

BNNB STATEMENT

DECEMBER 18, 2024

Addressing the Escalating Food Prices: A Call for Medium-Term Sustainable Solutions

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) has recorded an increase in the cost of living for Lusaka families, as reflected in the Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) for December 2024. The BNNB for a family of five now stands at ZMW 10,833.47, up ZMW 440.31 from ZMW 10,393.16 in November. This rise reflects significant price hikes in essential food and non-food items, compounded by adverse weather conditions and rising production costs.

The government's declaration of the ongoing dry spell for the 2024/25 season as a disaster underscores the worsening impact of climate change on food production. Weather-related challenges, which have already driven up food prices in 2024, are expected to persist and worsen in 2025, further exacerbating food insecurity and cost-of-living pressures.

Key Drivers of Price Increases

The December BNNB data highlights significant price increases in essential items:

- Vegetables (40Kg): Up ZMW 188.73, from ZMW 537.15 to ZMW 725.88.
- Kapenta (1Kg): Increased sharply by ZMW 144.19, now ZMW 493.46, up from ZMW 349.27.
- Mealie Meal (50Kg): Rose by ZMW 60.86, now priced at ZMW 610.86, up from ZMW 550.00.

Other notable food price changes include:

- Bananas (16Kg): Increased by ZMW 62.72 to ZMW 341.92.
- Cooking Oil (3.6Ltrs): Rose by ZMW 20.71 to ZMW 225.66.
- Eggs (3 trays, 90 eggs): Up by ZMW 12.87 to ZMW 252.81.

Non-Food Essentials

Price increases were also recorded in essential non-food items:

- Toilet Paper (6 rolls): Up ZMW 24.30 to ZMW 58.26.
- Sanitary Towels (2 packs): Increased by ZMW 3.78 to ZMW 41.28.

Meanwhile, charcoal (180Kg) recorded a marginal price decline from ZMW 900.00 to ZMW 885.60, offering little relief in the face of rising costs elsewhere.

Implications for Families

The sharp rise in prices of vegetables, mealie meal, and kapenta places a heavy burden on families, especially low-income households. These staples are central to the Zambian diet, and their increased costs threaten access to adequate nutrition for the most vulnerable.

Although some relief was noted in charcoal prices, overall increases in essential food and non-food items continue to strain household budgets, leaving many families struggling to meet their basic needs.

Recommendations for Addressing the Rising Cost of Living

The JCTR urges government and stakeholders to adopt the following medium-term interventions to address the rising cost of living:

1. Strengthen Food Security Measures:

- Fast track irrigation projects and ensure early warning systems are effective in detection of crop pests during this season.
- Address the challenges being faced in the importation of maize by government and private sector.

2. Reallocate Community Development Spending:

- Restructure the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to prioritise investments in agricultural infrastructure, including water management and irrigation systems.
- Support community-level initiatives aimed at boosting food production and access.

3. Support Agricultural Production and Efficiency:

- Promote clean energy solutions to reduce reliance on expensive fuel-powered irrigation systems.
- Timely distribution of farming inputs and actualise incentives for farmers in the northern region to grow more of the staple foods as they continue experiencing favourable rainfall,

4. Expand Social Protection Programmes:

- Enhance price shock emergency cash transfer schemes and introduce targeted subsidies for essential staples to cushion vulnerable households.
- Develop post-harvest storage facilities to reduce food losses and improve market stability.

Call to Action

The JCTR calls for urgent, coordinated action to address the escalating cost of living. Immediate and strategic measures are needed to stabilise food prices, mitigate the impact of adverse weather conditions, and provide relief to vulnerable households. A long-term approach balancing sustainable solutions with immediate relief is critical to safeguarding the well-being of Zambian families.

Issued by Mr. Edward Musosa – Social and Economic Development Programme Manager

For further clarifications, contact the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on 260955295881 or 260954755319, or email media.information@jctr.org.zm.

“A JUST ZAMBIAN SOCIETY GUIDED BY FAITH, WHERE EVERYONE ENJOYS FULLNESS OF LIFE”

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