

January produce department sales for the five weeks ending Jan. 31 increased 9.7 percent year-on-year, according to a report by the PMA, IRI and 210 Analytics.

The figure excludes online-only and delivery e-commerce sales, which would have been significantly higher than in 2020.

Shelf-stable produce sales were up by a similar amount, of which frozen produce sales grew by 13.2 percent.

"Produce at retail had a strong January, driven by the two middle weeks ending Jan. 17 and 24," said Joe Watson, VP of Membership and Engagement for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA).

"We continue to see highly elevated sales results for vegetables, that are very much in line with the gains seen in the meat department — both pointing at more meals prepared at home."

"Retail fruit gains have been in the high single digits since the third quarter of 2020 and remain a big opportunity for more at-home snacking, breakfast and lunch."

Fresh produce generated \$6.3 billion in sales during the January weeks. This reflects \$198 million in additional fruit sales and \$383 million in additional vegetable sales.

In fruit, berries remained dominant in sales but the strength of citrus is tremendous," said Jonna Parker, Team Lead Fresh for IRI.

"Citrus fruit was up 13.1% year-over-year, showing consumers' consistent turn towards foods they perceive to help live healthier lifestyles. Consumers relate citrus to Vitamin-C and, in turn, with boosting their immune systems."

"Other fruits and vegetables could benefit from leveraging their strengths as many consumers do not off-hand know their power. "

Only grapes lost some ground versus year-ago levels while lemons and oranges were the fastest growers.

Top 10 in weekly sales	Dollar sales increase over comparable period in 2019/2020						
	2019	Q1 '20	Q2 '20	Q3 '20	Q4 '20	Jan '21	
Fresh fruit	-0.2%	+5.3%	+10.6%	+9.5%	+8.7%	+7.2%	\$2.9B
Berries	+4.4%	+11.0%	+15.3%	+14.3%	+16.2%	+11.5%	\$696M
Apples	+0.0%	+2.2%	+3.1%	-0.1%	+1.9%	+4.9%	\$419M
Bananas	-0.9%	+5.6%	+6.2%	+0.5%	+1.9%	+4.2%	\$318M
Grapes	-3.1%	+1.9%	-1.1%	-0.3%	-0.1%	-4.3%	\$282M
Avocados	+6.8%	+6.6%	+14.6%	+2.2%	+6.1%	+2.4%	\$229M
Mandarins	-5.8%	+7.2%	+7.5%	+13.5%	+15.7%	+3.7%	\$207M
Oranges	-9.6%	+8.6%	+65.4%	+40.0%	+23.5%	+19.5%	\$146M
Melons	+1.0%	+4.0%	+2.6%	+14.4%	+18.7%	+6.4%	\$123M
Lemons	-6.5%	+1.8%	+35.9%	+30.2%	+21.5%	+25.5%	\$79M
Pineapples	+0.1%	-5.8%	+7.2%	+15.6%	+14.5%	+13.4%	\$72M

Source: Source: IRI Integrated Fresh, Total U.S., MULO, % change vs. YA

The vegetable side reflects double-digit gains for eight out of the 10 items.

“The January top 10 is very similar to what we have been seeing all year,” said Watson. “The dominance of tomatoes, potatoes and packaged salad is astounding, with great strength in size and growth for lettuce, onions and peppers as well.

“Mushrooms have also been a pandemic powerhouse in retail, placing in the top 10 month after month despite being a much smaller seller.”

Top 10 in weekly sales	Dollar sales increase over comparable period year ago						
	2019	Q1 '20	Q2 '20	Q3 '20	Q4 '20	Jan '21	
Fresh vegetables	+3.9%	+8.4%	+20.7%	+15.1%	+14.8%	+12.2%	\$3.5B
Tomatoes	+0.3%	+12.7%	+24.7%	+17.8%	+17.6%	+8.7%	\$387M
Potatoes	+1.5%	+19.4%	+36.8%	+16.6%	+12.1%	+15.9%	\$327M
Package Salad	+12.2%	+13.0%	+11.6%	+14.0%	+21.7%	+16.1%	\$298M
Peppers	+4.2%	+5.5%	+28.0%	+22.1%	+21.7%	+16.8%	\$259M
Lettuce	+6.3%	+3.5%	+14.2%	+8.0%	+23.2%	+13.6%	\$258M
Onions	+6.0%	+11.5%	+23.4%	+11.9%	+11.2%	+13.9%	\$246M
Mushrooms	+0.6%	+8.1%	+31.2%	+23.0%	+17.4%	+15.9%	\$146M
Carrots	-1.6%	+6.4%	+12.1%	+6.5%	+4.5%	+2.4%	\$141M
Broccoli	+7.3%	+4.8%	+18.5%	+13.4%	+11.3%	+10.8%	\$126M
Cucumbers	+3.1%	+10.2%	+21.4%	+18.9%	+21.8%	+13.9%	\$123M

Source: Source: IRI Integrated Fresh, Total U.S., MULO, % change vs. YA