



Willie, how wrong you were



It was a dark and stormy night...and on the following morning of February 2nd our prognosticating groundhog Warton Willie crawled out of his burrow and failed to see his shadow. As legend has it, that should have meant an early spring. Now, with a snowstorm pending as I pen our March Newsletter, I can't help but feel a little bit duped. But it's not all doom and gloom, although Willie got it wrong, that was over four weeks ago. Spring is just around the corner, so too is the springtime surge in sales and the end of the first quarter of the year.

Since this is the March Newsletter, we are prepping for the first big sales event of the year. This month in our exclusive ***Produce Moneyball*** feature we project weekly costs for the month of April on products you might expect to see on your Easter dinner table. In ***That's what she (and he) said*** we ask our customers what their favourite fruit and vegetables are and in ***Store Tours*** we review the good, the bad and the ugly across North American produce departments.

I hope you enjoy this month's edition. Feel free to forward to a friend or two who might find this stuff interesting. And if you have not seen our Produce Almanac yet, be sure to check out a sample by following this [link](#).

Produce Moneyball

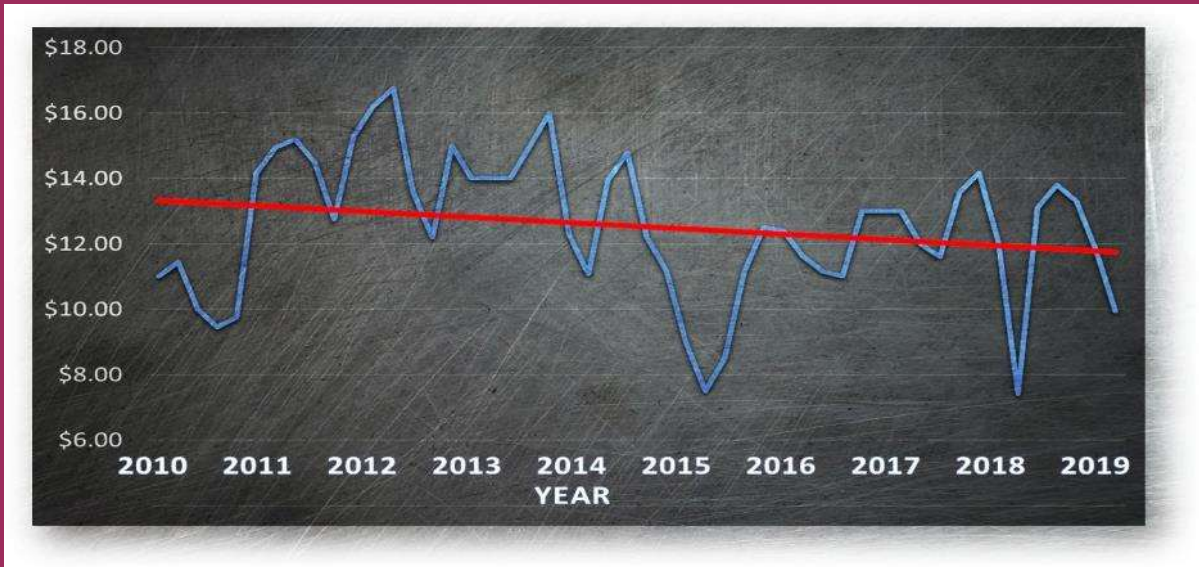


Here we stand on the precipice of the first big mealtime event of 2020. Who amongst us couldn't use a finely tuned crystal ball to help guide us through treacherous Easter waters and get that elusive leg up on our competitors? Have you heard the saying *'It's in the cards'*? The saying means that the *'it'* is very likely to happen. At Execulytics, we have a variation of that saying. Here we say *'It's in the numbers'* and we use our popular **Produce Moneyball** techniques to get at the *'it'*.

This month, using historical costs from the years 2010 through 2019 we will predict the weekly FOB costs for the month of April for 12x 6 oz. Blackberries, 25 lb. carton Brussels Sprouts and 6 count Pineapples. Just remember, these are predictions based on history. And the history of produce markets sometimes reminds me of the late, great Yankee Catcher, Yogi Berra...*'It's like deja vu all over again'*. But every once in a while, history doesn't repeat itself. Uncommon and unforeseen blips in supply or demand can cause the markets to go a little haywire. In these situations, even **Produce Moneyball** misses the mark.

12x6 oz. Blackberries

When I first became involved in produce I was immediately a fan of blackberries. Back then, convening a meeting of the blackberry fan club was easy, I was the only member. Nowadays, everyone loves blackberries. For good reason too. They will surely be a good addition to your Easter fruit platter. Speaking of Easter what can we expect this year?

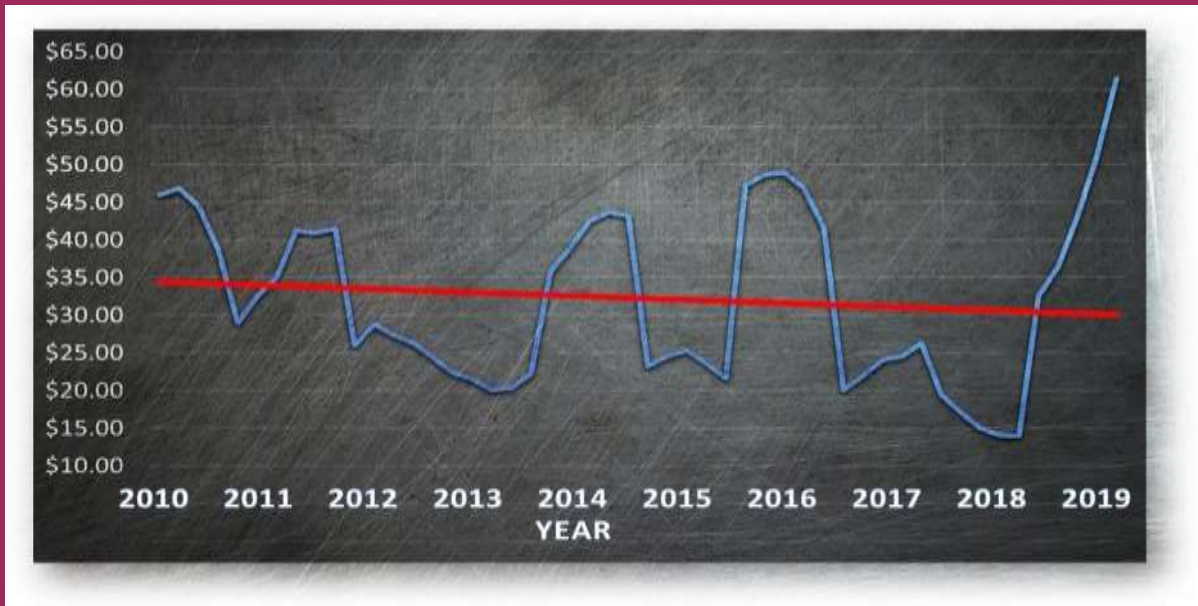


Looking at the 10-year history you can see that some years things get downright cheap. Most years though, costs hover in the low to mid teens. The 1.28% annual deflation shows costs are becoming more affordable over time. Expect April to start around \$12 for the Easter buy during week 14 and extending into week 15, then come down post Easter.



25 lb. carton Brussels Sprouts

Brussels Sprouts, the most improved vegetable in the produce department. That's what I'd say if I were handing out the awards on Oscars night. And just like a temperamental actor, brussels sprouts can be as volatile as anything. Do you see that FOB cost north of \$60 last year? But they sure are tasty, or at the very least a whole lot tastier than they used to be.

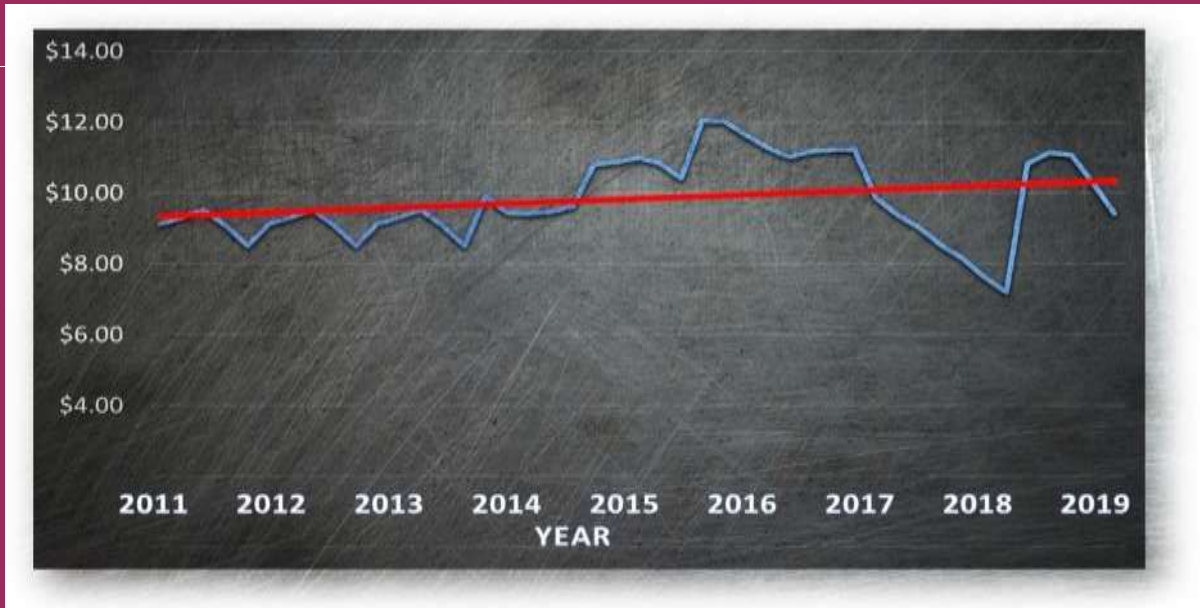


I would not anticipate costs of \$60 again this year, but I wouldn't start planning for costs to be in the teens either, despite the 1.37% annual deflation rate over the last ten years. Instead, I would plan for something in the high \$20's FOB and moving upwards as Easter demand takes hold with little relief after the holiday.



6 count Pineapples

Who amongst us does not love the sweet, juicy flesh of a tropical pineapple? And who can resist making it the centerpiece of your fruit platter while entertaining this year? Chances are many produce shoppers will be looking for pineapples, so it would be good to know where the market will be.



Finally, a category that won't cause a panic attack. Pineapples are much less volatile than the other Produce Moneyball products this month. With costs mostly hovering close to \$10 and slight inflation of 1.15% annualized, you can expect 2020 to remain the same, just above or just below \$10 FOB all April.



The NEW 2020 Produce Almanac is now available to purchase. It was built using the same data as Produce Moneyball. If you are an information junkie and want to stay a step ahead, the Produce Almanac should be on your bookshelf. Click the button to find out more.

[Produce Almanac](#)

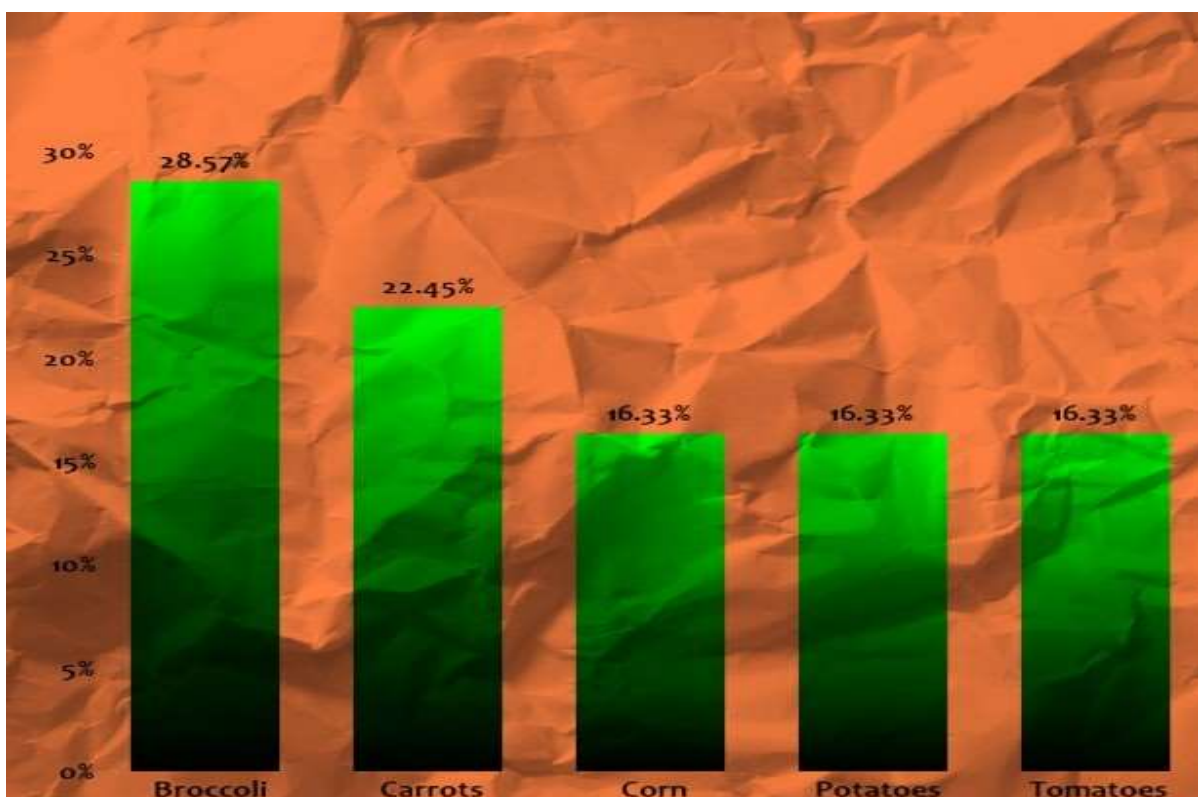
That's what she (and he) said



Every once in a while what *she* said is a little bit different than what *he* said. And when we went out and asked our panel of nearly 400 Canadian produce aficionados what their favorite fruits and vegetables were, we discovered exactly that. Surprise, surprise women and men are different in the fruits and vegetables that they favor.

Wouldn't it be good to know the products of choice in the battle of the sexes? You never know when you'll need to cater to one or the other. It's times like this when the Execulytics Consumer Panel earns its keep.

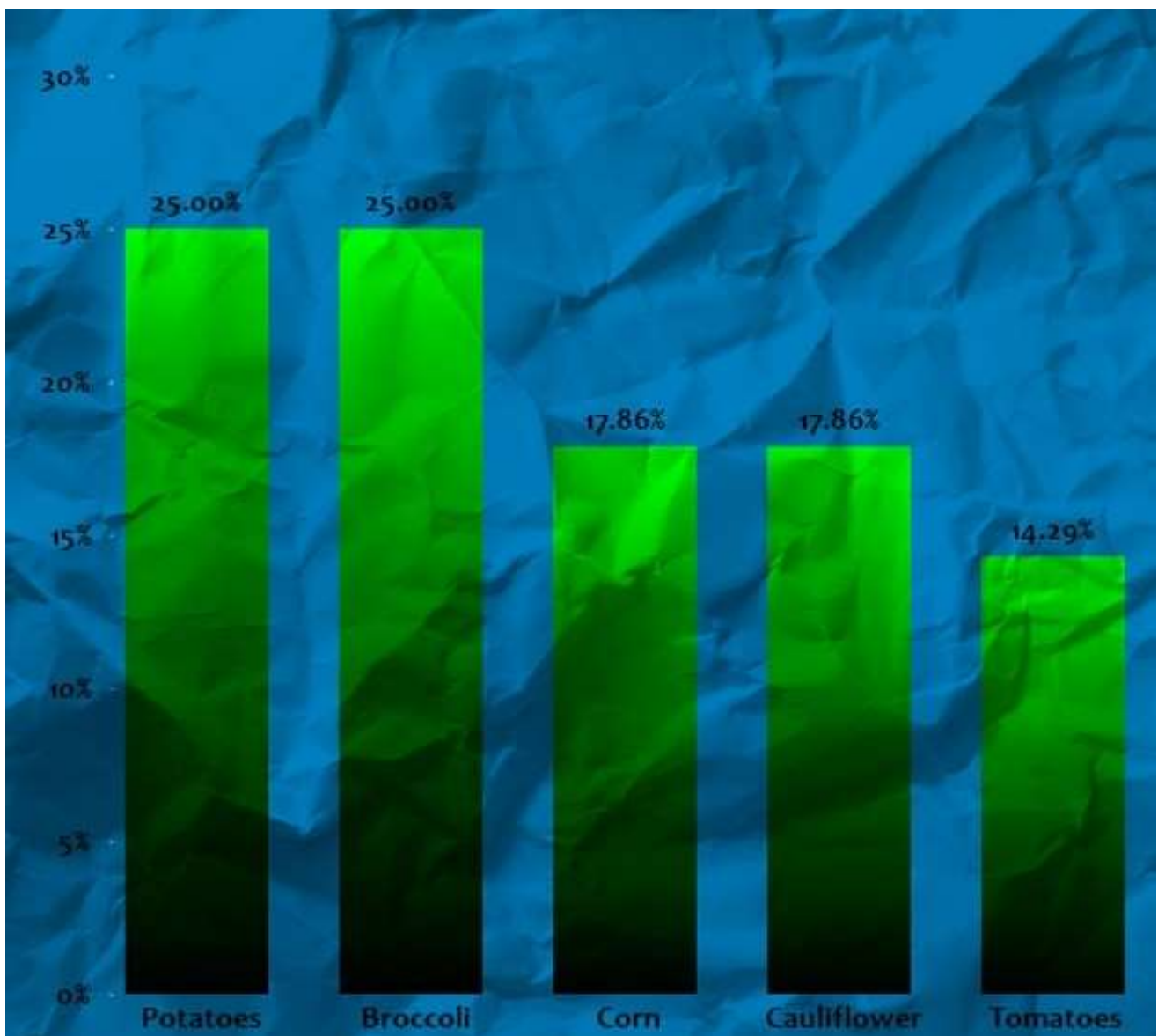
Women Favor Broccoli



Broccoli huh? Who knew? And it's not just a little bit favored, it is the favorite by a healthy margin over carrots, the number two vegetable and it blows the rest of the competition out of the water. I do wonder though, if this survey was taken in the middle of summer would we see corn move up the list a spot or two? Maybe it's worth it to repeat the survey when the weather is hot.

Nevertheless, broccoli is a key meal component amongst women. Is this important information? You bet it is! Most research suggests that women still control a larger portion of the grocery bill. Having inside information on consumer demands, particular the biggest customer block is vital for success. If you don't already have fantastic broccoli for your customers, now's your chance to up your game. That's true for retailers, wholesalers, food service providers and growers alike.

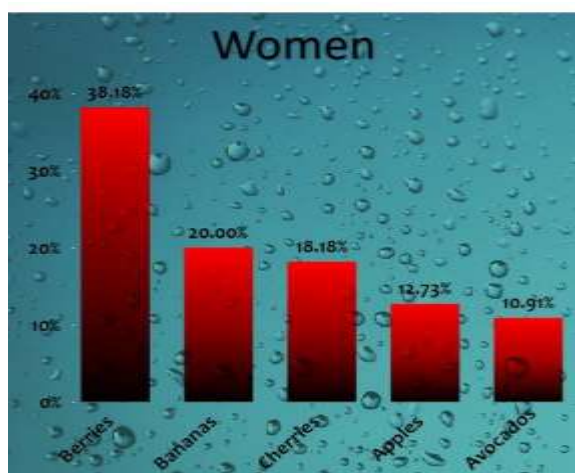
And what about the men?



Although, it's true women control the largest portion of the grocery spend, the same research also says men have almost closed the gap completely. The fact that men have broccoli high on their list too makes it doubly important to put your best broccoli foot forward. But it's not all about the broccoli for men. How many times have you heard someone describe their father as '*a meat and potatoes man*'? Perhaps the apple (or should I say *pomme de terre*) doesn't fall far from the tree. Getting your potato on is another vital tactic for success. It's easy to overlook the mighty potato, considering it almost sells itself, however with the special place it holds in the hearts of many men, overlooking potatoes should be something to avoid

Can we at least all agree on Fruit?

Hooray, hooray, something we can agree on...sort of. We agree on berries. Everyone loves berries. So that's easy, win on berries and you will have both genders thanking you. There are a few other areas of agreement, like bananas and avocados. But if you want to cater to the women in your business, then you would be well served to focus on cherries. Men on the other hand, will provide dividends with an effort on clementines. Here's an idea, whether retailer, food service provider or produce supplier how about you stay on the right side of berries, bananas, apples, avocados, cherries and clementines. That way you keep all your customers happy. Happy customers tend to spend money



Harness the power of consumer intelligence

If the Execulytics Consumer Panel can help your organization accomplish your customer goals click on the button to learn more.

[Find out more](#)

Store Tours



I promised you the good, the bad and the ugly this month. But to be honest, we like to think of ourselves as a pretty positive group, so we are going a little heavier to the good. Nevertheless take a dive into our store tours section and see what we see in and around the grocery arenas.

Ontario

Growing consumption is a 24/7, 365 day per year job



And this Sobeys store is doing what they can to help customers consume more. Instead of buying a jar of guacamole, or for that matter just crushing avocados, customers are encouraged to try this fresh take on a favorite recipe. It has a lot of ingredients, including roma tomatoes, grapefruit, basil, guacamole mix and of course, you can't forget the avocados. By displaying it all in one spot, it couldn't be easier for a customer to increase their consumption. Sometimes people need a little push to fill, as my friends at the CPMA would say, '*Half Your Plate*' with fruits and veggies.



Education goes a long way too

It's no secret that nowadays customers are looking for new, tastier varieties in their fruits and vegetables. As the industry works hard to satisfy these new demands it can become a little tricky for the general public. With so much choice, it may be easier for some customers to revert back to the tried and true varieties they are familiar with.

In-store signage like this tomato banner on the left, again at Sobeys, is a great way to break the ice with customers and encourage them to try something new. Along the way, brand new customers may enter the category.

Arizona



Neat and simple, it makes me want to buy

If there was any doubt that value added transcends the packaged salad category, Safeway in Arizona is doing their best to convince us otherwise. Above we see a full section, lined up all neat and orderly, with an eye-popping assortment and big inviting price cues telling me all this food, plus so much time saved can be mine for \$5.00. Say no more, direct me to the checkout.



On the left is another orderly section, this time full with organic apples and citrus. Again my eyes are drawn to a display like this. It's just so easy to shop from, I can see in one quick glance what's available. The display is also well signed, enhancing its simplicity. I wonder though, if this were a game of tic-tac-toe, did citrus give up or were they just caught napping?

Western Canada



Speaking of growing consumption

This SaveOn store pictured above from Alberta is really putting a stake in the ground for produce. On the left you see small baskets of healthy fruit offered free for children shopping with their parents. It used to be a free sugary cookie to pacify the young shopping assistants, but SaveOn is introducing good eating habits early on for their customers. To the right is the evolution of the SaveOn produce guarantee, displayed here as the Produce 3x Promise. This is their promise that if produce isn't right they will refund your money, replace the product AND give you loyalty points. It's such a large deterrent, I wouldn't be surprised if the impact on operations is hugely positive.



Meanwhile across town, Sobeys is signalling to their customers that Spring is on the way. If not in the weather, that most certainly in the products. A big display of strawberries are being offered for a 50% discount off the regular price. If that doesn't get you feeling a little springtime warmth, I'm not sure what will.

Texas

Number one for many reasons



Recently, HEB out of Texas was named the number one grocery retailer in the US. Although they have been hovering around the top for a while now, this is still a big accomplishment. It made us wonder what prompted their vault to the top? Could it be that they offer new flavorful varieties like the cotton candy grapes in their San Antonio store pictured above? Or maybe it has more to do with their devotion to a large organics offering like we see in the picture below-left? Both organics and flavorful varieties are growing trends, it's safe to say they play a part. It could also be that they use RPCs to display their produce as seen bottom-right cutting down on costs and handling leading to lower prices and higher quality. Maybe it's all these things plus a whole lot more.



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Sincerely,

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