

Food prices up 0.2 percent in December 2011

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Food prices rose 0.2 percent in December 2011, Statistics New Zealand said today. Higher prices for fruit and vegetables (up 2.5 percent) and meat, poultry, and fish (up 1.2 percent) countered a fall for non-alcoholic beverages (down 2.5 percent).

In December 2011, prices were higher for potatoes (up 14 percent), pumpkin (up 75 percent), and apples (up 14 percent). Higher pumpkin prices reflected a supply shortage. Strawberries recorded seasonally lower prices – down 21 percent for the month. However, they were up 25 percent on a year earlier.

The rise in meat, poultry, and fish prices reflected less discounting for fresh chicken pieces (up 3.9 percent) and sausages (up 6.2 percent).

The fall in non-alcoholic beverage prices resulted from lower prices for soft drinks (down 2.3 percent) and fruit juice (down 5.9 percent).

"Soft drink prices usually fall in December, with more discounting leading up to the Christmas break," Statistics NZ prices manager Chris Pike said.

For the year to December 2011, food prices increased 2.9 percent, compared with 1.9 percent for the year to November 2011. Four of the five food subgroups had price increases in the year to December 2011: grocery food (up 3.5 percent), meat, poultry, and fish (up 3.7 percent), restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food (up 2.4 percent), and non-alcoholic beverages (up 4.4 percent). The fruit and vegetables subgroup decreased 0.9 percent.

The food price index measures the rate of price change of food and food services purchased by households. Statistics NZ visits shops across New Zealand to collect prices for the FPI and check package sizes.

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