q1** (the shelf is autumn, the decision is spring). For a permanent listing, aim to be in front of the buyer **3–6 months before** the category's review window — which, given windows are announced only ~2 months ahead, means being on the buyer's radar continuously, not seasonally. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Austria (DACH)

How the trade plans. A compact, premium-leaning market dominated by two groups — Spar and Rewe (Billa) — with Hofer (Aldi Süd) and Lidl in discount. Regional origin, quality seals and organic carry unusual weight; Austria has one of Europe's highest organic shares. Buying structures closely mirror Germany's, and an Austrian listing is a credible reference for German buyers. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. No published per-retailer windows. Hofer and Lidl follow the DACH discount pattern (annual permanent review plus fixed seasonal listings). *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION, extended from the sourced Lidl model.)* For Spar and Billa, windows are internal. *(HOW TO VERIFY — Spar and Rewe Austria supplier contacts; a distributor already shipping to them will know the cycle.)*

Start talking: treat Austria on the German rhythm — seasonal decisions in the first half of the year, permanent listings well ahead of the category review. Because the market is small and premium-driven, organic and regional-origin credentials should be ready *before* the first conversation. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Switzerland (DACH, outside the EU)

How the trade plans. Migros and Coop control most of grocery, with Denner, Aldi Suisse and Lidl Schweiz in discount. Switzerland is **outside the EU customs union**, so imported food clears customs, permits and multilingual Swiss labelling before it reaches a shelf — which is why the practical route in is almost always a **Swiss importer or specialist distributor** who owns the compliance work. Migros also produces **over 90% of its own assortment** through subsidiaries, which narrows the opening for outside brands but leaves room in premium and delicatessen. *(Market structure: vetted baseline; Migros own-production — SOURCED, Wikipedia/Migros.)*

What's known about timing. No published review windows. Because an importer usually sits between you and the retailer, **the importer's own planning calendar is the one that governs your run-up** — and it precedes the retailer's. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)* *(HOW TO VERIFY — identify the specialist importer for your category first; their sourcing cycle, not the retailer's, sets your timing.)*

Start talking: work backwards from the importer, and add time for customs, permits and Swiss labelling. The realistic first conversation is **earlier** than an equivalent EU market because of the compliance layer. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Sweden (Nordics)

How the trade plans. Three groups — ICA, Axfood (Willys, Hemköp) and Coop — with Lidl growing in discount. Buyers work in English by default, decisions are data-driven, and **sustainability documentation** (climate footprint, packaging recyclability, KRAV for organic) actively decides listings. Private label is strong and centrally sourced. A Swedish listing is the reference that opens Norway and Denmark. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. ICA follows **GS1 Sweden's standard for product revisions** and runs planned assortment revisions. *(SOURCED — ICA Levnet.)* Exact category windows aren't public. *(HOW TO VERIFY — ICA's supplier portal Levnet at levnet.ica.se; Axfood and Coop supplier contacts.)*

Start talking: because Swedish buyers decide on documentation, the constraint is often *readiness*, not timing — have the sustainability and certification file complete before you open the conversation. For centrally-sourced private label, treat the run-up as **months**, and plan the Nordic sequence (Sweden first, then Norway/Denmark) as one connected run of listings across a shared commercial region. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Denmark (Nordics)

How the trade plans. Discount defines Denmark — Salling Group (Netto, Føtex, Bilka), the Coop cooperative, the fast-growing Rema 1000 and Lidl run most of the trade, and discount is roughly half of all grocery. It is the **most organic market in the world**; the state red Ø-label is near-universally recognised. Buyers work in English, decide on documentation, and weigh sustainability heavily. Copenhagen concentrates a dense foodservice scene supplied through wholesalers such as Dagrofa. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. Discount-led buying follows the codified pattern (annual permanent review, fixed seasonal windows), as documented for the Lidl model. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION, extended from sourced Lidl model.)* Per-retailer Danish windows aren't published. *(HOW TO VERIFY — Salling Group and Coop Danmark supplier pages; Dagrofa for the foodservice route.)*

Start talking: organic (Ø-label) and sustainability documentation should precede the first conversation. Treat the run-up on the German/Nordic discount rhythm — seasonal in the first half of the year, permanent ahead of the annual review. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Czechia (CEE)

How the trade plans. The structure mirrors Germany's — Kaufland and Lidl at the top, strong discount share — and buyers are used to working with Polish, Slovak and Hungarian suppliers. The market **runs on promotions**: a larger share of grocery is sold on promotion here than almost anywhere in Europe, so promotional capacity and sharp pricing decide listings as much as the base spec. Makro covers wholesale and HoReCa. A Czech listing typically extends into Slovakia, which the chains buy for together. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. Kaufland and Lidl follow the codified Schwarz-Group cycle (annual permanent review, seasonal windows, promotional slots on a 10–13 week engagement pattern for the Lidl model). *(SOURCED for the Lidl mechanics — SPS Commerce; extension to Czechia is INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)* *(HOW TO VERIFY — Kaufland and Lidl CZ supplier portals; ask about the promotional (Aktion) calendar specifically, since that's the live route here.)*

Start talking: because promotions are the practical entry, plan around **promotion slots** as much as base listings — engage on the order of **8–13 weeks** before a promotion window, and treat Czech + Slovak as one conversation. *(SOURCED promotion run-up; two-market pairing is vetted baseline.)*

Hungary (CEE)

How the trade plans. Two tracks at once: international chains (Spar, Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Auchan, Penny) hold most of modern retail in the cities, while domestic franchised groups **CBA and Coop** reach smaller towns and rural trade. Price-sensitive, promotion-driven; Budapest concentrates foodservice, reachable through Metro. Inside the EU single market, so no customs for CE producers. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. International discounters follow the codified cycle; the domestic franchised groups buy differently and less centrally. No published windows. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.) (HOW TO VERIFY — supplier contacts at Spar/Tesco/Lidl Hungary for modern trade; CBA and Coop head offices for the domestic track, which runs on a different, more relationship-led cadence.)*

Start talking: run the two tracks separately — the internationals on the discount review/promotion rhythm (**8–13 weeks** for promotions, ahead of annual review for permanent), the domestic groups on a slower, relationship-led timeline. Promotional capacity should be ready up front. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION; promotion run-up SOURCED.)*

Romania (CEE)

How the trade plans. Among the fastest-growing grocery markets in the EU, with modern trade **still expanding** — Lidl, Kaufland, Carrefour, Auchan and proximity operators Profi and Mega Image keep opening stores. Crucially, buyers here are often **adding range rather than defending it**, so a new listing doesn't always require displacing an incumbent. A growing ready-meal and processing sector adds industrial buyers. Inside the EU single market. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. Discounters follow the codified cycle; the expansion means off-cycle openings for new range are more common than in saturated Western markets. No published windows. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.) (HOW TO VERIFY — Lidl, Kaufland and Carrefour Romania supplier pages; for industrial buyers, approach ready-meal and processing manufacturers directly.)*

Start talking: because buyers are adding rather than defending range, the window is effectively **more open, more of the year** than elsewhere — but the codified permanent-review and promotion timings still apply at the discounters. Approach on price and proximity together, and don't wait for a formal review if a buyer is actively expanding. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Italy (South)

How the trade plans. Large but **fragmented** — no single chain dominates. Conad and Coop Italia are the two biggest, both built as associations of members rather than centralised companies; Esselunga is a strong northern regional force; and much real purchasing power sits with **buying groups (centrali d'acquisto)** — Selex, VéGé, Agorà — that aggregate demand across banners. Discount (Eurospin, Lidl, MD) is taking share. One of Europe's largest HoReCa channels sits alongside retail. *(Market structure: vetted baseline.)*

What's known about timing. The fragmentation means there is **no single review calendar** — each association, buying group and regional distributor runs its own. No published windows. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.) (HOW TO VERIFY — identify the relevant buying group (centrale d'acquisto) for your category first; their calendar governs a large slice of purchasing across several banners at once.)*

Start talking: because purchasing is aggregated by buying groups, the highest-leverage first conversation is often with the *centrale d'acquisto*, not an individual banner. Expect hard negotiation on both price and quality, and plan for multiple parallel timelines rather than one national window. *(INDUSTRY CONVENTION.)*

Part 3 — The countdown (backwards planning)

This is the honest version: derived from the documented steps — the review window, the tender/NPD run-up, samples, audits, artwork — not invented precision. Read it as *"to be on shelf for X, the first buyer conversation should start by Y."* Every row is labelled by how firmly it's grounded.

If you want to be on shelf for…	The decision is typically taken…	First buyer conversation by…	Grounding
Christmas confectionery / seasonal (autumn shelf)	Planning Q2, locked early Q3	**Q1** (Jan–Mar) — ~9–12 months ahead	SOURCED (Netstock; JollyCracker)
Veganuary / plant-based January	Product in-store from autumn, rollout January	**Spring–early summer** the year before (~6–9 months ahead)	SOURCED (The Grocer; Lidl autumn intro)
Easter confectionery (Feb–Mar shelf)	Preceding autumn/winter	**Previous summer** (Jun–Aug), ~7–9 months ahead	SOURCED (Log-hub; Talking Retail) + CONVENTION

If you want to be on shelf for...	The decision is typically taken...	First buyer conversation by...	Grounding
BBQ / summer range (spring shelf)	Preceding autumn/winter	**Previous Q3–Q4** (~6–9 months ahead)	CONVENTION
Permanent listing at annual range review	In the review window (announced ~2 months ahead)	**3–6 months before the review window**	CONVENTION (window-notice SOURCED — RangeMe)
Private-label (own-brand) supply	On the tender cycle; NPD runs months (longer if imported)	**Before the tender is issued** — 6–9 months before target shelf	SOURCED (SPS Commerce; Bowen)
A one-week promotion (Aktion / Food Specials)	Promo calendar locked weeks ahead	**8–13 weeks** before the promotion week	SOURCED (Cognira; Lidl GB)

How to use it: find your target window in column one, read across to column three, and that's when the first conversation with a named buyer needs to be happening — not when you decide to start looking. In every case, being ***ready*** (spec, certification, samples, pricing, documentation) before that date is what turns a conversation into a listing.

Verify before you rely: a checklist

> **The published windows in this guide are the exception, not the rule.** Most retailers keep their exact review dates internal. Before you plan around any specific timing, confirm it — here's how:
>
> **Check the supplier portal.** Edeka (partnerportal.edeka.de), REWE (supplier.rewe-group.com), Lidl (corporate supplier pages / vip.lidl.com), ICA (Levnet, levnet.ica.se) and most large groups publish supplier-onboarding pages that state process, certification and sometimes review cadence.
>
> **Ask the buyer's assistant.** The category buyer's assistant will often tell you plainly when the category is next reviewed — a low-stakes question that also signals you understand their year.
>
> **Ask a distributor already shipping to them.** A distributor or importer with an existing relationship knows the real cadence, including the promotional (Aktion) calendar, better than any published source.
>
> **Ask the buyer directly, in the first conversation.** "When is your next range review for this category?" is a normal, professional opening question. The answer sets your whole timeline.
>
> **Treat convention as a default, not a fact.** Where this guide says INDUSTRY CONVENTION, use it to plan the *approach*, then confirm the *date* with one of the steps above.

The one thing that decides whether your timing works

You can have the right product, the right certification and the right price — and still miss the shelf by contacting the buyer in the wrong month. Timing the first conversation to the buyer's review window, in their language, with the file ready, is precisely the work ProspectX manages for food manufacturers: we identify the named buyers, and we start the conversation when their range is actually open. — *Casper Morawski, ProspectX*

Sources

Every dated or specific claim above traces to one of these. Structural market descriptions are drawn from ProspectX's own vetted market landscapes; retailer-specific facts are sourced as listed.

Anuga — Dates & facts (biennial; 4–8 October 2025) — https://www.anuga.com/trade-fair/anuga/dates-opening-hours/ and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anuga_Food_Fair — supports Anuga being biennial and its 2025 dates.

ISM Cologne (annual confectionery & snacks fair; 1–4 February 2026) — https://www.ism-cologne.com/ — supports ISM's cadence and 2026 dates.

BioFach 2026 (world's foremost organic fair; 10–13 February 2026, Nuremberg) — https://www.organicseurope.bio/events/biofach-2026/ — supports BioFach dates/status.

Fruit Logistica 2026 (fresh produce; 4–6 February 2026, Berlin) — https://www.fruitlogistica.com/en/press/press-releases/news_22592.html — supports Fruit Logistica dates.

What Suppliers Need to Know Before Working with Lidl GB (SPS Commerce / SupplierWiki) — https://www.spscommerce.com/community/articles/what-suppliers-need-to-know-before-working-with-lidl-gb — supports the seven-step lifecycle, three listing types (permanent/seasonal/food specials), annual range review, unannounced audit, and the 10–13-week Food Specials engagement.

I want to be a Lidl supplier (Lidl Help) — https://help.lidl.com/selfservice/s/article/I-want-to-be-a-Lidl-supplier-Who-should-I-contact-1614089638308 — supports Lidl's supplier-onboarding route.

Holiday Inventory Planning (Netstock) — https://www.netstock.com/blog/holiday-sales-strategy-for-retail-industry/ — supports Christmas planning beginning Q2 and locking early Q3.

When to Order Christmas Crackers: 2026 Seasonal Buying Calendar (JollyCracker) — https://jollycracker.com/when-to-order-christmas-crackers-2026-seasonal-buying-calendar/ — supports deep-seasonal lines committed in Q1.

Easter 2026 Supply Chain Planning (Log-hub) — https://log-hub.com/easter_2026_supply_chain_planning/ — supports Easter planning several months ahead.

Easter confectionery in focus (Talking Retail) / Boost Easter 2026 Sales (Hancocks) — https://www.talkingretail.com/advice/category-management/cracking-sales-in-focus-easter-top-up-23-03-2026/ and https://www.hancocks.co.uk/blog/prepare-early-and-grow-sales-for-easter-2026 — support ~half of Easter confectionery selling before Easter Sunday and early planning.

What's new in plant-based for Veganuary 2026 (The Grocer) — https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/range-previews/whats-new-in-plant-based-for-veganuary-2026/713239.article — supports retailers planning Veganuary launches ahead.

The ultimate guide to Veganuary product launches (Vegan Food & Living) — https://www.veganfoodandliving.com/products/veganuary-product-launches/ — supports Lidl introducing plant-based products in autumn ahead of a January rollout.

How Retailers Review Products / Category Review Schedules (RangeMe) — https://help.rangeme.com/hc/en-us/articles/115000166167-How-Retailers-Review-Products and https://help.rangeme.com/hc/en-us/articles/360008227213-How-to-Check-Category-Review-Schedules — support review-frequency variation and ~two-months-ahead window notice.

How to Become a Private Label Supplier (SPS Commerce) — https://www.spscommerce.com/community/articles/how-to-become-a-private-label-supplier — supports the tender-document + sample process and multi-month NPD.

How Australian supermarkets range private label SKUs (Bowen Consulting) — https://bowenconsultingaus.com/private-label-blog/ — supports tender mechanics, imported-SKU longer run-up, and 1–2-year own-brand contracts.

The ultimate guide to Retail Promotion Planning (Cognira) — https://cognira.com/guide/the-ultimate-guide-to-retail-promotion-planning/ — supports promotional-flyer items locked ~8 weeks out and a 1–2-month planning run-up.

EDEKA Partnerportal — https://partnerportal.edeka.de/ — supports Edeka's supplier portal as the verification route.

REWE Supplier Portal — https://supplier.rewe-group.com/ — supports Rewe's supplier portal as the verification route.

ICA Levnet (Become a Central Food Supplier) — https://levnet.ica.se/ — supports ICA's supplier portal and GS1-Sweden-based revision practice.

Migros (Wikipedia) — own-production share — https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migros — supports Migros producing over 90% of its assortment via subsidiaries.

Market-structure descriptions (retail concentration, channels, buying-group aggregation, organic shares) are drawn from ProspectX's vetted market landscapes and are stated there as industry estimates.