

Fiji Grocery Prices in 2026: What Inflation Figures Don't Tell Us

Why falling monthly prices, higher annual inflation and rising household costs can coexist

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Patternfield Research

In September 2026, Fiji recorded three very different inflation figures.

The annual-average inflation rate was **1.9%**. Consumer prices were **6.8% higher than a year earlier**. Yet the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) **fell 0.4% between August and September**.

All three figures were correct.

The explanation lies in the periods being compared, Fiji's recent tax and energy-price changes, and the distinction between statistical price movements and the actual cost of purchasing everyday goods.

For retailers and manufacturers, these differences matter. A headline inflation figure cannot, by itself, explain what is happening to the cost of a particular product or shopping basket.

Why the three inflation figures differ

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) uses different comparisons to measure price changes.

September's **1.9% annual-average rate** compares the average CPI over October 2025–September 2026 with the average for the preceding twelve months.

The **6.8% year-on-year rate** compares September 2026 directly with September 2025.

The **0.4% monthly decline** compares September 2026 with August 2026.

The rolling annual average includes six months of zero or negative year-on-year inflation between October 2025 and March 2026, following the August 2025 reduction in Fiji's VAT rate from 15% to 12.5%.

This helps explain why the twelve-month average remained comparatively low even as annual inflation accelerated during 2026.

September's year-on-year comparison also uses a price index recorded after the VAT reduction. That lower comparison base is relevant to interpreting the later increase.

The Reserve Bank of Fiji has identified the fading impact of the VAT reduction as one contributor to inflationary pressure.

Importantly, the September year-on-year rate of 6.8% was **lower than August's 7.6%**. Price pressure remained elevated, but the annual rate moderated during September.

A decline in the rate of inflation is not the same as a return to earlier price levels.

Food prices tell a more specific story

Food and non-alcoholic beverages account for **309 of the CPI's 1,000 weighting points**, making food the largest expenditure division in the index.

The September figures illustrate how rapidly the picture can change depending on the comparison period.

Indicator	September 2026
All-items CPI, year-on-year	+6.8%
Food and non-alcoholic beverages, year-on-year	+7.6%
Food and non-alcoholic beverages, month-on-month	−1.2%

Food prices rose 2.2% during August before declining 1.2% in September. Even after that decline, the September food index of 127.8 remained above July's 126.6.

For consumers, a monthly reduction offers some relief. But it does not mean the category has returned to its earlier price level.

For retailers, it also demonstrates why a single month's movement is insufficient to describe longer-term price conditions.

The FBoS notes that its expenditure-division indexes are subject to a non-additivity issue under review. Individual category movements should therefore not be treated as components that can simply be added together to reproduce the all-items index.

The fuel shock matters

Fiji's recent inflation cannot be examined independently of international energy markets.

In its 24 September 2026 monetary policy announcement, the Reserve Bank of Fiji described heightened inflationary pressure as driven largely by external factors, and separately attributed August's rise to higher food, energy and kava prices and the fading impact of the VAT reduction.

The September CPI recorded transport prices **12.2% higher year-on-year**, while housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels were **4.9% higher**.

These are category-level index changes, not direct estimates of how much additional transport or energy expenditure each household incurred.

Higher fuel and distribution costs are particularly relevant to an import-dependent island economy. They can affect the costs of moving goods through supply chains, although the extent and timing of any pass-through to individual retail prices require separate evidence.

The IMF also identifies Fiji's geographic isolation, limited scale, dependence on maritime transport and relatively weak shipping connectivity as structural contributors to elevated logistics costs.

This wider context matters when interpreting supermarket pricing. Not every increase in the cost of an everyday product originates at the retail shelf.

When a discount disappears, the checkout price can rise

A separate problem emerges when prices are measured only through regular shelf labels.

In May 2026, the Consumer Council of Fiji reported findings from supermarket price monitoring conducted between late March and early May.

The Council identified average increases ranging from **15% to more than 35%** among selected monitored goods, including rice, eggs, teabags, sausages, cooking oil and household essentials.

The investigation took place against the background of the global fuel crisis.

The Council also reported that some retailers had reduced or withdrawn promotional discounts, narrowing the difference between regular and discounted prices.

It noted that price-controlled products remained below their regulated maximum prices while the discounts offered on them had diminished.

This creates an important distinction.

A product's regular shelf price may remain unchanged while its effective purchase price increases because the shopper no longer receives the same discount.

The Consumer Council's published summary does not provide sufficient product-level observations, baseline prices, store counts or promotional histories to independently reconstruct the reported increases.

Its findings should therefore not be treated as equivalent to Fiji's national CPI or generalised to every supermarket product.

Nevertheless, they identify a specific measurement problem worth examining.

Three prices, three different measurements

For retail analysis, Patternfield distinguishes three related but different prices:

Regular price: The standard advertised selling price before applicable promotions or discounts.

Promotional price: The price offered under a specified promotion, including any eligibility conditions.

Effective transaction price: The amount actually paid for the product after applicable discounts, including loyalty or basket-level adjustments where these can be reliably allocated.

This is Patternfield's analytical framework, not a classification published by the Consumer Council.

The distinction matters because a change in promotional conditions may alter what customers pay without changing the standard shelf price.

Product size and quantity must also be considered. A lower package price does not necessarily represent better value if the quantity supplied has decreased.

For category managers, comparing products solely by their displayed selling prices risks overlooking important changes in effective unit cost.

A longer-term question of affordability

Fiji's pricing challenges extend beyond the most recent inflation figures.

In its 2026 Article IV assessment, the International Monetary Fund examined the cost of living and living standards in Fiji.

Using Food and Agriculture Organization data, the IMF reported that Fiji's estimated **Cost of a Healthy Diet increased approximately 41% between 2019 and 2024.**

The comparable increases were approximately **33% in Australia** and **32% in New Zealand.**

These are figures from the IMF's analysis of the 2019–2024 FAO data vintage, rather than a comparison extending to 2026.

The Cost of a Healthy Diet is expressed in purchasing-power-parity-adjusted dollars per person per day. It estimates the minimum cost of foods meeting specified nutritional requirements.

It is not a measurement of actual household grocery spending, a typical supermarket basket or food-price inflation alone.

Nevertheless, it provides a complementary perspective on affordability, particularly where essential expenses rise more quickly than broader price indexes.

The IMF also identified elevated transport and logistics costs, together with constrained domestic income growth, as important pressures on Fijian living standards.

What retailers and manufacturers should measure

The available evidence points to a practical challenge for retail intelligence.

A meaningful assessment of price competitiveness should distinguish at least four questions.

1. Has the underlying product price changed?

Compare equivalent products across time, accounting for pack sizes, product reformulations, tax treatment and changes in the product range.

2. Have promotional conditions changed?

Track promotional frequency, discount depth, eligibility conditions and effective transaction prices separately from regular prices.

3. Were the compared products actually available?

Record ranging, observed shelf availability and documented stock exceptions. A product being listed or ranged does not establish that it was available when a customer visited.

4. Has the shopper's available choice changed?

Consider substitutes, pack formats, competing offers and category coverage before interpreting a change in purchasing as a change in preference.

Each question requires different evidence.

A category experiencing lower sales might face reduced demand, a loss of promotional competitiveness, product availability problems or some combination of factors.

Aggregate CPI statistics cannot determine which explanation applies.

Nor can the observation that a product's price increased establish whether the retailer, supplier, freight provider, tax settings or another part of the supply chain was primarily responsible.

The implication for retail intelligence

Fiji's September 2026 statistics are not contradictory.

They measure different aspects of price movement across different periods.

Similarly, the Consumer Council's monitoring and the IMF's affordability analysis address different questions from the official CPI.

Together, they demonstrate why retail measurement must be explicit about what is being measured and what remains unknown.

The national inflation rate, the regular shelf price, the effective price paid and the affordability of a nutritious diet are not interchangeable measures.

For retailers and manufacturers, useful intelligence begins with preserving those distinctions.

A better understanding of retail pricing does not require rejecting official statistics.

It requires combining appropriate measurements, recognising their limitations and avoiding conclusions that the available evidence cannot support.

Sources and methodology

This article is an independent Patternfield desk analysis of publicly available third-party evidence, current to 22 October 2026. It does not present original supermarket price surveys, consumer interviews or proprietary transaction analysis.

1. Fiji Bureau of Statistics, *Consumer Price Index: September 2026*, Release No. 75, 1 October 2026. [Official release \(PDF\)](#).

2. Consumer Council of Fiji, *Market Surveillance Reveals Consumers Are Paying Higher at the Supermarket Checkout*, 18 May 2026. [Official release](#).

3. Reserve Bank of Fiji, *Press Release No. 28/2026: RBF Maintains the Overnight Policy Rate*, 24 September 2026. [Official release](#).

4. International Monetary Fund, *Republic of Fiji: 2026 Article IV Consultation*, Country Report No. 26/118, Annex IV, pp. 47–49, June 2026. [Official report \(PDF\)](#).

Evidence boundary: FBoS figures use their respective reporting periods and statistical definitions. Consumer Council findings concern monitored products and cannot be generalised to all supermarket prices. IMF food-affordability estimates measure a different construct from CPI. Patternfield's retail measurement recommendations are analytical proposals, not findings from an independently conducted field study.