

TRADERS IGNORE OFFICIAL PRICES AS ENFORCEMENT REMAINS WEAK

ISLAMABAD, September 16, 2020

Sugar, rice, and wheat remained the most unregulated commodities in most parts of the country as markets in more than half of the districts disregarded these items' officially notified prices.

These observations form part of the 20th Weekly Price Monitor issued by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN). This monitor comprises a market survey of the prices of 15 basic groceries conducted on Thursday, September 10, 2020, in 30 cities, 12 in Punjab, 11 in Balochistan, four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and three in Sindh.

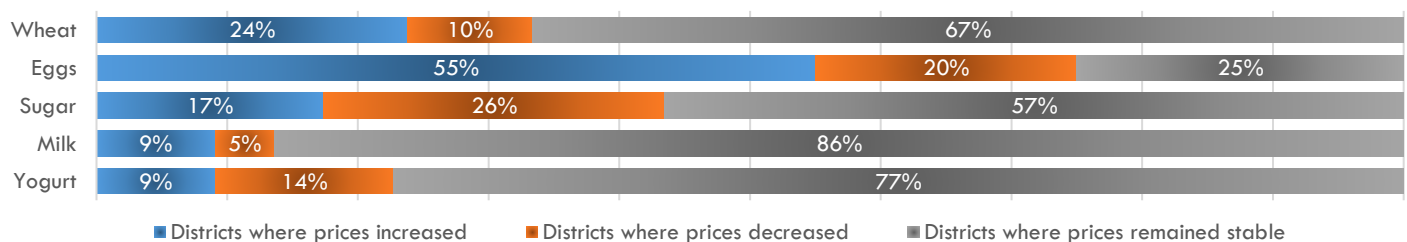
A two-week comparison of routine vegetables' market prices, i.e., potatoes, onions, and tomatoes, showed varying patterns. Among the everyday groceries, the pulses' prices remained mostly stable—almost a quarter of the surveyed districts, recording an increase or a decrease in the prices. Around two-thirds of the areas showed a decline or stability in vegetable rates during the reporting week compared to the previous one.

The meat prices also remained mostly stable except chicken, which showed a sharp increasing trend. Egg prices registered an increase in 55 percent districts, wheat flour in 24 percent, sugar in 17 percent, and milk and yogurt each in nine percent areas.

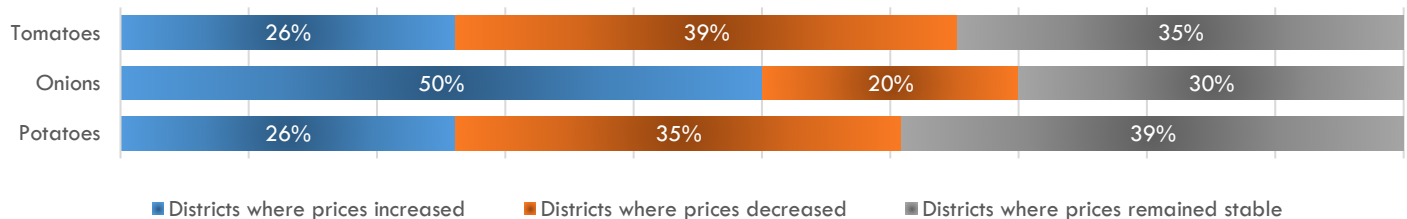
The following graphs show the overall trend of change in prices of essential edibles:



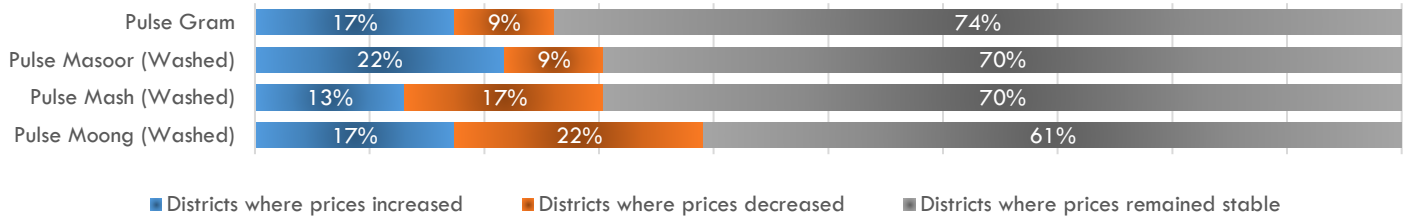
PRICE CHANGE B/W SEPT 3 AND SEPT 10 - MISCELLANEOUS GROCERIES



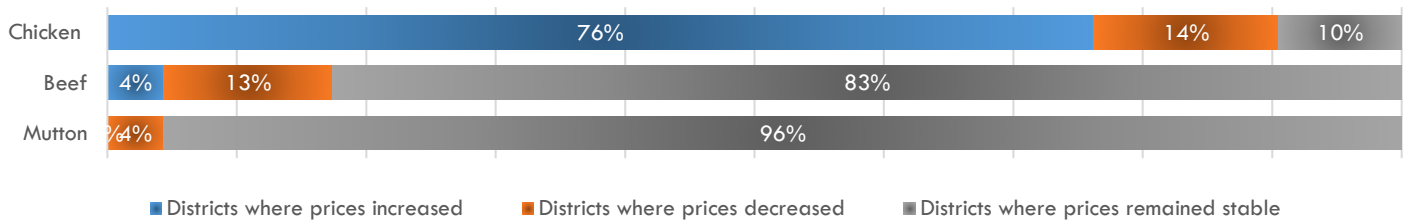
PRICE CHANGE B/W SEPT 3 AND SEPT 10 - VEGETABLES



PRICE CHANGE B/W SEPT 3 AND SEPT 10 - PULSES



PRICE CHANGE B/W SEPT 3 AND SEPT 10 - MEAT



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 around 53 percent of the surveyed cities. Like previous weeks, the unavailability of official wheat flour rates at shops was most significant in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where 75 percent and 100 percent of the districts did not have them.

The official sugar prices were missing in 63 percent of the surveyed districts—100 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 75 percent in Punjab, 45 percent in Balochistan, and 33 percent in Sindh. Similarly, the chicken prices were not obtainable in 67 percent of districts in Balochistan and 64 percent in Sindh. In contrast, they were available at all of the surveyed markets in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The official rates of four pulses—moong, masoor, mash, and chana—were generally available in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. However, they were missing at several markets in Balochistan. Daal mash prices were unavailable in 55 percent of the markets, while 45 percent lacked daal masoor, and 36 percent daal chana rates. Another 10 percent did not have daal moong prices. At the same time, yogurt and milk rates were not publicly obtainable in 30 percent and 27 percent markets.

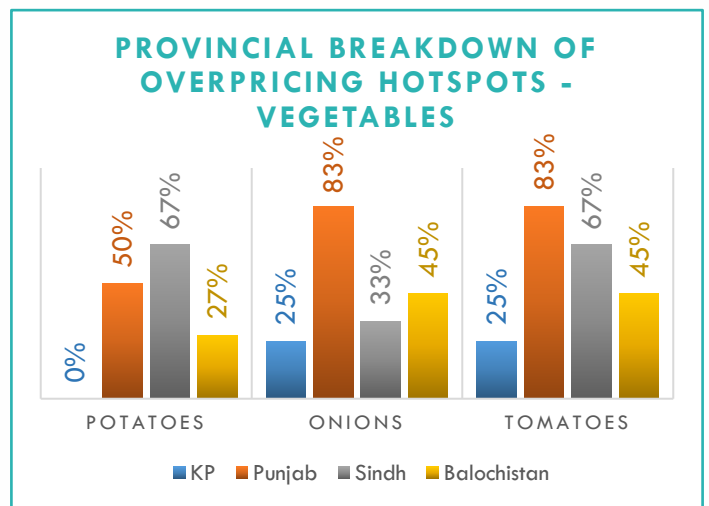
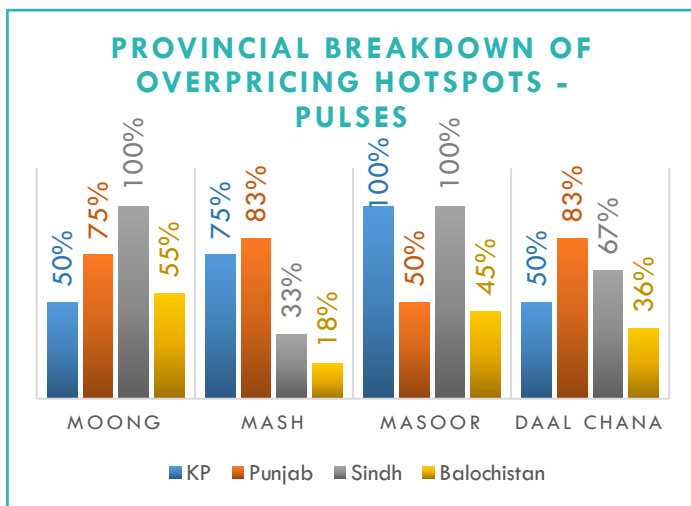
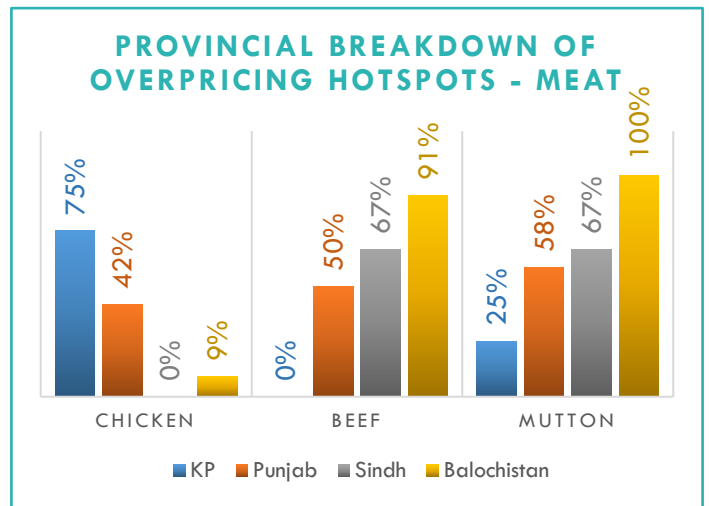
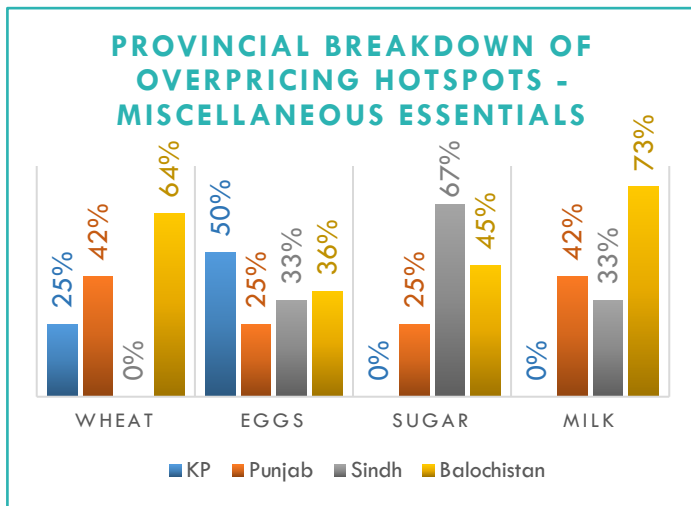
Moreover, mutton and beef prices were missing in 13 percent of the districts. Provincially, the mutton and beef prices were missing in 50 percent regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 33 percent in Sindh, and eight percent in Punjab. The meat prices used to be publicly accessible in all of the Balochistan markets during the previous weeks. The official price lists of regular vegetables—potatoes, onions, and tomatoes—were completely available everywhere, except for Balochistan, where the rates of tomatoes were missing in 36 percent of the areas while prices of potatoes and onions were missing in 27 percent of the regions.

Besides the unavailability of officially notified prices of essential groceries, the official prices' enforcement remained weak.

Mutton's price remained the most unregulated, with 70 percent of the markets selling it at a higher rate than its official price. Similarly, beef, daal masoor, and chana were overpriced in 60 percent markets each. Like the previous weeks, the pulses' overpricing was most prominent in Sindh, where no market sold any of the four pulses at official prices. Peshawar saw the highest rates of four pulses. In the meat category, mutton and beef (average

quality with bone) were overpriced in 70 percent and 60 percent of the surveyed districts, and chicken in 30 percent. Traders sold wheat flour and refined sugar above the official rates in 43 percent and 33 percent districts. Of the four provinces, wheat price enforcement was the weakest in Balochistan, where 64 percent of markets sold it above the officially notified rates. The sugar price enforcement was the lowest in Sindh and Balochistan, where half of the surveyed markets sold it above the official prices.

The market rates of eggs per dozen were above the officially notified prices in 33 percent districts. Simultaneously, the yogurt and milk rates were higher than the official ones in 53 percent and 47 percent of the surveyed areas.



TDEA-FAFEN generates the Weekly Price Monitor covering 15 essential kitchen items, including 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.