

When Isaac Minani, flocked to the market to shop for the festive season last week, he was surprised to find the price of matooke, rice, posho and meat to have drastically increased.

He notes that they used to take pride in being able to eat what they wanted during the festival season without worrying much about the cost but now that has radically changed what they eat.

The 36 year old father of three who spends 34 % of his income on food says that it is unbelievable, the cost of a kilogram of meat in some butcheries went from Rwf 3,500 to Rwf4, 000 while an average size bunch of the banana is costing between Rwf [6,000 to](#) Rwf 8,000 the bigger bunches going for as much as Rwf 10,000.

When Rwanda Dispatched asked him how inflation has impacted on his income habits during the festival season, the history teacher retorted, and “It has led to buying less because the burden is getting higher.”

“Prices of basic food items like milk, bread, sugar and maize flour have spiked sharply in recent months, it has become a challenge for me to afford three meals a day.” He adds

Marie Claire Iradunduka a vendor in Kayonza open air market says that most consumers have resorted to purchasing food like Matooke in kilograms or fingers instead of clusters, however she notes that, does not mean a kilogram comes cheap.

Even though figures released by the National Institute of Statistics (NISR) last week show that the economy expanded by 10 per cent in the third quarter, unemployment has remained high at just about 18 per cent and most Rwandans are saying they are struggling to put food on the table.

Urban Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 21.7 per cent on annual basis in November up from 20.1 per cent in October. The annual average inflation rate between November 2022 and November 2021 was 12.3 percent

Food and non-alcoholic beverages’ increased by 45.4 percent, ‘Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels’ increased by 8.8 percent and Transport increased by 13.7 percent.

According to Desire Izamuhaye who owns a bar in Eastern Province the prices for

Primus, Mutzig, Turbo King and soft drinks like soda radically increased weeks before the festival season.

He points out that one bottle of Mutzig is costing between Rwf 1500 to Rwf 1700. A cold Primus is sold at Rwf1,500 while Heineken has increased from Rwf 1,000 to Rwf1, 200, and a small bottle of soda is selling at Rwf600.

“We received the new tariff from Bralirwa noting that a crate of Mutzig beer purchased from distributors is costing Rwf 13,000 before retail, a crate of Primus is selling 10,500, and Heineken is selling at Rwf 20,000. Interestingly, they have not explained why” Desire adds.

Olivier Ngiruwonsanga, a motorist in Eastern Province says that prices of basic food commodities in the market have gone up. Cowpeas, carrots, onions, tomatoes have increased, even Irish potatoes.

“The increase in the cost of sweet bananas at the market is due to the spike in the farm price caused due to scarcity. Rice, maize, cassava and beans which complement bananas on the food table have also increased during this festival season even when we’re having rains in parts of the country” He explains.

Though the frustration in the market is collective, the financial squeeze is more painful on a personal level.

Jeanine Munyeshulli Kamanzi, a mother of four who loves cooking several dishes for the family and relatives every festival season, says that it is becoming different because she cannot buy as much as she did in previous years.

“The cost of ingredients like spices and groceries has gone up; I did not prepare different sauces because it is pricey now. We didn’t invite friends to sit around the table to enjoy themselves. Instead I decided to cook simple meals for family only, it’s really sad” She noted, adding that they have focused on cutting the budget on food.

Some consumers have made changes because of current circumstances. Jean Damascene Bizimana, a tailor in the Rukara sector, says that he used to take his family to dine out in a hotel after church on Christmas.

But with menu prices rising due to inflation he now sees a reason to change eating habits.

“We used to enjoy simple pleasures during the festival season but those are out now, the cost of living is spiraling out of control, we’re getting used to being happier with home-cooked meals.” He explains.

He observes that prices of other commodities have also increased, for instance one litre of cooking oil has increased from Rwf 3300 to Rwf 4,200; maize floore has increased from 800 to Rwf 1,000 while a kilogram of bean increased from Rwf 500 to Rwf 850.