

Wild fluctuations in veg prices continue in Israel

The prices of vegetables in the Israeli local market have skyrocketed in the last month. Cucumber prices have increased by 25%, from 8 shekel per kilo to 10 shekel just in the last 24 hours. This added to an ongoing trend which saw cucumber prices go up by 156% in September. The price of peppers has also shot up in recent days, increasing by 15% since yesterday, and up 50% with 12 shekel per kilo in the last month. Zucchini prices have gone up by 100% in the last month, increasing by 10% in the last few days.

Tomato prices have been stable recently, but have seen an increase of 162% since the beginning of September. White and red cabbage prices have also increased, by 39% and 38% respectively in the same period.

The cause for these price spikes has been a shortage in supply caused by weather conditions, combined with the Jewish holiday period, which took place during the week this year, eliminating several business days. Israeli produce wholesalers report that supplies have been so low that even low quality vegetables are garnering high prices. Roni Mizrahi, a wholesaler from Jerusalem, said "By 4:30 in the morning there were no more cucumbers available in the market. Supply had run out. Peppers were out by 5:00. I estimate that tomorrow will be a similar situation. Really poor quality tomatoes are selling for outrageous prices, and good quality tomatoes aren't available at all."

As a result of this situation, farmers, wholesalers, and supermarkets have criticized the government for not taking the necessary precautions to prevent such price fluctuations. The farmers point to lacking support for the agriculture sector, while the wholesalers and supermarkets are lamenting the fact that the ministry of agriculture allowed no import of produce prior to the prices jumping upwards.

The Israeli minister of agriculture, Uri Ariel, recently announced that the government will allow importation of vegetables from Europe; however this announcement was made a mere few days before the holiday, making it nearly impossible to make use of these imports in practice.

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