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Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024 RECORDS HIGHER FOOD PRICES, BRINGING INFLATION TO 5,6% AS SOUTH AFRICAN CONSUMERS CONTINUE TO PAY MORE FOR FOOD



Apples also experienced a notable increase of 18,4% during February 2024.

Ndivhuwo Thenga

South African households, that are already buckling under pressure because of high food prices, paid even more for food and basic essentials for the first quarter of 2024 than they did during the same period in 2023. This was revealed by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) urban food basket price monthly report released at the end of March.

The report covers the prices of 28 selected items ranging from cereals, vegetable oils, meat and dairy. Comparing food prices for February 2023 with February 2024, the cost of the NAMC's 28-item urban food basket increased by 9,5%, reaching R1 527,23. When this amount is compared to the R1 251,50 in January 2024, the monthly increase was 0,5%.

Between February 2023 and February 2024, among these 28 items, 15 experienced price increases that exceeded the inflation target of 6% set by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). Notable products in this category include oranges, which experienced a substantial price surge of 51,0%, followed by potatoes (32,2%), Ceylon/black tea (29,7%), rice (27,4%), eggs (25,2%), white sugar (24,1%), instant coffee (20,6%), apples (18,4%), peanut butter and baked beans (11,5%), dried beans (10,8%), cheddar cheese (9,9%), polony (8,5%), full cream long life milk (7,0%) and chicken giblets (6,1%).

When examining year-on-year price differences, the food group that contributed most significantly to observed food inflation was fruit, experiencing a substantial increase of 27,5%. Following

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this was coffee and tea, which increased by 24,8%, sugary foods by 24,1%, bean products by 13,8%, bread and cereals by 7,9%, animal products by 2,2% and vegetables by 1,7%, while fats and oils decreased by 3,3%. Reviewing the month-on-month basis, fruit showed the most significant escalation by 3,5%, followed by bread and cereal by 1,8%, bean products by 1,4%, coffee and tea and fats and oils both increased by 0,4%. On the other hand, sugary foods, dairy and eggs increased by 0,3%, while animal protein remained constant and vegetables decreased by 2,6%.

Meanwhile, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported a decrease of 0,7% in the global nominal price index for February 2024, down by 0,9 points from January 2024. This can be attributed to decreases in different food categories included in calculating the food price index. For instance, the cereal price index recorded a decrease of 5,0%, while the vegetable oil index registered a decrease of 1,3% in February 2024. However, the sugar price index, meat price index and dairy price index registered increases of 3,2%, 1,8% and 1,1%, respectively.

On 20 March 2024, Statistics South Africa released the consumer price index (CPI) for February 2024 which stood at 5,6%, with a slight increase from 5,3% reported in January 2024.

South Africa's food inflation is anticipated to remain stable in the coming months owing to favourable global prices for crops such as wheat and maize. According to the FAO, there has been a decrease in global maize export prices in February, which is attributed to expectations of abundant harvests in countries like Argentina and Brazil, as well as competitive pricing from Ukraine. Similarly, global wheat prices experienced a slight decline owing to reduced export quotations, driven by a robust export pace from the Russian Federation, which extended downward pressure on prices from other sources.



Potatoes increased by 32,2%.



OPINION

LACK OF COMPETITION CAUSES HIGH FOOD INFLATION



Dr Mahlogedi Thindisa, Director: Agro-Processing Support.



Rowena Joemat, Director: Project Management Office.



Roger Tuckeldoe, Director: Smallholder Development.

Dr Mahlogedi Thindisa, Mr Roger Tuckeldoe and Ms Rowena Joemat

The absence of competition allows for food price discrepancies to persist, as suppliers and retailers are not compelled to offer competitive prices to consumers. This lack of competition not only fuels food inflation but also creates a barrier to economic inclusion and development. Smallholder farmers and businesses struggle to compete with larger players who can afford to keep prices high owing to limited competition.

The influence of competition on food inflation in South Africa has become a topic of great concern in recent years. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food and non-alcoholic beverages (NAB) has been steadily increasing over the past decade, with a staggering 76,2% increase from January 2009 to January 2019 (Vermeulen, 2019). This significant rise in food inflation has had a direct impact on headline inflation in the country.

In 2022, the CPI data for South Africa revealed that inflation, excluding NAB and food, was 5,1% year-on-year, which is considerably lower than the headline rate of 7,2% (StatsSA, 2022). This indicates the strong influence of food inflation on the overall inflation rate in the country. The escalating trend in food prices has continued into the current year, with inflation for food and NAB reaching 14,0% in the 12 months leading up to March 2023 (Stats

SA, 2023). This represents the highest annual increase since March 2009, when food prices rose by 14,7% (Stats SA, 2023).

An analysis of the food subdivisions reveals that vegetables and bread-cereals experienced the largest increase in prices, with a surge of 20,5% and 20,3%, respectively (Stats SA, 2023). This sharp rise in the cost of essential food items has put a strain on the budgets of South African consumers, particularly those with lower incomes. It highlights the urgent need for measures to address the issue of food inflation and ensure that access to affordable food remains a priority for all citizens.

A recent article by Dr Thindisa (2023) sheds light on the disparities in prices throughout the food value chain. The average farm gate price of onions was found to be R8,13 per kilogram. However, at the municipal fresh produce market, the price rose to an average of R11,56 per kilogram, and at the retail end, onions were being sold for a staggering R22,50 per kilogram (Dr Thindisa, 2023). Similarly, the wholesale price of 2,5 kilograms of maize meal was R32,00 on average, while it went for R41,00 at the retail shelf (Dr Thindisa, 2023).

These price disparities indicate a lack of competition in the



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food industry and suggest that market distortions are contributing to the high levels of food inflation in South Africa. The prevalence of concentrated market powers in the industry may be limiting competition and allowing for excessive price hikes. This calls for increased regulation and intervention to create a more competitive environment that promotes fairness and affordability for consumers.

Competition in the food industry can help drive innovation, efficiency, and price competitiveness. It encourages market players to invest in research and development, thereby leading to improved agricultural practices and increased productivity. Additionally, competition can foster greater transparency and accountability, ensuring that consumers have access to accurate information and can make informed choices about the food they purchase.

South Africa has made significant strides in promoting competition in various sectors of the economy, however, the food industry remains an area that requires urgent attention. Efforts should be made to enhance competition policy and enforcement, encourage new entrants into the market, and support small-scale farmers and retailers.

By promoting competition and diversity in the food industry, South Africa can help alleviate the burden of food inflation on its citizens and promote economic inclusion, growth and development.

Ethical management within the agribusiness and retail sectors can play a vital role in addressing these challenges. By intertwining the needs of both sectors, they can transform society by promoting fair competition, economic inclusion and growth. Encouraging fair pricing practices, supporting small-scale farmers and fostering competition can help alleviate the burden of food inflation in South Africa.

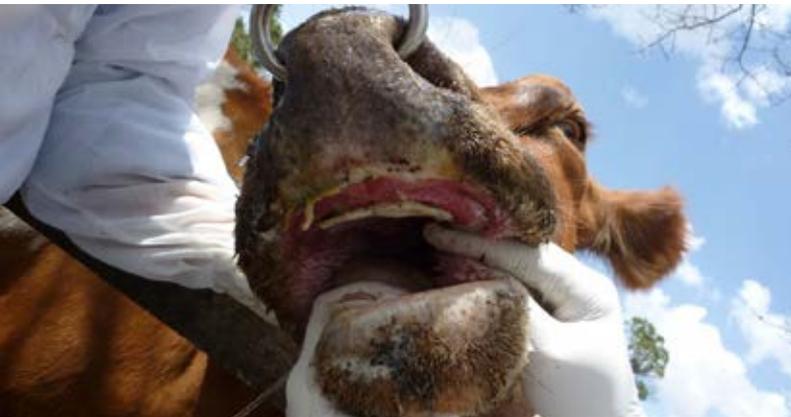
In conclusion, the influence of competition on food inflation in South Africa is a matter of great concern. The significant rise in food

prices has had a direct impact on headline inflation, highlighting the need for measures to address this issue. Price disparities throughout the food value chain indicate a lack of competition and the presence of market distortions. Promoting competition in the food industry can help drive innovation, efficiency and price competitiveness, ensuring that consumers have access to affordable and quality food. Efforts should be made to enhance competition policy and enforcement, encourage new entrants and support small-scale farmers and retailers, ultimately promoting economic inclusion and growth.

The authors are senior managers in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development; together they have over 30 years of experience in the agricultural sector.



THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES WITH ROUTINE VACCINATIONS TO CURB THE SPREAD OF FMD



Routine inspection in the FMD controlled zones is continuing.



Veterinary scientists are continuing with regular inspections.

Mphahlela Rammutla

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) is making progress in efforts to curb the spread of the deadly foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) amid recent reports of a new outbreak in Free State.

Reported in the middle of February 2024, the FMD outbreak has now been confirmed on a farm in the Frankfort State Veterinary area in Free State. However, the department has given its assurance that, while the source of the outbreak is still unknown, the epidemiological investigation to determine the origin and possible spread of the virus is ongoing.

“Confirmation of the disease was done using a combination of the Solid Phase Competition ELISA (SPCE), Non-Structural Protein (NSP) ELISA, and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR). All diagnostic tests are performed at the ARC Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Transboundary Animal Diseases (OVR-TAD) laboratory,” said Dr Mpho Maja, DALRRD Director: Animal Health. An ELISA, enzyme linked immunosorbent assay, is a method used to detect or diagnose virus infection.

FMD is a moving target, and the department is at all times attempting to get ahead of the disease by monitoring outbreaks and vaccinating cloven-hooved animals that are at risk of infection. The Animal Health unit has indicated that roughly 634 000 animals have been vaccinated to control the FMD outbreaks. The vaccination programme was implemented in March 2022 to curb the spread of the disease. Cattle in communal areas are vaccinated on a risk-based approach to ensure that the areas at highest risk are vaccinated first. On the other hand, around 200 000 animals have been sent for controlled slaughter to date. The basic disease control policy is the slaughter of all susceptible animals on premises infected with FMD and dangerous contacts in compliance with legislation and guidelines.

Dr Maja said that the routine vaccination in the protection zone (FMD controlled zones (Infected and protection zones)) is also continuing. The vaccine being used is procured from the Botswana Vaccine Institute and encompasses all three South African Territories (SATs) types. Only government officials are allowed to vaccinate animals as per the outbreak control plans.

“Clinical and serological surveillance surrounding the affected areas continue, with intensified inspections around identified infected dip tanks in communal areas, or epidemiologically linked locations identified through forward and backward tracing,” Dr Maja revealed.

According to the FMD outbreak report, including the latest outbreak, South Africa’s total outbreaks since April 2022 amounts to 216, and it further notes that no cases of FMD were reported in Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape. These three provinces remain FMD free without vaccination.

The single outbreak in Mpumalanga was resolved through slaughtering out livestock, and the outbreak was closed with the World Organisation for Animal Health on 26 June 2023.

The outbreak event in Limpopo was resolved and closed with the WOA on 29 August 2023. Limpopo also has a legislated FMD protection zone, where routine vaccination is done at dip tanks close to the FMD infected zone. Free State, Gauteng and North West still have open outbreaks with the WOA from the 2021–2022 outbreaks, but there have not been clinical or serological signs of virus circulation in these provinces for more than 12 months.

DALRRD AND AGRISETA HOST A SUCCESSFUL AGRICULTURAL CAREER SUMMIT



AgriSETA's executive manager of learning programmes and projects, Mr Medupi Shabangu, addressing learners during the summit.

Matsepo Malatswane

AgriSETA hosted the Agricultural Career Summit and Scarce and Critical Skills Expo in Tzaneen, Limpopo, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and Letaba TVET College on 18 March 2024. About 500 learners from Tzaneen were in attendance and were exposed to careers in agriculture, science and technology as well as artisan development, among other critical skills careers. The programme exposes and encourages young people to consider careers with artisanal, vocational and technical skills.

The event's host, AgriSETA's executive manager of learning programmes and projects, Mr Medupi Shabangu, delivered the keynote address to over 500 local learners from eight schools in and around Tzaneen, their educators, education district representatives, local leaders, government officials and private sector stakeholders. In his address, Shabangu emphasised the importance of learners venturing into scarce skill studies and that Tzaneen is known to be one of the richest provinces in agriculture. "Encouraging school-going learners to take up careers in agriculture serves as the basis of our work at grassroots level," said Shabangu.

The core activity of the event was for AgriSETA, DALRRD, higher learning institutions, as well as public and private entities to widen the scope of career choices for learners from Grade 8 to 12. The learners come from local rural environments and do not necessarily have access to such services, and specifically don't have focussed career exhibitions that provide a wide array of career choices.

The event had close to 30 exhibitors who came from academic institutions, private sector employers and other key stakeholders

in the education fraternity. Learners were given the opportunity to interact with exhibitors by engaging and asking relevant questions. Most exhibitors had practical demonstrations and displayed equipment for learners to have a look at and experience.

Each grouping of learners spent at least 20 minutes at each stand, which served to ensure the presentations were interactive, authentic and qualitative. Lethabo Mohlabe, a Grade 9 learner from Mosibudi High School in Tzaneen who was at the exhibition, expressed how excited he was that he came. He mentioned that he has gained further information on what he would love to study once he completes Grade 12.

One of the most significant benefits of hosting a career summit is that it provides high school learners with exposure to different career paths. Learners may not be aware of the various career options available to them, and a career summit can assist them in discovering new fields which they may be interested in pursuing.



DALRRD exhibitors interacting with learners.

BITOU MUNICIPALITY CELEBRATES SIGNIFICANT MOMENT WITH TITLE DEED HANDOVER



From left: Deputy Minister Skwatsha, Minister Didiza and Bitou Municipality mayor, Cllr. Claude Terblanche during the title deed handover.

Samuel Kgatla

Celebrations were the order of the day when the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, handed over the title deed for the Kurland land to the Bitou Local Municipality in Western Cape on Thursday 14 March 2024. The construction of houses, as well as the allocation of land for farming operations, were some of the interventions residents from Kurland in Plettenberg Bay have been looking forward to after many years of requesting for assistance.

The handover is part of the ongoing work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Land Reform, which hopes to accelerate land reform by mobilising state resources to increase the efficiency and sustainability of land redistribution and restitution.

The Kurland land (previously known as Erf 940), measuring 74 ha, was donated by the national government to the municipality, primarily for the development of housing.

The land is set to provide about 1 500 plots for the development of both low-cost and First Home Finance housing opportunities. Mr Steven Kelemebe, one of the Bitou farmers and a resident of Kurland, thanked Deputy Minister Mcebisi Skwatsha for making sure that the title deed was finally delivered.

"We came far with the deputy minister and he really helped us, and I would like to thank him. This is our day, and we must be happy for it. I am happy we received farming implements and Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) vouchers from DALRRD and this just shows that our government really cares," he said.

The Bitou Local Municipality mayor, Cllr. Claude Terblanche said that it was a bittersweet moment for him as he received the title deed on behalf of the municipality for the residents of Kurland. Furthermore, he thanked the department for delivering on the promise it had made to hand over the title deed.

The minister said that she was pleased to finalise the Bitou Local Municipality's claim. "It was a long journey, and our government is trying by all means to help the people of South Africa. Today, I see smiles on your faces and that makes me happy. People must use the land given to them wisely and we are going to make sure that residents of Kurland under Bitou Municipality are going to benefit from this land," she said.

Minister Didiza also handed over equipment to farming cooperatives in the area.



Community members of Bitou Municipality were happy to receive a title deed.

SA-GHANA BUSINESS FORUM GIVING SOUTH AFRICAN FARMERS HOPE ABOUT EXPORTING PROCESSED PRODUCTS TO GHANA

Rincert Moremi



President Cyril Ramaphosa greeting the Ghana delegation at the SA-Ghana Business Forum.

“We need to move beyond trade in commodities and on to the purchase of job-creating agricultural goods, advanced manufacturing and value-added products.”

Suard Sesay, a representative from the Ghana Export-Import Bank said that they support the agricultural sector in agro-processing, and that the business forum has been insightful and will help them take feedback to their country and hope it will generate enough revenue for both countries. “There are many opportunities that Ghanaians can benefit from; we have products that we would like to put on South African shelves. In three months or six months’ time, we should be able to see collaboration between the two countries. We had some discussions with South African partners about Ghanaian chocolate and plantain chips. Our focus is to help small and medium business enterprises to package their products well,” Sesay said. Ghana is the second-largest exporter of cocoa beans in the world.

Some of the resolutions of the business forum was to have business-to-business matchmaking, better coordination and alignment, and resolving of logistical challenges.

The SA-Ghana Business Forum provided a platform for the strengthening of bilateral relations between South Africa and Ghana and to explore mutually beneficial business opportunities. This business forum follows a successful state visit in 2021 by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

During his keynote address at the business forum in March at Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand, President Cyril Ramaphosa said that both countries are in a strategic position to benefit from the rapid growth of key clean energy manufacturing industries. “Most of the minerals crucial for the manufacturing of clean energy manufacturing industries, such as battery storage and electric vehicles, are held in Africa,” said the president.

Ghana was one of the first destinations of South African exports at the start of the preferential trade under the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) on 31 January 2024. AfCTA promotes a single African market for goods and services and aims to reduce barriers to trade and investment across African borders.

“We need to move beyond trade in commodities and on to the purchase of job-creating agricultural goods, advanced manufacturing and value-added products,” advised the president.

One of the farmers who hopes to benefit from the export of value-added products to Ghana is Portia Ndlovu, a fruit farmer from Komati in Mpumalanga. She farms with bananas, litchis and mangoes. She said that while networking with bank representatives from Ghana, they advised her that it is better for farmers to export processed products instead of raw products. “I wish we would be able to export litchi juice and mango juice to Ghana,” said Portia.



President Cyril Ramaphosa on the right with his Ghanaian counterpart, Mr Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo during the SA-Ghana Business Forum.

SLIGHT DROP IN THE AREA ESTIMATE AND SECOND PRODUCTION FORECAST OF SUMMER CROPS 2024



Jabulani Malinga

The official estimates and the second production forecast for the 2024 summer crops indicate a decrease in the yield when compared to the previous month.

The estimate for the commercial maize crop has been set at 13,256 million tons, which is 7,69% or 1,104 million tons less than the previous forecast of 14,359 million tons.

The expected yield for maize is 5,03 tons per hectare (t/ha). The estimated maize crop is 19,32% or 3,174 million tons smaller than the 2023 crop.

The production forecast of white maize is 6,277 million tons, which is 10,85% or 763 900 tons less than the 7,041 million tons of the previous forecast. The revised area estimate for white maize is 1,555 million ha and the expected yield is 4,04 t/ha.

In the case of yellow maize, the production forecast is 6,979 million tons, which is 4,64% or 339 650 tons less than the 7,318 million tons of the previous forecast. The area estimate for yellow maize is 1,082 million ha and the yield is 6,45 t/ha.

The three main maize producing provinces, namely, Free State, Mpumalanga and North West, are expected to produce 79% of the 2024 crop.

The production forecast for sunflower seed is 589 000 tons, which is 12,23% or 82 100 tons less than the previous forecast of 671 100 tons. The revised area estimate for sunflower seed is 529 000 ha from 559 500 ha, the previous month's estimate, while the expected yield is 1,11 t/ha.

The production forecast for soya beans decreased by 15,22% or 325 690 tons to 1,814 million tons. The estimated area planted to soya beans was revised to 1,151 million ha from 1,122 million ha, the previous month's estimate, with an expected yield of 1,58 t/ha.

The expected groundnut crop has been set at 57 610 tons, which is 10,54% or 6 785 tons less than the previous forecast of 64 395 tons. For groundnuts, the area estimate is 41 200 ha, with an expected yield of 1,40 t/ha.

The production forecast for sorghum is 89 630 tons, which is 19,09% or 21 150 tons less than the 110 780 tons of the previous forecast. The area estimate for sorghum is 42 100 ha and the expected yield is 2,13 t/ha.

In the case of dry beans, the production forecast is 54 120 tons. The area estimate for dry beans is 39 550 ha, with an expected yield of 1,37 t/ha.

The third production forecast for summer field crops for 2024 and the intentions to plant winter cereals for 2024 will be released on 25 April 2024.



Soya beans in North West.

MINISTER DIDIZA HANDS OVER AN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE TO THE VRYHEID COMMUNITY



Minister Thoko Didiza handing over a laptop and printer to Esikhame Crèche



Blankets donated by DALRRD to Esikhame crèche.



Esikhame crèche was officially opened by Minister Didiza.

Samuel Kgatla

and recommended that a permanent structure be constructed for Esikhame Crèche, as it has been 10 years since the initial structure was built using prefabricated partition type material, which was meant to be a short-term intervention.

DALRRD assisted in unlocking the housing project by providing the bulk services and the houses were constructed and the modular crèche was relocated to its current location. For the past 10 years, the crèche has been employing six teachers and enrolled over 120 learners who are fed daily through a feeding scheme.

Poverty and unemployment remain key challenges in the area. The new ECD structure consists of four classrooms, a sick bay, office, kitchen and staff ablution facilities. The structure will make sure that learners of the crèche are going to continue learning in a safe and secure environment.

During the official opening, the minister said that she was happy because the crèche is going to help the children. “We are going to continue supporting our children through rural development interventions,” she said.

The boys and girls of the Esikhame Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD) in Vryheid under the Zululand District in KwaZulu-Natal were smiling brighter on 21 March when Minister Thoko Didiza handed over a newly constructed crèche equipped with a revamped playground, facilities and toys. The minister, who officially opened the crèche, also handed over a laptop, printer, water tank, cookware, blankets, a gas stove and food parcels.

This initiative is part of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development’s (DALRRD) Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) in the Abaqulusi Local Municipality. The construction of Esikhame Crèche and the provision of bulk services for the Vryheid Extension 16 low-cost housing project were identified and implemented as part of Government’s intervention.

The Esikhame ECD was an existing crèche in the informal settlement and operated from a one-bedroom informal dwelling. DALRRD’s first intervention was to construct modular prefabricated classrooms in an area identified on the outskirts of the settlement.

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development conducted an oversight visit in the province in 2019



DALRRD Minister Didiza and MEC Zuma during the official opening of Esikhame crèche.

DALRRD RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING AND INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION STAND AT THE RAND EASTER SHOW 2024

Samuel Kgatla



Exhibitors from different directorates representing the department at the Rand Show.



Mr Henry Mambila was one of the exhibitors representing DALRRD at the Rand Show.



Ms Cynthia Moyo, Director: Restitution Policy, Office of the Chief Land Claims Commissioner, during an interview with #dalrrdtalk about the work of the commission.



A visitor who visited the Restitution on Land Claims stand at the Rand Show.