

PRODUCT INNOVATION

AND LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS



COMPANY OVERVIEW

Harvest Insights was retained by a private equity firm seeking the next high-growth opportunity in premium pet food. With rising demand for natural, fresh, and functional nutrition, the firm needed clear consumer insight to guide innovation and investment strategy across emerging feeding formats.

CHALLENGE

The pet food market is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by a surge in direct-to-consumer brands and a proliferation of new formats—fresh frozen, refrigerated, air-dried, freeze-dried, baked, and more. This fragmentation has created consumer confusion around processing methods, value, and health benefits, making it difficult to identify which innovations truly resonate and where whitespace opportunities exist.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Low consumer familiarity with pet food formats and its benefits
- Confusion around product role: treat vs. topper vs. meal
- High price points lead to value skepticism
- Packaging often lacks key benefits and premium visual cues
- Competition among products with visually “fresh” pieces like frozen or refrigerated

SOLUTION

Objective

To evaluate consumer understanding of the air-dried format, identify positioning gaps, and optimize messaging, packaging, and pricing perceptions to increase full-meal usage consideration.

Approach

- In-home interviews with pet parents in Seattle and Atlanta with follow-up quantitative study to test product ideas
- In-depth conversations about products, packaging, and use cases
- Deep dives into texture, perception of processing, feeding behavior, and pricing expectations
- Competitive comparisons across kibble, freeze-dried, frozen, baked, air-dried, and dehydrated

Conclusion

The research equipped the client with a clear understanding of shifting consumer expectations and the evolving role of emerging pet food formats. Insights from the study are now shaping product development priorities, positioning strategy, and packaging refinement—guiding the next phase of innovation and investment in the premium pet food space.

