

PACSA Monthly Food Price Barometer: FEBRUARY 2017

MEDIA STATEMENT

Inflation on the PACSA Food Basket down in February: too soon to tell whether this drop signals the start of a general downward trend in food prices for 2017.

Month-on-month (m/m) the PACSA food basket decreased by R35.41 (-1.7%) to R2 057.54 in February. This drop is off the back of the January high of R2 092.95. We will have to wait a couple of months to see whether the February barometer signals the start of a general downward trend in food prices for 2017 or whether it is just a slight decrease after Christmas highs. The Rand-value cost of the basket and the uncertain inflationary trajectory of food prices remain a serious concern in a context where currently low-income families struggle to afford their basic goods and services; and compromise their nutritional food intake and go into debt to cover food shortfalls. This concern is heightened because the annual increments on grants have now been set – at below inflationary levels – and workers will still have to wait to see what their annual increases will be.

Key data from the February 2017 PACSA Food Price Barometer:

- Year-on-year (y/y) the PACSA food basket increased by R178.30 (9.5%) from R1 879.24 in February 2016 to R2 057.54 in February 2017.
- February 2017 saw the prices of all the foods in the ‘big food’ category coming down (25kg maize meal, 10kg rice, 10kg cake flour, 10kg white sugar and 4 L cooking oil). There was a 3.7% (-R23.50) drop in this category (from R634.10 in January 2017 to R610.60 in February 2017). It will take another month or two to confirm that this signals a general downward trend in these core staple foods as not all supermarkets dropped their prices e.g. 2/6 supermarkets dropped their price of maize meal; 4/6 dropped rice; 1/6 dropped cake flour; 6/6 dropped sugar; and 3/6 dropped cooking oil.
- A downward trend in the prices of these 5 ‘big foods’ is important because their combined cost takes up 30% (a substantial portion) of the monthly food expenditure of low-income households; and must be secured every month for basic energy and enable meals to be cooked. The prices of the ‘big foods’ is thus critical as it determines how much money is remaining to secure dietary diversity on the plate (that is balanced nutrition of meats, fish, eggs, dairy and vegetables for health and well-being).
- Our data over the past two years (see Figure 1) shows the increasing trends in the prices of ‘big foods’; with the impact of the drought affecting supermarket shelves from November 2015 being the primary driver. As the agricultural sector recovers and the weather conditions improve, we should see prices of core staple foods come down to levels a bit above pre-November 2015 prices (R497.59). However, our experience of food price trends after price shocks (generally, but now also exacerbated by the very dramatic increases caused by the drought); along with the peculiarity of South Africa’s food system which sees control in the hands of a few players across the value chain and the power in particular sectors (viz. seed, agro-chemical, milling, baking, processing, packaging and retail); suggests that food price inflation does not follow a straight logic. In light of this, it is expected that prices of core staple foods will drop in 2017 but they will, in all likelihood, stabilize at levels much higher than the pre-price shocks which started in November 2015 with their prolonged price escalations which peaked in January 2017.
- The y/y price inflation on the ‘big foods’ is at 8.4% with their combined total in February 2017 at R610.60 (up from R563.25 a year ago).

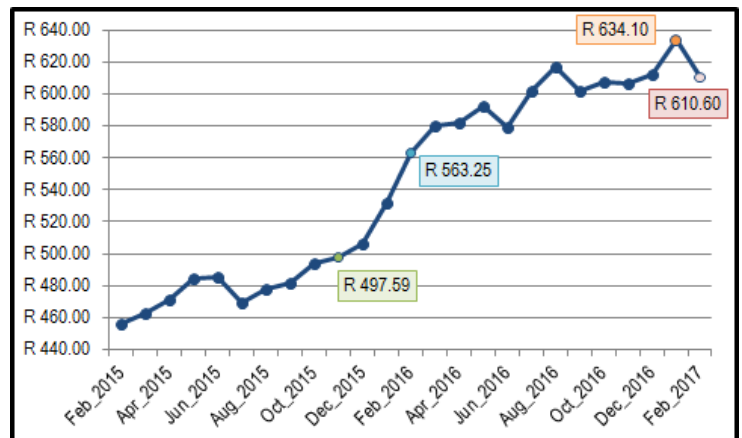


Figure 1: Total cost of the 5 ‘big foods’ in the baskets of low-income households (Feb 2015 – Feb 2017).

Key data from the February 2017 PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket:

- In February 2017 the cost of the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket for a family of 4 is R2 497.13, for a family of 5 is R3 155.61 and for a family of 7 is R4 366.63. Inflation on a minimum nutritional food basket for families of between 4-7 members is 3.1% y/y (note that the much lower increase compared to the PACSA Food Basket, is due to the very high prices of vegetables a year ago – because this basket is better balanced it has a greater proportion and variety of vegetables).
- In February 2017, the difference in cost between the PACSA Food Basket (not nutritionally complete) and the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket (nutritionally complete) is R2 309.09 (R2 057.54 vs. R4 366.63). It means that low-income families with 7 members are underspending on nutritious, albeit still very basic food by 52.9%. This has implications for health and well-being because there is a direct connection between the food we eat and how our bodies function.
- In February 2017 the cost of feeding a small child (aged 3-9 years) a diet complete in minimum nutrition is R562.06 per month. The cost of feeding a girl/boy child (aged 10-13 years) or an adult woman (aged 19-64 years) or an elderly woman

(aged >65 years) a diet complete in minimum nutrition is R610.27 per month. The cost of feeding a girl child (aged 14-18 years) or a very active woman (aged 19-64 years) or an adult man (aged 19-64 years) or an elderly man (aged >65 years) a diet complete in minimum nutrition is R648.96 per month. The cost of feeding a boy child (aged 14-18 years) or a very active man (aged 19-64 years) or a pregnant or lactating woman a diet complete in minimum nutrition is R724.05 per month.

National Treasury's Budget 2017 grant allocations in the context of food price inflation experienced by low-income households:

- Minister Gordhan, in the 2017 Budget, announced that in April 2017, the Child Support Grant would be increased by R20 (5.56%) to R380 and the old-age pension by R90 (5.96%) to R1 600 per month.
- The annual increments came in lower than the January y/y rates of Headline inflation (6.6%) and even lower than the 11.4% in the CPI Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages index; the latter figure being important because it provides a more accurate measure of inflationary pressures faced by low-income families as grants are primarily used to secure food.
- Below inflation increases on already far too low social grants will undermine the ability of millions of South Africa's low-income families to secure proper nutritional food this year; and will further undermine all other investments in health, education and economic growth.
- **Food is core to all our developmental outcomes.** If millions of households cannot secure sufficient nutritious food then there cannot be a proper social base on which our developmental and economic outcomes can improve.
- This point is underscored by the comparison of the R20 (5.56%) April 2017 increase on the Child Support Grant (totaling R380 per month or R12.67 per day) to the actual cost of a basic but nutritionally complete monthly diet for a boy/girl child between the ages of 10-13 years. The February 2017 cost was R610.27 a month (R20.34 a day). There is still a month to go before the increase takes effect at the beginning of April 2017 – **at current figures the CSG will mean an underspend of 38% on the plates of around 12 million children; and therefore a direct undermining of children's health, growth and development and our future education, health, social and economic outcomes.**
- Investment is required at the front-end of our economy – directly in the pockets of the majority of low-income families - so that all other investments on the support and supply side of our economy can bear fruit.

South Africa's labour market, economic and poverty indicators and PACSA's affordability data:

- Statistics South Africa's inflation adjusted poverty lines (latest for April 2016) put the food poverty line [FPL] (the level below which individuals cannot secure enough food) at R498 per month and the upper bound poverty line [UBPL] (the level below which individuals cannot secure food and non-food items) at R1 077 per month.
- Statistics South Africa's latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the 4th quarter of 2016 shows that the unemployment rate for Black South African workers is 30% and the expanded unemployment rate is 40.1%. The labour absorption rate for Black South African workers is 40.5%, meaning that out of 10 Black South Africans of working age; only 4 are employed.¹
- Black South African households typically rely on just one wage earner and this wage must support 3.8 persons.
- The R3 500 proposed National Minimum wage, when dispersed through a family of 4 persons is R875 per person. This is below the current upper bound poverty line of R1 077 per month.
- For Black South African households, the February 2017 PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket for a family of 4 persons (R2 497.13) would take up 71.3% of the R3 500 proposed National Minimum Wage. If we add just two critical household expenditures to the food costs: water and electricity (R573.70 at Pietermaritzburg 2016/17 tariffs) and transport to get to work (20 direct return trips at R24 = R480 at Pietermaritzburg 2016/17 tariffs), combined these total **R3 550.83 a month in February 2017** (R2 497.13 + R573.70 + R480). The low proposed National Minimum Wage will trap working families in ever deeper cycles of poverty; ill-health and debt (see affordability scenarios: Table 6, page 7).

¹ STATSSA (2016). **Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 4, 2016.** Statistical release P0211. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria. P 4 & 22. See <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2016.pdf>

February 2017
PACSA Monthly Food Price Barometer

TABLE 1: PACSA food basket showing prices over the last three months; month-on-month; and year-on-year.

| Food grouping | Foods tracked | Quantity tracked | Feb_2016 Price | Dec_2016 Price | Jan_2017 Price | Feb_2017 Price | m/m change (Rands) | y/y change (Rands) | y/y change (%) |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Starchy foods | Maize meal | 25kg | R 200.16 | ↑ R 233.49 | ↑ R 244.32 | ↓ R 241.66 | -R 2.66 | R 41.50 | 21% |
| | Rice | 10kg | R 82.32 | ↓ R 76.49 | ↑ R 80.82 | ↓ R 77.32 | -R 3.50 | -R 5.00 | -6% |
| | Cake Flour | 10kg | R 79.48 | ↑ R 83.16 | ↑ R 84.15 | ↓ R 83.82 | -R 0.33 | R 4.34 | 5% |
| | White bread | 8 loaves | R 87.64 | ↓ R 87.21 | ↑ R 91.21 | ↓ R 85.88 | -R 5.33 | -R 1.76 | -2% |
| | Brown bread | 4 loaves | R 39.71 | ↓ R 40.91 | ↑ R 41.94 | ↓ R 39.81 | -R 2.13 | R 0.09 | 0% |
| | Samp | 5kg | R 37.16 | ↓ R 47.66 | ↑ R 48.32 | ↓ R 43.82 | -R 4.50 | R 6.67 | 18% |
| | Pasta | 1kg | R 22.15 | ↔ R 23.65 | ↑ R 23.99 | ↓ R 21.65 | -R 2.33 | -R 0.50 | -2% |
| Sugar | White sugar | 10kg | R 110.82 | ↓ R 139.66 | ↑ R 143.65 | ↓ R 131.31 | -R 12.34 | R 20.49 | 18% |
| Dry beans, canned beans | Sugar beans | 5kg | R 86.49 | ↑ R 116.65 | ↑ R 117.82 | ↓ R 108.49 | -R 9.32 | R 22.00 | 25% |
| | Canned beans | 3 cans | R 24.72 | ↓ R 25.87 | ↑ R 27.88 | ↑ R 28.64 | R 0.76 | R 3.92 | 16% |
| Fat, oil | Cooking oil | 4L | R 90.48 | ↑ R 79.99 | ↑ R 81.16 | ↓ R 76.49 | -R 4.67 | -R 13.99 | -15% |
| | Margarine | 1kg | R 36.15 | ↓ R 32.16 | ↑ R 36.48 | ↓ R 35.48 | -R 1.00 | -R 0.67 | -2% |
| Milk, maas | Fresh Milk | 2L | R 24.66 | ↓ R 27.65 | ↑ R 27.98 | ↑ R 27.99 | R 0.01 | R 3.33 | 14% |
| | Maas | 2L | R 25.99 | ↓ R 24.32 | ↑ R 28.49 | ↑ R 29.16 | R 0.67 | R 3.17 | 12% |
| Meat, eggs, fish | Eggs | 30 eggs | R 39.99 | ↑ R 40.82 | ↑ R 45.32 | ↓ R 40.82 | -R 4.50 | R 0.83 | 2% |
| | Canned fish | 4 cans | R 59.61 | ↑ R 62.63 | ↑ R 63.60 | ↓ R 62.29 | -R 1.31 | R 2.68 | 4% |
| | Chicken pieces | 6kg | R 134.47 | ↑ R 175.47 | ↑ R 176.47 | ↑ R 180.47 | R 4.00 | R 46.00 | 34% |
| | Chicken feet | 4kg | R 60.62 | ↓ R 84.60 | ↑ R 85.93 | ↑ R 97.94 | R 12.01 | R 37.32 | 62% |
| | Chicken necks | 6kg | R 93.95 | ↓ R 131.66 | ↑ R 162.85 | ↑ R 185.94 | R 23.09 | R 91.99 | 98% |
| | Beef | 1kg | R 60.32 | ↑ R 62.49 | ↓ R 61.16 | ↑ R 63.82 | R 2.67 | R 3.50 | 6% |
| | Polony | 2.5kg | R 38.98 | ↑ R 44.49 | ↓ R 42.82 | ↔ R 42.82 | R 0.00 | R 3.85 | 10% |
| Vegetables | Carrots | 2kg | R 23.97 | ↑ R 17.32 | ↑ R 19.30 | ↑ R 21.97 | R 2.67 | -R 2.00 | -8% |
| | Spinach | 4 bunches | R 40.00 | ↓ R 13.66 | ↓ R 13.32 | ↑ R 31.96 | R 18.64 | -R 8.04 | -20% |
| | Apples | 1.5kg | R 16.82 | ↑ R 16.66 | ↑ R 19.82 | ↓ R 12.99 | -R 6.82 | -R 3.82 | -23% |
| | Cabbage | 2 heads | R 27.95 | ↑ R 17.66 | ↑ R 20.97 | ↑ R 21.63 | R 0.66 | -R 6.32 | -23% |
| | Onions | 10kg | R 59.16 | ↓ R 30.33 | ↑ R 38.49 | ↓ R 31.99 | -R 6.50 | -R 27.18 | -46% |
| | Tomatoes | 3kg | R 47.39 | ↑ R 34.50 | ↑ R 35.49 | ↓ R 33.32 | -R 2.17 | -R 14.07 | -30% |
| | Potatoes | 10kg | R 70.63 | ↓ R 45.64 | ↑ R 55.49 | ↓ R 37.82 | -R 17.66 | -R 32.81 | -46% |
| Miscellaneous | Salt | 1kg | R 10.73 | ↑ R 11.91 | ↑ R 12.15 | ↔ R 12.15 | R 0.00 | R 1.43 | 13% |
| | Yeast | 4 X 7g pkts | R 12.82 | ↔ R 12.82 | ↔ R 12.82 | ↔ R 12.82 | R 0.00 | R 0.00 | 0% |
| | Beef stock | 240g | R 15.82 | ↓ R 16.49 | ↑ R 18.16 | ↓ R 16.32 | -R 1.83 | R 0.51 | 3% |
| | Soup | 600g | R 23.37 | ↑ R 25.72 | ↑ R 25.97 | ↓ R 20.31 | -R 5.66 | -R 3.06 | -13% |
| | Curry powder | 200g | R 23.32 | ↓ R 25.99 | ↑ R 29.65 | ↓ R 26.66 | -R 2.99 | R 3.34 | 14% |
| | Rooibos tea bags | 200g | R 16.81 | ↑ R 17.66 | ↑ R 20.32 | ↓ R 17.49 | -R 2.83 | R 0.68 | 4% |
| | Coffee | 100g | R 16.32 | ↑ R 18.32 | ↔ R 18.32 | ↔ R 18.32 | R 0.00 | R 1.99 | 12% |
| | Cremora | 1kg | R 38.28 | ↓ R 34.49 | ↑ R 36.32 | ↓ R 36.16 | -R 0.17 | -R 2.13 | -6% |
| Total cost of PACSA food basket | | | R 1 879.24 | R 1 980.18 | R 2 092.95 | R 2 057.54 | -R 35.41 | R 178.30 | 9.5% |

Month-on-month: the PACSA food basket decreased by R35.41 or 1.7% (R2 092.95 in Jan 2017 to R2 057.54 in Feb 2017).

Over the last 3 months: the PACSA food basket increased by R77.36 or 3.9% (R1 980.18 in Dec 2016 to R2 057.54 in Feb 2017).

Year-on-year: the PACSA food basket increased by R178.30 or 9.5% (R1 879.24 in Feb 2016 to R2 057.54 in Feb 2017).

What is the PACSA food basket?

The PACSA Food Basket is an index for food price inflation. It provides insight into the affordability of food and other essential household requirements for working class households in a context of low wages, social grants and high levels of unemployment.

The PACSA Food Basket tracks the prices of a basket of 36 basic foods which working class poor households, with 7 members, said they buy every month (based on conversations with women). The food basket is not nutritionally complete; it is a reflection of reality - what people are buying. Data is collected on the same day between the 21st and 24th of each month from six different retail stores which service the lower-income market in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Women have told us that they base their purchasing decisions on price and whether the quality of the food is not too poor. Women are savvy shoppers and so foods and their prices in each store are selected on this basis. The PACSA Food Basket tracks the foods working class households buy, in the quantities they buy them in and from the supermarkets they buy them from. PACSA has been tracking the price of the basket since 2006. We release our Food Price Barometer monthly.

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PACSA Monthly Food Price Barometer

TABLE 2: PACSA Monthly Minimum Nutritional Food Basket for February 2017.

| | | | | Energy Group 1 | | Energy Group 2 | | Energy Group 3 | | Energy Group 4 | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | | 6 500 kJ | | 8 500 kJ | | 10 500 kJ | | 12 000 kJ | |
| | | | | Girls/Boys 3 - 9 yrs | | Girls/Boys 10-13 yrs Adult women 19-64 yrs Elderly women > 65 yrs | | Girls 14-18 yrs Very active women 19-64 yrs Adult men 19-64 yrs Elderly men > 65 yrs | | Boys 14-18 yrs Very active men 19-64 yrs Pregnant & lactating women | |
| Food group | Foods tracked | Unit (Kg/L/Loaves) | Prices per unit | AP Weight | Cost | AP Weight | Cost | AP Weight | Cost | AP Weight | Cost |
| Starchy Foods | Maize meal | Kilogram | R 9.67 | 3.2 | R 31.17 | 3.9 | R 37.70 | 5.7 | R 55.10 | 6.0 | R 58.00 |
| | Oats porridge | Kilogram | R 25.65 | 0.2 | R 6.16 | 0.2 | R 6.16 | 0.4 | R 9.23 | 0.4 | R 9.23 |
| | Brown bread | Loaves (700g) | R 9.95 | 1.8 | R 17.91 | 3.0 | R 29.86 | 3.6 | R 35.83 | 5.7 | R 56.72 |
| | Rice | Kilogram | R 7.73 | 0.9 | R 6.87 | 1.3 | R 10.31 | 1.9 | R 14.90 | 1.9 | R 14.90 |
| | Samp | Kilogram | R 8.76 | 0.4 | R 3.79 | 0.8 | R 6.63 | 0.9 | R 7.57 | 1.0 | R 8.52 |
| | Potatoes | Kilogram | R 3.78 | 0.4 | R 1.40 | 0.7 | R 2.79 | 0.7 | R 2.79 | 0.7 | R 2.79 |
| Vegetables | Onion | Kilogram | R 3.20 | 2.8 | R 8.92 | 2.8 | R 8.92 | 2.8 | R 8.92 | 2.8 | R 8.92 |
| | Tomato | Kilogram | R 11.11 | 1.4 | R 15.26 | 1.4 | R 15.26 | 1.4 | R 15.26 | 1.4 | R 15.26 |
| | Carrot | Kilogram | R 10.99 | 0.1 | R 1.53 | 0.1 | R 1.53 | 0.1 | R 1.53 | 0.1 | R 1.53 |
| | Spinach | Kilogram | R 7.99 | 0.5 | R 3.88 | 0.5 | R 3.88 | 0.5 | R 3.88 | 0.5 | R 3.88 |
| | Cabbage | Kilogram | R 10.82 | 2.3 | R 25.40 | 2.3 | R 25.40 | 2.3 | R 25.40 | 2.3 | R 25.40 |
| | Green pepper | Kilogram | R 10.15 | 1.2 | R 12.15 | 1.2 | R 12.15 | 1.2 | R 12.15 | 1.2 | R 12.15 |
| | Butternut | Kilogram | R 7.65 | 0.4 | R 2.69 | 0.4 | R 2.69 | 0.4 | R 2.69 | 0.4 | R 2.69 |
| Fruit | Orange | Kilogram | R 13.49 | 1.9 | R 25.06 | 1.9 | R 25.06 | 1.9 | R 25.06 | 1.9 | R 25.06 |
| | Apple | Kilogram | R 8.66 | 1.3 | R 11.30 | 1.3 | R 11.30 | 1.3 | R 11.30 | 1.3 | R 11.30 |
| | Banana | Kilogram | R 10.66 | 2.7 | R 28.39 | 2.7 | R 28.39 | 2.7 | R 28.39 | 2.7 | R 28.39 |
| Dry beans, canned beans | Sugar beans | Kilogram | R 21.70 | 0.7 | R 14.45 | 0.7 | R 14.45 | 0.7 | R 14.45 | 2.0 | R 43.35 |
| | Baked beans | Kilogram | R 23.28 | 0.6 | R 13.10 | 0.5 | R 10.48 | 0.5 | R 10.48 | 1.4 | R 31.43 |
| Fish, chicken, lean meat, eggs | Eggs | each (50g each) | R 1.36 | 24.0 | R 32.66 | 24.0 | R 32.66 | 24.0 | R 32.66 | 24.0 | R 32.66 |
| | Beef, neck, stewing | Kilogram | R 63.82 | 0.4 | R 25.58 | 0.4 | R 25.58 | 0.4 | R 25.58 | 0.4 | R 25.58 |
| | Pilchards, tinned | Kilogram | R 38.93 | 0.6 | R 24.70 | 0.6 | R 24.70 | 0.6 | R 24.70 | 0.6 | R 24.70 |
| | Chicken pieces | Kilogram | R 30.08 | 1.0 | R 30.14 | 1.0 | R 30.14 | 1.0 | R 30.14 | 1.0 | R 30.14 |
| | Chicken livers | Kilogram | R 35.26 | 0.2 | R 6.08 | 0.3 | R 12.16 | 0.3 | R 12.16 | 0.3 | R 12.16 |
| Milk, maas | Low fat milk | Litre | R 14.00 | 4.2 | R 58.78 | 4.2 | R 58.78 | 4.2 | R 58.78 | 4.2 | R 58.78 |
| | Maas | Litre | R 14.58 | 7.8 | R 113.71 | 7.8 | R 113.71 | 7.8 | R 113.71 | 7.8 | R 113.71 |
| Fat, oil | Margarine, soft tub | Kilogram | R 35.48 | 0.2 | R 6.39 | 0.2 | R 8.52 | 0.3 | R 10.65 | 0.3 | R 11.71 |
| | Oil, sunflower | Litre | R 19.12 | 0.3 | R 6.02 | 0.5 | R 10.04 | 0.8 | R 14.63 | 0.7 | R 14.06 |
| | Peanut butter | Kilogram | R 66.63 | 0.03 | R 2.00 | 0.03 | R 2.00 | 0.03 | R 2.00 | 0.03 | R 2.00 |
| | Mayonnaise | Kilogram | R 27.99 | 0.2 | R 5.04 | 0.2 | R 6.72 | 0.2 | R 6.72 | 0.2 | R 6.72 |
| Sugar | Sugar, white | Kilogram | R 13.13 | 0.3 | R 3.31 | 0.8 | R 10.87 | 0.8 | R 10.87 | 0.8 | R 10.87 |
| | Jam | Kilogram | R 26.83 | 0.1 | R 3.22 | 0.2 | R 6.44 | 0.2 | R 6.44 | 0.2 | R 6.44 |
| Miscellaneous | Tea | each bag | R 0.17 | 60.0 | R 10.49 | 60.0 | R 10.49 | 60.0 | R 10.49 | 60.0 | R 10.49 |
| | Salt | Kilogram | R 12.15 | 0.1 | R 1.46 | 0.1 | R 1.46 | 0.1 | R 1.46 | 0.1 | R 1.46 |
| | Soup powder | Kilogram | R 33.85 | 0.1 | R 3.05 | 0.1 | R 3.05 | 0.1 | R 3.05 | 0.1 | R 3.05 |
| Total cost per person per month | | | | | R 562.06 | | R 610.27 | | R 648.96 | | R 724.05 |
| Total cost per person per day | | | | | R 18.74 | | R 20.34 | | R 21.63 | | R 24.14 |

*Note that AP Weight means As Purchased Weight (dry weight) – the figure is rounded off.

What is the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket?

The PACSA Food Basket is assessed every 3 years to see if the foods and the quantities of these foods in our basket are still being purchased by women living in working class poor families. Consistent with previous assessments women told us that purchasing patterns change in response to affordability. Last year however we noticed a significantly starker change in purchasing patterns due to much steeper increases in electricity and transport coupled with higher food prices. The foods women identified as being in their trolleys were increasingly limited in their diversity. Some nutritionally-rich foods such as high quality proteins and calcium and vegetables were dropping out of their trolleys altogether or being reduced. Similarly, women told us that they were buying starches in greater volumes and switching to cheaper meats as well as buying more sugar, salts and fats.

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What is the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket? *(continued)*

Because households are forced to buy foods with poorer nutritional value; the gap between what households are buying and what they would like to and indeed should be buying for basic nutrition is widening. In early 2014 PACSA, in consultation with a Registered Dietician, formulated a Minimum Nutritional Food Basket. The rationale was to keep tracking what households are actually able to afford to buy but not to lose sight of the actual cost of foods required in terms of balanced nutrition, in order to grow and develop properly. The PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket provides data on which we can start talking realistically about adequacies in wages and social grants and ensures that current food expenditure patterns are not conflated with the food expenditure required to secure a nutritional basket of food.

The PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket includes a greater variety of nutritionally-rich foods to provide a family with a basic but nutritionally complete monthly diet. The basket can be amended to respond to families of various sizes, ages and lifestyles through its connection to 4 energy groups. Food price data for the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket is collected with the PACSA Food Basket and conforms to the same methodology. The full report and methodologies on which the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket is based is accessible off www.pacsa.org.za.

TABLE 3: Monthly costs of PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket for families of various sizes, ages and life stages for February 2017.

| Total family size | | 4 | 5 | 7 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Number of adults and children in family | | 2 Adults and 2 Children | 3 Adults and 2 Children | 3 Adults and 4 Children |
| Ages and lifestages of family members | Energy group 1 | 2 children (3-9 years) | 1 child (3-9 years) | 2 children (3-9 years) |
| | Energy group 2 | None | 1 child (10-13 years) 1 elderly woman | 1 child (10-13 years) 1 elderly woman |
| | Energy group 3 | 1 very active woman | 1 very active woman | 1 girl (14-18 years) 1 very active woman |
| | Energy group 4 | 1 very active man | 1 very active man | 1 very active man |
| Number of members in Energy group 1: 6 500 kJ | | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Number of members in Energy group 2: 8 500 kJ | | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Number of members in Energy group 3: 10 500 kJ | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Number of members in Energy group 4: 12 000 kJ | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total cost of food to meet basic nutritional requirements per family per month: | | R2 497.13 | R3 155.61 | R4 366.63 |

TABLE 3 provides an example of how the data in the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Basket can be used. By changing family member variables and linking these variables to the energy groups, it is possible to calculate the monthly costs of a basic but nutritional basket of food for any family.

February 2017
Key indicators and commodities

TABLE 4: Key indicators.

| Indicators | Oct_2016 | Nov_2016 | Dec_2016 | Jan_2017 | Feb_2017 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Total PACSA food basket | R 1 911.86 | R 1 940.29 | R 1 980.18 | R 2 092.95 | R 2 057.54 |
| PACSA month-on-month change (R) | R 51.26 | R 28.43 | R 39.89 | R 112.77 | -R 35.41 |
| PACSA month-on-month change (%) | 2.76% | 1.49% | 2.06% | 5.69% | -1.69% |
| PACSA year-on-year rates (%) | 16.69% | 17.73% | 15.52% | 16.47% | 9.49% |
| CPI-Food & NAB month-on-month rates | 0.9% | 0.5% | 0.8% | 1.6% | Not yet available |
| CPI-Food & NAB year-on-year rates | 11.7% | 11.6% | 11.7% | 11.4% | Not yet available |
| CPI headline year-on-year rates | 6.4% | 6.6% | 6.8% | 6.6% | Not yet available |

CPI data sourced from: Statistics South Africa. Consumer Price Index. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0141/P0141January2017.pdf>

Key indicators

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a national measure of inflation compiled by STATSSA. It is a measure of average price changes for consumer goods and services. South Africa's CPI is used to measure inflation for macroeconomic analysis and monetary policy and is used as the basis for wage negotiations and adjustments to social grants.

The CPI is constructed on a range of expenditure levels and spending patterns. Because all South African data is skewed by our extreme structural inequality, national measures tend to capture the middle – the middle is not the majority. The CPI approximates the expenditure of households that spend R12 900 a month. Similarly the weighting given to the 12 categories making up the total CPI basket do not capture the reality of the majority of our people. Workers earning low wages spend money on fewer items in the CPI basket and the proportion of money spent on these items is higher e.g. food, transport and electricity account for ± 90% of the expenditure for the majority of Pietermaritzburg low-income households. In the CPI however; food, transport and electricity are weighted at less than 50% of the total basket of household expenditure.

The PACSA Food Price Barometer tracks the expenditure patterns specifically of low-income households. It tracks the foods low-income households actually buy and the supermarkets low-income households buy from. Because our data is specifically focused on working class poor households, it is able to capture the reality of food price inflation for low-income households.

TABLE 4 presents the CPI-headline inflation (the full basket making up the CPI), the CPI-food component (just the food and non-alcoholic beverage category) and the PACSA food price barometer. Comparing CPI with CPI-food is useful because food prices typically drive overall inflation; and wages and social grant increases are often granted on CPI-headline inflation and not CPI-food. This distinction is important because food price inflation is borne highest by low-income households because most household monies are spent on food. Similarly comparing CPI-food with the PACSA food price barometer is useful because our barometer specifically shows the impact of food price inflation for poor working class households. Hence although both indicators will follow similar trends, the PACSA food price barometer provides a starker indication of the immediate reality of food price inflation.

TABLE 5: Key commodities.

| Commodities | Oct_2016 | Nov_2016 | Dec_2016 | Jan_2017 | Feb_2017 |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Exchange rate | R 13.91 | R 13.62 | R 13.88 | R 13.75 | R 13.34 |
| Oil price per barrel (\$) | \$53.55 | \$44.63 | \$48.78 | \$55.90 | \$55.32 |
| Petrol (Inland) per litre | R 12.34 | R 12.79 | R 12.59 | R 13.09 | R 13.38 |
| Diesel (Reef) per litre | R 10.71 | R 11.34 | R 11.02 | R 11.41 | R 11.62 |
| RSA White Maize per ton | R 3 439.40 | R 3 613.40 | R 3 947.00 | R 3 613.75 | R 2 943.80 |
| RSA Yellow Maize per ton | R 3 019.80 | R 3 149.60 | R 3 221.40 | R 3 321.25 | R 2 907.20 |
| RSA Wheat per ton | R 4 172.80 | R 3 919.00 | R 3 913.20 | R 3 939.75 | R 3 980.00 |
| RSA Soybeans per ton | R 6 187.80 | R 6 210.20 | R 6 520.00 | R 6 262.50 | R 6 485.00 |
| RSA Sunflower seed per ton | R 6 187.80 | R 6 045.60 | R 5 848.80 | R 5 543.00 | R 5 204.00 |

Data sourced from: Department of Energy. Fuel Price History 2017 <http://www.energy.gov.za/files/esources/petroleum/February2017/Fuel-Price-History.pdf> and Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Weekly Price Watch (1st Friday of every month) <http://www.daff.gov.za/daffweb3/Portals/0/Price%20Watch/Price%20Watch%202017-02-3.pdf>

Commodity prices

Most of our food is planted for profits and not for the plate. Analysing food prices is difficult because we need to consider the logic of the market and not a logic which would follow if food was grown for people. Most of the food on supermarket shelves is grown through agro-industrial methods. The crude oil price and exchange rate are key drivers of food prices locally. Our basic staple foods are commodified and speculated upon on international markets. The price of maize meal in our local supermarket tracks international commodity prices e.g. if the price per tonne of USA maize increases then South African farmers may choose to export their harvest to make more profits, so the price of local South African maize increases.

TABLE 5 includes some of the core drivers of food price inflation as well as our core staple foods subject to international commodity speculation.

February 2017
Affordability tables

TABLE 6: Income and expenditure for households of various socio-economic scenarios: February 2017.

| Household socio-economic scenarios | Household A | Household B | Household C | Household D | Household E | Household F | Household G |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total household income | R 1 800.00 | R 2 230.00 | R 2 362.00 | R 3 500.00 | R 4 500.00 | R 6 000.00 | R 8 000.00 |
| Number of household members | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| MINUS Minimum Nutritional food basket | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 | R 3 155.61 |
| Monies left over AFTER FOOD to buy some essential household requirements* | R -1 355.61 | R -925.61 | R -793.61 | R 344.39 | R 1 344.39 | R 2 844.39 | R 4 844.39 |
| MINUS Burial insurance | R 200.00 | R 200.00 | R 200.00 | R 200.00 | R 200.00 | R 200.00 | R 200.00 |
| MINUS Electricity and water | R 573.70 | R 573.70 | R 573.70 | R 573.70 | R 573.70 | R 573.70 | R 573.70 |
| MINUS Transport | R 720.00 | R 720.00 | R 720.00 | R 720.00 | R 720.00 | R 720.00 | R 720.00 |
| MINUS Education | R 500.00 | R 500.00 | R 500.00 | R 500.00 | R 500.00 | R 500.00 | R 500.00 |
| MINUS Communication and media | R 150.00 | R 150.00 | R 150.00 | R 150.00 | R 150.00 | R 150.00 | R 150.00 |
| MINUS Clothing and footwear | R 416.66 | R 416.66 | R 416.66 | R 416.66 | R 416.66 | R 416.66 | R 416.66 |
| MINUS Domestic & household hygiene items | R 583.58 | R 583.58 | R 583.58 | R 583.58 | R 583.58 | R 583.58 | R 583.58 |
| MINUS Cultural obligations | R 350.00 | R 350.00 | R 350.00 | R 350.00 | R 350.00 | R 350.00 | R 350.00 |
| Monies left over AFTER FOOD & SOME ESSENTIAL HOUSEHOLD REQUIREMENTS secured | R -4 849.55 | R -4 419.55 | R -4 287.55 | R -3 149.55 | R -2 149.55 | R -649.55 | R 1 350.45 |

* Please note expenditures in Table above exclude monies for debt repayments, health care, rent, emergencies, amongst others.

** Our research in Pietermaritzburg has shown that a household of five needs at least R8 000 a month to afford the expenditures that allow a family to live at a basic level of dignity (see "Household G").

Food price affordability

TABLE 6 shows the impact of low incomes and high food and other essential goods and service costs on the ability of households with different incomes and socio-economic scenarios to secure food. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the justification of income, household size, food indicator, and quantity and value of goods and services presented in the table above. All figures are purposive to present a realistic picture of the socio-economic situation affecting a wide range of low-income households and the costs of goods and services in Pietermaritzburg.

South Africans are net buyers of food. Supermarkets are the main source of food for the majority of households. Food availability is not generally a problem. We have enough food. The problem is food price affordability. We do not have enough money to buy the food we need. Food insecurity therefore has its basis not in agriculture but is caused by economic and political choices.

For households living on low incomes, food expenditure is not the first priority. Households typically prioritise the non-negotiable expenses before food – such as those expenses which incur penalties for non-payment (e.g. household debt repayments) and those that simply have to be paid (e.g. transport to work, electricity and burial insurance). Food is one of the few expenses which households are able to control. To analyse food price affordability we therefore need to consider not only the level of wages and social grants but also the inflation on other non-negotiable goods and services as well as that of food.

TABLE 7: Comparing PACSA Monthly Food Basket with PACSA Monthly Minimum Nutritional Food Basket: Feb 2017

| PACSA Food Baskets | Cost of Basket for household size of 7 |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| PACSA Monthly Minimum Nutritional Food Basket | R 4 366.63 |
| PACSA Monthly Food Basket | R 2 057.54 |
| Difference between Baskets | R 2 309.09 |

How affordability affects nutrition

Food is typically one of the few expenses which low-income households are able to control and because of this other non-negotiable expenses take precedent. This is the reason why we tend to see such low expenditure on food. It is not because that expenditure is what households' reasonably need to or wish to spend to secure sufficient quantities of a diverse range of food for adequate nutrition; it is because this is the amount of money households are able to spend on food.

TABLE 7 shows the severity of the impact of food price affordability on household nutrition when comparing the PACSA Food Basket to the PACSA Minimum Nutritional Food Basket. Low-income households are not able to secure sufficient nutritious food to ensure minimum nutrition, health, well-being and productivity.

Appendix 1: Notes and References for Affordability Table 6

Total household income

We have selected 7 total household income scenarios:

- Household A:** R1 800 = Business's proposal to set the National Minimum Wage level at the lowest existing sectoral determination.
- Household B:** R2 230 = 1 old-age pension of R1 510 + 2 child support grants (R360 x 2) of R720 (National Treasury, 2016. Budget Speech: 22).
- Household C:** R2 362 = the average minimum wage set by the Employment Conditions Commission across sectoral determinations for 2014 was R2362.36.
- Household D:** R3 500 is the National Minimum Wage level proposed by the Nedlac Advisory Panel.
- Household E:** R4 500 = Cosatu has called for a National Minimum Wage of between R4 500 and R6 000.
- Household F:** R6 000 = see above.
- Household G:** R8 000 is where we think the National Minimum Wage should be located if households are to have the possibility of living at a basic level of dignity.

Burial insurance

This figure of R200 presents basic family burial insurance costs for a low-income household registered with insurance companies which serve the low-income market (2016). Burial insurance has been included as an essential and prioritized expense because interviews with households reveal that burial insurance is typically paid before any other expense and very seldom defaulted as a mechanism to ensure food is secured.

Electricity and water

The **electricity** cost is calculated on 350kWh per month. This is the average consumption for low-income households in Pietermaritzburg. We use the prepaid electricity tariff because prepaid meters are installed in the homes of low-income households. Electricity increased by 7.64% for the 2016/17 term. The cost per kWh was R1.3773. No VAT has been levied on the 2016/17 price by Msunduzi Municipality. The total rand value for 350kWh is R482.05 per month (excluding transport and time costs of buying tokens). Households on prepaid meters in Pietermaritzburg are excluded from accessing free basic electricity.

The **water** expense is calculated on a fixed monthly charge for a non-metered household. This is a typical scenario for low-income households living in RDP housing in Pietermaritzburg. Water increased by 11.15% for the 2016/17 term. The 2016/17 charges on an unmetered water supply is R91.65 per month (includes VAT). **The figure in the table (R573.70) is the sum of electricity and water.**

Transport costs

The transport cost is calculated for a household living outside the CBD, given that apartheid geography has not changed and low-income Black African households still live outside the CBD and far from places of work. It is calculated on 1 kombi trip at R12 or R24 return inside Pietermaritzburg; and 1 kombi trip at R60 or R120 return to Durban (Pietermaritzburg kombi charges, September 2016). The R720 is calculated as follows: 20 trips to work [20 X R24 = R480] + 5 trips to town for work/study /shopping/church etc. [5 X R24 = R120] + 1 long

distance trip return (we use Durban as the destination) [1 X R120 = R120].

Education

This figure has been derived from a focus group (2015), it has its basis in the experience of women with children; it provides the possibility for stationery (± R500 per annum); Carlton paper and toilet paper (R50 once or twice a year); School fees (± R250 once or twice a year); School computer access (± R100 a month); contribution to transport costs.

Communication and media

This figure is arbitrary; it provides R150 per household per month – for newspapers, airtime, photocopying etc.

Clothing and footwear

This figure is arbitrary; it provides roughly R1 000 each for each member in a family of five. The annual figure of R5000 is divided by 12 months to give R416.66 per household per month. Note that for children, the R1 000 allocated may cover school clothes and shoes for a year but will exclude other clothes worn at home.

Domestic and household hygiene products

This figure presents the monthly price of personal and domestic hygiene products tracked through PACSA's monthly barometer.

Personal hygiene products tracked include:

toilet paper [1ply x 20 rolls], bath soap [200g x 6], toothpaste [100ml x 3], sanitary pads [pack of 10 x 2], Vaseline [250ml x 2], face & body cream [big bottle x2], roll-on [normal x 4], spray deodorant [big sprays x2], shoe polish [100ml x1].

Domestic hygiene products tracked include:

dishwashing liquid [750ml x1], washing powder [2kg x1], green bar soap [bars x4], toilet cleaner [750ml x 1], kitchen cleaner [750ml x1] and jik [750ml x1].

Cultural obligations

This figure is arbitrary; it provides R350 per month - includes monies for contributions to funerals, weddings, religious and cultural ceremonies, and possible intra and inter family and community financial assistance.

About PACSA

The Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) is a faith-based social justice and development NGO that has been in operation since 1979. PACSA operates in the uMgungundlovu region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and focusses on socio-economic rights, gender justice, youth development, livelihoods and HIV & Aids. Our work and our practice seek to enhance human dignity.