

FOOD INFLATION BRIEF

This BFAP Brief provides an overview of food inflation dynamics, its associated causes, and the cost of basic healthy eating based on October 2025 food prices.



Acknowledgement: Source of food inflation and retail price data reported and analysed in this BFAP brief: Official monthly data collected and published by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0141]



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SUMMARY OF FOOD INFLATION METRICS – October 2025 prices

		Year-on-year (YoY):	Month-on-month (MoM):	For more detail refer to:
Food and non-alcoholic beverages (NAB) inflation: <i>(Source: Stats SA CPI Oct'25)</i>		+3.9%	-0.2%	Section 1 of this brief
CPI headline inflation: <i>(Source: Stats SA CPI Oct'25)</i>		+3.6%	+0.1%	
Contribution of inflation on food & NAB to CPI headline inflation: <i>(Source: Stats SA CPI Oct'25)</i>		0.7 percentage points	0.0 percentage points	
Food categories with highest inflation: <i>(Source: Stats SA CPI Oct'25)</i>		Meat Oils & fats Sugar, sugar-rich foods NAB Fish & seafood	Fruits & nuts Oils & fats Sugar, sugar-rich foods NAB Fish & seafood	Section 2 of this brief
Food categories with lowest inflation: <i>(Source: Stats SA CPI Oct'25)</i>		Cereal products Fruits & nuts Dairy & eggs Vegetables	Meat Dairy & eggs Cereal products Vegetables	

Cost of the BFAP

Thrifty Healthy Food Basket:

(For more detail refer to Section 3)



Oct '25: R3 828 /  / month

Sept '25: R3 821 /  / month

Indicators for selected factors affecting food prices in South Africa:

(For more detail refer to Sections 4 & 5)

Global food commodity prices:

(Source: FAO, 2025)



FAO Food Price Index

-0.4% YoY (Inflation on oils, dairy, meat; Deflation on sugar, cereals)

-1.6% MoM (Inflation on oils; Deflation on sugar, dairy, meat, cereals)

Exchange rate:

(Source: SA Reserve Bank, 2025)



R/\$ exchange rate

YoY appreciation of 1.6%: R17.29/US\$1 (Oct'25) vs R17.56/US\$1 (Oct'24)

MoM appreciation of 1.0%: R17.29/US\$1 (Oct'25) vs R17.46/US\$1 (Sept'25)

Costs in value chain:

(Source: Stats SA CPI Sept'25)



SA CPI index for:

Electricity & other fuels: +8.2% YoY; 0.0% MoM

Fuel: +3.3% YoY; +0.1% MoM

SECTION 1: CPI headline and food inflation over time:

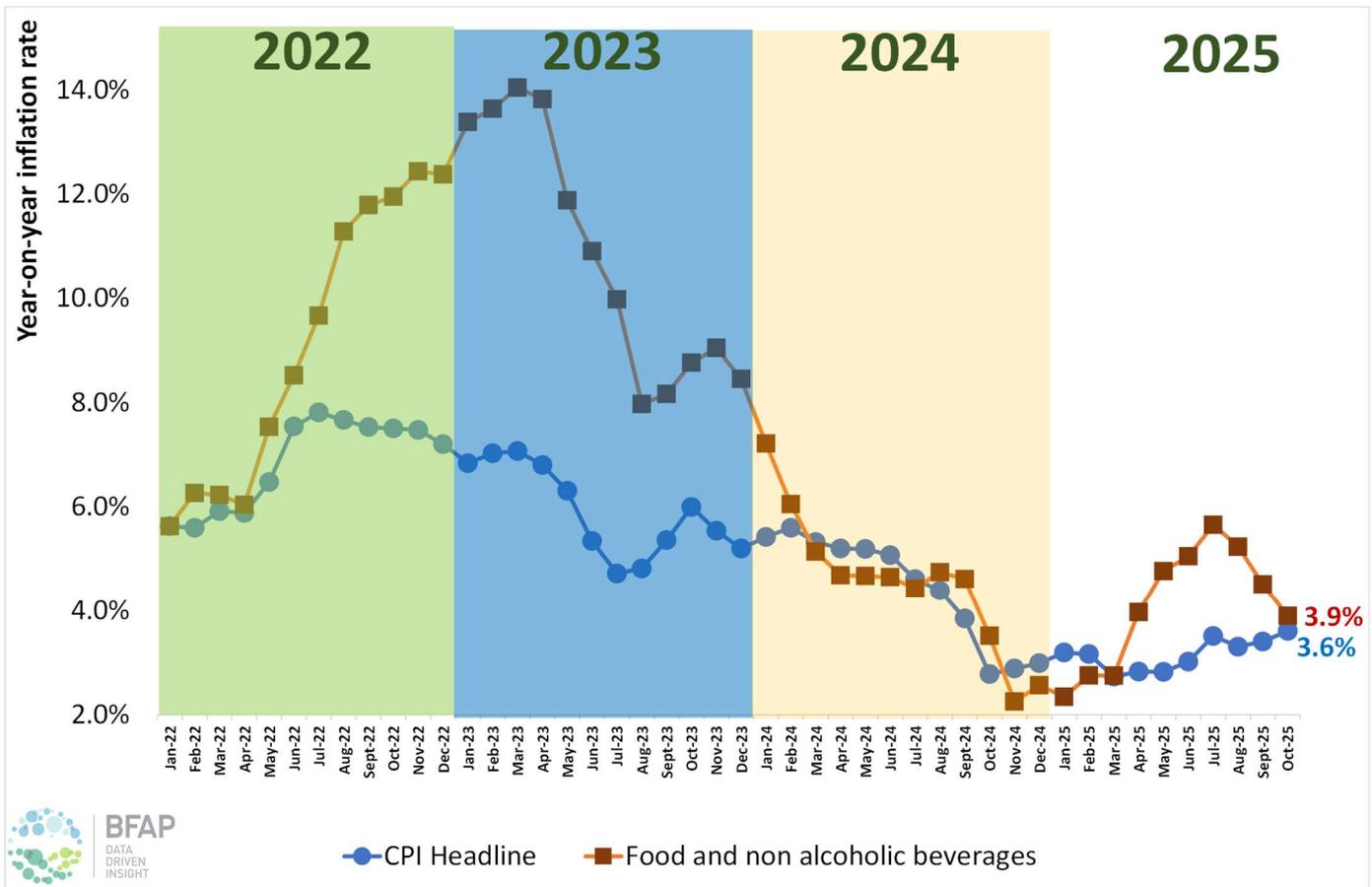


Figure 1: Year-on-year inflation 2022 to October 2025 - CPI Headline and Food and NAB

Source: Stats SA CPI for October 2025

- CPI headline YoY inflation increased from 3.4% in September 2025 to 3.6% in October 2025. The major contributors were housing and utilities (contributing 1.1 percentage points), food and NAB (0.7), alcoholic beverages and tobacco (0.2), as well as transport (0.2).
- CPI headline inflation has remained below the previous 6% upper-limit inflation target of the SA Reserve Bank for 24 consecutive months (since November 2023). However, on 12 November 2025 the Minister of Finance announced a new inflation target for South Africa of 3% with a 1 percentage point tolerance band.
- YoY inflation on food and NAB eased from 4.5% in September 2025 to 3.9% in October 2025.

SECTION 2: The contribution of different food categories & food items to inflation:

Table 1: Inflation on food categories in October 2025 (Source: Stats SA CPI for October 2025)

Category:	YoY inflation	MoM inflation	Comments:
Cereal products	2.0%	-0.1%	-
Meat	11.4%	0.0%	Highest YoY inflation among categories.
Fish & other seafood	3.0%	0.1%	-
Dairy & eggs	-1.5%	0.0%	-
Oils & fats	4.8%	1.3%	2 nd highest YoY & MoM inflation among categories.
Fruits & nuts	-0.2%	1.5%	Highest MoM inflation among categories.
Vegetables	-4.4%	-3.0%	-
Sugar & sugar-rich foods	3.5%	0.5%	3 rd Highest YoY & 3 rd Highest MoM inflation among categories.
Non-alcoholic beverages	3.3%	0.3%	-

- High YoY inflation on meat was offset by low inflation on cereals and deflation on dairy & eggs, fruits & nuts, and vegetables.
- High MoM inflation on fruits & nuts as well as oils & fats was offset by deflation on vegetables and cereals and no MoM inflation on meat and dairy & eggs.

Figure 2 illustrates the YoY inflation on commonly purchased food items in South Africa in October 2025.

Foods with deflation in October 2025, are listed below:

- Starch-rich foods: Brown bread, white rice.
- Meat: Bacon, whole fresh chicken.
- Fish: Canned tuna.
- Fresh produce: Carrots, onions, sweet potatoes, spinach, cabbages, potatoes, avocados, bananas.
- Legumes: Canned baked beans.
- Dairy, eggs: Long-life milk, fresh milk, maas, powdered milk, Gouda cheese, eggs.
- NAB: Fizzy drinks.

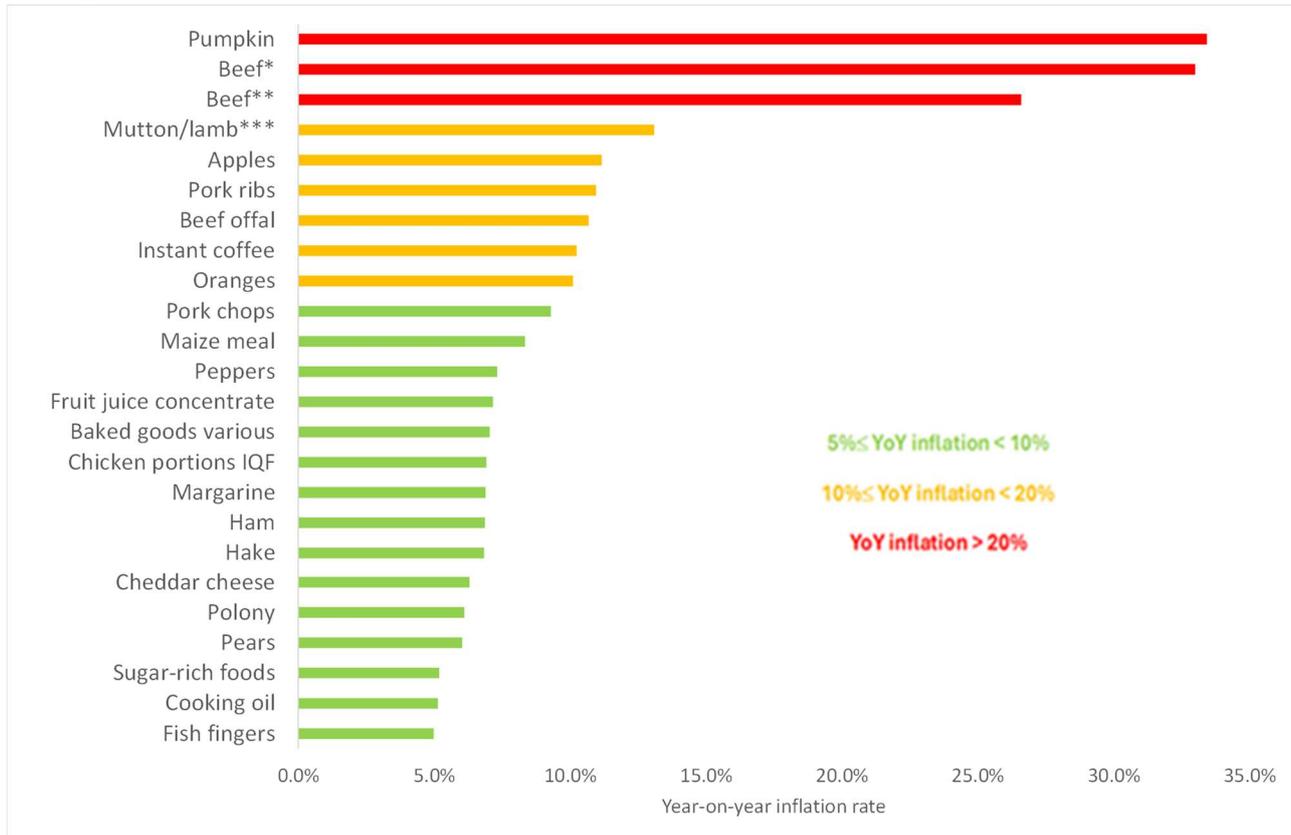


Figure 2: YoY Inflation above 5% on commonly purchased food items in October 2025

(Source: Stats SA CPI for October 2025)

*Stew, sirloin, rump steak, chuck; **T-bone, brisket, mince, fillet; *** Leg, chops, stew, neck, offal

SECTION 3: The BFAP Thrifty Healthy Food Basket (THFB)#



THFB – October 2025:

R3 828/ /month

Month-on-month change: **+R7 / +0.2%**

Year-on-year change: **+R40 / +1.0%**

Affordability*: **29.5% food expenditure share**

(similar to September 2025)

The BFAP Thrifty Healthy Food Basket (THFB) measures the cost of basic healthy eating for low-income households in South Africa. The methodology considers national nutrition guidelines, typical food intake patterns of lower-income households, official Stats SA food retail prices, and typical household demographics. Consisting of a nutritionally balanced combination of 26 food items from all the food groups, the BFAP THFB is designed to feed a reference family of four (consisting of two adults, an older and a younger child) for a month. The BFAP THFB comprises a smaller staple component and relatively more items from food groups contributing to dietary diversity than the CPI index. The CPI index is more reflective of 'typical' food preferences.

SECTION 4: Global food inflation perspectives

Comparing food inflation in South Africa to selected countries & regions globally

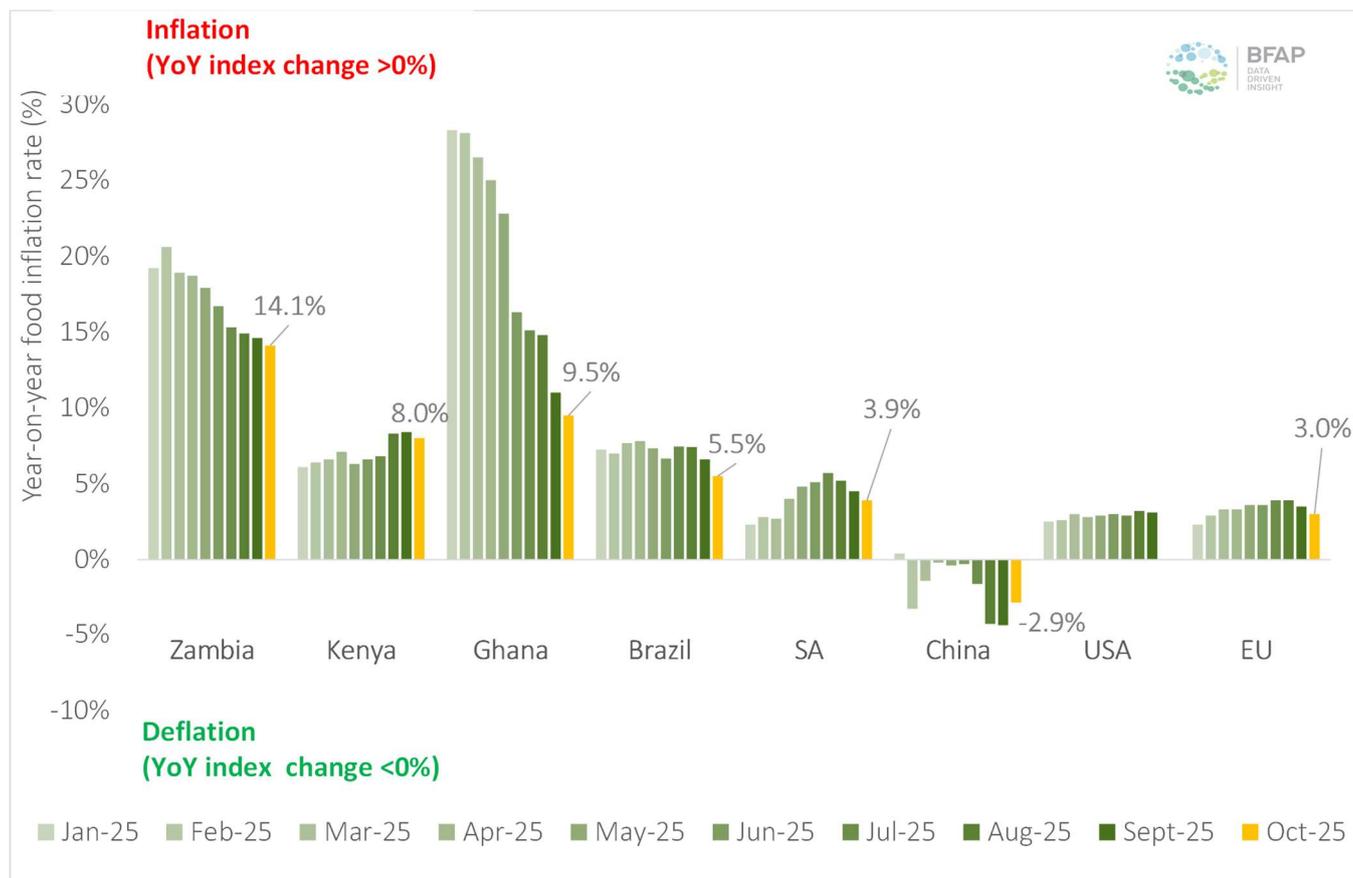


Figure 3: International food inflation comparison

Source: Official food inflation figures of the countries/regions reported by national statistical agencies

Figure 3 shows that in September and October 2025, considering the selected countries / regions:

Highest YoY food inflation:	Lowest YoY food inflation & lower than for South Africa:	Declining YoY food inflation trend (Sept-Oct'25):	Increasing YoY food inflation trend (Sept-Oct'25):
Zambia (+14.4%*)	China (-3.7%*)	Brazil	China
Ghana (+10.3%*)	USA (3.1%**)	EU	
Kenya (+8.2%*)	EU (3.3%*)	Ghana	
Brazil (+6.1%*)		Kenya	
SA (+4.2%*)		South Africa	
		Zambia	

(NOTES: * Average YoY inflation rate for September & October 2025; ** October 2025 data not available at time of publication)

Global food commodity prices: The FAO Food Price Index

The **FAO Food Price Index (FPI)** for global agricultural commodity prices reached 126.4 index points in October 2025, 0.4% lower than a year ago and 1.6% lower than in September 2025.

From September 2025 to October 2025 (MoM changes):

- Inflation was observed for oils (+0.9%).
- Deflation was observed for sugar (-5.3%), dairy (-3.4%), meat (-2.0%) and cereals (-1.2%).

Compared to September 2024 (YoY changes) (Figure 3):

- Inflation was observed for oils (+10.9%), meat (+4.8%) and dairy (+2.3%).
- Deflation was reported for sugar (-27.4%) and cereals (-9.5%).

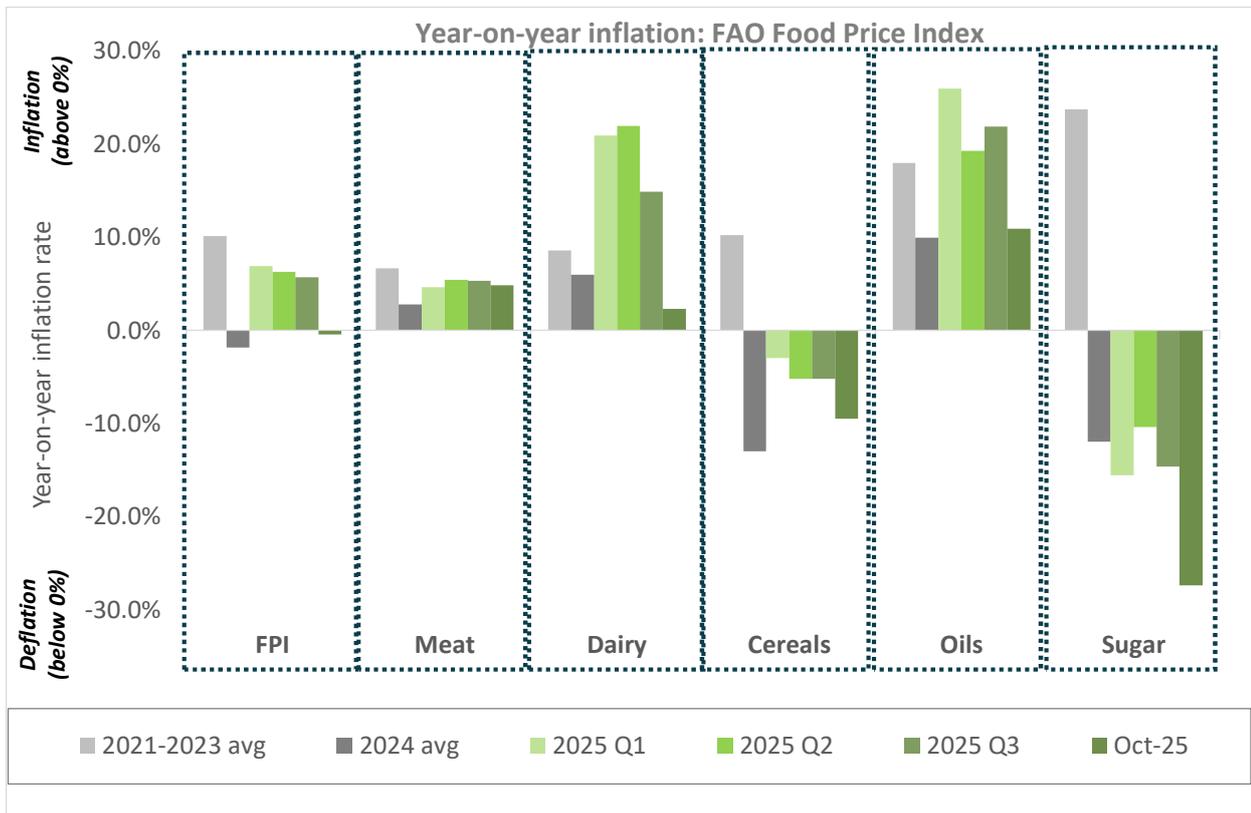


Figure 3: The FAO Food Price Index for global commodity and food prices

Source: FAO, October 2025

SECTION 5: Drivers and expectations

Cereals: The FAO Cereal Price Index declined by 1.3% in October 2025 compared to September 2025 and by 9.5% relative to October 2024, driven by decreases across all major cereals. Maize prices were supported by ongoing harvests in the Northern Hemisphere and favourable planting conditions in the Southern Hemisphere. However, uncertainty over U.S. maize yields during the 43-day government shutdown, coupled with news of a new trade agreement between China and the USA, limited further price declines. While official crop reporting has resumed and expectations still point to a bumper harvest, November estimates were revised downward compared to September 2025 projections. As of 16 November 2025, 91% of the maize area had been harvested, slightly below the five-year average of 94%. Wheat prices declined, pressured by harvesting activity in the global North (spring wheat) and South (winter wheat), which contributed to ample global supplies.

Domestically, grain prices mirrored global trends, further supported by the stronger rand. Maize prices continued to ease, with MoM declines of 6.1% for white maize and 2.8% for yellow maize. Year-on-year, white maize prices dropped by 22.4%, while yellow maize fell by 36.0%. The latest Crop Estimates Committee report (October 2025) shows another upward revision in 2024/25 maize production compared to September forecasts, bringing the total to 16.3 million tons. Planting intentions for the 2025/26 season indicate a 2.7% increase in total area compared to 2024/25. Combined with favourable early season weather, early indications point to another bumper crop. Wheat prices also declined, in line with global market dynamics and the stronger Rand.

Vegetable Oils: The FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index rose by 0.9% MoM and 10.9% YoY, reaching its highest level since July 2022. Palm oil prices were supported by anticipated export restrictions from Indonesia following its planned mandate to increase palm oil content in biodiesel to 50% in 2026. Soybean oil prices also strengthened as Brazil's exports declined compared to last year, reflecting higher domestic demand after the biodiesel admixture was raised to 15% in August 2025. Sunflower oil prices were buoyed by limited supply due to poor sunflower harvests in the Black Sea region and restrained farmer selling in the EU, which has slowed crushing activity. Meanwhile, strong global demand for Australian supplies, particularly from New Zealand, China, South Korea, and the U.S., boosted canola oil prices.

In the oilseed market, international soybean prices came under pressure. U.S. soybean exports increased in October 2025 compared to the previous month but remain below 2024 levels due to reduced shipments to China. These were partially offset by exports to Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt. In the canola market, anti-dumping duties imposed by China on Canadian exports, combined with expectations of a bumper crop in Australia following favourable seasonal rains, continue to weigh on prices. Conversely, sunflower seed prices have firmed as harvesting in the Black Sea region faces weather-related losses, alongside similar challenges in the EU.

Domestically, oilseed prices trended downward. Soybean prices fell by 2.7% MoM and 19.1% YoY, mirroring global developments and reflecting South Africa's bumper crop. Sunflower seed prices also declined, down 5.4% MoM and 1.5% YoY, diverging from international trends largely due to exchange rate movements and local market conditions. Crop projections for 2025/26 indicate a 4.4% reduction in sunflower area compared to 2024/25, while soybean area is expected to increase by 2.4%. Planting for the 2025/26 summer crop is well underway, supported by early rains and residual soil moisture from late rainfall from the previous season, enabling timely planting in most regions.

Meat: International meat prices declined in October 2025, underpinned by softer pig, poultry, and ovine meat prices. As a result, the FAO Meat Price Index decreased by 2.0% month-on-month, although prices were still 4.0% higher year-on-year.

In the EU, pig meat prices dropped due to lower foreign demand, particularly from China, following its implementation of import duties of up to 62.4% on EU pork. Adding to the price pressure was increased internal supply, resulting from a backlog of live pigs after the October public holiday and subdued demand from processors due to squeezed margins exacerbated by weaker domestic prices. Poultry meat prices also fell as Brazil's export prices remained sluggish amid reduced demand from China, linked to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) restrictions imposed earlier in the year. Mexico has replaced China as Brazil's main importer. However, China lifted all restrictions against Brazil earlier this month, suggesting that volumes may increase in the near term.

In the ovine market, increased supply as new-season lambs entered the market drove sheep and lamb prices down from previous month highs in Australia. In contrast, prices in New Zealand remained firm due to strong export demand and tight supply, as new-season throughput lagged previous season volumes. Bovine meat prices held firm, contrary to other meat types. Despite the tariffs imposed by the US, demand for Australian beef remains firm, boosting export prices, and prices are expected to increase further toward the end of the year as preparations for the Ramadan festival commence and the festive season approaches.

In the domestic meat market, prices for most meat types remain high due to continued battles against animal diseases, especially in the beef sector. This limits slaughters and availability of weaners, while high beef prices boost demand for alternative proteins, particularly chicken and pork. In addition, seasonal demand typically supports prices in the buildup to the festive season.

The average A2/A3 beef carcass price increased marginally in October, following a downward revision in September 2025, and remains significantly higher YoY (+37.1%). Slaughter numbers remain low, limiting production. While movement restrictions are in place amid ongoing Foot-and-Mouth-Disease (FMD) outbreaks, production is largely constrained by the slaughter of lighter carcasses compared to last year. Demand for feedlot animals is supported by smaller feedlots that are taking advantage of high prices, leading to early slaughter weights.

The price of individually quick frozen (IQF) chicken rose marginally in October compared to September and was 13.8% higher YoY. In the pork sector, prices increased by 3.1% MoM and by 14.7% YoY. The average A2/A3 sheep carcass price declined slightly MoM (-0.6%) but remained high YoY (+22.4%).

Dairy: The FAO Dairy Price Index declined by 3.4% in October 2025 but remained 2.7% higher year-on-year compared to October 2024. The monthly decrease was driven by lower quotations across all major products, including butter, cheese, and milk powders. Abundant milk supply in key exporting regions continues to weigh on prices, particularly as New Zealand approaches its seasonal production peak. Additionally, ample milk supply in both New Zealand and the EU has boosted export availability, while softer import demand from key regions such as Asia and the Middle East has further dampened prices.

In the domestic market, raw milk prices eased month-on-month, reflecting seasonal production patterns and the recent reduction in feed prices. For processed dairy products, the dairy product index remained stable MoM and showed a slight increase YoY. Total raw milk purchased and used in dairy production is rising both MoM and

compared to 2024 levels. Input costs such as feed are softening with fewer supply chain disruptions, providing some relief along the value chain and allowing for adjustments to changing producer and consumer needs.

Fresh Produce: In the vegetable products category, market trends indicate elevated potato stock levels since May, following heavy rainfall in March and April across most production areas. The rain delayed harvesting and temporarily reduced yields. Farmers in the Eastern Free State and Christiana (North-West Province) reported they could not access fields for harvesting, creating a supply gap during those weeks and leading to oversupply in subsequent months. Fresh produce market prices have remained under pressure ever since, as producers had already planted and were compelled to harvest and market under stressed conditions. October saw a reduction in stock levels, even though total sales also dipped, signalling a slowdown in supply. Producers were able to scale back plantings between late May and early July after observing a trend similar to 2022. Although prices improved month-on-month, a 10kg pocket still trades at less than R50 on average.

Onion sales volumes align closely with October 2024, but prices remain under pressure, trading at the lowest point in two years – below R4/kg. Elevated stock levels of fresh onions continue to weigh on prices, as these onions lack the shelf life of thicker-skinned varieties entering the market from November onward. A switch from potato to onion plantings earlier in the year may have contributed to this trend. Tomato stock levels have been high over the past two months, causing prices to average below R8/kg at national fresh produce markets. However, a sharp pullback in supply during October 2025 led to a drop in sales and stock levels, resulting in a price rebound of more than R3/kg to over R11/kg.

In the fruit category, the orange season is winding down, with supply dropping and prices rising by about R2/kg, from just below R6/kg to nearly R8/kg MoM as sales volumes fell by 60%. Overall, 2025 was a more normal season compared to the previous year. The avocado season is also ending, with supply tightening and prices climbing to over R100 per 4kg carton. Apples for export and local markets continue to be accessed from storage, with local supply remaining slightly constrained but steady. Strong juice prices and low risk for processors occasionally limit fresh supply to the local market. Apple prices rose to over R13/kg, a 4% increase month-on-month and 12% higher year-on-year. Banana throughput and stock levels normalised after two months of higher supply, prompting a 31% price increase MoM. However, prices remain 18% below October 2024 levels, as supply dropped significantly in late 2024 following post-election unrest in Mozambique.

Looking ahead: Global trade dynamics continue to evolve, with the US announcing a new list of products that will be exempt from higher tariffs earlier this month. This follows sustained high inflation following the imposition of the tariffs. Several countries have also redirected trade flows, in order to avoid higher US tariffs, affecting relative prices. While recent adjustments by the US are favourable to several major exporters, it further fuels uncertainty surrounding the tariff structure and the expected future levels. This uncertainty in itself and differences in expectations with respect to future tariff levels can also influence future price trends. Exchange rate volatility is expected to continue influencing the cost of essential production inputs such as fuel and fertilizers, as well as the prices of imported food products. Domestically, festive season demand and persistent disease outbreaks are likely to remain major drivers of livestock and meat prices in the coming months. In addition, exchange rate fluctuations will continue to influence the cost of essential production inputs such as fuel and fertilizers, as well as prices of imported food products. Additionally, festive season demand and persistent disease outbreaks remain key factors shaping livestock and meat prices in the coming months.

On a positive note, adequate supply from the 2024/25 summer crops, combined with favourable planting conditions for the 2025/26 season, is expected to sustain lower feed costs for producers despite ongoing disease challenges. Another good summer crop will also further bolster affordability of basic food staples. Furthermore, the recent interest rate cut could boost consumer purchasing power, potentially reviving demand for certain food products.

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Enquiries: Dr H Vermeulen (hester.v@bfap.co.za) www.bfap.co.za