



Retail Supply Chain Update

January 15, 2021

Grocery retailers ramp up COVID-19 vaccine distribution

- Supercenter retailer Meijer and regional grocer Wegmans Food Markets are mobilizing COVID-19 vaccination programs as they receive state allocations of the vaccine.
- Grand Rapids, Mich.-based Meijer said yesterday that Michigan has chosen the company as its an initial pharmacy partner to receive and administer coronavirus immunizations via the Federal Retail Pharmacy Partnership Program. Plans call for Meijer pharmacies to provide the first doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a limited number of stores in Wayne County to people ages 65 and older starting Jan. 18.
- Meanwhile, Rochester, N.Y.-based Wegmans announced this week that nine of its pharmacy locations in New York are receiving a limited supply of the COVID-19 vaccine. Based on state guidelines, the vaccinations will be distributed to people ages 75 and older and to Wegmans pharmacy staff, the company said.
- The COVID vaccinations are given by appointment only. Those eligible to receive the vaccine can schedule one at [wegmans.com/Pharmacy](https://www.wegmans.com/Pharmacy) by calling (800) 207-6099. Wegmans noted that recipients must present photo ID for proof of age and it won't immunize other groups eligible in Phase 1 of the state's vaccination distribution at this time.

Publix expands COVID-19 vaccinations to over 100 pharmacies

- After an initial allocation to 22 pharmacies, Publix Super Markets has rolled out the coronavirus vaccine to 105 pharmacies in 12 Florida counties.
- Publix yesterday expanded its distribution of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to Collier, Flagler, St. Johns and Volusia counties, with vaccinations starting tomorrow, Jan. 14. In line with Florida health authority guidelines, the immunization is currently available only to health care workers, residents and staff in long-term care facilities, and people ages 65 and older.

Tyson Foods prepares to vaccinate employees

- Tyson Foods is getting ready to vaccinate its employees for COVID-19 once they're eligible for the shot.
- The company announced Wednesday it is partnering with Matrix Medical Network to set up mobile health clinics with clinical staff to administer vaccinations.
- Tyson said any employee who wants to be vaccinated will be able to, but timing will depend on state guidelines.

Coronavirus vaccine incentive: Trader Joe's, Instacart and Dollar General to pay workers to get vaccinated

- Trader Joe's is the latest business to offer an incentive for workers getting the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The Monrovia, California-based grocery chain said Thursday it will give employees two hours of pay per dose for getting the vaccine and will also shift around schedules to make sure employees have time to get vaccinated.
- Online grocery delivery company Instacart also announced Thursday it will begin paying its workers \$25 to offset them taking time to get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The San Francisco-headquartered company, which has about 500,000 workers that shop to fill and deliver orders from more than 40,000 stores, said it will begin giving the vaccine support stipend Feb. 1 to eligible workers as the vaccination programs roll out across the U.S. and Canada.
- "With COVID-19 cases continuing to rise across the country, we're taking proactive steps to advocate that government agencies recognize Instacart shoppers as critical essential workers who deserve early access to vaccines," said Instacart CEO and founder Apoorva Mehta in a statement.
- Dollar General, which operates nearly 17,000 stores in 46 states, said Wednesday it will give employees the equivalent of four hours of pay if they get the vaccine.
- The Goodlettsville, Tennessee-based retailer said its salaried employees would get additional hours' pay to make up for time away from work.
- Dollar General said the extra pay is intended to compensate for the travel time, mileage and child care expenses that employees could incur to get the vaccine. "We do not want our employees to have to choose between receiving a vaccine or coming to work," the company said.

Target has announced, 10 months in advance, that it will close all its stores on Thanksgiving Day 2021

- The response to Thanksgiving Day store closures in 2020 was "so positive" that Target's doing it again.
- Stores will be closed all day on Thanksgiving Day 2021, it announced Wednesday, 10 months in advance.
- It introduced the policy in 2020 to minimize crowds and make shopping less stressful.

Walmart to test IoT 'smart box' for unattended fresh grocery deliveries

- Walmart plans to pilot an Internet-of-Things (IoT) "smart box" from startup HomeValet for home delivery of perishable foods.
- In a [blog post](#) on Tuesday, Tom Ward, senior vice president of customer product at Walmart U.S., said the HomeValet Smart Box test is slated to kick off this spring in Bentonville, Ark. Participating customers will be able to receive deliveries from their local Walmart store in a HomeValet temperature-controlled box situated outside their home. The unit's IoT platform has three temperature zones for storage of frozen, refrigerated and pantry items. At the point of delivery, the box communicates with the courier's mobile device to provide access and complete fulfillment of the order.
- Tysons, Va.-based HomeValet said on its website that the cold chain-compliant Smart Box works with a dedicated mobile app that lets customers shop for groceries, track the

delivery of their order and adjust temperature settings, which change automatically before the delivery is made. Users also can control permissions for access, such as family members and neighbors; secure their box remotely; and receive notifications for deliveries and unauthorized access, as well as temperature alerts.

- “The prospect of this technology is intriguing, both for customers and for Walmart’s last-mile delivery efforts,” Ward wrote in the blog. “For customers, they don’t need to plan their day around when their grocery delivery will be made. For Walmart, it presents an opportunity to deliver items 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While we don’t have plans to do 24/7 delivery today, it certainly has a nice ring to it.”
- The HomeValet Smart Box is powered by a standard 110-volt outlet and includes a backup battery that allows it to function without cooling capabilities for up to 36 hours, according to the company. The unit can be placed anywhere that provides delivery access and power, such as next to their garage or in a side yard. HomeValet noted that the size and weight of the Smart Box make it difficult to remove, but the unit comes with an anchor point for securing it to the ground with a stake or chain. A built-in UV-C LED light helps to disinfect the box between deliveries.

Harris Teeter dangles incentives for online grocery subscription

- Harris Teeter has ushered in an incentive-laden subscription option as part of a new fee structure for its ExpressLane Online Shopping service.
- The Matthews, N.C.-based grocer, part of The Kroger Co., said yesterday that going forward it will waive the service fee on all ExpressLane pickup and delivery orders over \$100 and offer a tiered service-fee structure of \$4.95 for orders of \$25 to \$49.99 and \$2.95 orders of \$50 to \$99.99.
- Before the change to an order value-based approach, a \$4.95 service fee was applied to all online grocery orders, which require a minimum purchase of \$25.
- Harris Teeter said it also will waive the service fee on ExpressLane orders for shoppers ages 60 and older on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and offer \$4.95 delivery during that time span.
- ExpressLane Delivery service, not offered through all stores, carries an additional cost. On top of the service fee, delivery orders include a \$9.95 delivery fee for purchases of \$50 or more and an \$11.95 fee for orders less than \$50.
- Meanwhile, Harris Teeter shoppers can receive new member-only incentives by purchasing an annual or monthly ExpressLane subscription. The memberships cost \$99.95 for an annual subscription and \$16.95 for a monthly subscription.

Ahold Delhaize’s RBS pilots UV disinfection robots

- Ahold Delhaize USA’s Retail Business Services (RBS) arm is testing ultraviolet disinfection robots in two distribution centers to support stepped-up cleaning procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- From Cambridge, Mass.-based Ava Robotics, the UV disinfection robots are now being used in a pilot at Ahold Delhaize’s affiliated DCs in Schodack, N.Y., and Dunn, N.C. In announcing the initiative on Friday, Ava said Ahold Delhaize is the first grocery retailer to employ the technology.
- Ava Robotics said the UV robot can disinfect both air and surfaces, with 99% effectiveness against COVID-19. (Photo courtesy of Ava Robotics)



- When asked if the robot will be deployed to other Ahold Delhaize USA distribution facilities and stores, a spokeswoman for Quincy, Mass.-based RBS told Supermarket News that the company is still assessing Ava’s solution.
- “The team continues to evaluate the technology at this time. No decisions about further rollout have been made yet,” Erin DeWaters, director of communications for RBS, said in an email.
- Ava’s robot is designed to provide autonomous UV disinfection — for COVID-19 and other cleaning needs — in workplace settings, such as corporate offices, warehouses and other workspaces. The UV robot can be used to disinfect both air and surfaces, with a disinfection rate of approximately 9,000 square feet per hour and 99% effectiveness against COVID-19, Ava reported.
- Facilities managers can remotely access the robot and automatically receive email reports to confirm proper dosages for assigned areas. In addition, screens and speakers on the unit provide disinfection-related announcements, and the technology offers easy integration with cleaning best practices and current protocols, Ava said.
- The UV robots are slated to ship and become widely available early in the second quarter of 2021, according to Ava. The company also offers Cisco Webex-enabled telepresence

robots to provide a mobile solution for workplace collaboration, including videoconferencing.

- Because the UV robots can automatically clean specified areas in a workplace based on preset schedules, employees can focus on other areas of need for disinfection, Ava noted.

Jewel-Osco tests self-serve grocery pickup kiosk

- Expanding its click-and-collect options, Albertsons Cos. is piloting an automated, temperature-controlled pickup kiosk outside a Jewel-Osco supermarket in Chicago.
- Albertsons said Thursday that it's the first U.S. grocer to test the contactless PickUp Kiosk, developed by Estonia-based Cleveron. The Jewel-Osco unit is now fulfilling orders, and Boise, Idaho-based Albertsons soon plans to install a second kiosk at a San Francisco Bay Area Safeway.
- To use the kiosk, Jewel-Osco online grocery customers choose the "Kiosk PickUp" option at checkout and selected a two-hour time slot to pick up their order. Upon arriving at the kiosk, they scan a code on their smartphone, and their groceries are robotically delivered to a clear door at the front of the unit for retrieval. The station features two temperature zones — regular and a deep freeze — and customer orders, made via the retailer's e-grocery website or mobile app, can be stored in two different zones and still be delivered in the same console for pickup.

E-commerce gives Target holiday sales boost

- Target Corp. tallied 17.2% comparable sales growth for the 2020 holiday sales period, with online transactions driving the bulk of the gain.
- Target reported Wednesday that comp-store sales climbed 4.2% year over year for November/December, while digital sales jumped 102% for the period. The Minneapolis-based mass merchant said the overall comp-sales increase was fueled by a 4.3% uptick in traffic and 12.3% growth in average ticket size.