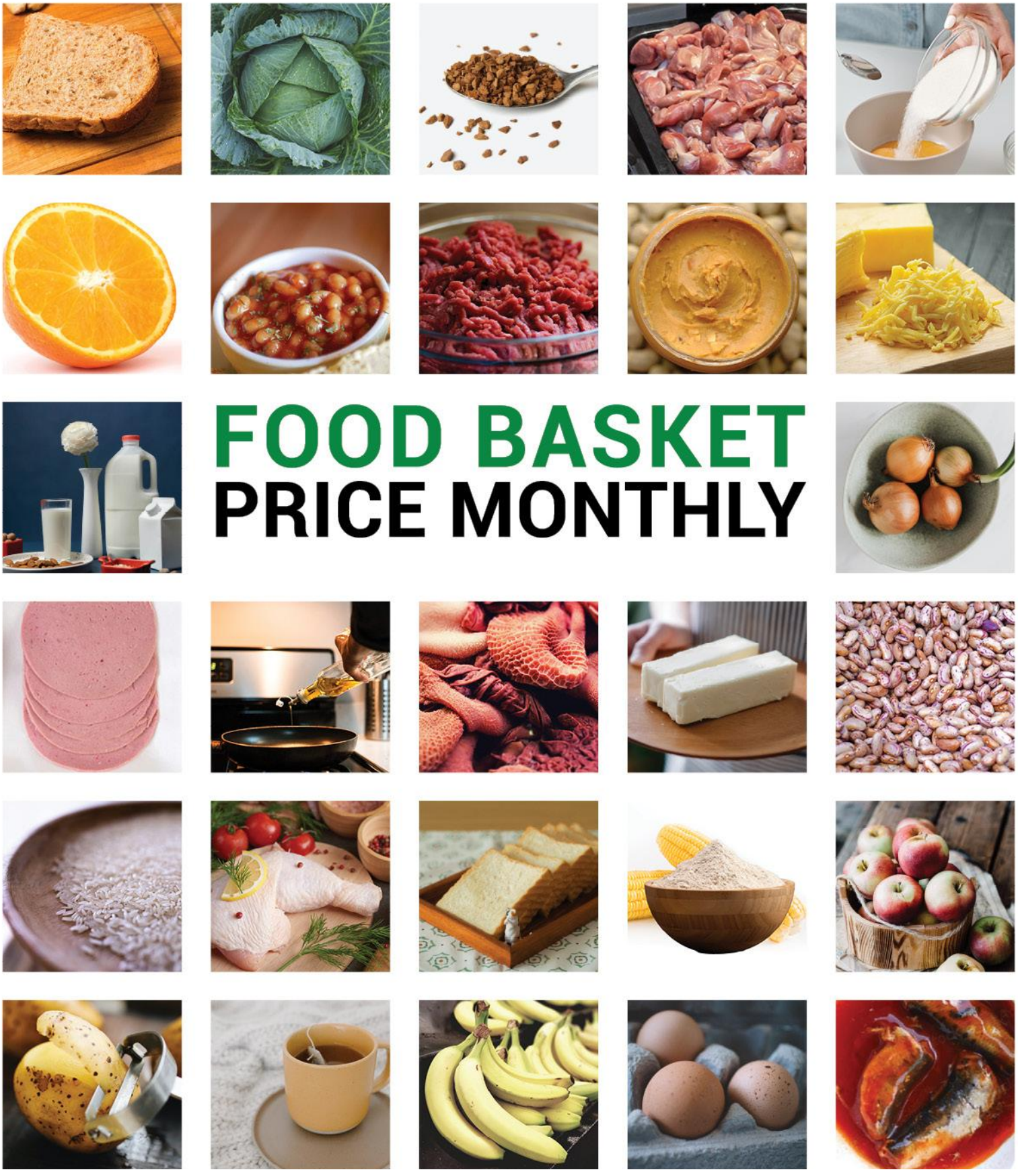


# FOOD BASKET PRICE MONTHLY

## NAMC FOOD BASKET: 28 SELECTED FOOD ITEMS PRICES

## Issue 131 – October 2026

NAMC

Promoting market access for South African agriculture

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# Food Basket
# Price Monthly
## *October 2026*

Important note

*Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) updated the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket of goods and services and the respective weights in the February 2025 CPI release.*

*The September 2026 official data is used in this report, as the official release of the October 2026 CPI data is scheduled for November 18, 2026 (see link below from the Stats SA website):*

https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0141/P0141September2026.pdf

# Highlights

During September 2026, the nominal cost of the NAMC's 28-item urban food basket amounted to R1 348.95 compared to R1 348.68 reported in August 2026. This represents a monthly increase of 0.02% and a year-on-year increase of 0.2%.

| September 26 vs. September 25 | Inflation bracket | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 12% or more | Between 6% and 11.99% | Between 3% and 5.99% | Between 1% and 2.99% | Inflation close to zero or deflation |
| **Stats SA food groups:** | Fish & other seafood (8.0%) | | Other foods (4.0%)<br>Vegetables (3.5%)<br>Oil & fats (3.0%) | Unprocessed food (2.9%)<br>Milk, other dairy products & eggs (2.4%)<br>Sugar. confectionery. and desserts (1.5%) | Meat (0.7%)<br>Processed (-0.7%)<br>Cereal products (-1.9%)<br>Fruit & nuts (-4.8%) |
| **Individual food items in NAMC food basket (listed in order of decreasing inflation rates):** | Onions (40.2%)<br>Bananas (33.0%) | Potatoes (10.0%)<br>Tinned fish (7.6%)<br>Apples (6.8%) | Full cream long life milk (5.1%)<br>Beef offal (4.2%)<br>Ceylon/black tea (4.0%)<br>White bread (3.6%)<br>Sunflower oil (3.4%) | White sugar (2.6%)<br>Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) chicken portions (2.6%)<br>Cabbage (1.1%) | Brown bread (0.8%)<br>Instant coffee (0.8%)<br>Tomatoes (0.6%)<br>Peanut butter (0.5%)<br>Cheddar cheese (-0.1%)<br>Brick margarine (-1.1%)<br>Chicken giblets (-1.5%)<br>Eggs (-3.2%)<br>Polony (-3.2%)<br>Baked beans (-3.7%)<br>Beef mince (-4.1%)<br>Oranges (-6.2%)<br>Dried beans (-9.6%)<br>Rice (-10.8%)<br>Maize meal (-14.1%) |

# 1. Overall inflation and food inflation

**Figure 1** presents trends in the global real food price index reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The FAO real food price index averaged 117.2 points in September 2026, reflecting a 1.5% increase from the 115.5 points recorded in August. The increase was 6% higher than the same period in 2025. This significant month-on-month increase in global inflation was mainly driven by rising prices in sugar, which recorded the largest increase of 6.1%, followed by cereals (5.1%), vegetable oils (0.9%), while the meat and dairy price index declined by 1.1% and 0.1%, respectively. The observed increase in sugar prices was mainly driven by concerns over tight global sugar supplies in the 2026/27 season. More specifically, lower production prospects in the European Union (EU), Thailand and India, due to adverse weather conditions and El Niño-related risks contributed to the tighter supply outlook. In addition, heavy rainfall in Brazil's key sugar-producing region disrupted harvesting activities, placing further upward pressure on international sugar prices. On the other hand, the increase in cereal prices was mainly driven by logistical constraints in the Black Sea region, which shifted demand to alternative export origins, and dry weather conditions in parts of North America. Maize prices were supported by lower-than-expected yields in the United States (US) and reduced export availability from Brazil. In addition, uncertainty surrounding shipping through the Strait of Hormuz raised concerns over fuel, fertilizer, and freight costs, while stronger demand expectations supported sorghum and barley prices.

Moreover, the increase in vegetable oil prices was influenced by higher palm oil prices, with strong support from global import demand and concerns over the impact of dry weather on production prospects in Southeast Asia. Soy and rapeseed oil prices remained relatively stable, while sunflower oil prices declined due to expectations of ample supplies from the Black Sea region. However, ongoing logistical disruptions and constrained export capacity limited the decline in sunflower oil prices. The decline in the meat price index was mainly driven by lower poultry and pig meat prices. Poultry prices eased due to ample export supplies from Brazil and lower import demand from the EU, following the introduction of new antimicrobial-related import requirements. Pig meat prices also declined as increased supplies in major exporting countries weighed on the market. Meanwhile, bovine and ovine meat prices remained relatively stable, with stronger demand supporting beef prices in Brazil and firm global import demand underpinning ovine meat prices.

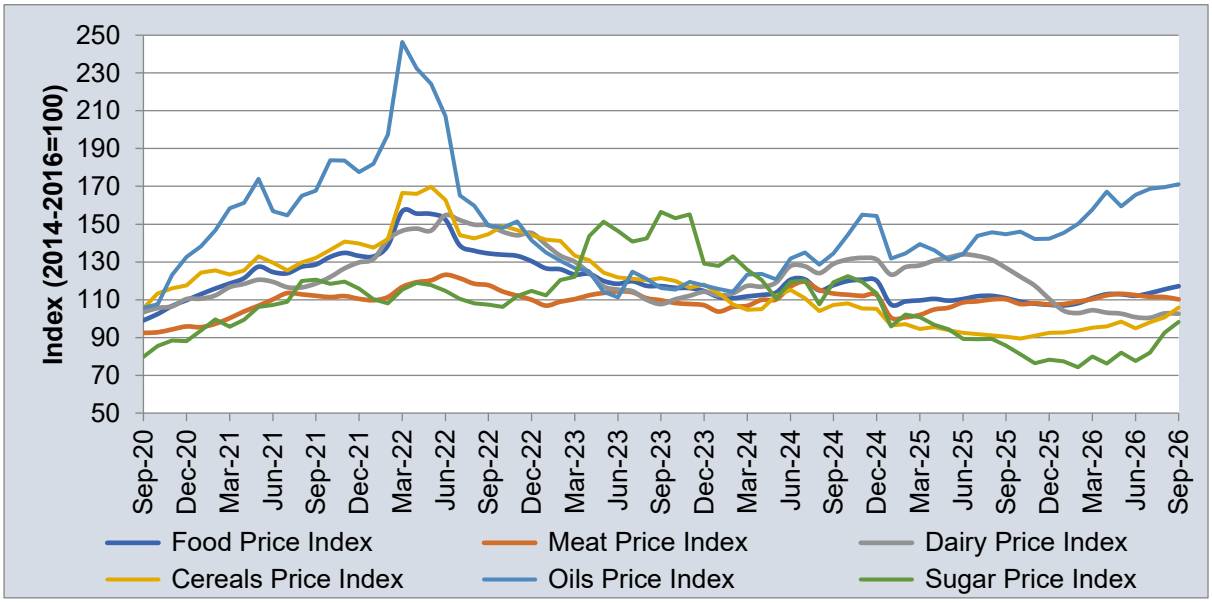



**Figure 1**: The FAO global real food price indices
**Source:** FAO, 2026

On the other hand, dairy prices experienced a slight decline due to lower cheese prices, which reflected weaker demand and increased export supplies from major producing regions. Cheese prices came under pressure due to low buying interest in the EU and strong competition from US exports, while

rising seasonal export availability in Oceania added further downward pressure. In contrast, milk powder prices increased, supported by sustained import demand, particularly from Asia, and limited availability for prompt delivery. On the other hand, butter prices remained relatively stable.

**Figure 2** illustrates fluctuations in global inflation across selected countries with significant trade relations with South Africa. These countries include the BRICS member countries (namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and other countries such as Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, and the United Kingdom (UK). Between August and September 2026, food inflation rates for China, South Africa, Brazil, and India surged, while Botswana's, Russia's, and India's food inflation declined. Food inflation in the UK and Namibia remained relatively constant at 1.3% and 4%, respectively. South Africa's food inflation recorded its second consecutive monthly increase in 2026, rising from 1.1% in August to 1.2% in September. Brazil experienced a 1.1 percentage point monthly increase in its food inflation, from 3.5% in August to 4.6% in September. Similarly, food inflation in India increased from 6% to 7.7%, while in China it decreased from -1.4% to -1.7%. On the other hand, Botswana experienced a 24% monthly decline in relative termsin its food inflation, from 5.9% in August to 4.5% in September, followed by Russia, from 5.1% to 4.6%, and Zambia from 6% to 5.8%. The food inflation rate for the UK remained relatively constant for the third month at 1.3%, together with Namibia, which remained at 4%.

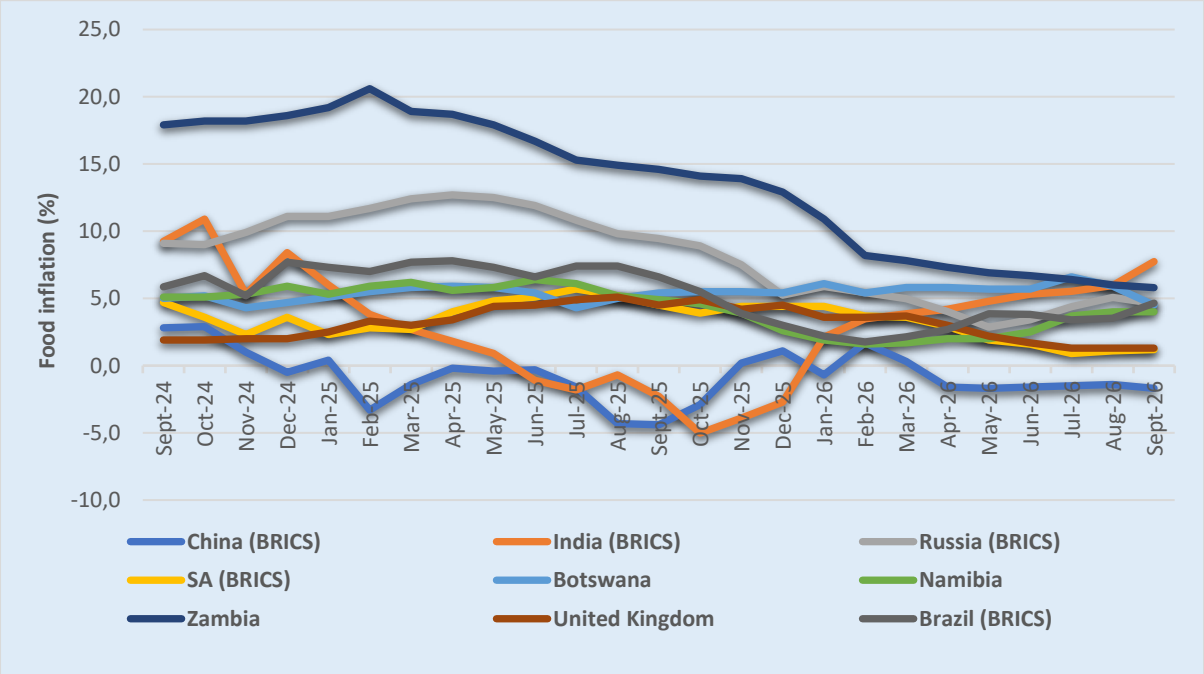



**Figure 2:** Food inflation in selected countries
**Source:** Trading Economics, 2026; Stats SA, 2026 & NAMC calculations

**Figure 3** shows trends in South Africa's Consumer Price Index (CPI) from September 2020 to September 2026, along with the inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages (NAB). In September 2026, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) confirmed that the annual headline CPI was 4.5%, up by 2.3% in relative terms from 4.4% reported in August 2026. The inflation rate for food and NAB recorded its second consecutive monthly increase to 1.2% in September, up from 1.1% in August. Despite the observed two consecutive months of increases in food and NAB inflation, it is still low compared to the level recorded in September 2025. Notably, fish & other seafood were the leading drivers of the inflation rate for food and NAB, which recorded an 8% increase, followed by other foods (4%), vegetables (3.5%), oils & fats (3%), unprocessed foods (2.9%), milk, other dairy products & eggs (2.4%), sugar, confectionery & desserts (1.5%), and meat (0.7%). In contrast, processed foods declined by 0.7%, followed by cereal products (-1.9%), and fruit & nuts (-4.8%).

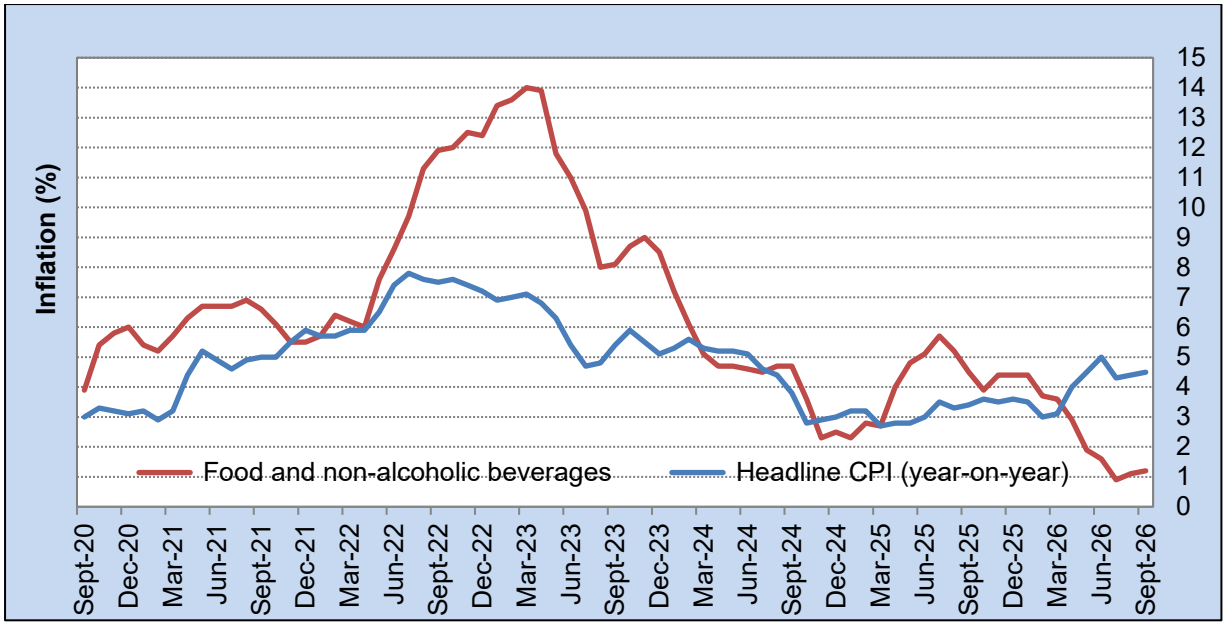



**Figure 3:** South Africa's headline CPI and Food & non-alcoholic beverages' inflation
**Source:** Stats SA, 2026; NAMC calculations

## 2. Monthly comparison of prices between urban and rural areas for September 2026

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of expenses associated with selected food items in both urban and rural areas during September 2026. Recent data released by Stats SA reveals that there are variations in prices for certain products purchased in urban versus rural regions. Urban consumers paid more for Ceylon/black tea, which exhibited the highest price difference of R8.75, followed by peanut butter (R4.67), sunflower oil (R1.56), white bread (R0.22), and bananas (R0.12), compared to consumers in rural areas. On average, consumers in urban areas pay R1.33 more than those in rural areas for the nine food items.

**Table 1: Comparison between urban and rural food prices (selected food items)**

| Product | Urban Food Prices September 2026 (R/unit) | Rural Food Prices September 2026 (R/unit) | The price difference (R/unit) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Full cream milk - long life 1ℓ** | 20.94 | 21.11 | -0.17 |
| **Brown bread 700g** | 17.60 | 17.81 | -0.21 |
| **White bread 700g** | 19.61 | 19.39 | 0.22 |
| **Bananas per kg** | 22.83 | 22.71 | 0.12 |
| **Maize meal 2.5kg*** | 38.55 | n/a | n/a |
| **Margarine spread 500g*** | 39.45 | n/a | n/a |
| **Peanut butter 400g** | 49.57 | 44.90 | 4.67 |
| **Rice 2kg** | 37.86 | 40.30 | -2.44 |
| **Sunflower oil 750mℓ** | 38.11 | 36.55 | 1.56 |
| **Ceylon/black tea 250g** | 66.44 | 57.69 | 8.75 |
| **White sugar 2.5kg** | 68.33 | 68.87 | -0.54 |
| **Average price difference** | | | **1.33** |

**Source:** Stats SA, 2026; NAMC calculations. * Rural prices for maize meal (2.5 kg) and margarine spread (500g) were not available (n/a) in the data for September 2026.

## 3. The NAMC food basket: September 2026 vs September 2025

In this section, the cost of NAMC's 28-item urban food basket is explained through a comparison of average food prices in September 2026 and September 2025. Table 2 presents nominal prices of the 28 food items that comprise NAMC's urban food basket. The analysis shows that the cost of the NAMC's 28-item urban food basket increased by 0.2% in September 2026 when compared to the same period last year, reaching R1348.95. However, this is equivalent to a 0.02% month-to-month increase from the R1348.68 cost recorded in August 2026. Between September 2026 and September 2025, among these 28 items, only 10 items recorded price increases that exceeded the 1-3% inflation target set by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). Notable products in this category include onions, which experienced a substantial price surge of 40.2%, followed by bananas (33.0%), potatoes (10.0%), fish (7.6%), apples (6.8%), full cream milk (5.1%), beef offal (4.2%), Ceylon/black tea (4.0%), white bread (3.6%), and sunflower oil (3.4%).

**Table 2: Percentage change in the price of a basic NAMC food basket (28-item)**

| Category | Product | September 25 (R/unit) | August 26 (R/unit) | September 26 (R/unit) | Change year-on-year (%) | Change month-on-month (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beans | Baked beans - tinned 410g | 15.69 | 15.18 | 15.11 | -3.70 | -0.46 |
| | Beans - dried 500 g | 34.77 | 31.88 | 31.44 | -9.58 | -1.38 |
| | Peanut butter 400g | 49.31 | 50.39 | 49.57 | 0.53 | -1.63 |
| Coffee & Tea | Ceylon/black tea 250g | 63.86 | 66.49 | 66.44 | 4.04 | -0.08 |
| | Instant coffee 250g | 74.30 | 77.57 | 74.86 | 0.75 | -3.49 |
| Dairy & Eggs | Cheddar cheese per /kg | 160.69 | 159.35 | 160.60 | -0.06 | 0.78 |
| | Eggs 1.5 dozen | 62.58 | 60.29 | 60.58 | -3.20 | 0.48 |
| | Full cream milk -long life 1ℓ | 19.93 | 20.98 | 20.94 | 5.07 | -0.19 |
| Fats & Oils | Brick margarine 500g | 32.75 | 32.07 | 32.39 | -1.10 | 1.00 |
| | Sunflower oil 750mℓ | 36.86 | 38.00 | 38.11 | 3.39 | 0.29 |
| Fruit | Apples per kg | 24.83 | 25.75 | 26.51 | 6.77 | 2.95 |
| | Bananas per kg | 17.16 | 20.53 | 22.83 | 33.04 | 11.20 |
| | Oranges per kg | 21.02 | 20.51 | 19.72 | -6.18 | -3.85 |
| Animal Protein | Beef mince per kg | 129.22 | 124.92 | 123.86 | -4.15 | -0.85 |
| | Beef offal per kg | 58.13 | 59.45 | 60.58 | 4.21 | 1.90 |
| | Chicken giblets per kg | 48.5 | 48.13 | 47.77 | -1.51 | -0.75 |
| | Fish (excl. tuna) 400g | 28.57 | 30.48 | 30.75 | 7.63 | 0.89 |
| | IQF chicken portions 2kg | 99.31 | 101.65 | 101.53 | 2.24 | -0.12 |
| | Polony 1kg | 59.48 | 55.40 | 57.55 | -3.24 | 3.88 |
| Bread & Cereals | Brown bread 700g | 17.46 | 17.56 | 17.60 | 0.80 | 0.23 |
| | White bread 700g | 18.93 | 19.62 | 19.61 | 3.59 | -0.05 |
| | Rice 2kg | 42.45 | 37.42 | 37.86 | -10.81 | 1.18 |
| | Maize meal 5kg | 75.46 | 65.26 | 64.85 | -14.06 | -0.63 |
| Vegetables | Cabbage each | 21.81 | 22.96 | 22.04 | 1.05 | -4.01 |
| | Onions per kg | 22.41 | 29.49 | 31.43 | 40.25 | 6.58 |
| | Potatoes per kg | 17.72 | 19.12 | 19.50 | 10.05 | 1.99 |
| | Tomatoes per kg | 26.44 | 30.66 | 26.59 | 0.57 | -13.27 |
| Sugary foods | White sugar 2.5kg | 66.57 | 67.57 | 68.33 | 2.64 | 1.12 |
| **Total Rand Value** | | **1 346.21** | **1 348.68** | **1 348.95** | **0.20%** | **0.02%** |

**Source:** Stats SA, 2026; NAMC calculations

**Figure 4** provides an overview of changes in the average nominal cost of the different food groups within the NAMC's 28-item food basket, offering a comparative analysis of September 2026 with September 2025 (year-on-year) and September 2026 with August 2026 (month-on-month). When examining year-on-year price differences, the food group that contributed most significantly to the observed food inflation among the food groups was vegetables, with a 12.6% increase, largely driven by surge in prices of onions and potatoes. Following this was fruits, which increased by 9.6%, then sugary foods (2.6%), coffee & tea (2.3%), and fats & oils (1.3%). In contrast, animal protein decreased by 0.3%, while dairy & eggs, bean products and bread & cereals dropped by 0.4%, 3.7% and 9.3%, respectively. When reviewing month-on-month changes, fruits showed an increase of 3.4%, followed by sugary foods (1.1%), dairy & eggs (0.6%), fats & oils (0.6%), animal protein (0.5%), and bread & cereals, which rose by 0.04%. In contrast, bean products prices decreased by 1.4%, followed by coffee & tea (1.9%), and vegetables (2.6%).

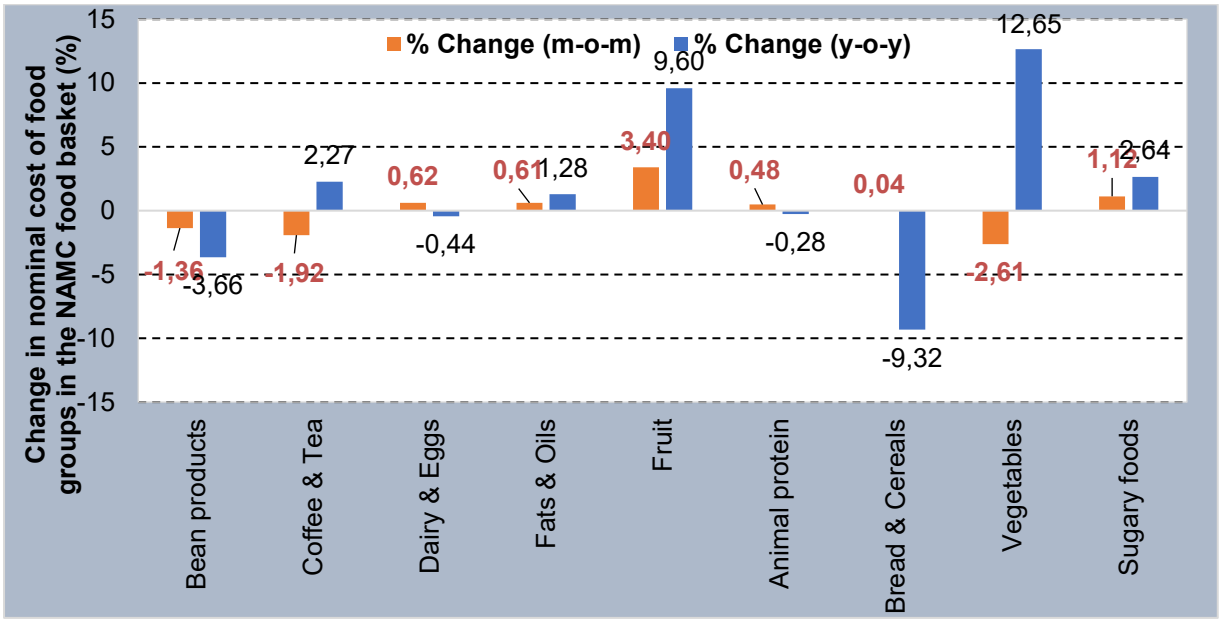



**Figure 4:** Nominal change in the cost of specific food groups within the NAMC's 28-item food basket comparing September 2026 vs. September 2025 and September 2026 vs. August 2026
**Source:** Stats SA, 2026; NAMC calculations

In conclusion, food inflation in South Africa recorded its second consecutive monthly increase in 2026, while headline inflation also increased in September 2026. These trends align with global developments. where food prices increased due to the rising in international prices for sugar, cereals, and vegetable oils. Notably, the drivers of the increase in food and NAB inflation in South Africa included price increases across several food groups, namely fish and other seafood; other foods; vegetables; oils and fats; unprocessed foods; milk, other dairy products, sugar, confectionery & desserts and meat. On the other hand, processed foods, cereals, and fruit and nuts exerted a deflationary effect on food and NAB inflation. On the other hand, the NAMC's 28-item urban food basket recorded a modest year-on-year increase, as well as a slight month-on-month increase. Furthermore, persistent spatial price disparities remain evident. However, their direction varies across food products. Urban consumers paid notably higher prices for items such as tea, peanut butter, sunflower oil and white bread, whereas rural consumers faced higher prices for products such as milk, brown bread, bananas, white sugar, and rice. Developments including ongoing geopolitical conflicts resulting in global supply disruptions as well as the El Nino induced draught remains a threat to both headline inflation as well as, food and NAB inflation in South Africa.

***Background Information:***

*The NAMC monitors food prices at the retail level and releases regular authoritative reports. The Department of Agriculture, then known as the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) established the Food Price Monitoring Committee (FPMC) at the NAMC to track and report food price trends in South Africa; to provide explanations of the observed trends and to then advise the Department on any possible action that could be taken should national and household food security be threatened. The FPMC was established after the high food price episode of the 2000/01 season. The NAMC continued the functions of the FPMC after the FPMC completed its work in September 2004. The NAMC issues four quarterly Food Price Monitoring reports annually and, since 2005, also publishes an annual Food Cost Review report, which documents the margins between farm and retail prices of the major food products, amongst other topics. In 2015, the NAMC began releasing a quarterly Farm-to-Retail-Price-Spread (FTRPS) publication, which seeks to provide more insight into the factors driving commodity and food price margins. This publication, the Food Basket Price Monthly Report, was initiated following discussions with the industry to maintain a more frequent monitoring of food prices.*

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