Food Retailer Marketing of California Fresh Strawberries: A Case Study

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Abstract
This study explores the marketing strategies that supermarket produce managers use to promote strawberries in their stores in Davis, California. The objectives are to identify whether and how differences in marketing channels affect retailers’ marketing decisions; determine the roles that pre-commitments play in marketing decisions; and examine how seasonality affects retailers’ demand and plans for promotion. A twenty-eight point questionnaire was used to collect data from local supermarkets and their suppliers from October 2001 to March 2002 using in-person interviews and emailed questionnaires. Three supermarkets and their suppliers were interviewed. Primary findings included the following: Differences in corporation size were associated with different marketing channels for strawberries, and different marketing decisions in the store. Pre-commitment pricing arrangements increase strawberry promotions because they allow retailers to reduce uncertainty regarding product volumes. Produce managers indicated that seasonality considerations must be incorporated into an effective marketing strategy. Understanding these factors is essential for assessing the potential for California strawberry producers to increase the demand for strawberries.