

FOOD INFLATION BRIEF

This Brief provides an overview of food inflation dynamics, its associated causes, and the cost of basic healthy eating for November and December 2025.

We also present a recap of 2025 food inflation dynamics.








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]



BFAP
DATA
DRIVEN
INSIGHT

RELEASE DATE:
30 January 2026

SUMMARY OF FOOD INFLATION METRICS – November & December 2025

		Year-on-year (YoY):	Month-on-month (MoM):	For more detail refer to:
Inflation: Food and non-alcoholic beverages (NAB)		+4.4% (Dec'25) +4.4% (Nov'25)	+0.2% (Dec'25) +0.1% (Nov'25)	Section 1 of this brief
CPI headline inflation:		+3.6% (Dec'25) +3.5% (Nov'25)	+0.2% (Dec'25) -0.1% (Nov'25)	
Contribution of inflation on food & NAB to CPI headline inflation:		0.8 percentage points (Dec'25) 0.8 percentage points (Nov'25)	0.0 percentage points (Dec'25) 0.0 percentage points (Nov'25)	
Food categories with highest inflation:		For December 2025: Meat Oils & fats NAB	For December 2025: Meat NAB Cereals Oils & fats	Section 2 of this brief
Food categories with lowest inflation:		For December 2025: Fruits & nuts Vegetables Dairy & eggs Cereals	For December 2025: Fruits & nuts Vegetables Dairy & eggs	

Cost of the BFAP

Thrifty Healthy Food Basket:

(For more detail refer to Section 3)



Dec '25: R3 841 /  / month
Nov '25: R3 846 /  / month

Indicators for selected factors affecting food prices in South Africa:

(For more detail refer to Section 4)

Global food commodity prices



FAO Food Price Index

Dec '25: -2.4% YoY (↓ sugar, dairy, cereals; ↑ meat, oils)
Dec '25: -0.6% MoM (↓ dairy, meat, oils; ↑ sugar, cereals)
[Nov '25: -2.0% YoY, -1.1% MoM]

Exchange rate



R/\$ exchange rate

YoY appreciation of 7.3% (R16.86/US\$1 (Dec '25) vs R18.18/US\$1 (Dec'24)
MoM appreciation of 2.2% (R16.86/US\$1 (Dec '25) vs R17.23/US\$1 (Nov'25))

Rising costs in value chain



CPI for 'Electricity':

Dec'25: +7.9% YoY; 0.0% MoM
Nov'25: +7.9% YoY; -0.3% MoM
(Lowest index value for 2025 in June 2025)

CPI for 'Fuel':

Dec'25: +0.6% YoY; +1.6% MoM
Nov'25: +0.1% YoY; -2.2% MoM
(Lowest index value for 2025 in November 2025)

SECTION 1: CPI headline and food inflation over time:

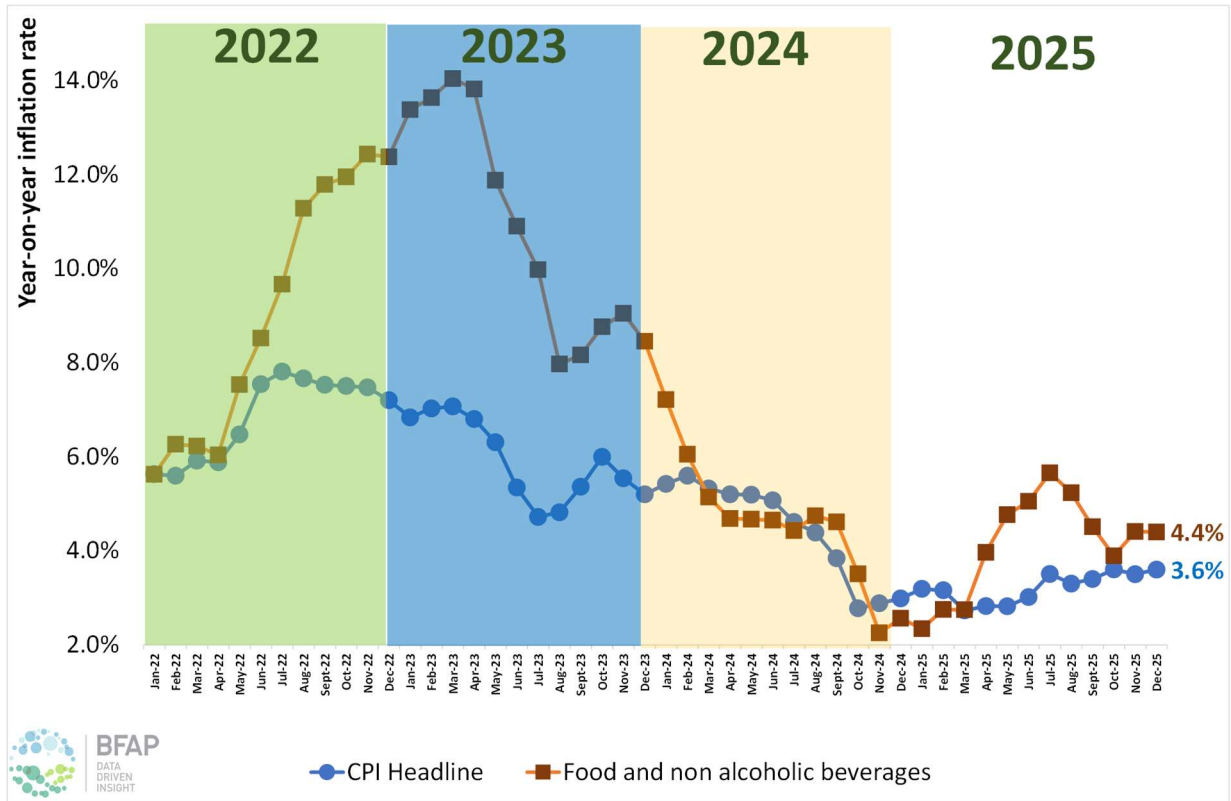


Figure 1: Year-on-year inflation 2022 2025 - CPI Headline and Food and NAB

Source: Stats SA, December 2024

- In 2025, CPI Headline inflation had an increasing trend from 2.7% YoY in March 2025 to 3.6% YoY in December 2025, with the November and December 2025 inflation rates within the latest South African inflation target of 3% with a 1 percentage point tolerance band, as announced in early November 2025.
- In December 2025 the food and NAB category was the 2nd highest contributor to CPI headline inflation (contributing 0.8 percentage points), preceded by housing and utilities (1.2) and followed by insurance and financial services (0.7).
- In 2025 CPI inflation on food and NAB increased from 2.3% in January 2025 to 5.7% in July 2025, followed by some recovery in the 4th quarter of 2025.

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

2025 inflation overview: Food categories

The **highest** annual average YoY inflation (top 3):

- Meat (7.0%)
- NAB (5.8%)
- Fruits & nuts (5.2%)

The **lowest** annual average YoY inflation (top 3):

- Dairy & eggs (-0.3%)
- Cereals (2.9%)
- Fish & seafood (3.9%).

2025 inflation overview: Dominant food items

The **highest** annual average YoY inflation:

- Starch-rich foods: **Maize meal.**
- Vegetables: **Lettuce, carrots, pumpkin.**
- Fruit: **Apples.**
- Protein foods from livestock: **Selected beef, mutton/lamb and pork products.**
- Fish: **Hake, fish fingers.**
- Fats/oils: **Brick margarine.**
- Legumes: **Dried beans, peanut butter.**
- NAB: **Fruit juice concentrates, instant coffee, Ceylon tea.**

The **lowest** annual average YoY inflation:

- Starch-rich foods: **Rice, bread, pasta, wheat flour, potatoes.**
- Vegetables: **Tomatoes, onions.**
- Fruit: **Oranges.**
- Protein foods from livestock: **Eggs, chicken.**
- Fish: **Canned tuna.**
- Dairy: **Milk, sour milk.**
- Legumes: **Canned baked beans.**
- NAB: **Carbonated beverages.**

Looking at December 2025:

Inflation on food categories in December 2025 (Source: Stats SA, December 2025)

Category:	YoY inflation	MoM inflation	Comments:
Bread and cereals	2.1%	0.2%	3 rd Highest MoM inflation among categories.
Meat	12.6%	0.9%	Highest YoY & MoM inflation among categories.
Fish	3.5%	0.0%	-
Dairy & eggs	-1.1%	-0.1%	-
Oils and fats	4.6%	0.2%	2 nd Highest YoY inflation among categories.
Fruit	-7.4%	-1.5%	-
Vegetables	-2.8%	-1.0%	-
Sugar & sugar-rich foods	3.0%	0.0%	-
Non-alcoholic beverages	4.2%	0.4%	3 rd Highest YoY and 2 nd highest MoM inflation among categories.

Commonly purchased food items with high YoY inflation rates in December 2025

≥20%	≥10% to <20%	≥5% to <10%	Deflation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beef (Sirloin, rump steak, stew, brisket, chuck, T-bone, mince, fillet) Pumpkin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maize meal Mutton/Lamb (leg, chops, stew) Pork (chops, ribs) Beef (offal) Cheddar cheese Instant coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken (non-IQF frozen portions, IQF portions, fresh portions) Pork (ham, fillet) Fish fingers Lettuce, apples Brick margarine Fruit juice concentrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes Chicken (whole fresh) Canned tuna Eggs Cabbage, carrots, cucumber, onions, tomatoes, spinach Oranges, pears, avocados, bananas Beans (dried & canned) Fresh, powdered & sour milk Carbonated beverages

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

- In 2025, the average cost of the BFAP THFB amounted to R3 899 (2.9% higher than in 2024, compared to more severe increases of +4.4% for 2023/24 and +11.3% for 2022/23).
- The highest value of the BFAP THFB was observed in June 2025 (R3 988/household/month).
- The BFAP THFB recovered from June 2025 to September 2025, followed by a less significant increasing trend towards November/December 2025.
- The BFAP THFB was relatively more affordable in 2025 than in 2024. In 2024 a household with two full-time wage earners who also benefited from Child Support Grants and school meals had to spend 31.0% on average of available income on the basket, compared to a slightly improved expenditure share of 30.3% for 2025.



THFB – December 2025:

R3 841/  **/month**

Month-on-month change: -R5.30 / -0.1%

Year-on-year change: +R7.67 / +0.2%

Affordability*: 29.6% food expenditure share

(NOTE: Improved affordability compared to Nov 2025 [29.7% expenditure share])

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: Drivers and expectations

Looking back at 2025:

In 2025 *international food commodity prices*, as measured by the FAO Food Price Index (FPI), increased by 4.2% from its average value in 2024 value (see Figure 2), fuelled by price pressure (inflation) on oils, dairy and meat, offset by price relief (deflation) for sugar and cereals.

Overview of international food price movements and drivers in 2025:

Category:	YoY inflation 2024-2025:	2025 movements:	Main drivers:
Edible oils	+17.9% (Highest category inflation)	Peaking at +29.1% YoY in Feb'25. Easing to +1.6% YoY in Dec'25.	Tight global supplies, uncertainties regarding global palm oil supply in Southeast Asia and steady demand from the food, biofuel, and industrial sectors
Dairy	+13.7%	Above +20% YoY up to July'25. Easing to 8.2% in Dec'25.	Strong import demand in key markets, limited exportable supplies (particularly during the first half of the year), tight inventories, and weather-related production challenges.
Meat	+5.0%	Declining from +7.2% in Jan'25 to +3.4% in Dec'25, but with spikes above +6% in June'25 and Sept'25.	Sustained import demand (especially for beef in major markets like USA & China), lingering animal disease risks (e.g. avian influenza outbreaks), continued trade disruptions linked to geopolitical tensions, and limited exportable supplies for bovine and ovine meat.
Sugar	-16.9% (Highest category deflation)	Higher deflation towards the 2 nd half of 2025, with peak deflation of -29.9% in Nov'25.	Improved global supply prospects for the 2024/25 season (e.g. favourable weather conditions in Brazil), favourable harvest prospects in India and Thailand following ample monsoon rains and expanded plantings, India resuming sugar exports.
Cereals	-4.9%	Higher deflation towards the 2 nd half of 2025, with peak deflation of -9.5% in Oct'25.	Ample global supplies, record-breaking cereal harvests, and historically high stock levels. Despite some monthly price increases for wheat and maize due to specific regional supply concerns or changes in demand, the overarching trend for the year was characterized by downward pressure from abundant supply. Rice prices saw an even steeper decline, attributed to strong exportable supplies, intense competition, and reduced demand from Asian importing countries.

Local commodity markets are driven by global market trends, the exchange rate, and local supply and demand dynamics. For 2025 these included:

- **Cereals:** Bumper maize crop harvest
- **Vegetable oils:** Ample supply from 2024/25 soybean crop, increasing import demand for sunflower seeds
- **Meat:** Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)-related disruptions (i.e. movement and auction restrictions) and other biosecurity risks (i.e. African Swine Fever (ASF) and Asian Influenza (AI)); feed costs only declined in latter part of year
- **Dairy:** Easing feed costs later in year, fewer supply chain disruptions (i.e. improved electricity supply), FMD risk
- **Fresh produce:** Political conflict in import supplying countries (i.e. Mozambique), adverse weather, fluctuations in trade and related issues (i.e. bans in neighbouring markets)

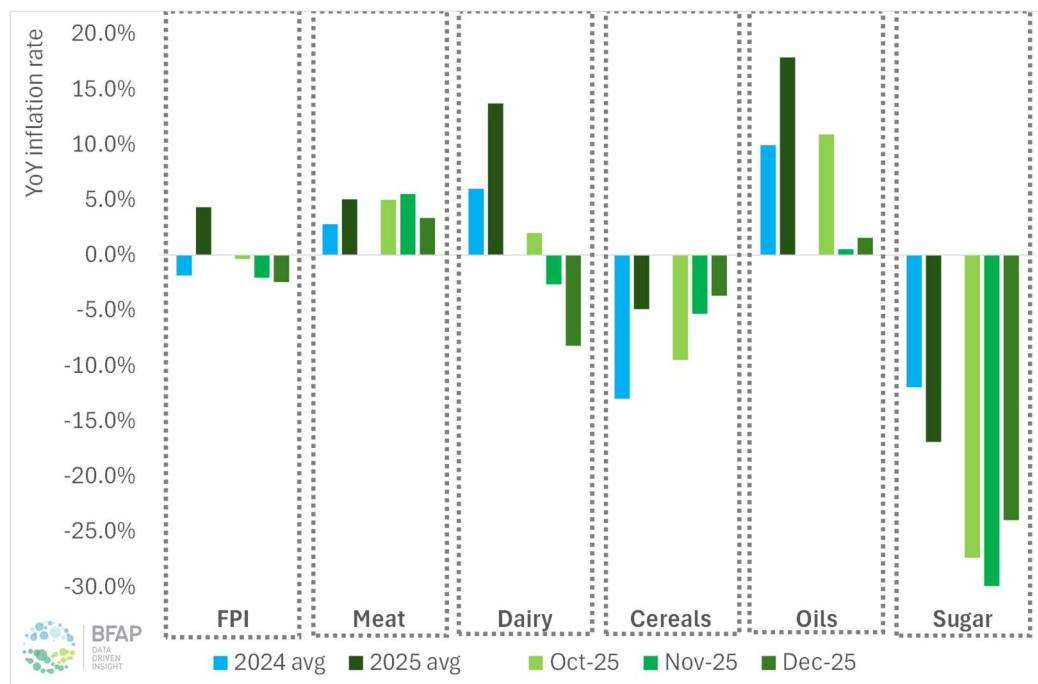


Figure 2: Overview of YoY inflation on the FAO Food Price Index for 2024 and 2025

Source: FAO, 2025

Food price drivers for November & December 2025:

Cereals: International food commodity prices, as measured by the FAO Food Price Index (FPI), declined in both November and December 2025, marking continued easing in global food markets. In November, the FPI fell by 1.2% month-on-month (MoM) and 2.1% year-on-year (YoY), driven by broad-based declines across dairy, meat, vegetable oils, and sugar. The downward trend persisted in December, though at a slower pace, with the index easing by 0.6% MoM and 2.3% YoY, reflecting sustained but moderating global price pressures.

In the global cereals market, drivers varied across the two months. In November, the Cereal Price Index increased by 1.8% MoM, driven by firmer wheat and maize prices. Wheat was supported by expectations of Chinese buying, Black Sea conflict uncertainties, and lower Russian plantings, while maize benefited from good rains in South America. In December, cereal prices remained supported by global supply risks, especially around Black Sea wheat flows, though large harvests in Argentina and Australia helped offset pressures. Maize prices remained stable despite abundant supply, on strong export and biofuel demand.

In the South African grains market, price movements were mixed between November and December. In November, domestic maize prices rose in line with global trends despite a strong rand, increasing by 2.2% MoM for white maize and 2.3% MoM for yellow maize, though remaining significantly lower YoY (down 38.9% and 26.4%, respectively). The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) revised the 2024/25 maize production forecast upward to 16.4 million tons, reinforcing expectations of abundant supply. Wheat prices declined, reflecting lower import-parity levels supported by the strong rand.

By contrast, December saw domestic maize prices move counter to international trends, pressured by ample local supply from what is now projected to be the second-largest harvest on record. Prices declined MoM by 0.6% for white maize and 2.9% for yellow maize, while YoY prices fell even further (down 44.9% and 32.2%, respectively). Year-to-date maize exports reached 1.3 million tonnes by the week of 9 January 2026, with total exports expected to reach 2.4 million tonnes, although this remains below the previous season's levels when export demand was boosted by constrained supply and stock rebuilding in the region.

Vegetable Oils: Global vegetable oil prices declined by 2.6% MoM in November, and a marginal 0.2% in December. Higher palm oil output in Malaysia, strong canola production, and increased sunflower supply pressured prices, while soybean oil remained supported by biodiesel demand. In December, ample supplies of soybean oil from Brazil, high canola and sunflower seed production (Australia and Canada) combined with weak import demand for soybean oil continued to weigh on prices, although palm oil rose slightly on expectations of seasonal production slowdowns (Southeast Asia).

Global oilseed markets saw mixed trends. In November the soybean market was supported by expected U.S. exports to China and weather concerns in South America, and sunflower seed prices lifted by crushing demand (Russia), a poor harvest and tight old crop stocks (EU). Canola market price remained under pressure from high inventories (Canada), high import duties (China) and projected declines in EU import demand.

Domestic oilseed markets mirrored international trends, with soybean prices up 3.8% MoM and sunflower prices increasing 2.0% MoM. YoY, prices eased by 18.7% for soybeans and 6.8% for sunflower seeds, reflecting abundant supply from the 2024/25 crop and a strengthening rand against the dollar. The Crop Estimates Committee's November 2025 report showed an upward revision in 2024/25 soybean production compared to October 2025. The total crop of almost 2.8 Mt provides a substantial exportable surplus.

In December, global soybean prices softened on expectations of a record Brazilian crop, while U.S. prices held firmer on renewed Chinese demand. Sunflower seed prices stayed supported by tight supplies, though pressures are likely to ease with rising Argentine exports.

Domestic soybean prices were down MoM and YoY, while sunflower seed prices increased. An abundant supply from the 2024/25 production is putting pressure on soybean prices. The latest available trade data indicate that exports were significantly higher in November 2025 compared to November 2024 (up by 118.9%) and are expected to reach 230 thousand tonnes. Sunflower seed prices moved higher, mirroring global trends despite the rand appreciating.

Meat: The FAO Meat Price Index weakened on a month-on-month basis in both November and December, although index levels remained elevated on a year-on-year basis. Meat price declines were driven mainly by lower pig meat and poultry prices. Ample Brazilian poultry exports, weak Chinese demand for EU pork, and sufficient EU pork supplies contributed to the declines. Earlier strength in beef and ovine markets moderated in December as increased cattle supplies in Australia and new seasonal lamb and mutton availability added downward pressure.

In South Africa, domestic meat prices remained elevated despite the cooling global backdrop, underpinned by persistent animal disease outbreaks and strong festive-season demand. The red-meat sector continued to battle FMD in cattle, while occurrences of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in sheep and the seasonal re-emergence of African Swine Fever (ASF) in pigs heightened biosecurity risks. Elevated beef prices encouraged consumer substitution toward more affordable proteins, particularly pork and poultry. Although festive demand typically supports slaughter activity, beef and sheep slaughter volumes remained subdued due to limited supply of livestock, FMD-related movement restrictions and low live import volumes from Namibia and Botswana.

In November, the average A2/A3 beef carcass price increased by 1.9% MoM and remained substantially higher year-on-year (up 37.5%), supported by firm demand and limited supply. However, prices eased by 2.7% in December as consumers increasingly shifted toward alternative protein sources, although year-on-year prices remained elevated at 24.2%. Weaner calf prices remained buoyant, increasing 6.4% MoM and nearly 30% YoY, indicating continued supply constraints and strong forward demand for cattle.

Poultry prices (IQF) broadly reflected global developments in November, while pig carcass prices remained firm as consumers sought more affordable protein options. On a year-on-year basis, prices across both categories remained well supported. In December, pig carcass prices increased by 3.7% MoM and 24.9% YoY, while sheep meat prices rose by 2.3% MoM and 23.7% YoY, reflecting ongoing supply challenges and sustained demand.

Dairy: Dairy prices declined by 3.1% MoM and 1.7% YoY in November and continued to soften in December, declining by 4.4% MoM, though they remained significantly higher YoY (13.2%). Rising milk production in the EU, New Zealand, and Oceania increased supplies of butter, powders, and cheese, while subdued import demand (Asia), especially for milk powders, added further pressure. Despite monthly declines, cheese prices remained 10% higher YoY relative to November 2024, supported by Asian and Near East demand.

In the domestic market, the producer price index for raw milk rose marginally by 0.1% MoM in November compared to October 2025 and increased by 2.7% YoY. For processed products, the dairy products index also recorded modest gains, rising 0.3% MoM and 2.1% YoY. Seasonal trends typically support higher milk supply during the summer months, with production peaking around October, which also aligns with stronger demand for unprocessed milk. While easing feed prices provided some relief to farmers, the dairy industry was impacted by FMD, particularly in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, both major production regions. These outbreaks reduce output and also resulted in herd reductions. At the retail level, prices softened in the last two months of the year, largely reflecting fewer supply chain disruptions such as loadshedding and floods compared to 2024.

Fresh produce: Fresh produce market data recorded lower year-on-year prices for the three largest vegetable categories (potatoes, tomatoes, and onions) in both November and December, reflecting higher volumes supplied to

the market. In November 2025 prices were 37.2% lower for potatoes, 17.5% lower for tomatoes, and 19.3% lower for onions compared with the previous year. In December, potatoes and tomatoes continued their downward trajectory, with prices 21.1% and 25.2% lower than December 2024 levels. Onion prices, however, were 9.1% higher YoY, supported by firmer demand.

Month-on-month trends highlight the influence of elevated volumes and weather-related disruptions. Widespread rainfall placed significant pressure on potato and tomato markets, while fewer trading days due to public holidays disrupted sales, resulting in higher MoM stock levels, especially for tomatoes. In contrast, the onion market recorded lower stock levels, signalling strong demand that supported prices despite high supplies. Rain in Limpopo delayed harvest completion in November, while continued rainfall in KwaZulu-Natal disrupted harvesting and contributed to larger volumes entering the market in December.

In the fruit market, apple prices declined YoY in both November and December despite lower stocks and sales volumes, suggesting subdued consumer demand and/or quality differences in market arrivals compared to a year earlier. MoM, apple prices also moved lower, reinforcing weak demand. Export challenges for summer fruits (e.g. table grapes and stone fruit) likely diverted additional volumes to the domestic market, adding pressure to local fruit prices and crowding out demand for other categories.

For bananas, high volumes and elevated stock levels weighed on prices YoY in November. On a MoM basis prices briefly strengthened in November due to lower stocks relative to October, but this was short-lived. With volumes rebounding in December, banana prices moved lower again.

In the avocado market, sales volumes increased in both November and December, while prices moved largely sideways YoY. International market dynamics also spilled over into the domestic market. In November, prices were lower YoY due to strong export volumes from Peru to the EU and UK, which limited South Africa's exports to these countries and resulted in more avocados entering the local market.

Looking ahead: Consumers may experience some price relief as grain, oilseed, and fuel prices continue to ease, supported by a stronger exchange rate that helps cushion the cost of imported inputs and food commodities. However, meat prices are likely to remain high in the near term due to ongoing biosecurity risks. Many regions remain affected by movement restriction and recent detections of FMD at a commercial piggery in the Free State, new ASF cases in Gauteng (December 2025), and RVF outbreaks in sheep (November 2025) underscore the persistent disease pressures that will continue shaping supply conditions and livestock price formation. On a more encouraging note, the prevalence of ASF and Avian Influenza has been significantly lower in 2025 compared to recent years, offering some relief for the poultry and pork industries, although the threat remains and continued vigilance is required.

In the fresh-produce market, vegetable prices are expected to recover gradually as supply levels decline seasonally. However, domestic volumes may increase slightly following Botswana's reinstatement of its import ban (December 2025), which is likely to redirect additional produce into South Africa's market. Meanwhile, the high rainfall received across summer rainfall production regions is expected to influence the supply, quality, and price patterns of both fruits and vegetables over the coming months, potentially resulting in short-term variability in market availability and price movements.

Suggested citation for this brief:

Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP). 2025. BFAP Food Inflation Brief – December 2025 food prices.

Release date 30 January 2026. Available at: <https://www.bfap.co.za/library/>

This food inflation brief is a collaboration between BFAP and Absa Agribusiness,

based on Statistics South Africa CPI and food retail price data (released in January 2026 for the December 2025 data).

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