

TITLE: Food chains and the retailing revolution: supermarkets, dairy processors and consumers in Spain (1960 to the present)

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Abstract: On the basis of an analysis of the retailing of dairy products in Spain from 1960 onwards, it is argued that the rise of supermarkets was conditioned by developments taking place in the food system, and not just by macro-scale socioeconomic change. Upstream, supermarket expansion depended on dairy processors' capacity to push raw milk out of the consumer market. Downstream, the expansion was favoured by the transition towards a demand pattern that featured little aggregate dynamism and much product diversification. This case suggests that a food chain perspective might contribute to the historical study of the retail sector, especially by making the study of conditional causality more systematic.

REFERENCE: Business History (2016) [[LINK](#)]



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