PROFESSIONAL PAPER

Overview of established examples of price monitoring practises in Europe

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Abstract

This study explores established examples of price monitoring practices across Europe, highlighting the diverse strategies employed by national authorities to ensure market transparency, protect consumers, and maintain fair competition. It examines the roles of key institutions such as national competition authorities, consumer protection agencies, and statistical offices, as well as the European Commission's efforts to harmonize practices across member states. Examples from EU countries illustrate a range of methodologies, from traditional data collection to the use of digital platforms and real-time analytics. The study underscores the importance of price monitoring in responding to inflationary pressures, detecting market distortions, and informing public policy. By analyzing current approaches, the paper provides insight into best practices and identifies opportunities for further innovation and cross-border collaboration in the evolving European economic landscape. Due to various manipulative tactics and innovative pricing strategies employed in Croatia by some retailers, the measures fell short in fostering a genuinely competitive market environment or in effectively curbing price increases and inflation in the agricultural and food sectors through increased consumer awareness. In Slovenia, this approach has not produced the desired results. As for Croatia, its effectiveness remains to be seen. However, it is important to note that a significant share of food purchasers in Croatia are tourists, who are unlikely to engage with such price monitoring tools frequently.

Keywords: Monitoring food price, analyse, European Union, Slovenia, Croatia

1. Introduction

The calculated agricultural price indices at EU level, which Eurostat began calculating in the 1970s in agreement with the Member States, are the first example of the collection and comparison of prices for agricultural products in the EU. Today, after almost 50 years, the database of agricultural product price indices is the largest and most comprehensive database on agricultural product prices in the EU, containing metadata on time series of changes in the selling prices of agricultural products. As it is necessary to analyse analyze the relationships between the different links in the food chain, individual countries have set up established various institutions, both at the national and supranational (European)

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level levels, to monitor food prices at different stages of the supply chain. Information on the development for prices of agricultural and food products is monitored at the sectoral level, including agriculture, the food industry, transport and distribution or trade.

The analysis of data on prices and quantities of agricultural products and foodstuffs (here in after referred to as "agricultural products" and "foodstuffs") by origin in the food supply chain involves monitoring and analysing the evolution of purchase and selling prices, quantities bought and sold and the origin of certain agricultural products and foodstuffs by category for each group of operators within a single chain (according to Turk et al., 2013; Samal et al., 2022; Winne and Peersman 2021; Ikechukwu et al., 2023). The purpose of monitoring and analysing the aggregated data collected every month is to obtain a transparent overview of the input and output weighted prices, quantities and origins by groups of actors in the food supply chain (according to Meade et al., 2013; Roberts and Schlenker 2013; Rehman and Khan 2015; Mravljak, 2024).

As stipulated in the Regulation on the collection of data in the food supply chain (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 132/23 of 22. 12. 2023), for the purposes of this analysis, the weighted purchase and sale prices, quantities bought and sold and origin in the cereals, meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables sectors are monitored or collected. The data is provided by four categories of actors (i.e. parties obliged to provide data): Producers, intermediaries, processors and traders.

The paper provides an overview of established examples and operational systems used to monitor food prices across Europe.The discussion of the paper aims to describe the established system in Slovenia.

2. European food price monitoring tool

The Food Price Monitoring Tool (FPMT) is an instrument used by Eurostat to monitor food prices in the Member States of the European Union (Eurostat, 2025). This tool aims is to provide accurate and up-to-date data on food prices, enabling the analysis of market conditions, monitoring of inflation and assessment of food availability. The food price monitoring tool provides information on the evolution of food prices at various stages of the food supply chain. Basically, price monitoring is divided into three stages of the food chain, namely primary production, the food processing industry and trade or final consumption. Comparing price developments at the different stages of the supply chain provides a clearer picture of potential disruptions in the food supply chain and a deeper insight into price transmission mechanisms. To enable this price comparison, the available data on price developments in the supply chain are collected. The indices included in the food price monitoring tool are the agricultural commodity price indices, producer prices, import prices and consumer prices.

The food price monitoring tool was developed in 2009 on the initiative of the European Parliament, which called for greater transparency of prices and profit margins in the agri-food sector. The tool contains price data for 26 food chains or different food categories, where prices are monitored at different stages of the chain. Eurostat carries out price monitoring on the basis of the Consumer Price Index (HICP), the Producer Price Index (PPI) and the Agricultural Commodity Price Index (ACP).

The instrument been based on data that already exists either at EU or national level and is expressed in the form of monthly price indices or annual price changes. Since 2015, the price monitoring tool has been based on the five-digit COICOP classification, which means that the HICP indices have been slightly updated and adapted to the new classification. The tool has also been updated to monitor import prices in individual food chains.

The FPMT is a significant tool or benchmark for measuring the European economy. Among other things, it helps to determine the inflation rate in the various EU countries. Bunte et al. (2009) point out caution that caution is required when comparing comparisons of price trends between different countries, as there may be differences require careful consideration, as variations in product quality or , manufacturing processes, or products may be defined differently product definitions may exist.. It is also challenging to assess price pass-through in the chain on the based on indices, as the share of the primary producer price in the consumer price can vary from product to product and between countries (Oosterkamp et al., 2012).

2.1 France

In France, the Observatoire de la formation des prix et des marges des produits alimentaires (Observatory for the formation of prices and

market margins of food products), which reports to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Consumer Protection (FranceAgriMer, 2023), is primarily responsible for observing, monitoring and analysing prices in the food sector in order to ensure transparency and a better understanding of market developments. Transparency, which contributes to greater efficiency in food markets, is achieved through more precise analyses of pricing mechanisms in food chains. The Observatory is involved in the collection of information and data on prices and costs in the agri-food sector and at the same time plays a key role in developing knowledge about the functioning of agri-food chains, which can contribute to easier dialogue and greater trust between actors within individual agri-food chains (Oosterkamp et al., 2012). It analyses the gross and net margins at different stages of the value chain, from agricultural production to final sale to consumers, and helps to understand how the added value is distributed among the various actors in the food supply chain. The Observatory's work aims to explain the level and fluctuations of agri-food prices by measuring the added value at each stage of their development, from agricultural production to industrial processing and consumer access to retail. To this end, the Observatory is developing two types of approaches (FranceAgriMer):

1. A sectoral approach complemented by a macroeconomic analysis – this includes a breakdown of retail prices and a sectoral analysis of costs, as well as a macroeconomic breakdown of food expenditure
2. Analysing costs in the agriculture, industry and trade sectors

The Observatory calculates the structure of retail prices and gross and net margins for each stage of the supply chain for Cereals (bread, pasta), meat (beef, fresh pork, processed pork, sheep meat, poultry), fisheries and aquaculture, dairy products (butter, cheese, milk, yoghurt), fresh fruit and vegetables.

Based on interviews conducted by Oosterkamp et al. (2012) with various actors in the agricultural and food chain, they found that these actors perceive the value of the data obtained and the work of the observatory differently. Most criticism was voiced by industry representatives, who emphasised that despite all the effort and time they spend on data collection, the calculated values or results do not have much practical value for them, as the results are allegedly too aggregated and consequently too far removed from reality to be beneficial for their business (Masten et al., 2014). As a positive feature of the establishment of the Observatory, the representatives of industry and trade organisations highlighted the creation of a common platform that allows them to engage in an easier dialogue and could have an impact on improving relations between the different sectors of the chain in the future. An important outcome of the Observatory's work to date has been the disclosure of individual inefficiencies within the agri-food processing sector, which has influenced self-reflection by individual actors and the modification of inefficient business practices.

2.2 Spain

In Spain, price observation and monitoring are carried out by the Food Price Observatory, which reports to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Observatorio de la Cadena Alimentaria). The Observatory monitors and analyses food prices and margins ensure market transparency and inform the public about trends and changes in the food sector. It creates a framework of knowledge about pricing throughout the food chain by publishing data and conducting studies and reports that enable the systematic monitoring of prices, thus promoting transparency and efficiency in the marketing process and revealing possible imbalances in product prices throughout the marketing chain.

One of the main tasks of the Observatory is to systematically monitor the prices of basic foodstuffs that are crucial for production or domestic consumption at various stages of the distribution chain - from agricultural production to final sale to the consumer. Price developments over time are analysed, with a focus on identifying seasonal trends, the impact of market changes and other factors that influence food prices. In their work, they seek to create mechanisms to recognise and understand various power imbalances between different actors in the chain. By preparing reports, research and explanatory studies and proposals on prices in the agri-food sector, they support various ministries (Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs, Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade) and the executive branch of the government. The published data on prices and profit margins ensure transparency in the food chain contributing, to a better understanding of how the market operates. The

objectives aim to ensure the stability of food prices in the market, especially particularly by preventing excessive profit margins and other irregularities in the market. By improving market transparency and promoting fair competition, farmers and producers should be able to obtain fair prices for their crops or products on the market.

The information system for producer and wholesale prices managed by the Observatory enables the monitoring of weekly price trends for 34 agricultural and food products at two key levels: production and wholesale. The statistical operation of the system is supported by various administrative units of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment and the national company MERCASA.

The Observatory emphasises that to conduct analyses of different price movements in agriculture and food, it is essential to have a precise understanding of the various procedures or processes that occur within each agricultural and food chain. This is particularly important for direct comparisons between different price forms. It is necessary to distinguish between gross margin, net margin and different forms of costs. These relate to the various processes that add value to the product in a single agri-food chain. These costs include the costs of cleaning, sorting, packaging, transport, storage, waste disposal, marketing, etc.

Based on interviews conducted by Oosterkamp et al. (2013) with various actors in the agricultural and food chain, they found that these actors are generally satisfied with the work of the Observatory. They particularly appreciate the plenary sessions or meetings, which they see as an opportunity for constructive dialogue. One exception is the representatives of the processing industry, who point out that these meetings are attended by too many different organisations that are not directly involved in the agri-food chain and, in their opinion, have no right to sensitive business information, which makes open dialogue difficult. Despite the Centre's well-received studies, some representatives of the food chain believe that the results of these studies are too static and offer no real benefit to the individual actors in the chains (weekly reports on price trends only show price dynamics, but not the reasons behnd these trends).

2.3 Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Dutch statistical office (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek - CBS) is primarily responsible for analysing prices in the food sector. The CBS collects, analyses and publishes data on the prices of various products and services, including agricultural foodstuffs. Additionally, the Dutch Consumer and Market Authority (Autoriteit Consument & Markt, ACM) plays a crucial role in monitoring market competition and protecting consumers. Together, both authorities contribute to the transparency and efficiency of the Dutch agricultural and food market, ensuring fair conditions for all participants in the food chain.

The main tasks of Statistics Netherlands are to collect data on food prices at various stages of the supply chain, including prices for agricultural raw materials, processed products and retail prices, to analyse long-term and short-term trends in food prices and to identify factors that influence price changes.

The Dutch Authority for Consumers and Markets is responsible for monitoring competition practises in the food chain and ensuring fair competition between companies. In the event of irregularities, it acts against possible monopolistic practises, cartel agreements and other irregularities that could harm consumers or a competitive market.

In the Netherlands, data on the prices of agricultural and food products is not only collected by Statistics Netherlands, which calculates producer price indices and consumer price indices, but also by LEI Wageningen UR, which analyses data on the sales prices of agricultural products and production costs.

LEI Wageningen UR publishes the prices and price indices in the agricultural sector once a month, where the so-called barometer also displays the current production and market trends in the individual sectors in addition to the price information. Data on sales prices and price indices are collected and published for fattening pigs, free-range eggs, milk, cattle and broilers (Oosterkamp et al., 2013). The time series of the collected data or the calculated indices form the basis for further research and policy decisions and are also used for preparing year-end income forecasts for agricultural enterprises.

2.4 Belgium

In Belgium, the Price Observatory (Observatoire des prix / Prijzendobservatorium), which reports to the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs (Service public fédéral Économie / Federale Overheidsdienst Economie), is primarily responsible for

analysing prices in the food sector. The Price Observatory monitors and analyses price trends for various products and services, including food, and reports on its findings.

Its main task is to monitor and analyse the components that make up the final price of food and to analyse their impact on inflation. Its main activities include the preparation of various studies on price trends, prices and market forces in different sectors of the economy, including agriculture and food, as well as the analysis of (quarterly and annual) inflation with a focus on the evolution of consumer prices (food) in Belgium and the central neighbouring countries.

The Observatoire des prix / Prijzendobservatorium thus plays a key role in monitoring and analysing prices to ensure market transparency, protect consumers, support economic policy and contribute to market stability and efficiency. The tasks and objectives of the Observatoire des prix / Prijzendobservatorium are aimed at ensuring fair prices, improving market efficiency and promoting fair competition in the economic chain.

As far as agricultural and food prices are concerned, the evolution of processed food prices along the supply chain is monitored more closely and this issue is analysed in a relatively simple methodological way by comparing indicators based on overall prices. Due to the sharp increase in the price of some foodstuffs or strong price fluctuations, the Observatory carried out a study on fresh fruit and vegetables in 2013, in which it found that the prices paid by Belgian consumers for tomatoes, leeks, lettuce and Jonagold apples are determined by the auction prices for fruit and vegetables, which depend on supply and demand factors (Oosterkamp et al., 2013).

2.5 Germany

In Germany, there is no separate agency for monitoring food prices, unlike in some other European Union countries, but various institutions fulfill this task.

The Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) monitors the prices of agricultural commodities and foodstuffs and prepares analyses and reports on market conditions in the agriculture and food sector. The main objectives of the agency are to enhance market transparency, provide political decision-makers with accurate information and promote competitiveness and sustainable development in agriculture and the food industry.

The Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) collects, analyses and publishes statistical data on the prices of agricultural and food products at the various stages of the distribution chain, including prices for agricultural products, prices in the food industry and retail prices.This provides reliable statistical data that enable an understanding of market dynamics. All data on sales prices, producer price indices and consumer price indices are collected in co-operation with the statistical offices of the individual federal states.

The Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) monitors food safety, food quality and prices for agricultural products and participates in the preparation of reports and analyses of market conditions. The main aim of the office is to protect consumers from unfair practices, ensure safe and high-quality food at fair prices and improve market transparency.

The private Agrarmarkt Informations-Gesellschaft mbH (AMI) also plays an important role in analysing the agricultural market in Germany. It aims is to provide all contractual partners with accurate and objective information about the agricultural market. AMI collects, processes and transmits information on agricultural markets and prices for all important agricultural products and prepares forecasts for future market developments (AMI). Its analyses relate to the following markets: livestock and meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy products, eggs, cultivated flowers and organic crops.

Together, these authorities ensure that prices in the food sector in Germany are comprehensively monitored and analysed, thus contributing to market transparency, consumer protection and support for the sustainable development of agriculture and the food industry.

2.6 Italy

Ismea (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare) is an Italian institute for services for the agricultural and food market that collects, analyses and publishes data on prices, production, consumption and trade in agricultural and food products. It monitors market trends and price and cost developments at the national and international level. The analyses and research conducted by the Institute aim better to understand the dynamics of agricultural and food markets, focusing on the competitiveness of the agri-food sector and identify-

ing new opportunities for growth and development. By producing reports on the economic analysis of the agri-food sector, reports on foreign trade, reports on the purchasing habits of Italian consumers and reports on the economic situation of the sector with a focus on the situation of the food processing industry, and by monitoring data on prices and costs at the various stages of the individual agri-food sector chain, they support governmental and non-governmental organisations in the formulation and implementation of agri-food policy, particularly about to market conditions and the necessary measures. Ismea plays a key role in supporting and developing the Italian agri-food sector, contributing to sustainable economic development and competitiveness on the global market. It endeavours to increase market transparency by providing accurate and up-to-date information on prices, production and trade. In this way, it indirectly protects the position and interests of farmers and food industry representatives in agri-food chains, particularly with regard to maintaining fair prices for their crops or products.

2.7 Austria

In Austria, Agrarmarkt Austria (AMA) is responsible for collecting, analysing and publishing data on agricultural products, including prices, market trends and volumes, and plays a key role in the management and development of the Austrian agricultural sector. It regularly monitors market conditions and price developments at national and international level, with a focus on analysing data on prices, production and consumption, foreign trade and the costs of agricultural inputs in various agricultural food chains or sectors (e.g. eggs and poultry, milk and dairy products, livestock and meat, cereals and oilseeds, fruit and vegetables, sugar, etc.).

Agrarmarkt Austria (AMA) plays an important role in supporting and developing the Austrian agricultural sector. With its tasks and objectives, it contributes to improving competitiveness, ensuring food quality and safety, promoting sustainable agriculture, developing rural areas and improving market transparency. The AMA supports farmers and other stakeholders, contributing to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector in Austria.

3. Example of price monitoring in Slovenia

Typical agri-food chains in Slovenia consist of four to five links, and these links are organised vertically, which means that each link operates at different stages of the product's "life cycle". In principle, each agri-food chain can be divided into three links or sectors: agricultural production (primary sector), processing or the food industry (secondary sector) and distribution or trade (tertiary sector). As noted by Masten et al: "Processing activities can be integrated with retailing (e.g. retailers with their own bakeries), or farm packaging can be separated from production. Wholesaling can be combined with retailing, or both activities may be carried out by the same company. Cases with links abroad are even more complicated, as e.g. Slovenian farmers and/or co-operatives sell part or all of their production abroad, usually due to better business conditions" (Masten et al., 2014).

The relationship between supply and demand, and in particular the number and market power of the companies or players involved at the individual levels of the agri-food chain, also plays vital role in determining market prices. Characteristic of agri-food chains in Slovenia is that the downstream market structure is more concentrated (which does not imply the intensity of price competition), as the number of agricultural producers is large and the number of traders is small (Masten et al., 2014). This means that the market structures at the level of processing and, above all, trade (wholesale and retail) are oligopolistic. There are no pure monopoly companies in Slovenian chains, but there are companies with considerable market power. Due to the large number of suppliers (farmers) at the beginning of the chain, this type of competition could be described as monopolistic competition, which changes as the number of suppliers decreases at each further level of the chain, thus making the market structure oligopolistic. As Masten et al. found out, when price shocks occur for inputs in vertical chains, it is important to consider that if the shocks are similar for all producers and the producers operate with similar costs, they will all adjust their prices in a similar way. However, if the cost shares differ between companies, it is to be expected that the price changes will not be the same (Masten et al., 2014). As far as price changes are concerned, it is characteristic of vertical agri-food chains that only sufficiently large cost changes lead to price changes, while companies generally do not react to smaller cost changes by changing the prices of their products. Consequently, margins may change both downwards and upwards over time simply because

there is an interval of no price change (i.e. an interval of inaction), but only if these price movements are large enough (Masten et al., 2014).

An important factor for the behaviour of companies on the market is also the number of products or services that an individual company produces or offers. The way an individual company operates is thus directly reflected in its income and expenditures. If multiple products are produced, these products can be either complementary or substitutable on the demand side. As Masten et al. state, the cross-elasticity of complementary products is negative, as an increase in the price of the complementary product decreases demand; if they are substitutable, the cross-elasticity is positive, as an increase in the price of the substitute increases demand (Masten et al., 2014). This means that when setting prices for an individual product, companies consider the impact that the price set could have on the prices of other products. Another important aspect for companies that manufacture several products is the linking of costs between the different products. If common inputs are used to produce different products, such a production or business model can reduce some fixed costs per unit of production for the company. As Masten et al. found, such synergies allow companies with multiple products to produce at lower costs and consequently set lower prices and achieve higher production volumes given competitors' prices. It is also possible for companies with multiple products to utilise their market power and achieve lower purchase prices (Masten et al., 2014).

3.1 Food price reporting system in Slovenia

3.1.1 Persons obliged to send data

All operators in the entire food supply chain (as defined in Article 61 of the Agriculture Act) required to provide data on the weighted purchase or sale prices, the quantities bought or sold and the origin of agricultural products or foodstuffs. They are divided into 4 categories:

- Producers - are all natural persons (a limited liability company is considered a natural person) or legal persons who produce their own agricultural products and sell them to an intermediary, processor or trader or any other legal form that is not a liable person within the meaning of the Regulation (e.g. catering businesses, public bodies, etc.) and have an annual turnover of more than 250,000 euros (net sales) according to the last publicly available balance sheet. This category includes all taxable persons who fulfil the criteria of the required turnover and legal form and are active in primary agricultural production and have a registered office or permanent address in Slovenia (e.g. farmers, cooperatives, agricultural companies, etc.).
- Intermediaries - are all natural persons (a limited liability company is considered a natural person) or legal entities that acquire agricultural products or foodstuffs of resale for processing or marketing (they do not modify the agricultural products or foodstuffs themselves, but buy them and resell them unchanged in the chain) and have an annual turnover of more than EUR 2,000,000 (net turnover) according to the last publicly available balance sheet. This category includes all taxable persons who fulfil the criteria regarding the required turnover, the legal form and the purchase and sale of unaltered agricultural products or foodstuffs further down the chain (e.g. farmers, cooperatives, agricultural companies, distribution companies, food processing companies, traders, etc.). In the case of intermediaries, these are sales to legal entities (persons who have received an invoice with their tax number). Your buyer may be an intermediary, a processor, a trader or another legal entity that is not a taxpayer under the regulation (e.g. catering businesses, public institutions, etc.).
- Processors - are all-natural persons (a limited liability company is considered a natural person) or legal entities that carry out the activity of food production and have an annual turnover (net sales revenue) of more than 2,000,000 euros according to the last publicly available balance sheet. This category includes all taxable persons who fulfil the criteria regarding the required turnover, the legal form and the performance of all activities of processing agricultural products or foodstuffs (e.g. food processing plants, slaughterhouses, etc.). All operations on agricultural products or foodstuffs that alter the agricultural product or foodstuff are considered processing (if the agricultural product is only packaged and no alterations or processing are carried out, such as packing apples in sacks or eggs in cardboard packaging, this is not considered processing - they are taxable as producers if they produce this product themselves).
- Traders - are all legal entities (except limited

liability companies) that carry out an activity in the food trade and have an annual turnover of more than EUR 10,000,000 (net turnover) according to the last publicly available balance sheet. This category includes all taxable persons who fulfil the criteria of the required turnover, legal form and carrying out activities in the food trade, regardless of whether this is their main activity or not (e.g: Food traders and other traders who, in addition to their primary activity, also carry out food trade activities, or food processing businesses that, in addition to their primary activity, also carry out food trade (retail) activities). In the case of traders, these are sales to the final consumer (a person who has not received an invoice with their tax number).

Taxable persons must report all purchase and sale prices for transactions carried out in Slovenia. When concluding a transaction with a foreigner and when selling goods abroad, these prices are not reported. When purchasing raw materials from abroad, they must report the purchase price upon arrival of the goods in Slovenia.

3.1.2 Reporting data

All reported data must be expressed in the appropriate units of measurement (kg, litres or pieces), as specified in the Regulation on the collection of data in the food supply chain (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 132/23 of 22. 12. 2023). Weighted purchase or sales prices, quantities purchased or sold and origin (Slovenian, EU, non-EU) are collected in the cereals, meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables sectors.

For agricultural products, reporting agents report data on:

- Wheat,
- Bone-in and boneless beef,
- boneless and bone-in pork,
- boneless and bone-in chicken meat,
- unprocessed fresh milk,
- Free-range eggs from categories M and L and
- fresh apples.

Of the foodstuffs, taxpayers report data on:

- Wheat flour (except wholemeal flour) and white, semi-white and brown bread,
- Beef, chicken and pork with and without bones, dried, salted or smoked meat and other meat preparations,
- fresh whole milk, fresh skimmed milk, yoghurt without additives and semi-hard cheese,
- pre-packaged free-range eggs in categories M and L,
- Apples, bananas and lemons, and
- Leaf lettuce, potatoes, onions and carrots.

Origin of agricultural products and foodstuffs

For the purposes of monitoring the Regulation on Data Collection in the Food Supply Chain (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 132/23 of 22 December 2023), the origin of agricultural products and foodstuffs is divided into THREE groups, namely

- SLO - all stages of production and processing are carried out in Slovenia
- EU - all stages of production and processing are carried out in EU countries (if at least one stage of production and processing for which the taxable person has data is outside SLO and all other EU Member States)
- Outside the EU - if at least one production and processing stage is carried out outside the EU.

The origin is determined on the basis of traceability (documents), the main processing stages or labelling, depending on the production stage and type of agricultural or food product category.

Prices included in the analysis:

The purchase price is the realised price, excluding VAT, at which a processor, intermediary or trader buys and pays for agricultural or food products from another taxable person under this order or from another business that is not required to submit data under this order.

The selling price is the price, excluding VAT, at which a producer, processor, intermediary or trader sells and receives payment for agricultural products or foodstuffs that he sells to another taxable person or to another entity that is not obliged to provide data under the contract or to the consumer, and represents the realised sales proceeds.

The weighted price is the average price of the agricultural products or foodstuffs in a particular category, calculated as the sum of the products of the prices and quantities of the individual agricultural products or foodstuffs divided by the sum of the quantities of these agricultural products or foodstuffs. The weighted price includes all prices (including promotional prices) excluding VAT and other additional costs (e.g. transport costs).

Price monitoring case in croatia's food sector

In response to persistent inflation and rising

food prices, Croatia introduced targeted price monitoring measures in May 2025, specifically within the food sector. This initiative aimed to increase transparency, empower consumers, and stimulate healthy competition among retailers. By publicly publishing food prices from individual retailers on a central platform, the government sought to curb unjustified price increases and enhance consumer decision-making.

The approach mirrors similar efforts previously implemented in other EU countries, such as Slovenia during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Croatian context presents unique challenges. A significant portion of food purchases in Croatia is made by tourists, who are less likely to engage with national price comparison tools. Moreover, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of such initiatives in the face of retailers' adaptive pricing tactics and marketing strategies designed to maintain profit margins without triggering public scrutiny.

While it is too early to fully assess the long-term impact of Croatia's food price monitoring system, early indications suggest that consumer awareness alone may not be sufficient to regulate prices. For the initiative to succeed, it may need to be complemented by stronger enforcement mechanisms, integration with broader market oversight tools, and ongoing public engagement campaigns.

In Croatia, price monitoring in the food sector has gained increased attention as a tool to combat inflation, protect consumers, and promote fair competition. However, it is crucial to distinguish between the different levels at which price monitoring can occur:

- Agricultural Products (Primary Production): This level involves tracking the prices of raw agricultural commodities such as grains, fruits, vegetables, and livestock directly at the production stage. Monitoring here is essential for understanding input costs and supporting farmers through informed policy decisions.
- Processed Products (Industry Prices): This stage covers the prices of food items after the food industry has processed them. Monitoring industry-level pricing helps identifying shifts in cost between raw materials and finished goods, which can indicate inefficiencies or market imbalances.
- Retail Food Products: The most visible to consumers, this level focuses on the prices of food items sold in supermarkets, grocery stores, and other retail outlets. The Croatian government's 2025 initiative specifically targets this layer by collecting and publishing retail prices to inform consumers and encourage competitive behaviour among retailers.

Understanding these distinctions is key to designing effective monitoring systems. Each level involves different market dynamics and stakeholders and therefore requires tailored approaches. Effective coordination between them can provide a comprehensive understanding of price formation along the food supply chain, enabling more informed policy responses to inflation and market manipulation.

4. Conclusion

Price monitoring practices across Europe demonstrate a shared commitment to market transparency, consumer protection, and fair competition. Countries like Germany, France, and the Netherlands have implemented robust systems often led by public authorities such as competition agencies or consumer protection bodies that systematically track prices across essential goods and services. These systems utilize a mix of traditional data collection, digital tools, and collaboration with industry stakeholders to ensure prices reflect genuine market dynamics rather than anti-competitive behavior or unjustified inflationThe European Commission also plays a key role by encouraging harmonized practices and supporting digital tools that enable cross-border price comparisons, enhancing consumer choice in the single market. Overall, the diversity of national approaches reflects local market conditions and policy priorities, but they all converge on the goal of fostering a fair and transparent economic environment. Going forward, integrating real-time data and AI-powered analytics may further enhance these monitoring mechanisms, enabling policymakers respond more swiftly to economic shocks or manipulative pricing behaviors.

In May 2025, Croatia implemented specific measures to monitor and publicly disclose the prices of food products at individual retail outlets. Similarly, Slovenia adopted comparable measures during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to rising food prices. However, it became evident that these initiatives did not fully achieve their intended goals. Due to various manipulative tactics and innovative pricing strategies employed by some retailers, the measures fell short in fostering a genuinely competitive

market environment or in effectively curbing price increases and inflation in the agricultural and food sectors through increased consumer awareness.

In Slovenia, this approach has not produced the desired results. As for Croatia, its effectiveness remains to be seen. However, it is important to note that a significant share of food purchasers in Croatia are tourists, who are unlikely to engage with such price monitoring tools frequently. Therefore, one potential avenue for improvement could lie in the proposals and insights presented in this article.

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Pregled ustaljenih primjera praksi praćenja cijena u Europi

Sažetak

Ova studija istražuje ustaljene primjere praksi praćenja cijena diljem Europe, ističući različite strategije koje primjenjuju nacionalna tijela kako bi osigurala transparentnost tržišta, zaštitila potrošače i održala poštenu konkurenciju. Ispituje uloge ključnih institucija poput nacionalnih tijela za zaštitu tržišnog natjecanja, agencija za zaštitu potrošača i statističkih ureda, kao i napore Europske komisije za usklađivanje praksi u državama članicama. Primjeri iz zemalja EU ilustriraju niz metodologija, od tradicionalnog prikupljanja podataka do korištenja digitalnih platformi i analitike u stvarnom vremenu. Studija naglašava važnost praćenja cijena u reagiranju na inflacijske pritiske, otkrivanju tržišnih poremećaja i informiranju javne politike. Analizirajući trenutne pristupe, rad pruža uvid u najbolje prakse i identifici-

ra mogućnosti za daljnje inovacije i prekograničnu suradnju u promjenjivom europskom gospodarskom krajoliku. Zbog raznih manipulativnih taktika i inovativnih strategija određivanja cijena koje su u Hrvatskoj koristili neki trgovci, mjere nisu uspjele potaknuti istinski konkurentno tržišno okruženje niti učinkovito obuzdati rast cijena i inflaciju u poljoprivrednom i prehrambenom sektoru kroz povećanu svijest potrošača. U Sloveniji ovaj pristup nije dao željene rezultate. Što se tiče Hrvatske, njegovu učinkovitost tek treba vidjeti. Međutim, važno je napomenuti da značajan udio kupaca hrane u Hrvatskoj čine turisti, koji vjerojatno neće često koristiti takve alate za praćenje cijena.

Ključne riječi: Praćenje cijena hrane, analize, Europska unija, Slovenija, Hrvatska

Überblick über etablierte Beispiele von Preisüberwachungspraktiken in Europa

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie untersucht etablierte Beispiele von Preisüberwachungspraktiken in Europa und hebt die verschiedenen Strategien hervor, die von nationalen Behörden eingesetzt werden, um Markttransparenz zu gewährleisten, Verbraucher zu schützen und einen fairen Wettbewerb aufrechtzuerhalten. Sie untersucht die Rolle von Schlüsselinstitutionen wie nationalen Wettbewerbsbehörden, Verbraucherschutzagenturen und statistischen Ämtern sowie die Bemühungen der Europäischen Kommission um eine Harmonisierung der Praktiken in den Mitgliedsstaaten. Beispiele aus EU-Ländern veranschaulichen eine Reihe von Methoden, von der traditionellen Datenerhebung bis hin zum Einsatz digitaler Plattformen und Echtzeitanalysen. Die Studie unterstreicht die Bedeutung der Preisüberwachung, um auf Inflationsdruck zu reagieren, Marktverzerrungen aufzudecken und die Politik zu informieren. Durch die Analyse aktueller Ansätze bietet die Studie einen Einblick in bewährte Verfahren und zeigt Möglichkeiten für weitere Innovationen und grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit in der sich entwickelnden europäischen Wirtschaftslandschaft auf. Aufgrund verschiedener Manipulationstaktiken und innovativer Preisstrategien, die in Kroatien von einigen Einzelhändlern angewandt wurden, haben die Maßnahmen nicht ausgereicht, um ein wirklich wettbewerbsfähiges Marktumfeld zu schaffen oder Preissteigerungen und Inflation im Agrar- und Lebensmittelsektor durch eine stärkere Sensibilisierung der Verbraucher wirksam zu bekämpfen. In Slowenien hat dieser Ansatz nicht zu den gewünschten Ergebnissen geführt. Was Kroatien betrifft, so bleibt ihre Wirksamkeit abzuwarten. Es ist jedoch wichtig zu wissen, dass ein erheblicher Anteil der Lebensmittelkäufer in Kroatien Touristen sind, die sich wahrscheinlich nicht häufig mit solchen Preisüberwachungsinstrumenten beschäftigen.

Schlüsselwörter: Überwachung der Lebensmittelpreise, Analysen, Europäische Union, Slowenien, Kroatien

Panorama de prácticas consolidadas de monitoreo de precios en Europa

Resumen

Este estudio analiza ejemplos consolidados de prácticas de monitoreo de precios en distintos países europeos, destacando la diversidad de estrategias implementadas por las autoridades nacionales para garantizar la transparencia del mercado, proteger a los consumidores y preservar una competencia leal. Se examina el papel de instituciones clave como las autoridades nacionales de competencia, las agencias de protección al consumidor, las oficinas estadísticas, así como los esfuerzos de la Comisión Europea por armonizar las prácticas entre los Estados miembros. Se presentan ejemplos de países de la UE que ilustran una variedad de metodologías, que van desde la recolección de datos tradicional hasta el uso de plataformas digitales y analítica en tiempo real. El estudio pone de relieve la importancia del mo-

nitoreo de precios frente a presiones inflacionarias, la detección de distorsiones del mercado y la formulación de políticas públicas. Mediante el análisis de los enfoques actuales, el trabajo ofrece una visión de las mejores prácticas y señala oportunidades para una mayor innovación y colaboración transfronteriza en un panorama económico europeo en constante evolución. Debido a diversas estrategias de fijación de precios manipulativas y tácticas comerciales innovadoras adoptadas por algunos minoristas, las medidas aplicadas en Croacia no lograron generar un entorno de mercado genuinamente competitivo ni contener de forma efectiva el aumento de precios y la inflación en los sectores agrícola y alimentario, a pesar de los intentos de fomentar una mayor conciencia del consumidor. En Eslovenia, este enfoque tampoco ha producido los resultados esperados. En cuanto a Croacia, su eficacia aún está por determinarse. Cabe destacar, sin embargo, que una proporción significativa de los compradores de alimentos en Croacia son turistas, quienes probablemente no utilicen con regularidad las herramientas de monitoreo de precios.

Palabras claves: monitoreo de precios de alimentos, análisis, Unión Europea, Eslovenia, Croacia

Panoramica delle pratiche consolidate di monitoraggio dei prezzi in Europa

Riassunto

Questo studio esamina esempi consolidati di pratiche di monitoraggio dei prezzi in tutta Europa, sottolineando le diverse strategie adottate dalle autorità nazionali per garantire la trasparenza del mercato, proteggere i consumatori e mantenere una concorrenza leale. Vengono analizzati i ruoli delle principali istituzioni, come le autorità nazionali per la concorrenza, le agenzie per la tutela dei consumatori e gli uffici statistici, nonché gli sforzi della Commissione Europea per armonizzare le pratiche tra gli Stati membri. Esempi tratti da vari Paesi dell'UE illustrano una gamma di metodologie che spaziano dalla raccolta tradizionale dei dati all'utilizzo di piattaforme digitali e all'analisi in tempo reale.
Lo studio sottolinea l'importanza del monitoraggio dei prezzi nel rispondere alle pressioni inflazionistiche, nell'individuare distorsioni di mercato e nell'orientare le politiche pubbliche.
Analizzando gli approcci attuali, lo studio fornisce una panoramica delle migliori pratiche e identifica opportunità per ulteriori innovazioni e per la cooperazione transfrontaliera in un contesto economico europeo in continua evoluzione. A causa di varie tattiche manipolative e strategie di prezzo innovative adottate da alcuni commercianti in Croazia, le misure intraprese non sono riuscite a creare un ambiente di mercato realmente competitivo, né a contenere efficacemente l'aumento dei prezzi e l'inflazione nel settore agricolo e alimentare attraverso una maggiore consapevolezza dei consumatori. In Slovenia, questo approccio non ha prodotto i risultati auspicati. Per quanto riguarda la Croazia, la sua efficacia resta ancora da verificare. È tuttavia importante notare che una quota significativa degli acquirenti di generi alimentari in Croazia è costituita da turisti, i quali con ogni probabilità non utilizzeranno frequentemente strumenti di monitoraggio dei prezzi.

Parole chiave: Monitoraggio dei prezzi dei generi alimentari, analisi, Unione Europea, Slovenia, Croazia