

Situation Report on Nepal's Agrifood Systems

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Key messages

The year-on-year annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) reached its lowest for 2023/24 at 3.6 but the CPI for food and beverage was higher than the national CPI indicating higher costs for these essential items compared to other non-goods and services. Annual remittance inflow increased by 16.5 percent in July 2024, although the increase was lower than the same period of the previous year. The number of Nepali workers applying for entry renewal declined by 1.4 percent.

Macroeconomic trends and implications for household economic welfare

Key messages: The CPI for cereals, pulses and vegetables is in an upward trend reflecting increase on financial pressure on consumers, particularly those with lower incomes who rely heavily on rice as a staple food (Figure 1). Similarly, the CPI for protein sources like meat, fish, milk products and eggs has also increased. However, the declining CPI for ghee and oil, petroleum along with stable fruit price is a positive sign for consumers.

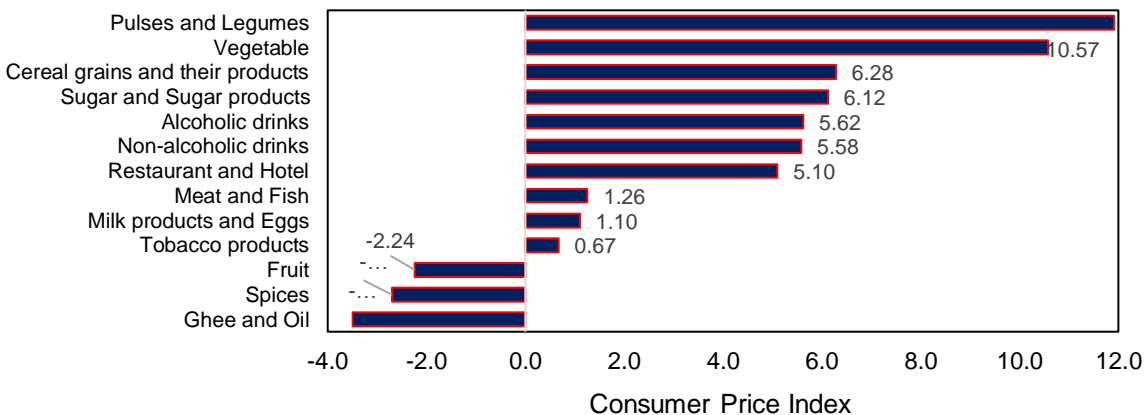


Figure 1: Annual percent change in the consumer price index (CPI) of food and beverage in Nepal during mid-July 2024. Source: Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation (Based on the Annual Data of 2023/24), Nepal Rastra Bank.

Inflation: In mid-July 2024, the year-on-year CPI reached the lowest point of 3.6 percent, for the 2023/24 period. However, the CPI of food and beverage was relatively high at 4.1 percent, indicating an inflation in the prices of food and services items. Within the food and beverage category, pulses and legumes price showed the highest increase at 11.9 percent. Staple foods in Nepal, such as cereal grains and their products and vegetable, also experienced price rise, with the annual CPI for vegetables at 10.6 percent and cereals at 6.3 percent in mid-July 2024 (Figure 1). Among three ecological regions, in mid-July 2024, annual CPI of food and beverage in hill witnessed the highest increase of 3.8 percent, whereas the lowest was at mountain with 3.0 percent. Overall, the passage highlights that while general inflation is relatively low, the cost of food and essential items is rising significantly, affecting different regions unevenly and putting additional financial pressure consumers to meet the stable dietary needs.

Salaries and wages: During this period, the year-on-year national salary and wage rate increased by 5.1 percent, declined, down from 9.9 percent in the same period of the previous year. The annual increase in wage rate index surpassed the salary index by 5.3 percent in mid-July 2024. Within the wage rate index, industrial labor wages experienced the highest annual increase, nearly 11.0 percent, while agricultural labor wages rose by 4.5 percent during the same period. However, the salary and wage rate index remained relatively stable compared to the previous month. From November 2023 to May 2024, the national salary and wage rate index exceeded CPI, indicating an increase in consumer purchasing power (Figure 2). Nonetheless, the year-on-year national salary and wage rate declined in the subsequent month than the CPI percentage change in June 2024 before moderating again in mid-July 2024.

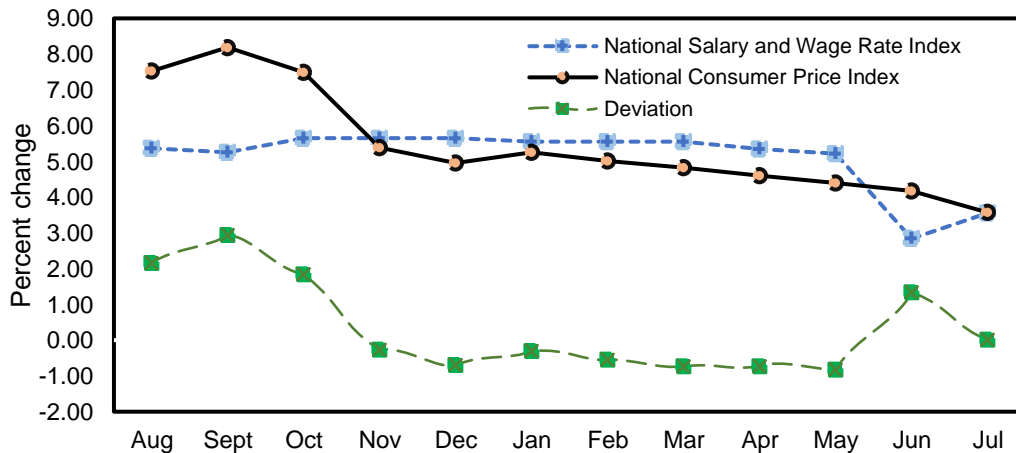


Figure 2: Monthly percent change in the National Salary and Wage Rate Index and the National Consumer Price Index for 2023/24. Source: Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation (Based on the Annual Data of 2023/24), Nepal Rastra Bank.

Migration and remittances: The number of Nepali workers (both institutional and individual) securing first-time approval for foreign employment was 460,103, while 281,199 sought approvals for renewals¹. In the previous year, these numbers were 497,704 and 277,272, respectively. Remittance inflows increased by 16.5 percent to NPR 1,445.32 billion (USD 10.7 billion)² during 2023/24, compared to a 23.2 percent increase in the previous year. The compound annual growth rate of remittance inflows from August 2023 to July 2024 was 0.4 percent. In mid-July 2024, Nepal received NPR 117.8 billion (USD 878.0 million) in remittances, a decline of 8.6 percent compared to the previous month.

Recent price fluctuation in food commodities and agricultural inputs

Key messages: In June 2024, the annual price of coarse and medium grain rice increased, while the price of wheat flour fell below the national average and was also lower in the Western Province. During the same period, the national prices of fruits, edible oils and milk decreased, making these items more affordable for households. The stability of urea and DAP prices and wages for female agricultural laborers, especially during the rice planting season, will benefit farmers. However, this decline in wages may have a have negative financial impact for the female agricultural laborers.

¹ Nepal Rastra Bank. 2024. Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation of Nepal (Based on Annual Data of 2023/24). Kathmandu; 2024.

² Exchange rate as of 25th August 2024: USD 1 = NPR 134.17

Agricultural inputs

Fertilizers: In July 2024, CSISA field data showed that the monthly price of urea and diammonium phosphate (DAP) remained stable at NPR 21.0 (USD 0.16) per kilogram and NPR 50.0 (USD 0.37) per kilogram respectively (Annex 3). However, the price of muriate of potash (MOP) decreased by 3.1 percent. The price of MOP varied across districts, ranging from NPR 36.8 (USD 0.27) in Banke and Bardiya to NPR 40.0 (USD 0.30) per kilogram in Dang and Kanchanpur. The stable prices of urea and DAP, along with the decline in MOP prices, will help farmers to minimize their production cost and thus will benefit them.

Energy: In August 2024, the retail price of petrol dropped from NPR 170.0 (USD 1.27) to NPR 165 (USD 1.23), while the retail price of diesel decreased from NPR 158.0 (USD 1.18) to NPR 155.0 (USD 1.16). Compared to the previous month, the retail prices of petrol and diesel dropped by 3.5 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the price of an LPG cylinder remained constant at NPR 1,910 (USD 14.24) in August 2024, despite a 6.1 percent rise compared to the same period last year. If sustained, this decline in diesel and petrol prices could potentially lower the costs for plowing and preparing land for rice cultivation and is likely to reduce the cost of rice production.

Seed: Analyses of field data indicated that the average cost of hybrid rice seeds was NPR 563.3 (USD 4.19) per kilogram, while open-pollinated rice seeds were priced at NPR 93.3 (USD 0.70) per kilogram in July 2024. Compared to the previous month, the price of open-pollinated rice seeds declined by 2.7 percent, while hybrid rice seeds remained stable. Hybrid maize seeds were priced at NPR 537.5 (USD 4.01) per kilogram, significantly higher than per kilogram price of open-pollinated maize seeds NPR 170.8 (USD 1.27). For vegetables, 10 grams of hybrid tomato seeds cost NPR 1681.25 (USD 12.53). Similarly, there was a notable increase in the prices of open pollinated cauliflower and onion seeds by 26.1 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively, in July 2024 compared to a month before. The high cost of hybrid seeds with the significant fertilizer requirements for their cultivation, could have made farmers adopt open-pollinated varieties, either saving their own seeds or obtaining them from fellow farmers. This is one of the key factors limiting the successful adoption of hybrid seeds in cereal cultivation in Nepal which limit the seed replacement ratio of rice to around 20 percent.

Labor: According to field data from USAID/Nepal's implementing partners, in July 2024, male agricultural laborers earned NPR 623.6 (USD 4.6) per day, while female laborers earned NPR 528.5 (USD 3.9) per day (Annex 3). The female-to-male wage ratio in agriculture was 0.85. The largest wage disparity was observed in Banke district, where the ratio was 0.58. Compared to the previous month, average agricultural wages for female in July 2024 declined by 4.6 percent. During the rice transplanting season in Nepal, female agriculture laborers are in high demand for manual rice transplantation. Therefore, the decline in the wage rate for female laborers will have significant impact on the income.

Cereals

In June 2024, the national prices of coarse and medium-grain rice rose by 18.1 percent and 6.3 percent, respectively, compared to the previous year. Conversely, the price of wheat flour fell by 3.9 percent during the same period. A similar trend was observed in the Western Province of Nepal for rice and wheat flour. However, the monthly changes in cereal prices in Nepal and Western Province remained relatively stable during June 2024. At the provincial level, the annual price of coarse rice showed an upward trend, with increases ranging from 25.6 percent in Koshi Province to 5.0 percent in Lumbini Province. In contrast, the price of wheat either declined or remained stable in all provinces,

except in Karnali Province, where the price increased by 4.4 percent in June 2024 compared to the previous year. The increasing prices of coarse and medium-grain rice at the national level suggest potential challenges of food insecurity and financial strain for consumers, especially those with lower incomes who rely heavily on rice as a staple food. However, the decline in wheat flour prices might provide some relief to consumers, potentially offsetting the increased costs of rice. This benefit, however, may not be evenly distributed, particularly in regions where rice is the primary staple.

Selected horticultural and fruit products

Vegetables: In June 2024, the national year-on-year price for cabbage, red potato, pumpkin, and tomato increased, ranging from 40.9 percent increase in the price of pumpkin to 8.5 percent increase in the price of red potato. Similar year-on-year price trend was also observed in the Western Province of Nepal, where pumpkin prices rose significantly by 70.7 percent. On the other hand, the national price of carrots fell by 14 percent and 12 percent in the Western Province. Compared to the previous month, the prices of all the vegetables increased at both the national level and in the Western Province. At provincial level, in vegetables category, the highest increase in the annual price of tomato by 94.7 percent was observed in Bagmati Province followed by pumpkin price with 88.2 percent increment in June 2024. Conversely, the price of carrots declined significantly in Koshi, Madhesh, Bagmati, and Karnali Provinces during the same period. The monthly increase in vegetable prices at the national level and in the Western Province is indicative of seasonal variations affecting demand and supply, particularly with the Terai belt of Nepal and India engaged in monsoon rice cultivation.

Fruits: The overall year-on-year fruit price fell at the national level and in the Western Province in June 2024, except for the price of apple in the Western Province. Among fruit categories, the annual price of oranges saw the highest drop by 11.9 percent at the national level, followed by the price of banana with a decline of 8.1 percent in the Western Province. The downward trend in orange prices continued with a decline of 7.1 percent nationally and 13.3 percent in the Western Province. At provincial level, in June 2024, the most significant drop in the annual price of apple was 38.1 percent in Madhesh Province, while the annual price of oranges declined by 38.5 percent in Karnali province. The declining fruit price can make these nutritious foods more accessible to a boarder population, potentially improving dietary diversity and nutrition. However, this might have negative implications on fruit-producing farmers by limiting their ability to invest in future fruit production.

Milk and eggs

In June 2024, the annual and monthly prices of milk dropped both nationally and in the Western Province. At the national level, the annual price of milk dropped by 3.6 percent while a slight decline of 0.8 percent was observed in the Western Province. Conversely, the annual prices of eggs surged by 11.9 percent nationally, with an even higher inflation rate of 16.7 percent in Western Province during the same period. A significant rise in the price of egg in June 2024 was observed compared to the previous month, whereas the price of milk declined insignificantly both nationally and in the Western Province. Among the provinces, Gandaki Province witnessed the highest annual decline in the price of milk with 15.4 percent followed by Bagmati Province with 11.8 percent. Milk prices remained relatively lower in Madhesh and Sudurpashchim provinces. For eggs, Karnali Province saw the highest annual increase in the prices of egg with 27.6 percent, followed by Madhesh Province with 23.4 percent annual increase in the price. Lumbini and Bagmati are the second and third largest provinces, respectively, for milk production. The drop in milk prices could adversely impact the income of dairy farmers in these regions. On the other hand, consumers in these provinces might benefit from lower milk prices, making milk more affordable for households.

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Edible oils

The annual prices of mustard and soybean oil have declined in Nepal and in the Western Province. In June 2024, the national price of soybean oil dropped by 8.3 percent, with an even greater decrease of 10.9 percent in the Western Province. While the annual price of mustard oil also declined both nationally and in the Western Province, the rate of decline was lower than that of soybean oil. However, in June 2024, the monthly prices of both edible oils showed an upward trend nationally and in the Western Province. The monthly price of mustard oil rose by 4.2 percent, and the price of soybean oil increased by 2.2 percent in the Western Province.

Acknowledgments

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Data sources

Data sources for this brief includes the World Food Program for food prices, Nepal Oil Corporation (noc.org.np) for fuel prices, the Nepal Rastra Bank for the CPI, budget shares from the Ministry of Finance, remittance flows, and other macroeconomic data. The field reports provided by USAID/Nepal's Nepal Seed and Fertilizer (NSAF) and KISAN II Activities. Data from a primary household survey second wave undertaken by CSISA across eight districts in USAID Feed the Future Zone of Influence in August-September 2023 as well as a bi-weekly market survey in the same areas including Kathmandu is used.

Suggested citation

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Annexes

Annex 1: Percentage change in food commodity prices (NPR/Kg) in Nepal.

Commodity	Western Province					Nepal				
	Price (NPR)			% change		Price (NPR)			% change	
	June 2023	May 2024	June 2024	June 2023 - June 2024	May 2024 - June 2024	June 2023	May 2024	June 2024	June 2023 - June 2024	May 2024 - June 2024
Rice (coarse)	65.5	76.2	76.0	16.0	-0.3	60.5	71.6	71.4	18.1	-0.3
Rice (medium grain)	96.3	103.5	104.2	8.2	0.7	87.4	92.7	92.9	6.3	0.1
Wheat flour	91.4	86.2	87.7	-4.0	1.7	88.0	83.9	84.5	-3.9	0.7
Apples	330.8	354.6	351.5	6.3	-0.9	332.1	336.5	324.0	-2.4	-3.7
Bananas*	173.6	156.9	159.6	-8.1	1.7	150.1	137.9	141.3	-5.9	2.4
Oranges	225.0	243.3	211.0	-6.2	-13.3	218.0	206.7	192.0	-11.9	-7.1
Cabbage	54.8	50.4	56.5	3.1	12.2	49.9	47.5	54.4	8.9	14.5
Carrots	133.0	105.0	117.1	-12.0	11.5	120.1	87.1	103.3	-14.0	18.7
Potatoes (red)	49.6	49.3	53.8	8.5	9.2	51.3	51.5	55.6	8.5	8.0
Pumpkin	42.1	60.9	71.9	70.7	18.1	48.1	60.7	67.7	40.9	11.5
Tomatoes	82.9	82.7	90.8	9.5	9.8	71.0	74.0	82.1	15.7	11.0
Chickpeas	153.8	152.7	156.8	1.9	2.7	139.4	145.4	148.7	6.7	2.2
Beans (black)	186.5	205.8	213.1	14.2	3.5	184.4	201.7	206.0	11.8	2.1
Lentils (broken)	182.5	177.1	182.1	-0.2	2.8	171.0	165.1	169.5	-0.9	2.7
Oil (mustard)**	292.9	270.5	281.9	-3.8	4.2	281.0	254.5	260.0	-7.5	2.2
Oil (soybean)**	261.2	227.6	232.7	-10.9	2.2	246.3	222.0	225.8	-8.3	1.7
Eggs***	18.5	20.7	21.5	16.7	4.1	18.6	19.7	20.8	11.9	5.9
Fish	585.0	619.0	625.0	6.8	1.0	481.0	517.3	538.2	11.9	4.1
Meat (chicken)	531.5	540.8	558.8	5.1	3.3	486.5	496.3	511.5	5.1	3.1
Milk**	131.8	131.4	130.8	-0.8	-0.5	119.3	117.0	115.0	-3.6	-1.7
Peanut	552.9	435.0	435.0	-21.3	0.0	361.5	333.5	327.0	-9.5	-1.9

*Denotes unit price per dozen, ** denotes unit price per liter and *** denotes unit price per piece.

Western Province includes Lumbini, Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces.

Source: World Food Programme (July 2024).

Annex 2: Percentage change in food commodity prices (NPR) across provinces of Nepal.

Commodity	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Karnali		Sudurpashchim	
	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May 2023
Rice (coarse)	25.6	2.1	22.4	0.5	17.5	-4.3	18.3	1.4	5.0	-0.5	20.2	0.0	16.5	-0.7
Rice (medium grain)	18.5	3.6	-6.7	0.0	-1.6	-3.5	6.9	1.1	9.9	0.9	10.6	0.3	3.0	1.6
Wheat flour	0.0	0.0	-4.7	1.5	-9.5	-0.8	0.0	-2.9	-15.8	4.7	4.4	1.1	-11.1	1.0
Apples	12.5	7.1	-38.1	-1.6	-14.3	-22.1	-10.8	-10.8	18.1	0.0	4.9	-1.8	-1.6	0.0
Bananas*	-5.6	6.2	3.2	6.7	6.6	12.5	-15.3	-13.8	1.3	1.3	-10.8	-1.6	-7.7	11.6
Oranges	NA	6.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	-7.3	5.6	25.0	2.7	-38.5	NA	-37.0	NA
Cabbage	-7.1	8.3	0.0	6.7	42.9	15.4	62.5	52.9	8.0	42.1	-14.7	1.4	46.9	17.5
Carrots	-20.8	5.6	-37.2	17.4	-22.7	34.2	7.3	76.0	42.9	42.9	-18.4	0.0	NA	14.3
Potatoes (red)	8.6	11.8	0.0	0.0	29.6	6.1	-4.8	11.1	13.6	5.9	1.5	5.4	16.7	16.7
Pumpkin	6.2	3.0	5.9	5.9	NA	-7.1	NA	7.7	8.0	2.3	NA	6.7	88.2	52.4
Tomatoes	17.9	35.3	4.5	0.0	94.7	0.0	26.1	26.1	17.1	29.7	2.8	5.0	19.2	6.9
Chickpeas	3.8	0.0	23.9	3.8	16.4	0.0	12.0	3.7	-4.4	0.8	2.4	0.9	5.4	7.3
Beans (black)	4.7	0.9	10.7	0.0	17.1	4.2	0.0	-5.0	10.1	1.7	15.7	1.1	14.5	9.7
Lentils (broken)	1.0	3.2	-1.1	-2.2	-3.6	2.2	-4.5	8.5	-5.6	1.1	2.4	2.1	-0.7	5.4
Oil (mustard)**	-24.9	0.0	-4.1	0.0	-3.6	-5.0	-10.4	4.9	-17.9	-2.0	1.3	5.7	-3.7	5.1
Oil (soybean)**	-7.7	0.0	-5.8	0.0	4.0	0.8	-10.4	4.9	-21.9	3.6	-6.5	1.0	-9.4	3.4
Eggs***	3.3	5.1	23.4	1.8	0.0	13.2	0.0	17.6	6.1	0.0	27.6	5.7	6.7	3.9
Fish	0.0	1.6	4.8	4.8	43.5	11.9	NA	NA	0.0	0.8	9.4	1.1	0.0	0.0
Meat (chicken)	13.2	4.3	8.3	-3.0	-5.5	2.4	5.5	9.1	-9.5	-10.2	2.7	6.6	20.5	6.2
Milk**	-4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-11.8	-6.3	-15.4	-8.3	-6.3	0.0	0.7	-0.8	0.0	0.0
Peanut	7.6	-0.6	-11.4	-11.4	29.5	-12.7	8.7	13.6	4.6	0.0	-28.1	0.0	NA	NA

NA indicates data not available.

Annex 3: Unit prices of key agricultural inputs in July (in NPR) and percent change compared to June 2024.

Inputs	Unit Price in NPR (July 2024)						July 2024 Average Price (NPR)	June 2024 Average Price (NPR)	Percent Change June- July 2024
	Banke	Bardiya	Dang	Kailali	Kanchan pur	Kapilvastu			
Fertilizer									
Urea (Kg)	20.2	20.3	20.5	22.0	23.5	19.0	20.9	21.0	-0.3
DAP (Kg)	48.8	50.0	49.0	52.8	52.8	48.0	50.2	50.0	0.5
Potash (Kg)	36.8	36.8	40.0	38.5	40.0	35.5	37.9	39.1	-3.1
Seed									
Rice OP (Kg)	72.5	70.0	180.0	72.5	80.0	85.0	93.3	95.9	-2.7
Rice hybrid (Kg)	550.0	575.0	555.0	550.0	600.0	550.0	563.3	564.0	-0.1
Maize OP (Kg)	200.0	145.0	200.0	140.0	210.0	130.0	170.8	158.3	7.9
Maize hybrid (Kg)	750.0	575.0	425.0	650.0	300.0	525.0	537.5	537.5	0.0
Wheat seed Price (Kg)	81.3	70.0	110.0	75.0	82.5	85.0	84.0	84.6	-0.7
Lentil seed Price (Kg)	200.0	125.0	500.0	250.0	232.5	225.0	255.4	257.5	-0.8
Cauli OP (Kg)	9000.0	8250.0	7500.0	6500.0	7000.0	4750.0	7166.7	5683.3	26.1
Cauli hybrid (Kg)	57500.0	65000.0	57500.0	60000.0	62500.0	82500.0	64166.7	63125.0	1.7
Tomato OP (Kg)	8500.0	11000.0	13000.0	9000.0	8750.0	80000.0	21708.3	21416.7	1.4
Tomato hybrid (Kg)	78750.0	77500.0	265000.0	107500.0	280000.0	200000.0	168125.0	166354.2	1.1
Onion seed (Kg)	1700.0	1200.0	1250.0	750.0	700.0	1750.0	1225.0	1089.6	12.4
Onion seed Nepali (Kg)	1525.0	900.0	2550.0	5000.0	3200.0	2100.0	2545.8	2508.3	1.5
Labor									
Agricultural Labor Male (day)	600.0	600.0	600.0	666.7	600.0	675.0	623.6	626.1	-0.4
Agricultural Labor Female (day)	350.0	600.0	600.0	533.3	512.5	575.0	528.5	553.9	-4.6
Non-Agricultural Labor Male (day)	1000.0	600.0	600.0	900.0	1000.0	1150.0	875.0	866.7	1
Non-Agricultural Labor Female (day)	500.0	600.0	600.0	566.7	600.0	600.0	577.8	590.3	-2.1
Irrigation									
Irrigation (hour)	200.0	325.0	300.0	300.0	120.0	400.0	274.2	270.0	1.5
Machine use (hour)	1800.0	3000.0	2600.0	2933.3	3350.0	2500.0	2697.2	2697.2	0.0
Fuel									
Diesel (liter)	157.0	191.2	159.0	158.0	158.5	158.0	163.6	152.1	7.6
Petrol (liter)	168.0	169.0	170.0	169.0	182.0	171.0	171.5	166.6	2.9

NA denotes item is not sold in any nearby shop, agrovet or cooperative; Source: CSISA field data, July 2024.

Annex 4: National Consumer Price Index (Based on the Annual Data of 2023/24).

Groups & Sub-Groups	Weight %	2021/22		2022/23		2023/24 ^P			Percentage Change			
		Jun/Jul	May/June	Jun/Jul	May/June	Jun/Jul	3 Over 1	3 Over 2	5 Over 3	5 Over 4		
		1	2	3	4	5						
Overall Index	100	151.67	161.36	162.95	168.09	168.77	7.44	0.99	3.57	0.41		
Food and Beverage	43.91	149.22	156.40	160.24	165.42	166.81	7.38	2.45	4.10	0.84		
Cereal grains and their products	11.33	135.07	150.81	152.34	161.85	161.92	12.79	1.02	6.28	0.04		
Pulses and Legumes	1.84	123.86	124.97	127.75	139.67	142.98	3.14	2.23	11.91	2.37		
Vegetable	5.52	150.12	140.41	158.69	162.89	175.45	5.71	13.02	10.57	7.71		
Meat and Fish	6.75	150.17	155.89	158.45	161.58	160.44	5.51	1.64	1.26	-0.70		
Milk products and Eggs	5.24	151.05	167.33	168.65	169.74	170.50	11.65	0.79	1.10	0.45		
Ghee and Oil	2.95	208.15	176.15	173.84	166.44	167.78	-16.48	-1.31	-3.49	0.80		
Fruit	2.08	171.45	171.30	172.68	178.01	168.82	0.72	0.81	-2.24	-5.16		
Sugar and Sugar products	1.74	143.13	146.97	148.65	157.23	157.75	3.86	1.15	6.12	0.33		
Spices	1.21	129.33	173.11	183.61	176.65	178.65	41.97	6.06	-2.70	1.13		
Non-alcoholic drinks	1.24	143.97	150.61	151.30	159.58	159.74	5.09	0.46	5.58	0.10		
Alcoholic drinks	0.68	193.81	206.36	206.36	217.95	217.95	6.48	0.00	5.62	0.00		
Tobacco products	0.41	177.40	192.45	192.45	193.75	193.75	8.49	0.00	0.67	0.00		
Restaurant and Hotel	2.92	154.71	173.98	174.37	183.19	183.27	12.70	0.22	5.10	0.04		

P=Provisional

Source: Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation (Based on the Annual Data of 2023/24), Nepal Rastra Bank