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from the publisher

Food Inflation is still Real in 2025!

Over the years, I've focused on food inflation. It definitely is a leading indicator of the US economy. There are several reasons why food inflation makes its appearance. In the industry, food prices are one of the first categories that increase in lieu of upcoming economic downturns. Let's examine the current situation. The common thought for today's food inflation includes the war in Ukraine, shipping costs, and higher costs associated with the production of food items (increased wages).

That begs the question "How much have food prices risen in the past 12 months and how does this compare to general inflation?" According to Forbes Magazine, The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported food inflation has risen at a faster rate than the broader Consumer Price Index over the previous 12 months. General inflation - as measured by CPI-U, which covers all urban areas - rose 3.2% for the 12-month period ending in July, while the cost of food rose 4.9% during the same period.

So which food items have been most effected by inflation? Grain products top the list. Ukraine produces a lot of grain and Russia's invasion hit producers and exporters of grains and oilseeds hard. The effects on cereals and other grain products rose as much as 10.7% in the past year. Also rising substantially were frozen foods such as fruits and vegetables (11.8%) and noncarbonated juices and drinks (16.3%) and margarine increased by 11.3%.

To ignore the effects Covid-19 and the rebound that followed in 2023 resulted in the most significant reason for rising prices. According to Forbes Magazine, "As we emerged from the pandemic, supply chains were severely disrupted and coupled with the glut of fiscal stimulus from governments around the world, demand remained strong. This supply/demand imbalance was the primary reason for the current round of inflation". There were some bright spots in the cost of certain food prices which fell during the past 12 months. This includes bacon (-10.7%); pork chops (-2.4%); pork roast, steaks, and ribs (-6.8%); chicken (-2.5%); eggs (-13.7%); and fresh whole milk (-4.5%). Prices for oranges and tangerines also fell (-3.6%), as did peanut butter (-1.7%).

So how long can we expect these high costs in our supermarkets. We are reminded that this is a global event and the reasons cited started long before the pandemic such as the cost of shipping, labor, and tariffs. Some of the other generic reasons that have been mentioned are the federal government's excessive spending, a.k.a. fiscal stimulus which continues to push prices higher. Inflation occurs when there is too much demand relative to supply.

Here's where I break from the uniform idea of supply and demand. We have plenty of supply. And we have an equal proportion of demand. In fact, the United States continues to produce too much food! That's why the export industry exists. An industry I've been involved with for 20 years and the growth has been exponential! What's really going on?

As food prices head higher, it's a safe bet the Fed will continue to tighten rates until inflation falls to its 2.0% target. The conventional thought...if the federal government reduces spending, they might not need to go to such extremes in raising rates and reducing the money supply. Yeah...right! That isn't happening. Remember when China and the US were in a bitter trade war? It's still simmering.

And then in 2022 the container shortages caused clogged supply lines and backlogs in US ports. Remember that? The cost of food products as well as many other product categories started with the US/China tariff war in 2019. That war spilled over to the artificially created shortage of containers which

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If you've been paying attention to the small-but-mighty war on single-use plastics, you've likely noticed a growing trend—sustainable cutlery making its way to your favorite cafes, restaurants, and even the office lunch room.

But while eco-friendly forks and compostable spoons are working hard to save the planet, their adoption rates aren't without a few twists and turns. Businesses and consumers are standing at a metaphorical fork in the road. Do we continue down a path littered with polypropylene forks that take 500 years to decompose, or do we pivot toward the shinier (and more guilt-free) future of compostable items?

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A Growing Trend With a Side of Confusion

First, some good news! The market adoption of sustainable cutlery is on the rise. What was once a niche segment is now becoming a viable, mainstream alternative to single-use plastics. And businesses are catching on—cafes, food trucks, and even corporate giants are taking the leap to swap out traditional cutlery for more sustainable counterparts.

Here's the tea, though—while compostable cutlery, such as those made from polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA), offers a vastly superior option to the traditional polypropylene options (a.k.a., the dinosaurs of the plastics world), it's not exactly a smooth ride for manufacturers or businesses ready to make the switch. To begin with, just slapping "compostable" on your product isn't the free pass you think it is. Certifying bodies have made the designation process increasingly strict, and while that's important for environmental integrity, the constant rule changes have left manufacturers scratching their heads—and sometimes slowing down production.

PHA vs. Polypropylene—It's Not Even a Fight

Now, why should we care that PHA is outperforming polypropylene by a landslide? Because it's shaping up to be the Usain Bolt of sustainable materials (really fast, really impressive). PHA doesn't just make excellent cutlery—it's also safe for food use and biodegrades in a fraction of the time compared to the plastic leftovers we've been burying in our landfills and oceans. It's even marine-biodegradable, meaning if some of those forks end up in the sea (they shouldn't, but accidents happen), they'll be gone faster than you can say, "Save the turtles!"

Simply put, PHA isn't just superior—it's the MVP of materials in the sustainability space right now.

Compostable... But Complicated

Here's where things get messy—literally. Compostable cutlery is being held to higher standards by those who oversee these certifications. While that's great for ensuring quality and environmental benefit, it creates uncertainty for manufacturers.

One week, your eco-spoon meets the criteria. The next, you're told the rules have changed and suddenly, your product is no longer up to par. It's like showing up for a dance competition only to find out they've switched categories from ballroom to hip-hop overnight—it's confusing, frustrating, and can stall adoption until things are ironed out.

Businesses and consumers often find themselves stuck in this loop of misinformation, which doesn't exactly scream "smooth adoption." Until certifying bodies streamline the process, these hiccups might deter or delay more widespread implementation of sustainable cutlery.

A Bright Future With Some Hurdles

The good news is that the future of sustainable products is as bright as a freshly cleaned compost bin (stay with me here). Demand for eco-friendly alternatives is growing, businesses are investing more resources into sustainable innovations, and consumers are voting with their wallets. But for this bright green future to become

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For three generations, the Seely Family has lived and worked on its mint farm near Clatskanie, Oregon, where they grow peppermint and spearmint for essential oil. As mint farmers, they use the same agricultural practices their family has used for generations.

Today, third-generation mint farmer, Mike Seely operates the Seely Family Farm. They grow single-cut, premium-quality heirloom Black Mitcham Peppermint and Native Spearmint. The mint they raise is sustainably harvested and has a unique flavor that cannot be found anywhere else. The way they grow their mint, the region's climate, the rich soils along the Columbia River and their harvesting methods make their mint extraordinarily smooth and refreshing. The essential mint oils are steam distilled only once to retain the

full flavor spectrum and bouquet of real Oregon mint.

In addition to mint oil, one of their most popular creations is the handcrafted Seely Mint Peppermint Patty, a delicious combination of European dark chocolate and Seely heirloom mint. They also produce a complete line of mint confections, sun-dried mint leaf tea, mint soap, and even mint flea repellent for pets.

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reality, several challenges need addressing.

1. Availability of Materials

First things first—sustainable materials like PHA need to be available in larger quantities at accessible prices. Not every manufacturer has the resources to source eco-friendly materials, making it harder for them to offer sustainable alternatives in large quantities.

2. Consistent Messaging from Certifying Bodies

Certifications are great, but they're useful only when businesses and manufacturers can actually trust the process. Clear, consistent, and achievable guidelines from certifying bodies will be crucial to ensure the process doesn't feel like trying to decode ancient hieroglyphics. Not only does the article need to be compostable, but the packaging as well.

3. Business Support and Investment

Here's the kicker—businesses HAVE to walk the walk. It's not enough to promote green initiatives in marketing campaigns without actually prioritizing sustainability in their supply chains. The more money and resources businesses invest in sustainable products, the more normalized they'll become. Businesses serious about sustainability need to promote their work in sustainability, invest in small business and make sustainability goals achievable.

4. Willing Manufacturers

Finally, we need more manufacturers willing to take on the upfront costs of producing sustainable goods. Sure, economies of scale often lower costs later, but jumping into sustainable production can feel like an expensive gamble. Hint to businesses reading this—it's time to support these champions.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The adoption rate of sustainable products like compostable cutlery is a work in progress. We're seeing the shift happen every day, but the hurdles—availability, certifications, and upfront costs—can't be ignored.

For businesses, this is the time to step up—invest in the materials, support sustainable manufacturing, and communicate clearly with your customers about the changes you're making.

One thing's for sure—while the future of sustainable products might still have a few potholes, the momentum behind them is unstoppable.

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California Walnuts provide the goodness of a natural whole food while adding unique flavor and texture to a variety of foods. Over 30 years of research suggests that California Walnuts may offer a myriad of health benefits and a great reason to incorporate them into your daily eating.

When it comes to including walnuts into your meal plan, think outside the box. Although they

are known for adding delicious flavor and texture to baked goods, they have become a popular snack, toss in for savvy salads, a thickener for soups and sauces and a great plant-based meat substitute in many of your favorite dishes.

California Walnuts have a mild and buttery flavor and soft consistency, making them an excellent choice for both sweet and savory dishes. To keep walnuts at their peak freshness and maintain their great taste it is best to store them in the refrigerator between uses. Walnuts should also be used within 6 months of purchase. For longer storage, place them in a freezer for up to 12 months. They thaw quickly and can be used almost immediately.

The California walnut industry has a long tradition of producing a healthy, safe, quality food product for its global consumers. Pamela Gravier, Vice President Integrated Marketing for California Walnut Commission (CWC) explains the latest crop and sales data. "The 2023 crop was an all-time high record for the California industry at

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823,000 tons. This was combined with 140,000 tons carryover from the 2022 crop, resulting in a marketable volume of 960,000 tons. Sales have been robust both in the U.S and overseas with the USA up 8% and export markets up 25% year-to-date over the previous year. The industry is optimistic for the upcoming crop year with a more normal crop size (production and carry in), a continued focus on delivering quality all the way to the consumer, better

handling of walnuts by our trade partners and our demand-building initiatives to drive more sales and excitement for California walnuts.”

Graviet outlined the current global marketing strategy and activities. “During this past year, the California walnut industry’s marketing efforts have been designed to increase global demand and consumption in North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The CWC recently conducted consumer research to help the industry better understand

consumer perceptions of California walnuts while identifying barriers to increased consumption. The research identified key areas for the industry to focus on to increase consumer consumption and drive sales.

“A strategic focus will be to deliver the best taste experience to consumers, from orchard to table, through improved education of best shipping, handling, and storage practices. Additionally, our efforts directly tie into current trends of plant-based diets, food as medicine, freshness and convenience / on-the-go. With over thirty years of CWC supported health and nutrition research, consumers are keenly aware that walnuts can play a positive role in improving heart health, brain health and healthy aging. California walnuts are an easy way for consumers to add a boost of health benefits, flavor and crunch, to their daily routines.”

When asked which products are driving international sales Graviet adds, “Overall, more and more consumers are looking for the convenience of walnut kernels for snacking, cooking, and baking. In fact, our research has shown that snacking is the #1 use for walnuts across the globe. For California walnuts, the USA is the largest consumer. When looking overseas, Germany is the world’s largest importer of kernels including those from California. Japan, Korea, Spain and the Netherlands are also significant destinations. Inshell walnuts are preferred in Turkey, Italy, India, and the UAE.”

The global dried fruit and walnut industry has witnessed substantial growth in recent years, driven by increasing health awareness, a

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by Lisa Mooney

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Hazelnuts have grown in popularity and are quickly establishing themselves as the new nut, leading innovative product launches in top growing categories today. And, consumers are enjoying more hazelnuts for a variety of reasons: superior taste, quality, health and nutrition attributes, and availability.

The hazelnut became Oregon's official state nut in 1989 and about 1,000 farm families grow hazelnuts on approximately 93,000 acres in the state. Due to its unique location on the 45th parallel, Oregon's moderate climate, ample precipitation and rich volcanic soil provide ideal growing conditions for Oregon Hazelnuts.

The hazelnut is unique in that it blooms and pollinates in the middle of winter. Wind carries the pollen from yellow catkins to a tiny red flower, where it stays dormant until June, when the nut begins to form. The nuts mature during the summer months, turning from green to shades of hazel nestled in a protective husk, and are harvested in late September or October after they have fallen to the ground.

According to the Hazelnut Industry Office, "U.S. hazelnuts have long been prized for their large size, which are unparalleled in the inshell market. In addition, high oil content leads to a smoother, sweeter flavor than many other hazelnuts available throughout the world. As an industry, we also take quality standards very seriously, and our growers and handlers prioritize producing a premium product. U.S. hazelnuts are trending as a premium ingredient, too, which formats like paste/butter, oil and meal rising in popularity along with the traditional kernels and in-shell nuts".

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www.wilburpacking.com

Farmers' Rice Cooperative (FRC) is a grower-owned rice marketing cooperative. Since 1944, we have supplied domestic and international food manufacturers, brewers, private retailers, exporters and distributors with premium quality California rice.

What makes FRC unique is our vertically integrated structure; we are directly in control of every aspect in the production lifecycle - from the fields of our grower owned farms, to the milling of the rice, all the way through final packing & shipping. This allows us to not only ensure the quality of the products we sell, but also allows us to quickly react to changing consumer needs so that we remain ahead of the market.

Diamond G® is the flagship brand of Farmers Rice Cooperative, and is distributed in over 25 countries worldwide. It has received the prestigious Superbrands® award in Jordan, acknowledging Diamond G® as a premier brand.

In addition to Diamond G®, we have several other brands which may be more tailored to specific marketing regions in the world. You may contact us below with your individual market needs so that we can find a product solution for you.

Products We Sell

Medium Grain
Short Grain
Mochi (Sweet Rice)

Processes We Offer

Musenmai (No Wash)
Oil Coated (Camolino Style)
Quick Cooking Brown Rice
Nitrogen Flush (For Freshness)

Packaging Types

1kg - 1000kg
Multiwall Kraft Paper
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P.O. BOX 15223 | Sacramento, CA 95851

TEL: 916-923-5100 | WEB: www.farmersrice.com

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Since 1944



Harris Woolf Almonds-

With Harris Woolf Almonds, the possibilities are endless.



Harris Woolf Almonds is a California-based manufacturer of almonds and almond ingredients. Our products include inshell almonds, natural almonds, almond paste/butter, almond protein powder, and almond oil. Our products have broad utility in several industries: Food & Beverage, Sports Nutrition, Restaurant & Food Service, Cosmetics, and more.

As your sales grow, we grow with you.

Harris Woolf has watched customers' orders grow from under 100 pounds to 1,000,000 pounds or greater. Reliable shipments, fair market pricing, and outstanding customer service will help you scale your production. With the commissioning of a second paste line coming soon, we're looking forward to helping more customers expand their business. In the near future, we look forward to introducing new tree nut pastes. Be sure to follow us on LinkedIn so that you don't miss our exciting news.

Innovation

Our innovation and R&D team possess the almond know-how our customers require when developing new products. Their wealth of knowledge makes them adept at getting formulations using HWA almond paste, protein powder, or oil across the finish line.



Sustainability

The best almonds formulate the best products. We work with approximately 200 unique farms and farmers to harvest high-quality, sustainable almonds. Pollinator preservation, soil health, water conservation, and food safety are at the forefront of our minds and our growers' minds. We encourage our growers to achieve certifications like Bee Friendly Farming or Bee Better Certified or participate in programs like the California Almond Stewardship Platform or EcoPractices.

Contact Us

For more information or to place an order, visit harriswoolfalmonds.com or email us at inquiry@hwalmonds.com.



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Contact Mike Briano
+1.559.630.2109

mbriano@hwalmonds.com



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Continued from page 22

Hazelnuts can be found whole, sliced, ground, raw or roasted. They are commonly eaten as a snack or added to baked goods and other dishes. It's best to eat them with the skin on. Here are some of the most common ways to use hazelnuts in cooking:

- In entrées. Hazelnuts can be used in savory meals, especially in pasta, ravioli, and pesto. Chopped hazelnuts are also delicious on top of salads and to coat fish or poultry.
- Desserts. Hazelnuts are often chopped

and used in desserts like pastries, pies, truffles, biscotti, cookies, tarts, and macaroons.

- Flavoring.. Hazelnut flavoring is one of the most popular flavors for coffee creamers, and it is also used to make hazelnut liqueur, which can be used in cocktails.
- Pressed. Hazelnuts can be pressed to produce hazelnut oil, which is used as a cooking oil in place of canola or olive oil.
- Ground. Hazelnuts can be ground up into hazelnut flour, which is used as a

gluten-free alternative to wheat flour.

- Nut butter. Arguably the second-most common form of hazelnuts in the United States, hazelnut spread, hazelnut paste, and hazelnut butter are all popular.

One reason these nuts are popular around the globe is the health benefits associated with eating them. These healthy nuts are packed with nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, antioxidant compounds and healthy fats. They may offer benefits, including helping decrease blood fat levels, regulating blood pressure, reducing inflammation and improving blood sugar levels, among others. All in all, they are an excellent and delicious source of nutrients that can be easily incorporated into your diet. "Healthwise, hazelnuts are a top-tier source of Vitamin E, and hazelnuts are an excellent source of naturally occurring folate. Hazelnuts are also packed with nutrients like fiber, manganese, and proanthocyanidin, as well as being a solid source of protein," explained the Hazelnut Industry Office.

"2024 was another strong year for U.S. hazelnuts. Final harvest numbers are not available yet, but we are optimistic that we will be comparable to the 2023 record levels. Markets throughout the world continue to discover the advantages of U.S. hazelnuts and are excited by our potential and continued growth. We are in the midst of a historic growth period, and many trees that were planted in the 2010s are just now reaching their productive ages. Our acreage nearly tripled from 2010-2020, and those young trees are just now beginning to produce nuts; it will be exciting to see how much we can grow as these trees mature."

Currently, efforts to market and sell hazelnuts are being concentrated globally in "The European Union, India and Canada."

Source: The Hazelnut Industry Office is the representative body for the industry, including the Hazelnut Marketing Board, Nut Growers Society, Oregon Hazelnut Commission and Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries.

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rising demand for plant-based foods, and changing dietary habits. Additionally, governmental policies have emerged in many nations that promote healthier dietary choices which encourage the consumption of nutritious foods like walnuts. Key drivers include:

1. Snacking Replacing Meals: With busier lifestyles, people are opting for healthier snacks, such as walnuts, over full meals.

2. Increase in Plant-Based Eating: As more individuals choose to eat less meat adopting a more flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan diets, walnuts become a crucial source of nutrition including protein, healthy fats, fiber and essential omega-3 which the body cannot produce. Walnuts are the only tree nut that is an excellent source of plant-based omega-3 ALA (alpha-linolenic acid).

3. Innovative Products: The development of new walnut-based products, including dairy alternatives, meat alternatives, healthier snacks such as seasoned walnuts, and gluten-free options, are attracting new consumer segments and eating occasions.

4. Health and Wellness Awareness: There is growing awareness regarding walnuts health benefits such as reducing the risk of heart disease, lowering cholesterol, but there are also benefits in improving gut health, improving sleep quality, and contributing to overall health and wellbeing. Adding walnuts is an easy way for consumers to add a boost of health benefits, flavor and crunch.

5. Food as Medicine: The concept of using food for its nutritional and medicinal benefits is gaining popularity, with walnuts being a key component. By adding walnuts to existing menu items,

hotels and restaurants are able to meet new consumer dietary demands.

To find out more please visit www.walnuts.org or their booth at one of these upcoming trade shows. “Throughout the globe we participate in many trade shows including those with a special focus on food and beverage product innovation, baked goods, culinary inspiration, and produce – yes, #Walnuts Are Produce Too! Through the end of 2024, you can see us at the Global Produce Show (Atlanta, Georgia), Fi Europe (Frankfurt, Germany) and the CIA Worlds of Flavor International Conference (Napa Valley, CA). The first part of 2025, we will be at Gulfood (Dubai, UAE), and FOODEX (Tokyo, Japan)”.

Sources: California Walnut Commission



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was a silent outcrop. This triggered the supply chains to contract and so supply and demand was affected. In my next statement, I will examine the roll of China and the Federal Government in the acceleration of policies and politics that has contributed to inflation. And with that, I will see you at Gulfcood in Dubai!

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Fax: +1-802-257-8111

E-mail:

sales@bascomfamilyfarms.com

Web site:

www.bascomfamilyfarms.com

Contact: Arnold Coombs

Company Profile: Bascom Family Farms is America's leading independent supplier of pure and organic maple syrup and maple sugar products in a wide range of forms, sizes and packaging. Top food manufacturers, private label maple marketers, food service buyers and chefs choose Bascom Family Farms for our high quality selection, R&D capacity, competitive pricing, and rapid turnaround times. **Product Line:** Grocery items, organic products, pure and organic maple syrup and maple sugar products

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Missouri Northern Pecan Growers

Phone: +1-417-667-3501

E-mail: marketing@mopecans.com

Contact: Ben Bennett or Joe Wilson

Web Site: www.mopecans.com

Business Type: Grower, Shipper,
Packer, Manufacturer

Product Line: Our product offerings include Pecans, Pecan Oil, and Pecan Meal-Flour in Certified Organic and non-Organic



Great Lakes Packing Company Int'l, Inc.

1535 W. 43rd Street

Chicago, IL 60609

Phone: +1-773-927-6660

Fax: +1-773-927-8587

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greatlakespacking@ameritech.net

Web Site: www.glparking.com

Contact: Adriana Alcalá -
General Manager

Product Line: Pickled Meats, Pork
and Beef packed in brine.

Company Profile:

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Website: www.chefpaul.com

Contact: Anna Zuniga,

Business Type: Manufacturer,
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Contact: Banu Sinar

Website: www.settonfarms.com

Business Type: Grower, Processor, Exporter, Roaster, Manufacturer, Packer

Business Profile: America's premier grower, processor, and exporter of California pistachios since 1986. Setton markets "America's Best Tasting Pistachios," offering raw and roasted salted inshell, raw whole kernels, Organic, seasoned inshell pistachios, seasoned pistachio kernels, dark chocolate pistachios and premium blend snacks.

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E-mail: ewv@rosepacking.com

Web Site: www.rosepacking.com

Contact: Erik W. Vandenberg

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