

From a dollar sales perspective, 2021 retail fresh produce sales surpassed the records set in 2020, however, dollar gains were inflation boosted and units and volume sales declined year-on-year.

The fresh produce supply chain moved nearly 43 billion pounds through the registers in 2021, which was 7.1% more than 2019.

“Traditionally we have always compared our performance to the prior year and that is a hard habit to break,” said Joe Watson, VP, Retail, Foodservice & Wholesale for IFPA.

“But when we remove the unprecedented demand of 2020 and compare to the more typical levels of 2019, we see our true accomplishment.”

Fresh produce prices were higher than last year. In 2021, price per volume (pound) for total fresh produce increased by 6.5% — pulled down by much milder inflation early on in the year.

When regarding inflation in December 2021 only, a comparison to 2020 shows a 14.7% increase for fresh fruit.

Last year, 2021, brought \$691 billion in food and beverage sales — up 1.8% over 2020 and 15.8% over the 2019 pre-pandemic normal. However, inflation played a significant role with year-on-year unit sales still down 3.3%.

The top sellers in 2021 reflect a mix of fruits and vegetables. Retail berry sales were nearly twice that of the number two, apples and tomatoes were the biggest seller on the vegetable side.

Additionally, berries recorded the highest growth rates among the top 10 sellers, at +11.7%. Other areas with high year-on-year growth were salad kits and melons.

Not all top 10 sellers grew sales in 2021. Tomatoes, potatoes and peppers lost a little ground compared with their 2020 records.

Fresh Fruit Sales in December

“On the fruit side, all top 10 items gained versus year ago,” said Jonna Parker, Team Lead for IRI Fresh. “In fact, eight out of the 10 top sellers in December gained in double digits,

boosted by inflation."

"The top 10 in absolute dollar gains showed both small and large categories are important for department growth," said Parker.

"But more than anything, it shows the impact of inflation. While melons, mixed fruit and party trays had a tremendous December performance as people entertained at home, the average price per pound for rose 20.0% for melons (highly affected by cut melons), 10.1% for mixed fruit and 22.6% for party trays."

"Impressively, berry prices only increased 1.9% over December 2020, yet berries remain the leader in absolute dollar growth."

Top 10 in sales	Dollar sales increase over comparable period in 2019/2020										
	Q1 '20	Q2 '20	Q3 '20	Q4 '20	Q1 '21	Q2 '21	Q3 '21	Q4 '21	Dec '21	Dec vs '20	Dec vs '19
Fresh fruit	+5%	+11%	+10%	+9%	+5%	+3%	+6%	+10.8%	\$2.4B	+13.0%	+23.3%
Berries	+11%	+15%	+14%	+16%	+11%	+9%	+11%	+16.3%	\$592M	+19.5%	+39.7%
Apples	+2%	+3%	+0%	+2%	-1%	+3%	+8%	+7.4%	\$336M	+7.5%	+14.0%
Grapes	+2%	-1%	+0%	+0%	+3%	-1%	+4%	+11.7%	\$262M	+13.9%	+16.7%
Bananas	+6%	+6%	+1%	+2%	-1%	-2%	+4%	+3.0%	\$236M	+3.3%	+7.7%
Mandarins	+7%	+8%	+14%	+16%	-1%	+14%	+12%	+4.9%	\$180M	+14.5%	+17.9%
Avocados	+7%	+15%	+2%	+6%	-1%	-10%	-3%	+9.2%	\$170M	+12.8%	+20.9%
Melons	+4%	+3%	+14%	+19%	+10%	+12%	+6%	+23.0%	\$115M	+31.9%	+42.2%
Oranges	+9%	+66%	+40%	+23%	+3%	-25%	-11%	+3.3%	\$100M	+3.0%	+33.3%
Mixed fruit	-1%	-26%	-2%	-9%	+8%	+58%	+28%	+28.9%	\$72M	+34.1%	+14.0%
Pineapples	-6%	+7%	+16%	+15%	+12%	+11%	+8%	+11.2%	\$64M	+10.9%	+19.5%

Source: Source: IRI Integrated Fresh, Total U.S., MULO

The report said that marketplace disruption is likely to continue through the first quarter of 2022 at a minimum.