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FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Economics

LABOR AND EQUITY LAB

# Tracking Retail Price Movements in Lebanon

Research Report

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# Tracking Retail Price Movements in Lebanon

*Online Evidence from Supermarkets, June-October 2026*

**Leila El Sayed**

**Rebecca Moukarzel**

**Nour Chamseddine**

**Wafaa El Bokaily**

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# Executive Summary

Fuel prices in Lebanon rose sharply over the summer of 2026, and supermarkets reported higher costs. Official consumer price figures are monthly, so they do not show exactly when prices changed or which products moved. This brief uses weekly online prices for 2,562 products in 18 food and household categories at three large supermarket chains, from 29 June to 5 October 2026.[1] It sets the timing of price changes against the official diesel price, compares cheaper and more expensive products, and checks for shrinkflation. Technical details are in the appendix. Prices of most packaged goods held steady through July and August before rising at the end of September, in the same week that diesel prices peaked.

- **Prices increased in most categories.** Sixteen of 18 categories became more expensive. Most packaged food, household and personal care categories rose by 3% to 7%, while vegetables (+20.6%) and chicken (+9.0%) rose the most. Fruit (−13.6%) and beef (−3.6%) became cheaper. Movements in vegetables, chicken and fruit reflect mainly seasonal changes in supply and demand.
- **Packaged goods were repriced in the week diesel prices peaked.** Diesel rose by 54% from the end of June to its peak on 22 September, in two waves. Supermarkets changed few packaged prices after the first increase in July. In the week to 28 September, about half of packaged products went up in price across the three chains, compared with around 2% in a typical summer week. This points to fuel costs as one possible explanation, although other costs, including import-related costs, also changed during the period.
- **Cheaper products often rose more.** In 14 of the 18 categories, the cheapest products rose more than the most expensive ones, although in four of them the difference was only about one percentage point. The reverse was true in the other 4. In rice, for example, the cheapest 10% of products rose by 8.2% and the most expensive 10% by 5.3%.
- **Prices varied widely within categories.** Within a category, the product at the 90th percentile cost from 1.5 times (milk) to almost 8 times (toothpaste and mouthwash) as much per unit as the product at the 10th percentile.
- **There is some evidence of shrinkflation.** We found 37 products whose pack size was reduced without a matching price cut. In the typical case this raised the price per gram by about 12%. Most cases were snacks, and only one occurred in a category included in the main analysis.

[1] All categories carry equal weight, so the results are not a consumer price index.

# 1. Price Changes by Category

Like-for-like prices, which compare the same products over time, rose in 16 of the 18 categories over the period (Table 1). Packaged food and household and personal care products increased by 1.5% to 7.3%, with the largest increases in toilet and kitchen paper, dairy and oral hygiene. For most of these categories, the increase came mostly after 31 August, during the September repricing.

**Table 1**. Like-for-Like Price Change by Category, 2026 (%)

| Category | 29 June to 31 August | 31 August to 5 October | Whole period |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Packaged food** | | | |
| Dairy | −0.6 | +7.0 | **+6.4** |
| Pasta | +2.6 | +2.7 | **+5.4** |
| Vegetable Oil | +0.3 | +5.0 | **+5.3** |
| Bread & Bakery | 0.0 | +5.2 | **+5.2** |
| Sugar, Salt and Flour | −0.6 | +4.2 | **+3.6** |
| Rice | +0.9 | +1.9 | **+2.9** |
| Hot Drinks | −0.3 | +2.7 | **+2.4** |
| Legumes & Pulses | −1.1 | +2.6 | **+1.5** |
| **Household and personal care** | | | |
| Toilet & Kitchen Paper | 0.0 | +7.3 | **+7.3** |
| Oral Hygiene | +3.5 | +2.7 | **+6.3** |
| Cleaning Products | +2.3 | +3.1 | **+5.5** |
| Women's Hygiene | +3.0 | +2.1 | **+5.2** |
| Diapers | +0.8 | +2.5 | **+3.3** |
| **Fresh food** | | | |
| Vegetables | +26.1 | −4.3 | **+20.6** |
| Chicken | +11.9 | −2.5 | **+9.0** |
| Eggs | +0.2 | +6.6 | **+6.8** |
| Beef | −1.3 | −2.4 | **−3.6** |
| Fruit | −2.2 | −11.7 | **−13.6** |

Note: Like-for-like change in %. The changes in the two periods compound to the change over the whole period.
Source: Authors' calculations from weekly online prices of three supermarket chains. See Appendix A3.

Oral hygiene and women's hygiene products were exceptions, with most of their increase taking place over the summer. Pasta, rice and cleaning products increased in both periods.

Fresh food followed a different pattern. Vegetable prices rose sharply in August, to about 26% above their end-of-June level, and eased slightly in September, ending 20.6% higher. Chicken prices rose sharply in July before falling back part of the way. Fruit prices fell by 13.6% as the local apple harvest reached the market, while beef prices fell by 3.6%. Eggs were the exception, rising by 6.8%, with almost all of the increase occurring after 31 August. Except for eggs, these

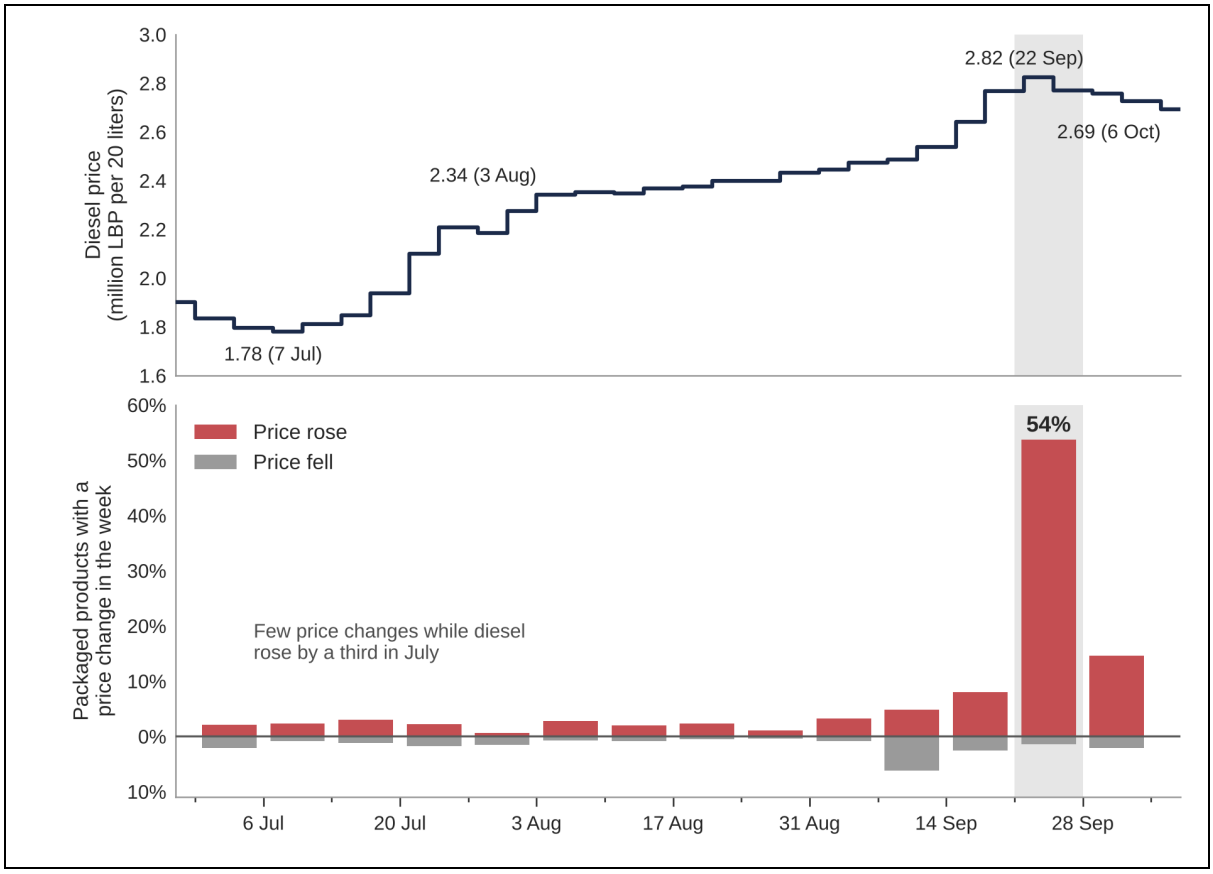
movements are more consistent with seasonal changes in supply and demand than with the broader price increases seen in packaged goods.

## 2. Timing of Price Changes and Fuel Costs

Prices of most packaged goods changed little over the summer, and most of their increase came in a single week at the end of September, when diesel prices reached their peak (Figure 1). For the median category, like-for-like prices changed by −0.2% in July, +0.4% in August, +2.4% in September and +0.4% in the first week of October.

The repricing was broad. About three-quarters of packaged products at two of the three chains went up in price in the week to 28 September, typically by 2% to 5%, while the third chain made few changes. Across the three chains, about half of packaged products rose that week, up from 8% the week before and around 2% in a normal summer week.

**Figure 1**. Official Diesel Price and Weekly Share of Packaged Products Repriced, 29 June to 5 October 2026




Note: Diesel is the official price per 20 liters in the Ministry of Energy and Water's price tables, held constant between tables. Packaged products are the 13 categories other than vegetables, fruit, chicken, beef and eggs. A product counts as repriced when its regular unit price moved by more than 0.5% from the previous week, and each bar covers the week up to the Monday shown. The shaded area marks the week to 28 September. Source: Ministry of Energy and Water (2026) for diesel; authors' calculations from weekly online prices of three supermarket chains.

Diesel is a major cost for transport, refrigeration and bakeries, and many businesses also rely on diesel generators for electricity. Its price rose in two waves. The first took it from 1.78 to 2.34 million LBP per 20 liters between 7 July and 3 August, an increase of about a third, but packaged shelf prices changed little. After creeping up through August, diesel rose another 16% between 28 August and 22 September and reached 2.82 million LBP, 54% above its level at the end of June. The broad supermarket repricing followed in the same week.

Retailers were also reporting higher costs at the time. The head of the supermarket owners' syndicate said on 24 September that most goods had gone up by 3% to 6%, and vegetables, fruit, meat and some grains by 8% to 12%, citing fuel costs and the 3% import duty (IMLebanon, 2026b). The syndicate raised the same concerns again on 29 September (IMLebanon, 2026c). Our data show that packaged goods increased by 1.4% to 4.8% between 31 August and 28 September, within or below the range reported by the syndicate. Vegetables, fruit and beef did not increase over the same period.

The timing is consistent with fuel costs being one factor behind the repricing, but the data do not establish a causal link. A cost increase that affects several retailers at once can lead them to reprice in the same week. For locally produced food products, the effect of higher fuel costs may also depend on when other input-cost increases were incorporated into prices, which we cannot observe directly in our data. Other costs were also changing during this period. A draft decree to reverse the import levy cited by the syndicate was signed in late September and was awaiting Cabinet approval (Enterprise, 2026), and the 15-week period is too short to separate the effects of these changes from those of fuel.

The extent to which fuel costs should affect shelf prices also depends on how important diesel is in the cost of each product. For bread, the Ministry of Economy and Trade's own pricing puts diesel at about 22% of production costs. The official price of a medium bundle of Arabic bread was raised to 80,000 LBP on 17 September (IMLebanon, 2026a).

Prices did not move back down when diesel prices fell. Diesel was cut on 25 September and stood at 2.69 million LBP on 6 October, about 5% below its peak. Yet 15% of packaged products increased in price again in the week to 5 October. This suggests that the late-September repricing was not immediately reversed when fuel costs eased.

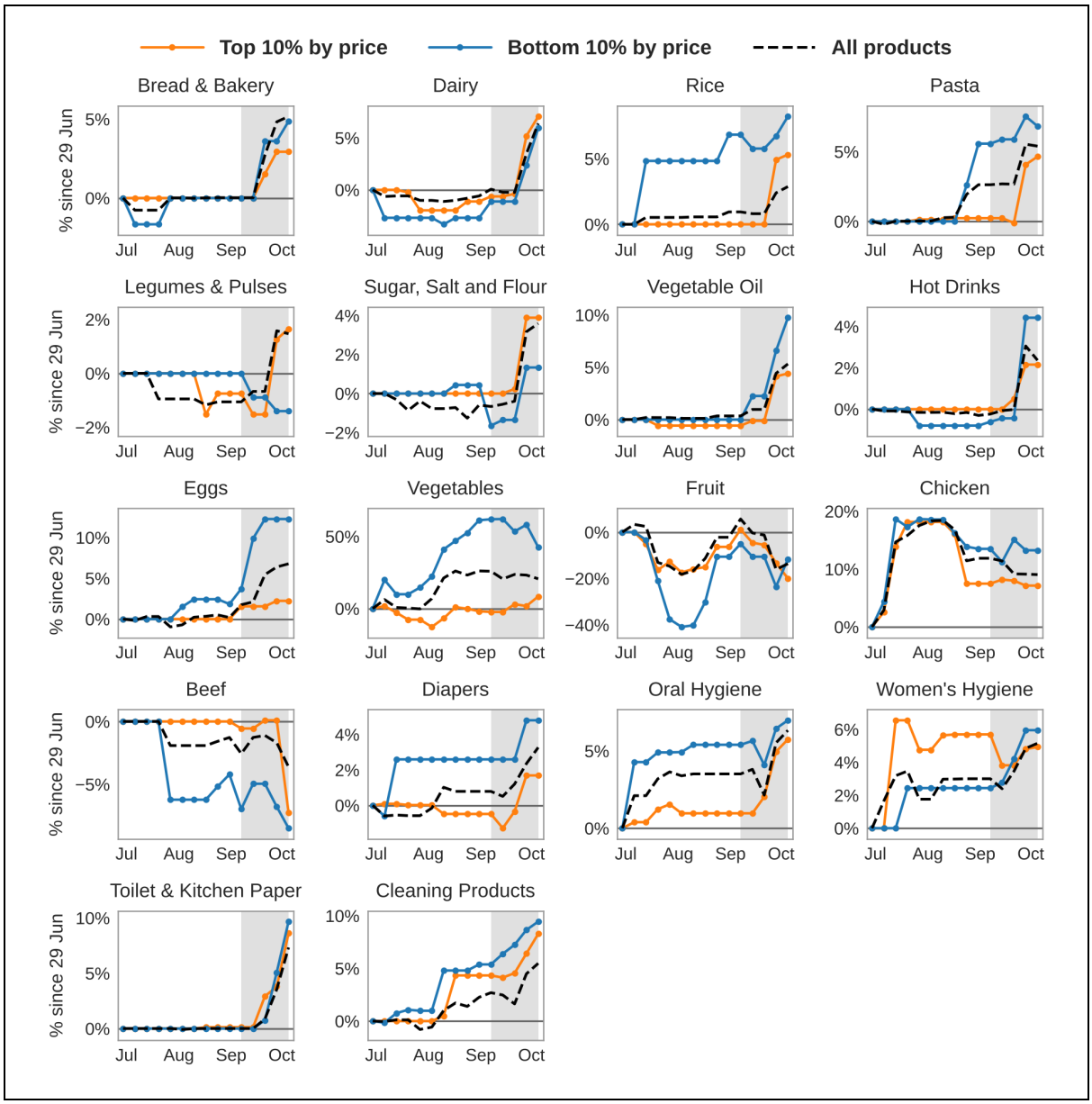
# 3. Price Changes for Lower- and Higher-Priced Products

Lower-priced products often rose more than higher-priced ones. In 14 of the 18 categories, the cheapest 10% of products rose more than the most expensive 10%, although in four of them

the difference was only about one percentage point. The reverse was true in the other 4 (Figure 2).

In rice, the cheapest products rose by 8.2% against 5.3% for the most expensive. The cheapest products also rose faster in hot drinks (4.4% against 2.2%), pasta (6.8% against 4.6%) and diapers (4.8% against 1.7%). Dairy went the other way, with the most expensive products up 7.1% and the cheapest 5.9%.

**Figure 2**. Like-for-Like Price Change for the Top and Bottom 10% of Products by Price, 29 June to 5 October 2026

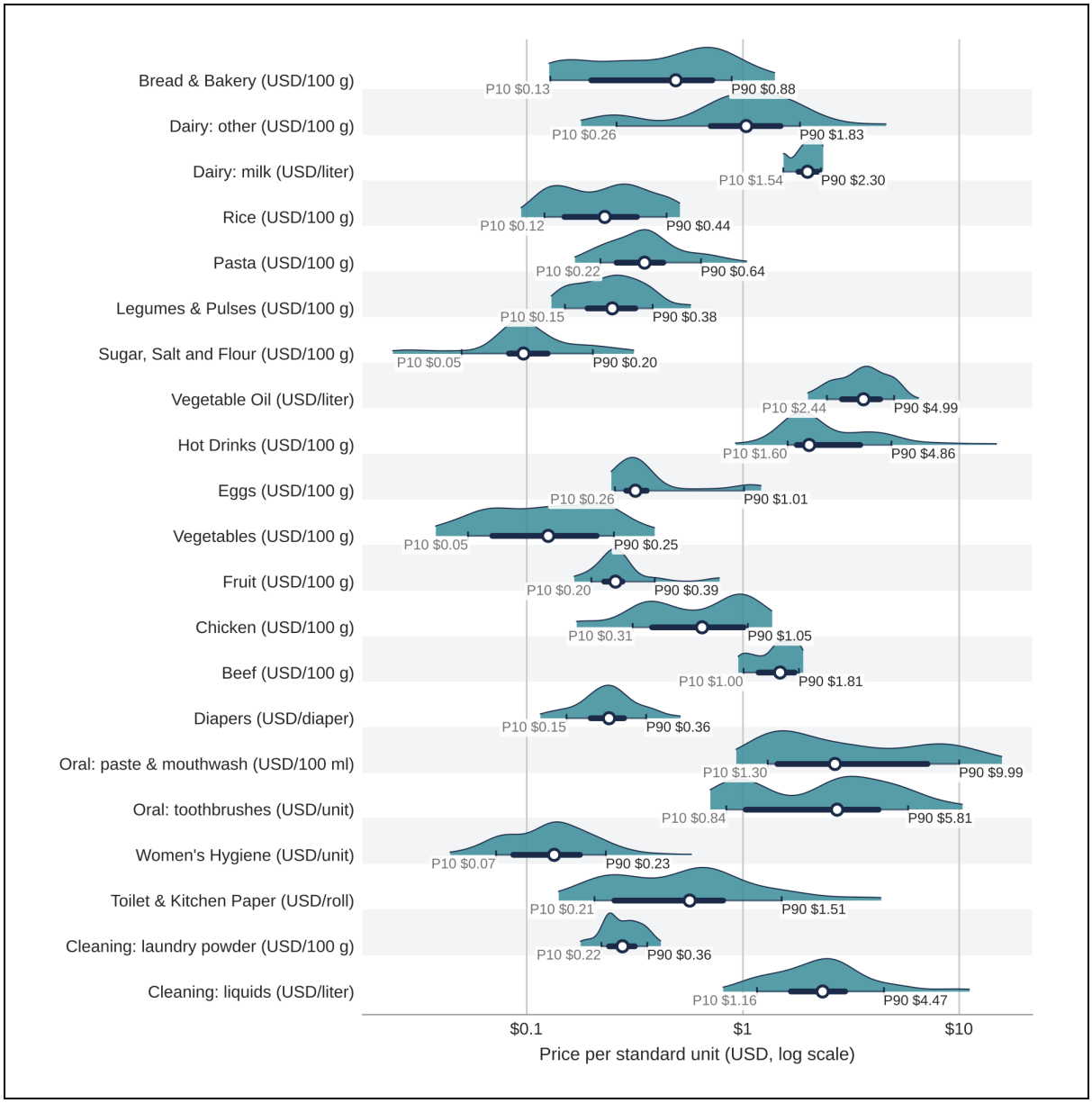



Note: Products are ranked by unit price within each product group in the first week, and the cheapest and most expensive 10% are then followed like-for-like. In vegetables, fruit, beef, chicken, eggs and toilet and kitchen paper, each group holds only two to five products at the start, so a single product can move the line. The shaded area marks the weeks to 21 and 28 September. Source: Authors' calculations from weekly online prices of three supermarket chains.

# 4. Price Dispersion within Categories

Prices within the same category varied widely (Figure 3). The product at the 90th percentile cost two times or less as much per unit as the product at the 10th percentile for milk, laundry powder, beef, fruit and vegetable oil, but 5 to 8 times as much in oral hygiene, dairy products other than milk, bread and bakery, and toilet and kitchen paper. These categories include products of very different types and sizes, so the spread does not only reflect price differences between comparable products.

**Figure 3**. Distribution of Unit Prices within Categories, 28 September 2026




Note: Unit prices of all products listed on 28 September 2026, with each chain given equal weight, on a logarithmic scale. The thick bar marks the middle half of products, the circle the median, and the labels the 10th and 90th percentiles. Eggs are converted to a price per 100 g at 60 g per egg. Source: Authors' calculations from online prices of three supermarket chains.

# 5. Shrinkflation

We found 37 products whose pack size was reduced without a matching reduction in price between May and early October 2026. The typical pack lost 11% of its contents, equivalent to an increase of about 12% in the price per gram or milliliter. These changes would not be captured by monitoring the shelf price alone.

The check covered all products listed online by the three chains during this period, not only those in the categories used in the main analysis. In 33 cases the price stayed exactly the same, in 2 it went up, and in 2 it fell by less than the pack size. Most reductions were between 5% and 20%. Four packs lost about a third or more of their contents, and these are still being checked against the products on the shelf.

Snacks account for most of the cases. Seventeen are chips and corn snacks, four are nuts and seeds and three are chocolate and candy, together 24 of the 37. Only one case was in a category included in the main analysis, a dairy product, and its price increase per gram is already counted in Table 1. The count should be read as a minimum (Appendix A4), since the method can miss products that were relaunched in a smaller size and listed online as a new product.

# Appendix: Technical Notes

## A1. Data Sources and Coverage

The data are the product listings published on the websites of three large supermarket chains in Lebanon, collected weekly with an automated web scraper. The analysis covers 15 weeks of prices, from 29 June to 5 October 2026, and therefore 14 weekly changes. The analysis focuses on 2,562 products and 21,849 usable weekly prices, grouped into 18 categories and 61 product groups (Table A1). The categories form a basket of everyday essentials: basic foods and household and personal care items that most households buy regularly. Within each category, only common products that can be compared on the same unit are included. Other categories, such as canned and frozen food are not yet covered. All prices are in US dollars. Results are reported for the three chains combined, and individual chains, brands and products are not named.

Diesel prices are the official prices per 20 liters in the price tables issued by the Ministry of Energy and Water, as reported in the Lebanese press. All 36 tables issued between 2 June and 6 October 2026 were collected, and prices are held constant from one table to the next.

## A2. Price Data and Cleaning

Only regular shelf prices are used. Temporary promotions are excluded, since they come and go within a few weeks and would otherwise show up as price changes that soon reverse. Where a listing shows the regular price alongside a promotional price, the regular price is used. When it shows only the promotional price, that week is treated as missing. The same applies when the promotion label is removed but the price stays at the promotional level for a few more weeks.

Each price is converted to a unit price per 100 grams, liter, 100 milliliters or unit (Table A1), so that packs of different sizes can be compared. Pack sizes are read from the product name or the listing's size field. Missing pack sizes are taken from the same product's other weeks. When a listed pack size goes up by more than 20% while the price changes by less than 10%, this is treated as a corrected label, and the corrected size is applied to the product's earlier weeks. A pack that gets smaller is never treated as a correction, so a smaller pack at the same price counts as a price increase. Products sold in unusually small or large packs for their group, such as catering sizes, are left out. Listings marked out of stock or unavailable, bonus packs and implausible prices, such as listing errors, are removed.

## A3. Measurement of Like-for-Like Price Change

Table 1 and the monthly changes in Section 2 use a like-for-like measure. Each product is compared only with itself from one week to the next, so that changes in the mix of products on the shelf are not mistaken for price changes. If a product's price is missing for one or two weeks, for example because it is out of stock, its price after the gap is compared with its price before it. If it is missing for longer, it drops out of the comparison until it is back. Weekly changes are averaged within each product group and chain using a geometric mean, which limits the influence of a few very large changes, and the weekly averages are then multiplied together to give the change since 29 June. Product groups carry equal weight within each category, and the chains carry equal weight, so the results show price changes by category and are not a consumer price index.

Monthly changes cover 29 June to 27 July for July, 27 July to 31 August for August, 31 August to 28 September for September, and 28 September to 5 October for October. The figure reported for each month is the median across the 18 categories. Fruit, beef and chicken rest on 10, 12 and 26 products respectively in the first week, so their results are more sensitive to individual products.

Weekly repricing shares count the packaged products whose regular unit price moved by more than 0.5% from the previous week, out of all packaged products with a price in both weeks. A normal summer week is the median of the weeks to 6 July through 7 September, and shares for individual chains are calculated in the same way.

To compare cheaper and more expensive products (Figure 2), the products in each product group are sorted by their price per unit in the first week. For example, all basmati rice products are sorted from the cheapest to the most expensive per 100 grams. The cheapest 10% form the lower-priced group and the most expensive 10% the higher-priced group. Each product in these two groups is then followed over time in the same way as in the main measure, and the results are combined into categories.

Products that appear on the shelf after the first week are placed in a group according to how their price compares with other products in the week they first appear. If a product's price is missing for one or two weeks, its last known price is used. A category is counted as showing a difference when the two groups' price changes by 5 October differ by at least one percentage point. In rice, for instance, the cheapest products rose by 8.2% and the most expensive by 5.3%, a difference of 2.9 percentage points.

## A4. Identification of Shrinkflation

The check covers all products listed online by the three chains between May and early October 2026, not only those in the categories used in the main analysis. A case is counted when the same product, under the same product code, is listed in a pack 1% to 50% smaller while its regular price stays the same, rises, or falls by less than the pack. Pack size is read from the product name, or from the listing's unit field when the name gives none, and listings where the two disagree are dropped. Changes that were later reversed, listings whose name changed to a different product, and fresh produce sold by weight are excluded. The typical case refers to the median.

The four cases in which the pack lost a third or more of its contents are still being verified against the products on the shelf. The count is a lower bound. It relies on chains updating pack sizes in their online listings, and it misses products relaunched at a smaller size under a new product code.

## A5. Limitations

The results describe online prices at three large chains. Online prices may differ from those in stores, and large chains do not represent smaller stores and neighborhood retailers. Industry estimates suggest that supermarkets and hypermarkets account for roughly half of grocery sales in Lebanon, so much of food retail is not covered. The period covered is short and falls in summer, when fresh produce prices are strongly seasonal. Product listings rarely state whether fresh produce is local or imported, so the two cannot be separated. The data also show when prices moved and by how much, but not why. The link with fuel rests on timing, and other costs changed in the same weeks.

**Table A1**. Categories, Product Groups and Units of Comparison

| **Category** | **Product groups** | **Unit of comparison** |
|---|---|---|
| Bread and Bakery | Arabic bread; sliced bread and toast; rolls and buns | per 100 g |
| Dairy | Fresh milk; shelf-stable (UHT) milk; powdered milk; labneh; yogurt; white cheeses; butter | per liter (milk), per 100 g (others) |
| Rice | Egyptian; American long-grain; basmati | per 100 g |
| Pasta | Dry wheat pasta | per 100 g |
| Legumes & Pulses | Lentils; chickpeas; white beans; fava beans (dried) | per 100 g |
| Sugar, Salt and Flour | White sugar; table salt; white wheat flour | per 100 g |
| Vegetable Oil | Sunflower; corn; blended oils | per liter |
| Hot Drinks | Black tea; ground coffee; instant coffee | per 100 g |

| Category | Product groups | Unit of comparison |
|---|---|---|
| Eggs | Eggs | per egg (per 100 g in Figure 3) |
| Vegetables | Tomato; cucumber; lettuce; potatoes; onions; cabbage; carrots | per 100 g (lettuce per head) |
| Fruit | Apples; bananas; oranges; lemons | per 100 g |
| Chicken | Whole chicken; breast and fillet; legs and thighs | per 100 g |
| Beef | Minced beef; beef cubes | per 100 g |
| Diapers | Sizes 1 - 2; sizes 3 - 4; size 5 and above | per diaper |
| Oral Hygiene | Toothpaste; mouthwash; toothbrushes | per 100 ml; per unit (toothbrushes) |
| Women's Hygiene | Sanitary pads; panty liners | per unit |
| Toilet and Kitchen Paper | Toilet rolls; kitchen rolls | per roll |
| Cleaning Products | Laundry powder; liquid laundry detergent; dishwashing liquid; bleach | per 100 g (powder), per liter (liquids) |

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