

Inflation

8 of 10 consumers in *Fresh Trends* survey see inflation with fresh produce

By Tom Karst



Inflation is a hard-edged reality for consumers, according to data from The Packer's *Fresh Trends 2023* survey.

With shoppers surveyed in mid-October 2022, respondents were asked the question, "Do you believe you are paying more for fresh fruits and vegetables than last year?"

A resounding 83% of consumers said yes, they do believe they are paying more for fresh produce. Seventeen percent said they did not believe they were paying more for fresh produce.

Top earners, ironically, were most convinced they were paying more for fresh produce compared with a year ago. More than 90% of those making more than \$100,000 per year said they believed they were paying more; that compares with 77% of those making less than \$25,000 annually, according to *Fresh Trends*.

When asked to estimate how much more they are paying for fresh produce compared with a year ago — "How much more would you say you're spending?" — the results were:

- 1%-24% more: 51%.
- 25%-49% more: 34%.
- 50%-75% more: 12%.
- More than 75% more: 3%.

Inflation adjustments

When consumers were asked in the *Fresh Trends* survey how their produce purchases have been affected as a result of higher prices, they said:

- I buy less: 36%.
- I cut back on other areas of my budget to be able to buy the same amount/types of food: 43%.
- I've changed the type of food I buy (buy less expensive items): 28%.
- I'm growing more of my own fruits and vegetables: 10%.

Switching loyalties

Asked how higher inflation is changing where they shop for food, consumers in the *Fresh Trends 2023* survey responded:

- No change in where I shop: 43%.
- More comparison shopping between grocers to find deals: 45%.
- Changed where I shopped to lower-priced retailer: 12%.

Bottom line

Higher inflation has subtracted from fresh produce consumption for some shoppers, according to the *Fresh Trends* survey.

Responding to the prompt, "Considering higher inflation, I estimate my consumption of fresh produce this year has:"

- Stayed about the same or increased compared with last year: 52%.
- Declined by 10%: 28%.
- Declined by 20%: 13%.
- Declined by 30% or more: 7%.

Out of stock

One prompt in the *Fresh Trends* consumer survey referenced out-of-stocks and how that may affect loyalty to particular retailers: "I have noticed more problems with produce commodities being out of stock where I shop this year compared to last year."

The results showed 3 out of 4 loyal to their stores:

- Yes, but it didn't cause me to switch stores: 38%.
- Yes, I found another food retailer because of out-of-stocks: 26%.
- I didn't notice this issue at my stores: 36%.