

**Please note: we have included the key data for VAT and zero-rated items, tracked in the Household Affordability Index, given the Finance Minister's proposal to increase VAT to 17% (see page 3 in this statement).*

Key data from the February 2025 Household Affordability Index

The February 2025 Household Affordability Index, which tracks the prices of 44 basic foods from 47 supermarkets and 32 butcheries, in Johannesburg (Soweto, Alexandra, Tembisa and Hillbrow), Durban (KwaMashu, Umlazi, Isipingo, Durban CBD, Hammarsdale and Pinetown), Cape Town (Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Philippi, Langa, Delft and Dunoon), Pietermaritzburg, Mtubatuba (in Northern KwaZulu-Natal), and Springbok (in the Northern Cape), shows that:

- **In February 2025:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket is **R5 313.22**.
- **Month-on-month:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket **decreased** by **R120.48 (-2.2%)**, from R5 433,70 in January 2025 to R5 313.22 in February 2025.
- **Year-on-year:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket **increased** by **R35,92 (0.7%)**, from R5 277,30 in February 2024 to R5 313,22 in February 2025.

Food pricing trends in February 2025.

In February, of the 44 foods tracked in the basket: 11 foods increased in price, and 32 foods decreased in price, and 1 food: oranges, remained unchanged – it still holding its November proxy price. *See page 2 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index.*

Food prices dropped across the egg and dairy categories, vegetables, meats, the canned foods of fish and beans, cremora, sandwich fillers of peanut butter, jam and polony, and both white and brown bread. This follows similar trends to the price drops in the basket in February 2024. This time last year, February 2024 prices also dropped down off the January 2024 prices; and similarly to this year – *all food baskets in all areas tracked decreased in price.*

However, what is important to note here is that whilst so many foods dropped in price this month, the core staple foods of maize meal, rice, cake flour, white sugar, samp, and cooking oil maintained their prices, with very little movement either up or down (with changes in percentages either 0% or 1%). It is these core staple foods which carry the highest Rand cost in the food basket, and which women tell us are purchased first because these foods secure households against hunger. For affordability to be eased, the core staple foods within the household food basket would need to come down by much higher amounts.

The 17 foods tracked as a separate index of foods which women prioritise and purchase first (*see page 3 of the February 2025, Household Affordability Index*) came to a total cost of R2 888,74 in February 2025. And whilst these foods also showed a decrease of R47.89 (-1,6%) drop, in February; the cost of these critical foods still, for most South African households, relative to household income – are unaffordable. Unless these core foods come down in price or wages go up, it is likely that households will struggle in 2025, as they have done so in previous years.

Below are the price movements of individual foods in the average household food basket:

Foods in the basket which increased in price in February 2025 by 5% or more, include: margarine (5%).

Foods in the basket which increased in price in February 2025 by 2% or more, include: stock cubes (3%), and apples (2%).

Foods in the basket which decreased in price in February 2025, by 5% or more, include: potatoes (-7%), onions (-7%), chicken feet (-6%), beef (-5%), carrots (-13%), butternut (-8%), bananas (-11%), peanut butter (-5%), and white bread (-5%).

Foods in the basket which decreased in price in February 2025, by 2% or more, include: sugar beans (-3%), curry powder (-4%), tea (-2%), full cream milk (-3%), Maas (-3%), eggs (-4%), chicken gizzards (-3%), chicken livers (-4%), wors (-4%), beef tripe (-4%), spinach (-2%), cabbage (-3%), green pepper (-4%), canned beans (-2%), apricot jam (-2%), and brown bread (-2%).

(See page 2 of February 2024, Household Affordability Index).

Inflation on the food baskets per area tracked.

In February 2025, all food baskets in all areas tracked decreased in price.

The Joburg basket **decreased** by R61,31 (-1,1%) month-on-month, and **increased** by R88,54 (1,7%) year-on-year, to **R5 446,07** in February 2025.

The Durban basket **decreased** by R197,00 (-3,6%) month-on-month, and **decreased** by R8,88 (-0,2%) year-on-year, to **R5 254,06** in February 2025.

The Cape Town basket **decreased** by R117,84 (-2,2%) month-on-month, and **increased** by R139,69 (2,7%) year-on-year, to **R5 250,75** in February 2025.

The Springbok basket **decreased** by R22,94 (-0,4%) month-on-month, and **increased** by R176,30 (3,2%) year-on-year, to **R5 750,19** in February 2025.

The Maritzburg basket **decreased** by R141,42 (-2,8%) month-on-month, and **decreased** by R190,00 (-3,7%) year-on-year, to **R4 934,04** in February 2025.

The Mtubatuba basket **decreased** by R169,18 (-3,0%) month-on-month, and **increased** by R43,27 (0,8%) year-on-year, to **R5 431,49** in February 2025.

(See pages 10-15 for area specific data, in the February 2025, Household Affordability Index).

Statistics South Africa's latest Consumer Price Index.

Statistics South Africa's latest *Consumer Price Index* for December 2024¹ shows that **Headline inflation was 3,0%**, and for the **lowest expenditure quintiles 1-3 it is 4,0%, 3,6%, and 3,3%** respectively. **CPI Food inflation was 1,7%** (for CPI Food & NAB it was 2,5%, we use the figure excluding non-alcoholic beverages). *STATS SA's Producer Price Index* for December 2024² shows **agriculture was 6,3%**.

¹ STATSSA (2025). **Consumer Price Index December 2024**. Statistical release P0141. 22 January 2025. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P4, 7. See Link: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0141/P0141December2024.pdf>

² STATSSA (2025). **Producer Price Index December 2024**. Statistical release P0142.1. 25 January 2025. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P12. See Link: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P01421/P01421December2024.pdf>

Workers

The National Minimum Wage is **R27,58** an hour and **R220,64** for an 8-hour day. In February 2025, with **20 working-days**, the maximum National Minimum Wage for a General Worker is **R4 412,80**. Workers work to support their families. The wage workers earn is not just to sustain themselves alone, it is used to support the entire family. For Black South African workers, **one wage typically must support 4 people. Dispersed in a worker's family of 4 persons, the NMW, is R1 103,20 per person – this is below the upper-bound poverty line of R1 634 per person per month.**

The February 2025 average cost of a basic nutritional food basket for a family of four persons is **R3 731,81** (See page 6 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index).

On our calculations, using Pietermaritzburg-based figures for electricity and transport, and the average figure for a minimum nutritional basket of food for a family of four, puts electricity, and transport, taking up **59,9%** of a worker's wage (R2 642,97/R4 412,80). Food is bought after monies for transport and electricity have been paid for or set aside (leaving **R1 769,83** – for food and everything else), and so in February 2025, PMBEJD calculates that workers' families will **underspend on food by a minimum of 52,6%** (having R1 769,83 left over after transport and electricity have been paid, and with food for the month costing R3 731,81). **In this scenario there is no possibility of a worker being able to afford enough nutritious food for her family.** If the entire R1 769,83 all went to buy food, then for a family of 4 persons, **it would provide R442,46 per person per month. This is below the food poverty line of R796** (See page 8 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index).

Women and children

In February 2025, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet was **R951,64**. Over the past month, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet **decreased** by **R24,76** or **-2,5%**. Year-on-year, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet **increased** by **R13,39** or **1,4%** (See page 6 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index).

In February 2025, the **Child Support Grant** of **R530** is **33%** below the **Food Poverty Line** of **R796**, and **44%** below the average **cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet (R951,64)**.

Household domestic and personal hygiene products

The February 2025 Household Domestic & Personal Hygiene Index **decreased** by **R10,38 (-1,0%)** month-on-month. Year-on-year the household domestic and personal hygiene products index **increased** by **R12,55 (1,2%)** bringing the total average cost of basic household domestic and personal hygiene products to **R1 035,25** in February 2025 (See page 5 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index).

The cost of basic hygiene products is high. These products are part of the monthly groceries, and compete in the household purse with food. These products are essential for good health and hygiene; and dignity.

VAT and zero-rating on the household food basket

PMBEJD has been tracking the total cost of VAT on the household food basket for several years.

22/44 foods in the total household food basket are subject to VAT. Foods subject to VAT make up **47%** of the total cost of the household food basket in February 2025: zero-rated food items cost R2 829,12 and foods subject to VAT cost R2 484,10 (the total household food basket being R5 313,22). VAT on the total household food basket came to **R324,01 in February 2025. This means 6,1% of the household food basket is made up of VAT.** See page 4 of February 2025, Household Affordability Index.

A tax of R324,01 is nearly the same cost of an average low-income household's requirement of 30kg maize meal per month (in February 2025, 30kg maize meal cost R341,52). A tax of R324,01 is nearly the same cost of an average low-income household's requirement of 10kg rice (R172,25) and 10kg flour (126,56). The total Rand-value of VAT on basic food stuffs is very high and removes money from the purse that could be spent on more food; better diversity of food; and better-quality food.

Low-income households are highly exposed to VAT on food, not to mention all other goods and services required to function at a basic level e.g. domestic and personal hygiene products; electricity; clothes and socks and shoes; pencils, pens and school notebooks; airtime, etc.