

WHEAT FLOUR PRICE ENFORCEMENT IMPROVES, OTHER COMMODITIES IGNORED

ISLAMABAD, August 19, 2020

Although more traders sold wheat at officially notified prices this week (76 percent) compared to the previous one (70 percent), the enforcement of official prices of other essential commodities such as sugar, vegetables, pulses, and meat remained lax.

These observations form part of the 16th Weekly Price Monitor issued by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

This Weekly Price Monitor comprises a market survey of the prices of 15 basic groceries conducted on Thursday, August 13, 2020, in 34 cities—12 in Balochistan, 11 in Punjab, six in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and five in Sindh.

A two-week comparison of routine vegetables' market prices, i.e., potatoes, onions, and tomatoes, showed varying patterns. Around a third of the surveyed markets recorded an increase in rates during the reporting week compared to the previous one. Another third showed a decrease, and the remaining third reported stable prices of vegetables.

The wholesale wheat flour prices remained largely stable across the 27 regions, where the rates for the last two weeks were available. However, five districts—three in Balochistan and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—recorded an up to nine percent increase (Rs10 to Rs100) in a 20-kilogram bag of wheat. The districts where it became expensive included Lower Kohistan, Mardan, Khushab, Lasbela, and Washuk. Only two areas saw a decline in market prices—three percent (Rs30) in Jaffarabad and four percent (Rs50) in Multan.

The wholesale sugar prices witnessed an up to 12 percent (Rs1 to Rs10) increase in nine districts—six in Punjab, two in Sindh, and one in Balochistan. Karachi South reported the most significant hike where per kilogram price of sugar rose by Rs10 in a week. On the other hand, the rates fell up to five percent (Rs1 to Rs5) in five districts—one in KP, two each in Punjab and Balochistan. Nearly half of the comparable regions (15) had the same sugar prices on August 13, as reported on August 6, 2020.



Commodity	Highest Price	
	District	Price
<i>Wheat</i>	Dera Bugti & Panjgur	1300
<i>Eggs</i>	Nasirabad	180
<i>Moong</i>	Mastung	320
<i>Mash</i>	Lahore & Karachi South	300
<i>Masoor</i>	Karachi South	240
<i>Chana</i>	Karachi South	250
<i>Sugar</i>	Mardan	105
<i>Milk</i>	Panjgur	130
<i>Yogurt</i>	Karachi Central & Karachi South	180
<i>Chicken</i>	Kalat & Lasbela	320
<i>Beef</i>	Karachi South	749
<i>Mutton</i>	Karachi South	1669
<i>Potatoes</i>	Rahim Yar Khan	100
<i>Onions</i>	Nasirabad & Washuk	80
<i>Tomatoes</i>	Karachi South & Jhal Magsi	120

Like the preceding weeks, the chicken prices continued to decline in 16 districts—eight in Punjab, four in KP, and two each in Sindh and Balochistan—that recorded seven percent (Rs10) to 44 percent (Rs86) decrease in rates. On the other hand, three districts, including Karachi Central, Kalat, and Lasbela, saw a seven percent (Rs10) to 60 percent (Rs120) hike in chicken's market prices. In nearly a quarter of comparable districts, the prices remained stable.

The tomatoes' market price showed an increase in 12 districts, a decrease in ten regions, and stability in seven areas. The highest increase per kilogram price was in Hafizabad, where it more than tripled in a week jumping from Rs18 to Rs59. Kalat saw the most significant decrease of Rs60, the rate falling from Rs100 to Rs40.

Similarly, the potatoes' prices registered an increase in eight districts, a decrease in ten regions, and stability in 11 areas. The highest increase was Rs46 recorded in Rahim Yar Khan, and the most prominent drop was Rs30 reported from Panjgur.

The onion prices registered an increase in 11 districts, a decrease in five, and remained stable in 13 regions. The biggest hike was Rs20 reported from Washuk, and Mastung, seeing the most significant reduction of Rs10. The officially notified price lists of essential commodities were unavailable in various parts of the country during the reporting week. The official rates of 20-kilogram wheat flour bags were not available in more than half (59 percent) of the surveyed cities. The unavailability of official wheat flour rates at shops was most significant in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, where 83 percent and 100 percent of the districts lacked the official prices.

The official sugar prices were missing in 44 percent districts—100 percent in KP, 33 percent in Balochistan, 36 percent in Punjab, 20 percent in Sindh. Similarly, the chicken prices were not obtainable in 29 percent regions overall—58 percent in Balochistan, 20 percent in Sindh, 17 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and nine percent in Punjab.

The official rates of four pulses—moong, masoor, mash, and chana—were generally available in KP, Punjab, and Sindh. However, more than half of the markets in surveyed cities of Balochistan did not display the official prices of mash and masoor, while 33 percent did not display daal chana prices and 17 percent daal moong rates. At the same time, milk and yogurt rates were not publicly obtainable in 21 percent and 26 percent areas.

Moreover, mutton and beef prices were missing in 18 percent and 12 percent of the districts, respectively. Provincially, the beef prices were missing in 20 percent regions of Sindh, 18 percent in Punjab, and 17 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while mutton prices were unavailable in 50 percent markets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, all of the surveyed Balochistan markets had prominently displayed the meat prices. The official price lists of regular vegetables—potatoes, onions, and tomatoes—were inaccessible in around 17 percent to 25 percent of Balochistan markets while elsewhere they were publicly available.

The lax enforcement of official prices burdened the ordinary citizens as traders sold several commodities at higher rates than the officially notified prices.

The weak enforcement of the official prices of vegetables, pulses, and meat continued during the reporting week. Pulses' prices were the most unregulated in many parts of the country as usual. Daal moong was overpriced in 68 percent of the surveyed districts, masoor and mash (53 percent), and chana (50 percent) of the areas. These four pulses went 141 to Rs176 above the official prices. The highest difference in wholesale prices and the official rates was in Karachi South. Like the previous week, the pulses' overpricing was most prominent in Sindh, where no market sold any of the four pulses at official prices.

Potatoes, onions, and tomatoes were overpriced in 38 percent, 62 percent, and 47 percent districts. The tomatoes rate went Rs90 higher than the notified price in Jhal Magsi, while potatoes and onions were sold Rs30 above the announced prices in Panjgur.

In the meat category, beef and mutton (average quality with bone) were overpriced in 62 percent and 56 percent of the surveyed districts, and chicken in 26 percent of areas. Mutton, beef, and chicken were sold at Rs929, Rs369, and Rs100, respectively, above the official rates. The highest difference in the market and the official prices of mutton and beef was in Karachi South and of chicken in Panjgur.

Traders sold wheat flour and refined sugar above the official rates in 24 percent and 41 percent districts. A 20-kilogram bag of wheat flour was priced Rs380 above the official rate in Washuk, and one kilogram of refined sugar Rs32 more than the market price in Karachi Central. Wheat price enforcement was the weakest in Punjab and Balochistan, where 27 percent and 33 percent markets sold it above the officially notified rates. The sugar price enforcement was the lowest in Punjab, where around 64 percent of the markets sold it above the official prices. Punjab was followed by Sindh (60 percent), and Balochistan (33 percent) in lax enforcement of sugar prices. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa markets mostly followed the official rates of sugar.

The market rates of eggs per dozen were above the officially notified prices in 29 percent districts. At the same time, the rates of milk and yogurt were higher than the official ones in 44 percent and 47 percent of the surveyed areas.

TDEA-FAFEN generates the Weekly Price Monitor covering 15 essential kitchen items, including groceries such as wheat, pulses, oil, sugar, and perishable commodities like meat, and vegetables. It does this considering the need for an independent and regular assessment of the availability of such items. The observers obtain the official prices from the officials of district administrations, or market committees, and collect the wholesale prices through market surveys. In Punjab's case, the government price app Qeemat Punjab is also used to get the official rates.

