

Outlook for Africa's snack foods industry in 2022 and beyond

By [Francois Robertson](#)

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There are certain things in life that are regarded as universal truths. Benjamin Franklin for instance famously said, "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes". Snacking, and the role it has played in providing comfort and a sense of normalcy during the pandemic, has more recently emerged as another.



Francois Robertson, managing director for growth markets, Mondelez International. Source: Supplied

In fact, over half – 52% – of adults surveyed as part of the [State of Snacking](#) report said that snacking has acted as a “lifeline” throughout the pandemic.

People have largely spent more and snacked more frequently throughout the day not only to nourish the body, mind and soul, or to enjoy a moment of indulgence, but also to relieve stress and anxiety and act as a mood booster.

This has been a worldwide trend that was broadly reflected in Africa.

A growing middle class, changing lifestyles and increasing consumer sophistication and product awareness were found to be the driving force behind higher levels of snack buying across the continent – and all indications are that this outlook will remain, as snacks act as more than just treats for consumers.

Ongoing uncertainty and volatility presented by the pandemic mean that people will continue to snack based on different occasions and need states: predominantly to provide nourishment, relax, indulge and share moments of joy and connection with their loved ones.



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Trends in snacking that we are seeing emerge and accelerate against this backdrop globally and across Africa include:

- Globally, enjoyment is still the number one driver of snacking, but consumers are becoming more [conscious of their health](#) and wellbeing and are seeking snacks that fit their unique, more active lifestyles – so are increasingly turning to [sugar-free or gluten-free products](#) both to address specific diet needs, as well as enable mindful snacking. Plant-based snacks are also growing in popularity.
- As it currently stands, affordable staple food dominates African consumers' spending, combined with a focus on quantity rather than quality – but this will gradually change as incomes rise and as African consumers continue to move up the 'food curve'.

Africa's market potential remains high as the middle-income segment is growing at 5% year-on-year, and according to the

World Bank the population in Africa is [forecast to double](#) to about 2.2 billion potential consumers by 2050. The FMCG sector stands to benefit from this growth immensely, given that the sector provides commodities, necessities, as well as confectionary at the convenience of the consumer.

- As a result, once basic needs have been met, consumers will start focusing on quality improvements such as including more meat in their diet and buying a higher-quality brand of the same product. There is already an increasing focus in markets across Africa on indulgence and on ready-to-eat, convenient snacks that fit into people's busy lifestyles, particularly as more people begin return to post-lockdown lives.

According to an [International Agricultural Trade Report](#), the hectic schedules of working professionals and ever-expanding middle class is driving significant demand for ready-to-eat, convenient snacks and easy-to-prepare packaged foods. As part of this, the market for indulgence categories such as sweet biscuits, snack bars, fruit snacks, and savoury snacks is growing in sub-Saharan Africa – and a wide range of products are expected to see a sharp increase in demand over the next few years.

Local snacks and preferences remain important to African consumers and will continue to do so going forward: as a case in point, Chin chin in Nigeria is a preferred on-the-go snack, and its popularity is likely to continue to grow.



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- While affordability remains key to accessing these consumers, this emerging middle class is also becoming more aspirational and brand conscious, placing greater emphasis on packaging, product details and quality over quantity or low prices.

Even as consumers in Africa prioritise convenience, in line with a growing focus on quality and product details, they are also increasingly health-conscious and are shifting towards alternatives like low-fat snacks and fruit – with fruit snacks and snack bars showing the [strongest and fastest growth](#) as they are seen to be the healthier option than biscuits, for instance. People are also downsizing to smaller pack sizes as a result.

- Against this rapidly evolving backdrop and the continued rise of snacking across the continent, the report forecast annual growth in total snacks sales for Ghana, South Africa, and Kenya at 3.8%, 4.7% and 5.5%, respectively, by 2024.

It is clear that there is great scope for growth in Africa, and it is important for FMCG retailers to establish a footprint in a country at an early stage so that they can benefit from both quantity and quality shifts in consumers' spending behaviour – particularly as consumers begin to move away from shopping at the informal outlets that dominate the food retail sector in the majority of African markets and start to favour the convenience offered by supermarkets and shopping centres.

What these trends indicate is the need to empower people to snack right based on their unique needs and preferences, by offering the right snack for the right moment. Essentially, it means giving people a wide range of high-quality snacks so they can make informed choices, making it easy for them to enjoy these snacks when and how it suits their lifestyles.

Ultimately, the key is to understand the diverse and constantly shifting behaviours of consumers broadly across the continent in order to meet their needs and help them snack right at the right moment.

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