

Call for Paper Proposals
Special Issue of the Journal of Agriculture and Food Industrial Organization (JAFIO)
on
The Causes and Consequences of Retail Food Price Inflation

From 2021 to late 2022, the U.S. economy experienced significant inflation including in the food and agricultural sectors. While global supply chain shocks due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine without question increased costs across the food supply chain and significantly contributed to inflation, economists and policymakers have speculated about other drivers. Some have pointed to the role of inflation expectations and behavioral factors that result in positive feedback and an upward spiraling of prices. Strong demand and government spending may also play a role. Meanwhile, some argue that food price inflation is partially explained by companies with large market share “price gouging” consumers under the guise of supply chain shocks.

While core inflation appears to be slowing right now, food prices continue to climb. Why peak food inflation has not been reached yet raises questions about the contribution of these different drivers and concerns about impacts on consumers. Higher prices no doubt have disproportionate impacts on food insecure households or lower-income populations who spend a larger share of their income on food. Higher prices may also impact nutrition and household spending on other essential categories such as healthcare and energy. Research is needed to fully understand the effects of food inflation on consumers’ purchase behavior and welfare implications, especially for low-income households.

Furthermore, how market structure and competition relate to changes in food prices is still an important question, one that only a few studies have addressed. Especially because the US food retail sector has been consolidating in recent decades and some empirical evidence indicates that higher levels of concentration in local markets leads to higher food prices. Additional studies are needed to better understand the conditions under which concentration in food retail can lead to higher prices and adverse outcomes for consumers.

The goal of this special issue is to highlight innovative applied economic research on the relationship between retail concentration, competition, food prices and impacts on consumers. Studies using empirical approaches will be prioritized for publication, but literature reviews, case studies and other qualitative methods are equally welcome. We are particularly interested in studies that evaluate the distributional impacts of rising retail food prices on low-income or food insecure people. Studies that utilize economic models and theories, combined with concepts from other disciplines are also strongly encouraged.

The guest editors for this special issue are: Rebecca Nemec Boehm, PhD and Shawn Arita, PhD, Office of the Chief Economist, US Department of Agriculture, and Metin Çakır, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota

Paper proposals (2 pages double-spaced in 12-point font) should be submitted to Metin Çakır at mcakir@umn.edu by February 1, 2023. Authors will be notified about accepted proposals by February 15, 2023. Selected papers will be uploaded to: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/dgjafio> no later than September 15, 2023 and will receive an expedited review. Contributors will be asked to recommend reviewers for the special issue upon paper submission. They will also serve as peer reviewers themselves through a single-blind review process. The special issue will be published in the Spring of 2024.

With any questions contact Metin Çakır at mcakir@umn.edu. We look forward to your contributions on this important topic.

Sincerely,

Metin Çakır, Rebecca Nemec Boehm, and Shawn Arita