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With apple volume up, dollars down it's time for ad promotions

Scratch last year's apple plan because it's time to turn the tide on this year's big apple crop and move volume. The October 2023 Nielsen retail scan data reveals that apple dollars and volume sold are trending down compared to the same time frame last year. [Stemilt](#) Marketing Director Brianna Shales said retailers can reverse this trend with multi-variety ad promotions that boost volumes across the category and start growing apples dollars over last year.



Brianna Shales

The volume of Honeycrisp sold in October 2023 grew 4.7 percent nationally compared to October 2022, but dollars dropped a percent. The remaining core apples, Gala, Fuji and Granny Smith decreased in volumes and dollars sold over last year.

“There’s so much opportunity for promotions on apples this year, especially compared to last year when we saw tight supplies on key items,” said Shales. “The October data shows retailers starting to shift down, with a 14-cent reduction on the average price per pound of the top dollar driver in the apple category, Honeycrisp. With all apples harvested, now is the time to focus on multi-variety promotions and growth in apple volumes over last year. Dollar growth will come as volumes in the category increase.”

All regions were down in apple volumes year-over-year with some declines larger than the national average. Regionally, apple volumes sold in the Midwest were down 8.5 percent year-over-year while sales were down 7.3 percent. The Northeast and West region were in line with the national averages, while the South region was 9.1 percent down on apple volumes this year, and 5.2 percent down on dollars. The average price for apples dropped 2 cents year-over-year to \$1.89 per pound.

“Honeycrisp volumes are up year-over-year in the Northeast and South regions but lagging behind last year in the West and Midwest,” said Shales. “Finding the sweet spot on retail price and promotion with Honeycrisp, and all core varieties, will be important in reversing the declines in the apple category over last year.”

For club apples, Cosmic Crisp ranked eighth in October and is poised for a big return when its new season begins in November. October data reflects a 14 percent increase in SweeTango volumes sold, with growth over 35 percent compared to last year during a large promotion week. The increased volumes of SweeTango nationally this year bring new promotion opportunities to help retailers drive dollars to the category.



“Cosmic Crisp is evolving from a seasonal club to an everyday apple and that is reflected in the data,” said Shales. “Club apples are poised for promotions, and capturing favorites in promotions from a seasonality aspect is a great way to bring velocity to the category.”

The bulk-to-bag ratios were consistent in October 2023 compared to 2022, with 42 percent of apples sold in bags and 57 percent sold bulk. Bag retails have dropped significantly over the last year while bulk retails are still elevated two cents over last year.

“Traditionally bags have been a volume and value offering at retail,” said Shales. “They’ve migrated into an everyday offering and that means they should be part of the regular promotion mix in a multi-variety strategy. Consider bolstering bag volumes with three-pound pouch programs like Lil Snappers

and five-pound pouch bags to increase purchase size. These tactics fit well together with regular bulk promotions to grow volumes of apples.”

As we look to the organic crop, it follows the same trend in volume as conventional apples this year. Looking at the organic data in October, volumes are up 7.2 percent while sales are up 3.7 percent. Organic apples account for 15.8 percent of apple category sales. Regular promotions for organic apples, especially on the volume driver bags, will be needed for retailers to see success within the whole organic category this season.

“Organics are off to a positive start with volume and dollar growth over last year,” said Shales. “This is a strong year for organic apples and category growth because we have great qualities and promotion opportunities. Upsizing on pouch bag sizes with three-pound and five-pound will help drive organic volumes. It’s time to plan big things for the apple category to grow volumes and dollars simultaneously.”

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