

Food Costs Soar but Healthy Eating still Affordable

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Healthy food is still affordable for the average family, despite the cost of food skyrocketing by 20 per cent since 2000, according to new research.

The survey, in *Nutrition & Dietetics* published by Wiley-Blackwell, found rising food costs have been matched by increasing average incomes and welfare payments - making the affordability of healthy food about the same as it was in 2000.

Researchers compared the results of the Illawarra Healthy Food Basket survey between 2000 and 2007 to monitor the affordability of healthy eating over time.

According to the survey, vegetables and fruit increased in price the most - by 56 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. But the cost of bread, cereals and dairy foods stayed the same or even dropped over the seven-year period.

“It’s concerning that fruit and vegetable prices have gone up the most. Our study shows this rise has been offset by other prices coming down and by the increase in people’s income. So putting healthy food on the table is still possible even in this day and age,” said study co-author and Accredited Practising Dietitian Dr Peter Williams.

“Now more than ever, the Government needs to focus its policies on reducing the cost of healthy food like fruit and vegetables. All

Australians should be able to access healthy foods at a reasonable price,” said Claire Hewat, Executive Director of the Dietitians Association of Australia.

“With warnings that climate change will put upward pressure on food prices, we’re encouraging Australians to prepare more homemade meals from basic food items, like fruit and vegetables. And this survey shows that it’s cheaper to buy fresh foods from the supermarket than to eat out,” Ms. Hewat added.

More information: This paper is published in February 2009, *Nutrition & Dietetics* (Vol. 66, Issue 1).

www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo.../1/122209385/abstract

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