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RETAIL PRICES OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES RISE IN POLAND

Summary: Rising retail fruit and vegetable prices have adversely affected the cost of living in Poland. Little relief can be expected in this consumer sector during the first half of 1972. The current five-year plan, however, contemplates a significant improvement in the per capita consumption of fruit. The diet of the Polish worker should become better balanced.

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In Poland, the retail prices of fruits and vegetables rose to high levels during the second half of 1971, and little relief is in sight for the consumer during the first part of 1972.

The monthly statistical journal, Biuletyn Statystyczny, carries monthly price data for selected fruit and vegetables, and these are reproduced, in the attached appendix, for the most recent months for which data are available (June-October 1971) and for the corresponding period in 1969 and 1970. The data reproduced cover the months during which one may expect peak supplies of fruits and vegetables, and when retail prices should be most advantageous for the consumer. Prices for other garden produce were cited in several issues of Polityka-Statystyka, a monthly supplement appearing in Polytika. However, after the September produce price developments, they were no longer included. Both sources provide price data for the socialized and private markets. A greater spread between these two prices tends to signify a growing shortage of supplies in the socialized sector.

In comparison with 1970, the largest price increases during 1971 were posted for white cabbage (one of the major staples in Poland), apples, pears, plums, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, red beets, beans, and potatoes (another staple in Poland). The smallest price changes were indicated for onions and peas. Thus, in October 1971 (the last month for which data are available), the free market price for cabbage almost doubled in comparison with the same month in 1970; dessert apples were 30 per cent higher; carrots were almost 23 per cent more expensive; red beets were 15 per cent higher; and potato

prices rose by more than 20 per cent. On the other hand, free market prices for onions were only about 8 per cent higher, and the price of peas remained about the same.

At the socialized outlets, prices generally changed in the same direction as on the free market. Although, during October 1971, prices for cabbage on the socialized market were below those charged on the free market, the socialized price increase more than doubled in comparison with 1970. On the other hand, prices on the socialized markets declined for onions and peas. Prices rose only slightly for potatoes and beans.

In the case of other fruit and vegetables, the latest comparative price data are available only for August and September. (1) During September 1971, in comparison with the same month of the previous year, pears were 52 per cent higher on the free market, plums rose by 17 per cent, tomatoes by almost 70 per cent, and cucumbers by 130 per cent.

In general, the higher prices are attributed to the drought experienced last summer, which resulted in smaller yields of fruit and vegetables. Thus, plans called for the procurement of 191,000 tons of cabbage, but only 150,000 tons were purchased. The target for cucumbers was 114,000 tons, while only about 80,000 tons were bought centrally. Similarly contracts called for delivery of 160,000 tons of tomatoes, and by the end of August 66,000 tons had been bought. It was expected that only 95,000 tons in all would be bought, in comparison with 114,000 tons of tomatoes in 1970. All in all, procurement of cabbage, tomatoes, and cucumbers was expected to fall 140,000 tons below the planned amount. Similarly, only 420,000 tons of fruit were to be bought, in comparison with a planned procurement target of 576,000 tons. (2)

Part of the difficulty is ascribed to factors other than bad weather. The orchards are old, produce poor varieties, and provide very unsatisfactory yields. Thus, while Holland has about 43,000 hectares of orchards and Poland has about 240,000 hectares (more than five times), the total fruit output in Poland is only 50 per cent larger than in Holland. In the case of apples, Poland harvests barely 5 tons per hectare, while Holland is able to harvest in the neighborhood of 20 tons. In the case of vegetables, both the "closest and remote neighbors" of Poland are able to harvest "twice, and even four times as much" from the same acreage. (3)

Over the last five years, on the average, per capita annual consumption of fruit in Poland barely reached 32 kilograms. In the case of the per capita

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- (1) (X), "Expensive Cabbage," Polityka-Statystyka No. 9, September 1971, and (Sb), "Tendencies in Market Price Changes," Zycie Gospodarcze, 7 November 1971.
 - (2) W. Perkowicz, "How Much Fruit and Vegetables Will We Harvest?" Gazeta Handlowa, 29 October 1971.
 - (3) Commentary by Stanislaw Staszewski, Radio Warsaw, 23 November 1971.

consumption of vegetables, Poland falls in the middle group, consuming about 100 kilograms per year. However, the assortment is very poor, consisting largely of cabbage, beets, carrots, and onions. Seasonal distribution of supplies is also very poor. Barely 25 per cent of the vegetables are consumed during the winter and spring of any year, with 75 per cent supplied during the summer and fall.

At the November session of the Politburo, the party dealt with this question and decided that, during the next four years, fruit production is to increase by 40 per cent, basic vegetables by 12 per cent, and hothouse vegetables by 60 per cent. (4) Thus, it is planned that, in 1975, the annual per capita consumption of fruit is to reach 44 kilograms, and vegetable consumption is to reach 110 kilograms per person annually.

Procurement difficulties of an administrative nature also arise. The famous "tomato affair," concerning local trade in the Sandomierz district, received publicity over Radio Warsaw. (5) Officials of a vegetable processing plant refused to accept tomatoes, and farmers had to cart them back by the carload even though "the possibilities of sale in the region and beyond . . . were considerable." As a result, two officials were discharged, two reprimanded, and another two were both reprimanded and had to forfeit their premiums. The director-general of the enterprise also forfeited his premium. However, this incident also points to a lack of food processing facilities, a shortcoming which can be ascribed to the past errors of planners and party policymakers. An expansion of the food industry is one of the key targets of the current five-year plan.

Ironically, one can note that, had the Polish diet consisted of a larger share of fruits and vegetables, one measure of a high living standard, then the adverse effects on the cost of living of higher prices for fruits and vegetables would have been even greater. Thus, one may conclude that a low standard of living in Poland has insulated the cost of living standard against a further deterioration.

Harry Trend

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- (4) Bulgaria is to build 25 hothouses for Poland by 1975, which will cover a total area of 150 hectares. Agreements have already been signed for building such facilities near Lublin, Gdansk, and Poznan. BTA in English, 28 September 1971.
 - (5) 5 October 1971 (1600 GMT).

APPENDIX

Fruit and Vegetable Retail Prices in Poland, June-November, 1969-1971
(in zloty per kilogram)

Month and year	White Cabbage		Onions		Carrots		Dessert Apples	
	sm	fm	sm	fm	sm	fm	sm	fm
June 1969	9.44	9.47	8.05	8.76	6.82	8.15	15.38	17.51
June 1970	6.81	8.34	13.13	15.25	3.11	4.24	14.15	15.18
June 1971	8.60	8.41	8.86	7.67	4.33	5.04	16.11	16.42
July 1969	2.96	3.64	7.10	6.72	6.62	6.05	11.80	13.11
July 1970	2.76	3.49	8.14	7.49	5.08	4.01	-	-
July 1971	4.04	4.05	8.24	7.45	7.30	6.62	12.84	12.26
Aug. 1969	4.20	3.92	5.96	5.71	4.07	4.38	11.08	9.40
Aug. 1970	1.64	2.35	6.08	5.88	2.95	3.74	8.71	7.35
Aug. 1971	3.63	3.83	6.69	6.41	4.23	4.48	12.29	11.36
Sept. 1969	2.11	3.10	5.38	5.32	2.34	3.41	7.89	7.76
Sept. 1970	1.26	1.86	5.50	5.27	2.11	2.83	7.31	6.59
Sept. 1971	3.97	4.08	5.60	5.68	3.03	3.66	9.37	9.57
Oct. 1969	1.77	2.35	5.24	5.11	2.01	2.82	7.16	7.69
Oct. 1970	1.18	1.59	5.45	5.08	1.92	2.61	7.71	7.19
Oct. 1971	2.65	3.06	5.34	5.31	2.45	3.21	9.19	9.40
Nov. 1969	1.96	2.14	5.45	5.13	2.09	2.80	8.33	8.24
Nov. 1970	1.61	1.49	5.58	5.08	1.89	2.49	9.32	8.35
Nov. 1971	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX (continued)

Month and year	Potatoes		Red Beets...		Peas		Beans	
	sm	fm	sm	fm	sm	fm	sm	fm
June 1969	1.79	1.62	6.29	5.45	12.76	14.59	20.83	18.23
June 1970	1.80	1.57	2.10	2.88	12.80	15.42	20.80	20.66
June 1971	1.78	1.65	2.29	2.46	12.72	16.04	20.91	21.52
July 1969	3.22	3.17	6.05	5.14	12.68	14.35	20.70	17.59
July 1970	3.79	3.86	4.01	3.99	12.68	16.53	20.85	19.54
July 1971	3.17	2.76	5.10	4.62	12.72	17.24	20.73	20.48
Aug. 1969	2.86	2.66	3.12	3.78	12.62	14.49	20.79	16.83
Aug. 1970	2.38	2.11	2.35	3.14	12.73	17.05	20.61	19.35
Aug. 1971	2.22	2.13	3.18	3.41	12.78	16.24	20.72	19.61
Sept. 1969	2.11	1.99	2.01	3.00	12.72	14.27	20.77	17.29
Sept. 1970	1.89	1.73	1.79	2.53	12.83	15.10	20.76	17.95
Sept. 1971	2.05	1.99	2.36	3.06	12.79	16.05	20.84	20.30
Oct. 1969	1.81	1.62	1.82	2.58	12.73	14.20	20.81	17.30
Oct. 1970	1.77	1.50	1.64	2.39	12.80	15.47	20.82	18.69
Oct. 1971	1.80	1.77	2.09	2.75	12.73	15.51	20.91	21.20
Nov. 1969	1.80	1.49	1.97	2.63	12.76	14.82	20.81	18.17
Nov. 1970	1.79	1.44	1.61	2.40	12.78	15.55	20.86	20.06
Nov. 1971	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: sm - socialist market; fm - free market.

Sources: Biuletyn Statystyczny, Table 47, No. 10, October 1970; No. 12, December 1970; No. 1, January 1971; No. 10, October 1971; and No. 11, November 1971.