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Apples, pears see dollar growth in February

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For the latest 12 weeks ending Feb. 21, apples continued their dollars up and volume down trajectory and experienced a 1.2 percent growth in dollars, according to Stemilt's Fruit Tracker Fast Facts The Cast series, which is based on Nielsen retail scan data. The pear category was up 13 percent in dollars and 6 percent in volume over the latest 12 weeks.

“Retail prices of apples inched up between December 2020 and February 2021, and are up 11 cents year over year,” said Brianna Shales, Stemilt marketing director. “This is due mostly to a shorter national apple crop this year. Apples are still competitively priced and ready for regular and big promotions as we head into the spring season.”

Honeycrisp led the category in sales by variety and made up 30 percent of apple dollars between Jan. 24 and Feb. 21. The sought-after apple was up 11 percent in dollars and 5 percent in volume compared to the same timeframe the year prior. The other workhorse of the apple category, Gala, saw dollars grow 5 percent but volumes dip compared to last year.



“Looking beyond the top five, we see Pink Lady at number six experiencing volume and dollar declines over the past 12 weeks,” said Shales. “It’s one of the best eating apples every spring and summer with that noteworthy sweet-tart profile and worthy of upcoming multi-variety bulk promotions. The pink branding can be a showstopper in the produce department to drive impulse sales.”

There were subtle differences in regional performance on apples during the Jan. 24-Feb. 21 timeframe where fresh produce sales were up 11 percent year over year. The Northeast region saw produce sales up 12 percent and moved 1 percent more apple volume during this timeframe. The south region had the largest growth in apple dollars versus last year, up 8 percent. The West region was down 3 percent on apple volumes over the latest four weeks.

“It’s difficult to pinpoint a single reason that the Northeast outperformed the average in February, but they had some wild weather during this timeframe which could have drawn more shoppers to purchase more food, including apples,” said Shales. “It also could be a continuation of the COVID-19 effect where consumers are eating and cooking at home more.”

Stemilt touched briefly on the pear category during the Fast Facts The Cast episode and explained that both dollars and volume continue their upward trend year over year. The workhorse of the pear category during the fall and early winter months is Bartlett. It made up 40 percent of pear sales during the latest 12 weeks ending Feb. 21, but this is slated to change as the domestic season winds down.

“We expect d’Anjou to move into that primary position for pears and have great supplies and fruit quality on Anjou’s to help continue the upward sales trend on pears,” said Shales. “Both Red and Green d’Anjou are great for frequent pear promotions this spring.”

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