

Fruits, Vegetables at Retail

availability of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables varies with store size, location, and ownership as shown by survey

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The following article is the fourth of a series of reports of a survey of characteristics of and services offered by retail grocery stores in five counties in California made cooperatively by the Department of Home Economics, University of California, and the United States Department of Agriculture under the authority of the Research and Marketing Act as part of Western Regional Research Project WM-26.

From 94% to 99% of 1,028 representative retail grocery stores surveyed in Alameda, Butte, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties offered fresh or frozen—or both—fruits and vegetables to their customers.

Fresh fruits and vegetables were available slightly more frequently except in San Diego where 94% of the stores carried fresh and 96% carried frozen products.

Both kinds of products were stocked by 83% to 92% of the stores. Relatively small proportions of the stores in each county offered fresh products only or frozen products only. Neither fresh nor frozen was carried by 1% to 6% of the stores.

In the two counties which had the highest proportions of rural stores—Butte and Fresno—the rural stores carried fresh fruits and vegetables more frequently than the frozen. Although all the rural stores in Butte had fresh fruits and vegetables only 87% stocked the frozen. In Fresno 91% of the rural stores carried fresh but only 73% offered the frozen.

In all five counties, from 90% to 99% of the urban stores stocked the fresh products and from 88% to 96% had the frozen. Los Angeles had the lowest pro-

portions of stores offering both the fresh and the frozen. Butte had the highest proportion for fresh and San Diego the highest for frozen.

In Alameda and Los Angeles the proportions of stores in neighborhood-secondary shopping areas which carried fresh and the proportions of the stores carrying frozen fruits and vegetables were higher—88%–96%—than the proportions of downtown stores—79%–90%. In Butte, the proportions of stores offering fresh and of those offering frozen products were higher in stores in the downtown areas than in stores in neighborhood-secondary areas. In Fresno, this was true for frozen fruits and vegetables but the reverse was true for the fresh products.

Fresh fruits and vegetables were carried somewhat more frequently than the frozen by the isolated stores. From 93% to 100% offered the fresh and from 74% to 94% had the frozen.

All the chain stores—two or more units—carried frozen fruits and vegetables. With the exception of one chain in San Diego and one in Los Angeles all of them stocked fresh fruits and vegetables.

The independent stores surveyed did not carry fresh or frozen—or both—fruits and vegetables as frequently as did chain stores. Of the independents affiliated with buying groups from 95% to 100% carried fresh and the same proportions carried frozen products. From 80% to 98% of the nonaffiliated independents stocked fresh and 74% to 93% had frozen fruits and vegetables.

All the larger stores—with seven or more equivalent full-time employees—carried both fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. Of those with 3–6 employees, 89% to 100% offered fresh and 93% to 100% stocked frozen products. Of those with one or two employees, 85% to 98% displayed fresh and 76% to 92% carried frozen fruits and vegetables.

Sources

In each county a high proportion of the stores offering fresh fruits and vegetables obtained them from only one source. That same practice was followed by 98% of the stores in Alameda and 92% in Los Angeles. The next largest proportion was 86% in Fresno. Butte with 74% and San Diego with 69% had the lowest proportions.

In San Diego, 28% of the stores carrying the fresh products and 24% in Butte bought from two sources. In Fresno, 13%—and in the other counties, smaller proportions—obtained them from two sources. In San Diego 3%, in Butte 2% and in the other counties less than 1% bought from three or more sources.

Wholesale fruit and vegetable markets—and wholesalers not in organized markets—were the major sources for the stores. The relative importance of those two sources varied among counties.

In Alameda, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties 48% to 50% of the stores carrying fruits and vegetables bought at least some of them from wholesale markets. In Fresno 74% and in Butte only 15% followed that practice.

Wholesalers outside the markets were patronized by over 80% of the stores in Butte, by 40% in San Diego, 43% in Los Angeles, by 25% in Fresno and 28% in Alameda counties.

Two other sources were reported as rather important in several of the counties. In Los Angeles 12% and in Alameda 13% of the stores carrying fresh fruits and vegetables bought some from self-owned warehouses. In Alameda 72% and in Los Angeles 50% of the chain stores followed that practice. On the other hand only 35% of the chains in San Diego, 13% in Butte and 10% in Fresno reported that they obtained fresh fruits and vegetables from self-owned warehouses.

Major Sources From Which Stores Carrying Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Obtained Them

	Location		Shopping area			Ownership			Number of employees			
	Rural	Urban	Downtown	Neighborhood Sec.	Isolated store	Unaffiliated	Affiliated	Chain	1 or 2	3 to 6	7 to 14	15 or more
A. Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Markets												
Butte	35.5	6.5	...	12.3	26.5	28.3	2.5	...	23.3	3.6	...	11.5
Fresno	78.0	72.1	63.2	76.7	72.5	75.2	67.6	80.0	69.8	80.0	77.8	80.0
San Diego	44.4	50.0	50.0	52.2	33.3	52.2	48.4	39.1	51.3	46.3	50.0	44.4
Alameda	*	50.6	55.6	51.1	*	54.3	57.9	27.6	54.1	56.2	35.3	27.3
Los Angeles	*	48.0	54.5	47.7	*	40.6	56.0	45.6	47.9	45.5	60.0	45.1
B. Fruit and Vegetable Wholesalers												
Butte	54.8	92.2	88.2	89.5	64.7	66.0	100.0	86.7	70.0	96.4	100.0	88.9
Fresno	19.5	27.9	36.8	23.2	25.0	20.8	35.3	40.0	26.7	24.4	22.2	20.0
San Diego	27.8	41.4	35.7	38.3	33.3	41.3	45.2	26.1	39.7	48.8	31.2	22.2
Alameda	*	27.8	11.1	29.3	*	42.4	15.8	...	38.8	18.8	...	9.1
Los Angeles	*	42.7	30.3	43.8	*	60.8	47.6	6.5	54.8	55.4	20.0	7.0

* Number of rural and of isolated stores were too small to be of significance.

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RETAIL

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One fourth of the stores carrying fresh fruits and vegetables in Butte County re-

ported that they bought, at least some, direct from farms or from farmers' markets. Over 18% of the stores in San Diego and 13% in Fresno reported that practice.

As shown in the table on the preceding page, the proportions of stores that patronized wholesale fruit and vegetable markets did not vary significantly—in most counties—from one subclass to another within the major classifications based on location, shopping area, ownership, and number of equivalent full-time employees. The same was true of the proportions of stores buying produce from fruit and vegetable wholesalers.

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