FOOD INFLATION BRIEF

This BFAP Brief reviews food inflation dynamics, its associated causes, and the cost of basic healthy eating based on April 2026 food prices.

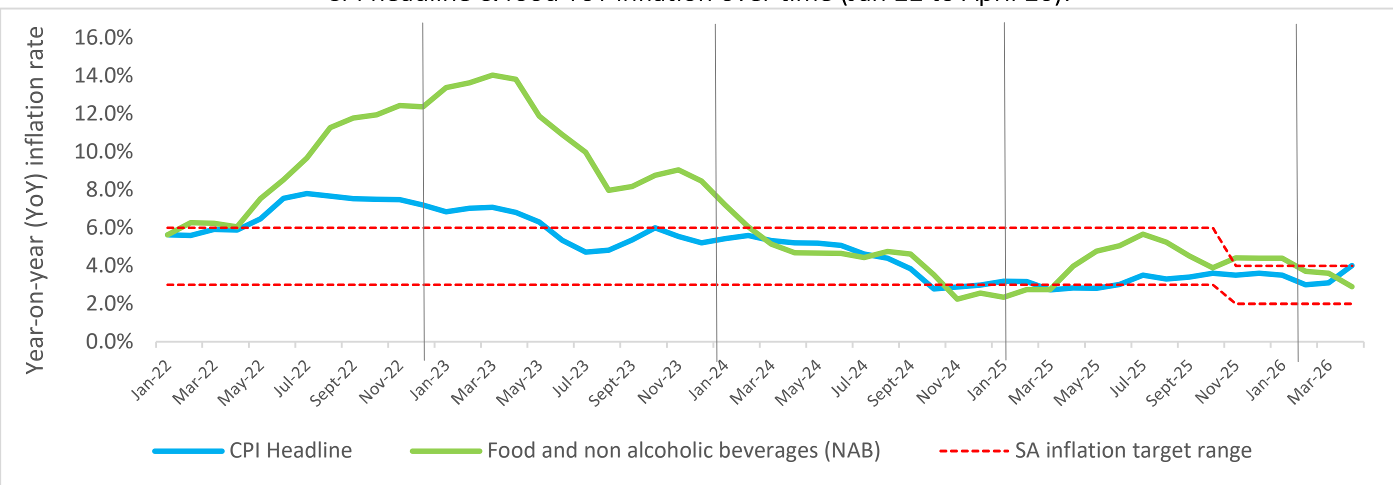
Release date: 28 May 2026

This food inflation brief is a collaboration between BFAP and Absa Agribusiness.
BFAP would like to acknowledge the source of the inflation and retail price data reported and analysed in this brief: Statistics South Africa [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0141]

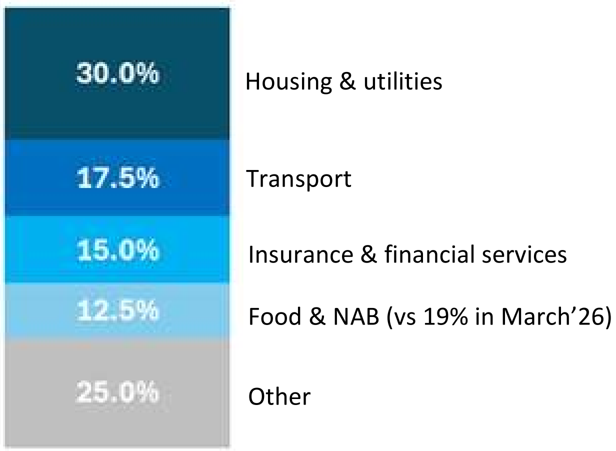
AN OVERVIEW OF CPI HEADLINE AND FOOD INFLATION IN APRIL 2026

Source: Stats SA CPI, April 2026

CPI headline & food YoY inflation over time (Jan'22 to April'26):



Biggest contributors to current CPI Headline inflation (4.0%):



***Inflation on Food & NAB in April 2026*:**

YoY: 2.9%
Declining trend compared to 3.6% in March'26

MoM: 0.7%
Increasing trend compared to 0.0% in March'26

***Headline inflation in April 2026*:**

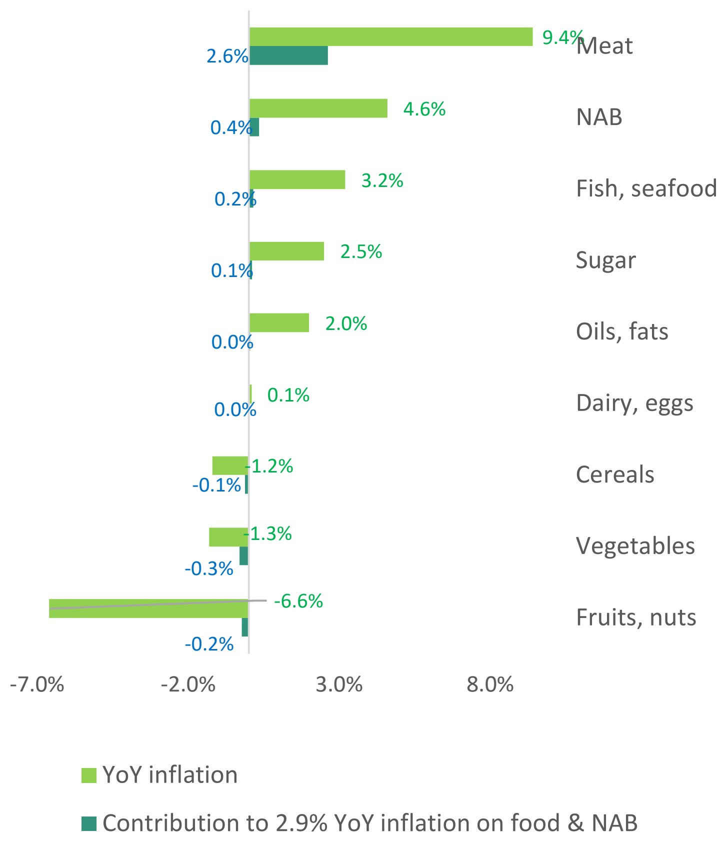
YoY: 4.0%
Increasing trend compared to 3.1% in March'26

MoM: 1.1%
Increasing trend compared to 0.6% in March'26

FOOD CATEGORIES IMPACTING YoY AND MoM FOOD INFLATION IN APRIL'26

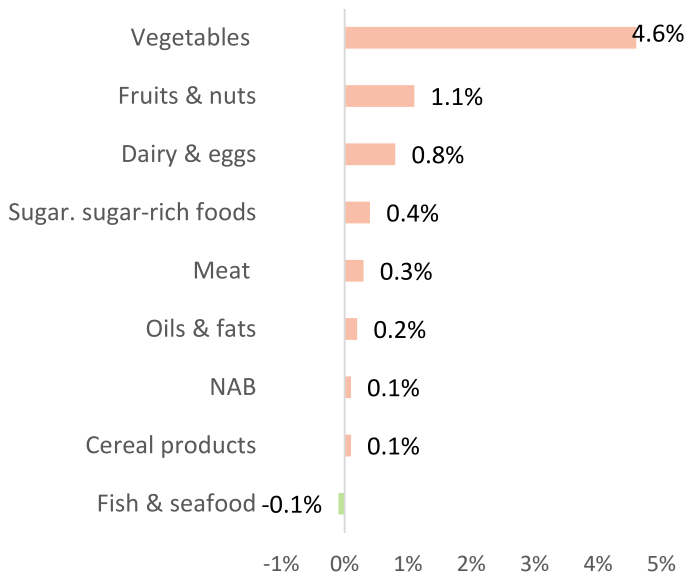
Source: Stats SA CPI, March 2026, BFAP calculations

YoY inflation on food categories & contributions to 2.9% YoY inflation on food & NAB in April 2026



- Highest YoY inflation on ***meat***, even though YoY inflation on meat fell below 10% for the first time in 8 months. High inflation on beef (sirloin, T-bone, offal, rump steak, mince, fillet, stewing meat, chuck, brisket [9.8% to 18.0%]), pork (chops, fillet, ribs, ham [10.4% to 20.2%]) and mutton/lamb (offal, leg [10.2% to 13.5%]).
- Second highest YoY inflation on ***NAB*** with high inflation on Ceylon tea (6.6% to 16.3% for various pack sizes), smaller pack sizes of carbonated beverages (5.2 to 7.8%), instant coffee (5.1% to 6.3% for various pack sizes) and fruit juice concentrates (4.8%).
- In the ***vegetable*** category, despite significant deflation on lettuce, carrots, potatoes, cabbage and tomatoes in April 2026, the retail prices of selected vegetables did increase significantly (pumpkin, bell peppers & onions [11.6% to 15.8%]).
- Considering food categories' YoY inflation rates (green bars in graph) in combination with their CPI weights, we can see that the inflation contributions of meat, NAB, fish/seafood and sugar/sugar-rich foods were offset by deflation on especially fruits and nuts, as well as vegetables and cereals.

MoM inflation on food categories in April 2026:



Compared to March 2026 the CPI figures revealed the highest MoM inflation on:

- ***Vegetables***: beetroot, onions, tomatoes, carrots, bell peppers, spinach, cucumber, cabbage, lettuce (2.5% to 25.7%).
- ***Fruit***: bananas (14.2%).
- ***Dairy***: sour milk, cheddar cheese (2.2% to 2.9%).
- ***Sugar & sugar-rich foods:*** white sugar, ice cream and various confectionary (0.3% to 2.9%).
- ***Meat:*** pork (bacon, ham, viennas [2.0% to 3.9%]), chicken (viennas, giblets [2.1% to 3.2%]), mutton/lamb offal [2.1%].

CONSUMER IMPACT OF FOOD INFLATION

Source: BFAP, 2026; Stats SA CPI, February 2026

The cost and affordability of basic healthy eating and an 'adequate energy' food basket in April'26:

(Illustrating the foods included in the BFAP THFB not the actual quantities of foods in the model)

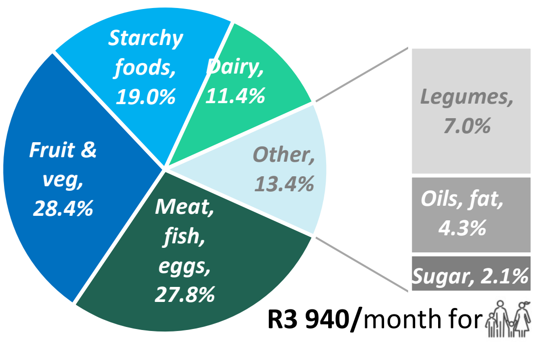
Component	Description
Basic healthy food basket (THFB)	Cost of a nutritionally balanced, energy-adequate diet for a low-income household.
BFAP Adequate Energy (AE) Basket	Cost of obtaining sufficient calories only, without accounting for dietary diversity.
Reference Household	South African household (HH) with 4 members: 2 adults and 2 children.
Basket Composition	27 food items across all food categories.
Methodology Pillars	National nutrition guidelines, typical low-income food intake patterns, and Stats SA retail prices.
Income Basis	One/two full-time minimum wages plus child support grants (CSG's).

In April '26 the cost of the THFB amounted to R3 940/month. This was 3.2 times more than the cost to obtain adequate energy* (AE) (R1 218/HH/month) for daily survival for the HH, but without adequate dietary diversity.

Compared to April'25 (YoY inflation) the cost of the THFB ***decreased*** by 0.4% (-R17), with cost increases on meat offset by decreases in the cost of starchy foods, oils & fats, vegetables and legumes.

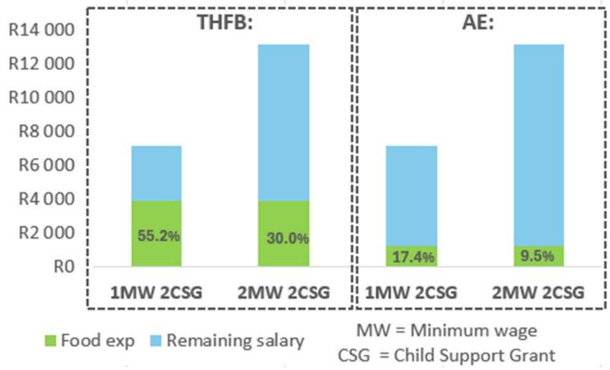
Compared to March'26 (MoM inflation) the cost of the THFB ***increased*** by 1.8% (+R68), with the most significant cost increase for vegetables.

Contribution of the various food categories to the cost of basic healthy eating in April'26:



The **largest THFB cost contributions** were from meat/fish/eggs, fresh produce & starchy foods – jointly contributing about 75% to the THFB cost in April'26.

Affordability of the AE and THFB in April'26:



In April 2026, the cost of the THFB was 3.2 times higher than that of the AE basket. For a household supported by two minimum wage earners and two CSG's, the THFB accounted for 30.0% of the total household income.

Did you know? A BFAP consumer insight snippet

Over the past year (comparing January-April 2026 with January-April 2025) the prices of beef cuts increased significantly, with the cost per kilogram for lower value beef cuts (e.g. mince, brisket, chuck, stewing meat) increasing between R22 - R25, and between R32 - R51 for higher value beef cuts (e.g. rump, T-bone, fillet, sirloin). To cope with these price increases, consumers could potentially partially replace beef with less expensive meat (e.g. chicken) or increase their consumption of less expensive plant-based protein-rich foods.

But are SA consumers willing to adopt plant-based protein-rich foods?

- BFAP research has indicated that about 80% middle-income and affluent consumers are willing to consider reduced meat consumption, even though only 4% indicated a definite willingness to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle.
- Younger generations generally reveal a higher willingness to accept plant-based protein-rich foods, as observed by Szejda et al. (2021) and more recently confirmed by Venter De Villiers et al. (2024) who also found that taste and product knowledge are the leading drivers behind young consumers' preference for plant-based foods.

(Citations available on request)

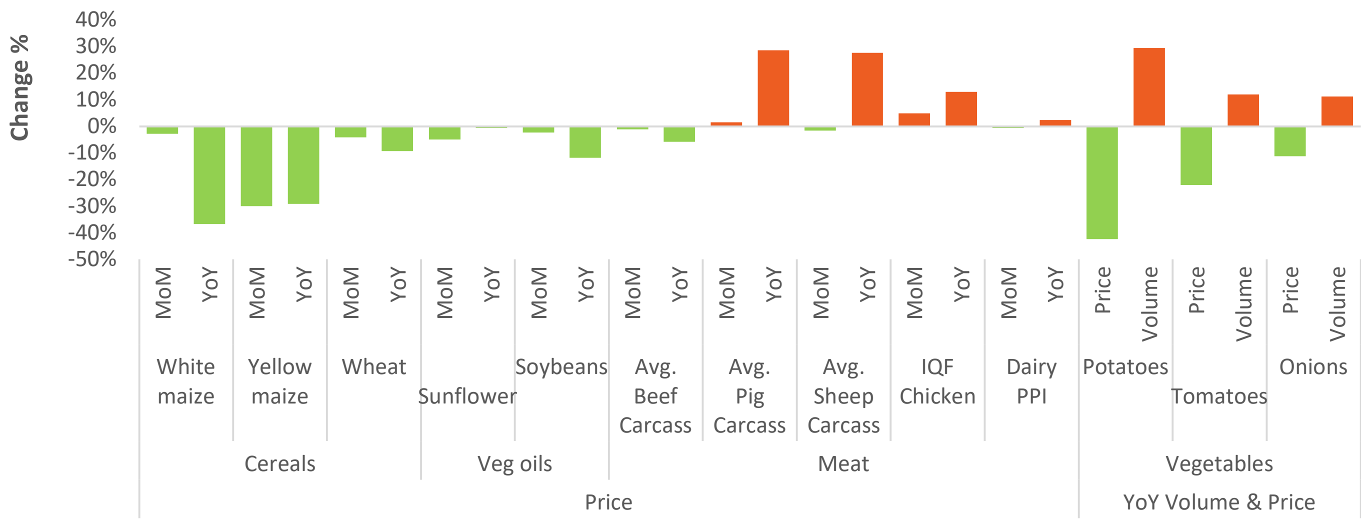
Interested in understanding how generational dynamics and preferences affect your product and market? Contact the BFAP consumer division (hester.v@bfap.co.za) for custom consumer insight solutions.

OBSERVATIONS IN PRIMARY PRODUCTION & VALUE CHAIN COSTS THAT CAN INFLUENCE FOOD PRICES *Source: BFAP, 2026; FAO FPI, May 2026*

Local trends and food commodity price expectations in coming months:

- **Grains & Oilseeds** – Large carryover stocks from the 2024/25 crop and another substantial crop for 2026 sustain downward pressure on prices.
- **Meat** – Beef carcass prices are starting to decline. FMD vaccination efforts and strengthening slaughter numbers will contain prices in 2026, but fuel and energy cost may limit the benefit consumers will experience at retail level.
- **Dairy** – Lower raw milk supply in winter will shape producer prices, while distribution and input costs (electricity) will likely increase dairy product prices at retail level.
- **Vegetables** – Adverse weather conditions (rain, heat) disrupted supply in recent times. With an increase in volumes and prices responding accordingly, retail prices are expected to ease in the coming months.

Important primary production indicators for domestic food inflation: April 2026



Other critical food price drivers & expectations:

Sharp increases in electricity and fuel prices are expected to intensify the pressure on consumers in the coming months. Electricity tariffs rose following the implementation of the 8.7% increase on 1 April 2026. At the same time, the global energy price shock linked to disruptions associated with the Middle East conflict led to substantial fuel price increases in South Africa in April 2026. Global energy and fertiliser prices remain volatile amid unsuccessful peace negotiations and continued supply uncertainty. In South Africa, the Central Energy Fund's projections point to an over-recovery in diesel prices heading into June, while petrol prices are expected to rise further. Although this may offer some relief to diesel consumers, the reintroduction of the fuel levy could somewhat offset that benefit. Amid ongoing uncertainty in the Middle East, the relative strength of the Rand will also impact costs in future.

Food commodity prices are expected to remain relatively moderate in the coming months. Changes in meat prices remain dependent on the ongoing management of FMD and ASF, with current short-term projections indicating that red meat prices will fall sooner, while pork and poultry could lag somewhat. Ample summer crop supplies will support continued easing of prices, however, a recovery in regional demand, sustained increases in fuel and fertiliser prices if the Middle East conflict persists, and adverse weather associated with the predicted El Niño cycle could reduce future planting and summer crop output into 2027. This would tighten supply and place upward pressure on food prices over the medium term. In addition, higher electricity and fuel costs are increasing processing, packaging, and distribution expenses across the value chain. These cost pressures are contributing to the increasing disconnect between retail food prices and on-farm producer prices.

BFAP
DATA DRIVEN INSIGHT

Enquiries on this brief? Please contact hester.v@bfap.co.za

Suggested citation: Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP). 2026. BFAP Food Inflation Brief – April 2026 food prices. Release date 28 May 2026. Available at: https://www.bfap.co.za/library/