

## Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket Statement

28th August, 2024.

### Ensuring Consumer Protection in the face of Rising Costs of Food Items

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is concerned with the wellbeing of consumers as food prices continue to rise. JCTR has recorded an increase in the Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) survey during the month of August, which now stands at K10, 669.33, reflecting a K93.40 increase compared to the month of July in Lusaka. This rise was attributed to increases in the prices of food items such as kapenta which increased to K407.51 from K377.52 per kg and the price of vegetables increased to K641.26 from K554.46 per 40kg. Our analysis over the past months also revealed that the prices of food items such as vegetables, kapenta, beans, fruits as well as cassava flour have been fluctuating due to seasonal availability as well as market conditions. These food items are essential components of a healthy diet - which are fruits, vegetables, dairy, cereals & tubers and legumes & nuts that every person should consume. Price shocks being exerted on food commodities pose a threat to the nutritional status of the country as consumers may shift to any other foods that may be available and affordable or compromise on the number of meals they take per day.

The Centre is particularly concerned with the challenge of access to affordable food (quality and quantity) posed by the rising food prices among the vulnerable and the poor in our communities. Access to nutrition significantly contributes to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life which includes food and necessary social services.<sup>1</sup> The incessant increase of the cost of food items, especially those mainly accessible to the poor and vulnerable, which have high nutritional value, is a serious concern that must be addressed by the government through pro poor policies and equitable government programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> See Pope John XXIII Encyclical on "Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty (Pacem in Terris). 11 April 1963.

The Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection therefore makes the following recommendations to address and respond to the needs of the Zambian people, especially those most affected by compromising their nutrition due to the high cost of essential food commodities;

1. ***Ensuring Consumer Protection:*** It is imperative that consumers, already constrained by low incomes, are protected from exploitation during such a crisis.
2. ***Preparedness for the Next Farming Season:*** The 2023/2024 farming season recorded reduced production of many crops in both cereals and tubers; therefore, it is important that farmers are well equipped with knowledge and equipment in sustainable agricultural practices in the next farming season.
3. ***Increase awareness of indigenous knowledge on sustainable farming practices:*** As a measure of ensuring food security and nutrition, we encourage other stakeholders working in food systems to raise awareness about the importance of indigenous knowledge in farming practices in order to ensure food security regardless of the season or other environmental calamities while adapting to changing climatic conditions.
4. ***Transparency in the implementation of the Cash for Work Programme.*** Social assistance programmes are prone to corruption risks and misuse of funds. Hence, the Centre recommends that the government puts in place measures to minimize such risks in the implementation of the programme. This will ensure benefits accrue to the most affected particularly now with the rise in the cost of living.

The continued rise in the cost of living is deeply concerning for the Centre, particularly the increase in the price of essential and nutritious food items, as this deviates from the goal of attaining quality universal health coverage for all. Through the basic needs and nutrition basket survey, JCTR seeks to advocate for the promotion of nutritious and locally produced foods by collecting data on the cost of these commodities on a monthly basis.

For further clarifications, contact the Social and Economic Development (SED) Programme at the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on 0955295881 and 0954755319. Email: [media.information@jctr.org.zm](mailto:media.information@jctr.org.zm) Martin Mwamba Road, Plot 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park – Lusaka. P. O. Box 37774 Lusaka – Zambia.

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