

## Lower fruit prices bittersweet due to high vegetable prices

Embargoed until 10:45am – 11 August 2017

Fruit prices fell 5.2 percent in July 2017, contributing to a 0.2 percent fall in food prices, Stats NZ said today.

Cheaper avocados and strawberries led the fall in fruit prices in July. Avocado prices fell 29 percent in July, coming off a near-record high in June, and strawberry prices fell 23 percent. The average price for a 250g punnet of strawberries was \$5.92 in July 2017, compared with \$7.71 in June.

"Strawberries are unseasonably cheap for this time of year," consumer prices manager Matthew Haigh said. "They typically reach their lowest price in December, but are currently dropping in price due to more imports from Australia."

Stats NZ data showed a 58 percent increase in the quantity of strawberries imported in June 2017 when compared with June 2016.

In contrast to fruit prices, vegetable prices rose 1.6 percent in July, driven by higher prices for cucumbers and tomatoes. Kumara rose 2.6 percent for the month, and 170 percent for the year – to reach a new record high price of \$8.39 a kilogram.

### Restaurant meals have largest annual increase in almost four years

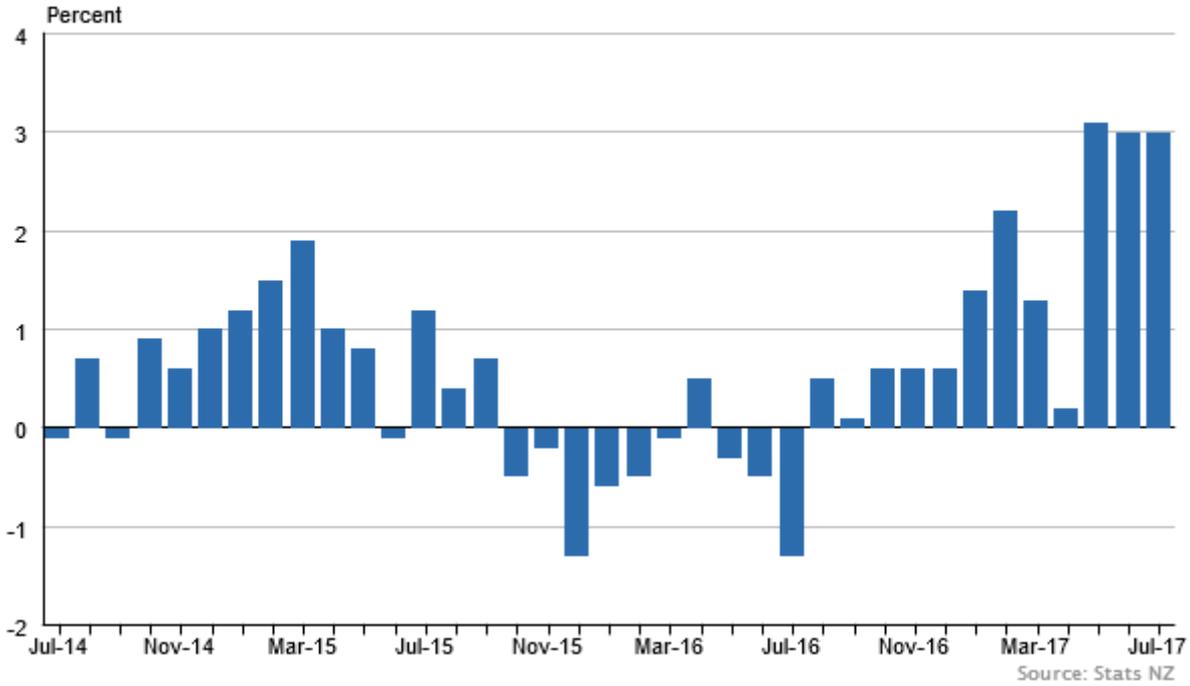
Prices for restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food were up 2.2 percent in the year to July 2017. This was led by a 2.5 percent increase in restaurant meals, the largest annual increase since October 2013. Spending on restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food makes up around \$23 for every \$100 spent on food for New Zealanders.

"It's likely that the higher prices we're seeing for vegetables and dairy are starting to feed through into restaurant meal prices," Mr Haigh said.

Vegetable prices increased 12 percent in the year to July 2017, and were the main contributor to the 3.0 percent annual increase in food prices.

Grocery food prices rose 3.1 percent in the latest year, led by higher prices for dairy products. Fresh milk price increases were the main contributor to the annual increase, followed by butter, cheese, and yoghurt.

**Food price index**  
Annual change



**Ends**

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Authorised by Liz MacPherson, Government Statistician, 11 August 2017