

*Note: PMBEJD will closely monitor the impact of the higher brent crude oil prices, with its knock-on effect to diesel, petrol and other fuels, transport; production, and packaging costs; on low-income household affordability – specifically food, transport and energy, including social responses over the coming months.*

### **1. Key data from the March 2026 Household Affordability Index**

The March 2026 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 March 2026:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket is **R5 328,53**.
- **Month-on-month:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket **decreased** by **R55,28 (-1,0%)**, from R5 383,81 in February 2026 to R5 328,53 in March 2026.
- **Year-on-year:** The average cost of the Household Food Basket **decreased** by **R0,83 (-0,0%)**, from R5 329,36 in March 2025 to R5 328,53 in March 2026.

### **2. Food pricing trends in March 2026.**

In March, of the 44 foods tracked in the basket: 14 foods increased in price, and 29 foods decreased in price, and 1 food remained unchanged. *See page 2 of March 2026, Household Affordability Index.*

*Below are the month-on-month price movements of individual foods in the average household food basket:*

**Foods in the basket which increased in price in March 2026 by 5% or more**, include: soup (5%), tea (7%), tomatoes (5%), cabbage (6%), and peanut butter (5%).

**Foods in the basket which increased in price in March 2026 by 2% or more**, include: samp (3%), and margarine (4%).

**Foods in the basket which decreased in price in March 2026, by 5% or more**, include: rice (-6%), chicken feet (-7%), beef (-5%), butternut (-5%), and apples (-9%).

**Foods in the basket which decreased in price in March 2026, by 2% or more**, include: maize meal (-3%), cake flour (-2%), potatoes (-3%), chicken gizzards (-2%), chicken livers (-4%), beef liver (-2%), fish (-3%), carrots (-3%), green pepper (-3%), cremora (-3%), tinned pilchards (-2%), canned baked beans (-3%), and bananas (-4%).

### **3. Inflation on the food baskets per area tracked.**

*In March 2026, food baskets in Joburg (-R28,77), Durban (-R22,18), Cape Town (-R75,94), Springbok (-R28,37), Pietermaritzburg (-R204,74), and Mtubatuba (-R91,11), decreased in price. The Mthatha food basket increased in price (+R63,93).*

*(See pages 8-15 for area specific data, in the March 2026, Household Affordability Index).*

#### 4. **Statistics South Africa's Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Index.**

Statistics South Africa's latest *Consumer Price Index* for February 2026<sup>1</sup> shows that **Headline inflation was 3,0%**, and for the **lowest expenditure quintiles 1-3 it is 2,4%, 2,5%, and 2,6%** respectively. **CPI Food & non-alcoholic beverages inflation was 3,7%**. STATS SA's *Producer Price Index* for February 2026<sup>2</sup> shows **Agriculture was -7,1%**, of which, *Products of crops and horticulture* was **-21,2%**, and *Live animals and animal products* was **16,9%**.

#### 5. **Workers and The National Minimum Wage**

The Minister of Employment and Labour gazetted a **5%** annual increase on the National Minimum Wage, which took effect on the 1st of March 2026. For a worker, the 5% increment works out to be an extra R1,44 an hour, R11,52 for an 8-hour day, and if the full working-day month is worked (average 21 days), a R241,92 monthly increase. **The NMW hourly rate increased by R1,44 from R28,79 per hour to R30,23 per hour.**

**The National Minimum Wage is R30,23 per hour, R241,84 for an 8-hour day, and R5 078,64 for an average 21-day working month.**

In March 2026, with **22 working-days**, the maximum National Minimum Wage for a General Worker is **R5 320,48**. 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**. The maximum wage of **R5 320,48** when disbursed in a **family of four persons is R1 330,12**. This is **below the National Upper-Bound Poverty Line of R2 846 per capita per month**, and **below the National Lower-Bound Poverty Line of R1 415 per capita per month** (in May 2025 prices).<sup>3</sup>

On our calculations, electricity, and transport will take up **R2 941,85 (55,3%)** of a worker's wage in March 2026 (R1760,00 for transport and R1 181,85 for electricity).

After paying for transport and electricity, workers are left with **R2 378,63**.

Food is bought after monies for transport and electricity have been paid for or set aside.

The March 2026 average cost of a basic nutritional food basket for a family of four persons is **R3 667,72**. (See page 5 of March 2026, *Household Affordability Index*).

The minimum shortfall on food for a workers' family in March 2026 is **35,1%** (a shortfall of R1 289,09 on a basket of nutritional food costing R3 667,72). **If all the remaining money (R2 378,63) went to buy food, then for a family of 4, it would provide R594,66 per person per month. This is 30% below the National Food Poverty Line of R855 per person per month.** Note that: the Food Poverty Line is a monetary-based threshold below which a person cannot consume enough food to meet their minimum daily energy requirements. (See page 7 of February 2026, *Household Affordability Index*).

#### 6. **Women and children: the Child Support Grant**

In March 2026, the average monthly cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet was **R934,93**. Over the past month, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet **decreased** by **R7,29 (-0,8%)**. Year-on-year, the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet **decreased** by **R16,07 (-1,7%)**. See page 5 of March 2026, *Household Affordability Index*.

In March 2026, the **Child Support Grant of R560 per month** is **35% below** the **National Food Poverty Line of R855 per month** (in May 2025 prices), and **40% below** the average monthly **cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet (R934,93)**.

<sup>1</sup> STATSSA (2026). **Consumer Price Index February 2026**. Statistical release P0141. 18 March 2026. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P3, 6. See Link: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0141/P0141February2026.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> STATSSA (2026). **Producer Price Index February 2026**. Statistical release P0142.1. 26 March 2026. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P12. See Link: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0141/P0141February2026.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> STATSSA (2026). **National Poverty Lines 2025**. Statistical Release P0310.1. 29 January 2026. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P3. See link: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03101/P031012025.pdf>

### 7. PMBEJD's Basic Nutritional Food Basket for families

As financial and economic circumstances worsen, so too does household health and nutrition. The gap between what women are able to buy for their families and what they need to buy for proper nutrition widens.

*The Basic Nutritional Food Basket*, is a basket designed by a Registered Dietician and includes foods which does constitute proper and healthy nutrition, unlike the Household Food Basket, which does not.<sup>4</sup> The Basic Nutritional Food Basket ensures that current food expenditure (severely limited by affordability constraints) is not conflated with the food expenditure required to secure proper nutrition. Read together with the *Household Food Basket*, the *Basic Nutritional Food Basket* assists to provide a more comprehensive picture of the economic situation and food crisis South African households face. *Table 1*.

**Table 1:** March 2026: The Basic Nutritional Food Index: household sizes 4, 5 &7.

By number of family members	Index 2025/26			change in Rands		change in %	
	Mar_2025	Feb_2026	Mar_2026	Feb 2026 vs. Mar 2026	Mar 2025 vs. Mar 2026	Feb 2026 vs. Mar 2026	Mar 2025 vs. Mar 2026
Four (4)	R3 729,40	R3 696,21	R3 667,72	-R 28,49	-R 61,68	-0,8%	-1,7%
Five (5)	R4 711,69	R4 672,45	R4 636,75	-R 35,70	-R 74,94	-0,8%	-1,6%
Seven (7)	<b>R6 509,75</b>	<b>R6 459,83</b>	<b>R6 410,74</b>	<b>-R 49,09</b>	<b>-R 99,01</b>	<b>-0,8%</b>	<b>-1,5%</b>

**Month-on-month:** The cost of a **basic nutritional food basket for a family of 7 members decreased** by **R49,09 (-0,8%)** from R6 459,83 in February 2026 to R6 410,74 in March 2026.

**Year-on-year:** The cost of a **basic nutritional food basket for a family of 7 members decreased** by **R99,01 (-1,5%)** from R6 509,75 in March 2025 to R6 410,74 in March 2026.

In March 2026, *The Basic Nutritional Food Basket*, using the same household size (7) as tracked by the Household Food Basket, is **R6 410,74**. This shows that the difference in cost between the foods which families living on low incomes try and buy each month (a household food basket) and the foods which families would like to buy and should buy to meet basic nutrition (a basic nutritional food basket) was **R1 082,21** (R5 328,53 vs. R6 410,74).

It shows that as at March 2026, families living on low-incomes may underspend on basic nutritional food by a minimum of 17% (R1 082,21). It means that the nutritional health and wellbeing of households is far worse than that shown by the Household Food Basket, and that the economic situation households face, with its attendant food crisis in homes is much deeper.

<sup>4</sup> The Basic Nutritional Food Basket includes a greater variety of better quality nutritionally-rich foods and in higher quantities to provide a family with a basic but nutritionally complete monthly diet. The basket can be amended to respond to families of various sizes, genders, ages and life stages through its connection to four "energy groups." Food price data for the Basic Nutritional Food Basket is collected with the Household Food Basket and conforms to the same methodology. See page 5 of March 2026, *Household Affordability Index*.