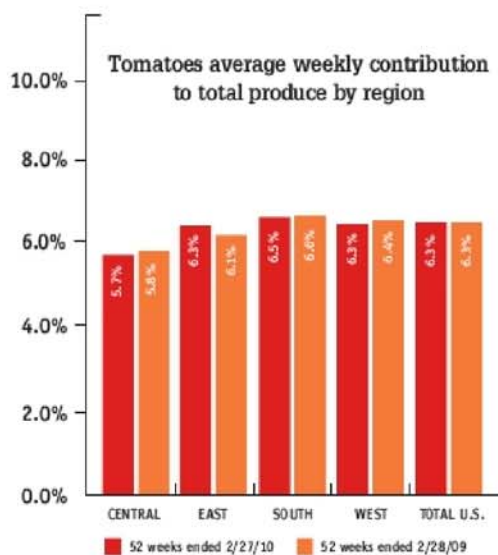
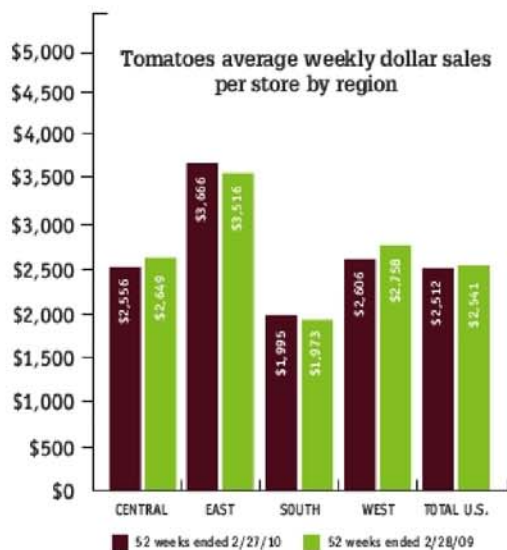


# Tomatoes

Romas remain strong as overall tomato sales slip a bit.

BY KIM GAWRONSKI



**H**OLDING STRONG AS ONE OF THE TOP VEGETABLE SALES PERFORMERS, the tomato category has endured tough times during the past few years with recalls, crop shortages and price increases. The current status of the category is no exception.

Average tomato sales decreased \$29 (or 1.1%) per store per week to \$2,512 during the 52-week period ended Feb. 27. Tomato contribution to total produce department sales averaged 6.3% during the time frame and remained flat compared to last year. The tomato category includes hothouse on the vine, field, roma, snacking and hothouse round varieties. Hothouse on the vine tomatoes represented the largest portion of all dollar sales, with 30.2% share. Snacking tomatoes had the second largest dollar share of national tomato sales, with 25.8%. Field tomatoes accounted for 17.9% dollar share. Roma and hothouse round subcategories held dollar share amounts of 14.4% and 11.7% respectively.

During the timeframe, the tomato category performed best during the spring of 2009, but all subcategories peaked during the Fourth of July holiday. Dollar sales slowed at supermarkets during the remainder of the summer and into the early fall due in part to the availability of local supplies.

Sales began to rise again starting in October and continued to increase through February.

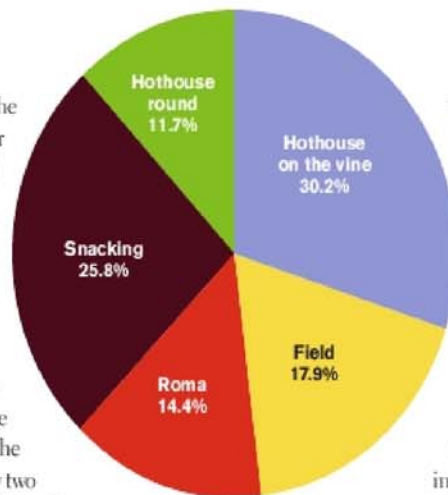
At the subcategory level, performance peaks were sporadic across the period. The hothouse on the vine subcategory steered the total tomato category's performance with top sales during the Fourth of July holiday, selling \$1,087 per store per week. Snacking tomatoes peaked the second week of April at \$836 per store per week. Field tomato dollars sales hit their highest point during the first week of August at \$577. Romas and hothouse rounds were at their highest sales per store per week at \$502 during early February and \$419 in early July.

Nationally, roma and field tomatoes were the only subcategories to post sales increases, up 2.1% and 0.3% respectively. Hothouse round had the largest dollar sales decrease compared to last year, down 6.0%, followed by hothouse on the vine with the second largest decrease of 2.4%. Snacking tomatoes remained relatively flat, with sales decreasing by 0.3% during the 52-week period.

Tomato sales were highest in the East, at \$3,666 per store per week, an increase of 4.3% compared to the previous 52-week period. The East was the only region to see increased sales in all five tomato subcategories. Romas posted the highest sales changes compared to the previous

year, up 10.7%. Hothouse on the vine had the next greatest increase in dollars per store per week, up 5.8%. Snacking tomatoes, field and hothouse round tomatoes also increased similarly for the period, up 3.1%, 2.8% and 0.8% respectively. Overall, tomato sales in the East accounted for 6.3% of all produce department sales.

The West sold the second-highest amount of tomatoes per store per week at \$2,606, a decline of 5.5% versus a year ago. This was the greatest decrease in tomato dollar sales of all the regions. Field and roma tomatoes were the only two subcategories to increase in the region, up 1.4% and 0.5% respectively. Hothouse round had the largest decrease for the region, down 16.0%, followed by hothouse on the vine, which drove the overall category decrease, which was down 9.5%. Snacking tomatoes decreased 1.2% in dollars per store per week for



Dollar contribution by subcategory

the period. Tomatoes' total contribution to the department was 6.3%, down 0.1% from last year.

The Central region sold \$2,556 of tomatoes per store per week, down 3.5% from the previous 52-week period. Roma tomatoes posted the largest growth, up 6.5%. Snacking tomatoes' dollar sales increased as well in the Central region, up 2.0% from last year. Field tomatoes decreased sales the most, down 12.9%. Hothouse on the vine and hothouse round also decreased compared to last year, down 8.4% and 3.9% respectively. Tomato sales in the Central region accounted for 5.7% of total produce sales.

The South sold the least tomatoes per store per week with \$1,955, down 0.9%. This region sold \$557 less than the total U.S. average. Hothouse on the vine sales increased the most, up 1.7% compared to last year in the South. □

*This sales review is provided by Chicago-based Perishables Group, Inc., an independent consulting firm focused on innovation and creating value for clients in the fresh food industry. Reported results are for March 7, 2009 through Feb. 27, 2010,*

*representing more than 63% of national supermarket ACV share. Sales data is provided by Perishables Group FreshFacts, powered by Nielsen. For more information, contact Kelli Beckel at 773-929-7013; KelliB@perishablesgroup.com.*

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