



Food prices are rising as we approach the Festive Season.

*Food price data over the past three months shows that the average cost of the Household Food Basket has increased by **R161,89 or 4,2%**, taking the total cost of the basket in November to **R4 018,22**. The Household Food Basket tracks 44 basic foods which women living in low-income households tell us they try and buy each month. Food prices are collected by women directly off the shelves of retailers which target the low-income market in Soweto and Alexandra, in Khayelitsha and Gugulethu, in KwaMashu and Umlazi, amongst others.*

These increases in basic food prices in the trollies of the majority of South Africans is alarming especially as the Festive Season approaches and with school re-opening dates having been pushed back to 27 January 2021. January is a month which stretches out like a mirage.

Our data at household level continues to paint a picture of escalating hunger, debt, unemployment, violence, poverty, and inequality. The plate is looking increasingly bad as pale starches displace all colour and protein. Health and well-being continue to deteriorate. Our health, education, economic and social outcomes continue to unravel. Describing what is going on in the lives of millions of South Africans and the wider impact and consequences of rising food prices amid a horrifying household affordability crisis, and economic crisis is no longer difficult. We know what is happening, and every month just gets worse.

Many women we speak with no longer believe that government will intervene to assist them. They tell us that it will be hard but they will survive. “We eat pap from Monday to Sunday, from one to thirty-one” (Soweto, 14 November 2020). “We will just eat starch, starch, starch. It is bad for us, but what can we do” (Dunoon, 12 November 2020). Listening to women, it is hard for our hearts not to break. Women continue absorbing high food prices, losses of jobs, and cuts in income internally, and at great cost. Without an outward push of hunger and anger into the public domain, it seems that hunger will again retreat into the invisibility of homes and women’s and children’s bodies. But as resilient as women are, this toughness will be severely tested over the festive season and the dreaded long-drawn-out month of January.

What happens over the next two months will therefore provide a guide for how the crisis at household level will play out in the public domain viz. whether the internal feelings of being responsible for our poverty and hunger will be pushed outwards and if the cracks that we are starting to see emerge will widen, and then bring a flood of very hungry and angry people onto our streets, and with hundreds of thousands of people refusing to leave until government does what is expected of a government to do: intervene decisively in the crisis.

Here we would suggest that it would be extremely helpful if government switched its focus from creating jobs for a few to supporting livelihoods for the many. Even if government were able to pull the rabbit out of the hat – the few thousand temporary jobs is not an appropriate response to the household affordability and economic crisis that more than 11,1 million South Africans face at household level. Supporting households to create their own work, even at the level of survivalist activities in the short-term, via direct income transfers is likely to create much more favourable outcomes for millions of South African households, whilst acting to kick-start higher growth and a transformed economy from the ground-up.

[Summary data over page].

Summary of key data in November 2020 Household Affordability Index

The main findings from the November 2020 Household Affordability Index, which now tracks food price data from 44 supermarkets and 30 butcheries in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Springbok and Pietermaritzburg shows that:

- **In November 2020:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket is **R4 018,22**.
- **Month-on-month** (between October 2020 and November 2020): The average cost of the Household Food Basket increased by **R101,50 (2,6%)**.
- **Over the past three months** (between September 2020 and November): The average cost of the Household Food Basket increased by **R161,89 (4,2%)**.

[See attached November 2020 Household Affordability Index for full data].

In November 2020, the cost of the *Joburg* Household Food Basket was **R4 054,94**.

The cost of the *Durban* Household Food Basket was **R4 022,78**.

The cost of the *Cape Town* Household Food Basket was **R3 975,28**.

The cost of the *Springbok* Household Food Basket was **R4 425,03**,

The cost of the *Pietermaritzburg* Household Food Basket was **R3 742,34**. [See Table 1 below].

Table 1: Household Food Index, for all areas and averaged month-on-month & past 3 months.

Household Food Basket	Index 2020/21			Change in Rands		Change in %	
	Sep_2020	Oct_2020	Nov_2020	Oct 2020 vs. Nov 2020	Sep 2020 vs. Nov 2020	Oct 2020 vs. Nov 2020	Sep 2020 vs. Nov 2020
Joburg	R3 886,87	R3 969,41	R4 054,94	R85,53	R168,07	2,2%	4,3%
Durban	R3 800,59	R3 907,62	R4 022,78	R115,16	R222,19	2,9%	5,8%
Cape Town	R3 902,48	R3 920,86	R3 975,28	R54,43	R72,80	1,4%	1,9%
Springbok	R4 061,82	R4 034,53	R4 425,03	R390,49	R363,20	9,7%	8,9%
Pietermaritzburg	R3 678,32	R3 709,92	R3 742,34	R32,42	R64,02	0,9%	1,7%
Average	R3 856,34	R3 916,72	R4 018,22	R101,50	R161,89	2,6%	4,2%

The main foods that are driving higher increases in the Household Food Basket over the past three months continue to be the core foods which women buy first: maize meal (6%), rice (1%), cake flour (2%), white sugar (2%), sugar beans (23%), samp (6%), cooking oil (2%), potatoes (35%), white and brown bread (4% and 3%).

At an average cost of **R2 167,41** in November 2020, these core foods are relatively very expensive in relation to the total money available in the household purse to buy food. These foods have increased by **R70,89 (3,4%)** over the past month; and **R101,70 (4,9%)** over the past three months (see page 3 of attached). These foods must be bought regardless of price escalations. The high cost of core staple foods result in a lot of proper nutritious food being removed off the family plate with negative consequences for overall household health and well-being.

The National Minimum Wage for a General Worker in November 2020 is **R3 487,68**. The average cost of the Household Food Basket of **R4 018,22** is well beyond the affordability thresholds of families living on low incomes. Low-paid workers do not even earn enough to afford a basket of food for their families, this even before deducting transport fare to work and back and electricity, amongst a myriad of other critical expenses.

In November 2020, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet cost **R713,51**. The Child Support Grant of **R440** a month is **25% below the food poverty line of R585** per capita and a further **38% below the November cost of R713,51 to feed a child a basic nutritious diet**.