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Market Watch: Essential Food Prices Stabilize Amid Enforcement Challenges

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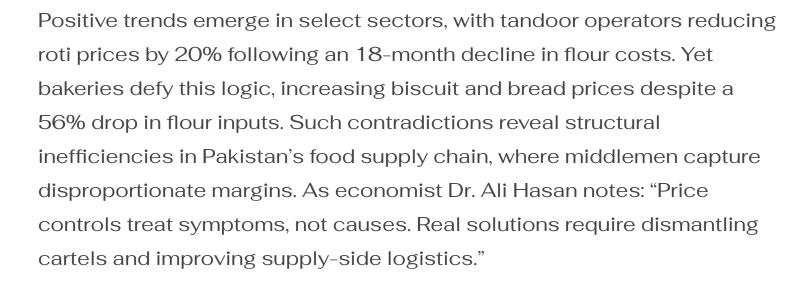




A recent market survey reveals relative price stability for essential kitchen commodities in Islamabad, with chicken prices declining 7% to 410 Pakistani rupees (PKR)/kg while sugar and flour maintain steady rates. However, widespread violations of government price caps persist, particularly in sugar and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sales, exposing

systemic enforcement failures in Pakistan's consumer protection framework.

The data shows a stark disconnect between official directives and market realities. Despite the government fixing sugar at PKR 170/kg, retailers continue selling at PKR 190/kg, blaming millers for supply constraints. Similarly, LPG distributors ignore the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority's (OGRA) reduced rate of PKR 233/kg, charging consumers PKR 300-330/kg a 40% markup that contributes to frequent cylinder explosion incidents. These violations highlight how bureaucratic price controls often crumble without robust market mechanisms.



The survey underscores a critical policy crossroads. While stable vegetable prices (potatoes at PKR 65-100/kg) and pulses (gram at PKR 270/kg) offer temporary relief, sustainable food security demands market-driven reforms. Strengthening competition through deregulation, modernizing distribution networks, and penalizing predatory pricing not arbitrary rate-setting would better serve both producers and consumers in the long term. Until then, Pakistan's kitchen economies will remain hostage to the gap between policy intentions and ground realities.