



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Category Partners, LLC
Adam Brohimer (president)
2155 Providence Way
Idaho Falls, ID 83404
Adam.brohimer@categorypartners.com
402.578.4494
categorypartners.com

Retail produce sales spiking as consumers react to COVID-19

Preliminary data suggest perishability a key component in sales changes

Idaho Falls, ID (3.23.20) – The numbers are starting to come in and at least on the grocery side of the business and the produce industry has been able to respond to consumer needs during this period of economic and medical uncertainty caused by COVID-19. While some news reports and social media discussion forums indicated consumers could be reducing produce purchases in favor of non-perishable, center store foods, supermarket sales data indicates strong demand for produce. As a result of the health crisis, consumers are buying more produce but may be modifying how they buy.

Category Partners' analysis powered by Nielsen U.S. scan data for the Total U.S. for the single-week ending March 7 revealed produce department sales growth of +3.8%. Sales spiked to +23.2% the single-week ending March 14.

"It is no surprise based on anecdotal reports that the inflection in sales gains between the weeks ending March 7th and 14th was so dramatic," commented Steve Lutz, SVP of insights and innovation. "As more data points roll in, we're beginning to see some underlying patterns that reveal interesting new currents in the retail channel."

Further segmentation of the data revealed that while fruit sales are up +18.8% for the week of March 14th, vegetable sales surpassed fruit gaining +27.3% over the same week last year. Less perishable products like potatoes have seen larger sales spikes (+45%). Products that support home prepared meals like fresh tomatoes (+42%) for example are outpacing the strong produce department trends. Looking outside the department, there are big gains for less perishable products like frozen fruits (+73.2%) and frozen vegetables (+68.9%).

"As we look across individual categories in fresh produce as well as departments outside produce, the patterns are beginning to emerge," said Lutz. "Highly perishable items are selling but experiencing



smaller increases in sales. In general, the more an item or category is considered storable and a staple, the greater the increases in year-over-year growth triggered by the COVID-19 crisis. Consumers are still picking up highly perishable items for the next week, but they are stocking up on more ‘durable’ food items for a longer time horizon.”

###

About Category Partners – *a nationally recognized resource, among food companies and retailers, for delivering actionable business/consumer insights, marketing/sales plans and technology/data solutions. Category Partners is producer owned and headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID, with offices in Laguna Hills, Calif., Chicago, and Wenatchee, Wash.*

For more information, contact CP president Adam Brohimer, at adam.brohimer@categorypartners.com.