

Maize prices remain high as demand for livestock feed keeps rising

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Wholesale and retail prices of maize have remained high so far in 2025, driven by sustained demand for feed from Bangladesh's poultry, dairy, and aquaculture sectors.

In February, the wholesale price of maize stood at Tk 34.49 per kilogramme (kg), while the retail price was Tk 38.47, according to a report released last month by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Though prices tend to fall briefly during the harvest season, they typically rise again within months, reflecting strong year-round demand from the feed industry.

The country currently hosts around 150 registered feed companies producing an estimated 75 lakh tonnes of commercial feed annually. An additional 500,000 tonnes are produced by unregistered operations.

The report said Bangladesh's feed manufacturing sector is the largest consumer of maize, accounting for 90 percent of total production, estimated at 57 lakh tonnes in the marketing year 2024-25.

The USDA report said maize makes up as much as 65 percent of poultry feed formulations. In the case of dairy feed, the grain accounts for up to 35 percent of the requirement.

Because of its strong returns and expanding demand, maize—the second-largest grain crop in the country after rice—continues to gain popularity among farmers.

In MY26, production of the grain is forecast to hit 58 lakh tonnes, the USDA forecast.

The area under cultivation is expected to increase slightly to 660,000 hectares, supported by good weather, timely fertiliser application, and irrigation.

The report added that farmers are prioritising maize cultivation due to its



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PHOTO: STAR/FILE

profitability.

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Major maize-producing districts include Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, and Rangpur, while cultivation is also spreading to char areas and coastal lands due to favourable yields.

The availability of hybrid seed varieties has pushed average yields above 10 tonnes per hectare, with some hybrids delivering

even more under optimal conditions, according to the report.

Apart from increased production, Bangladesh's maize imports have shot up to meet demand from the feed industry.

In MY25, maize imports were estimated at 16 lakh tonnes—growing nearly threefold compared to the previous year.

However, as domestic production improves and stocks build, imports are projected to fall by 12.5 percent to 14 lakh tonnes in MY26, the USDA forecast.

The report said Brazil emerged as the

leading corn supplier to Bangladesh after India's exportable surplus declined due to rising biofuel demand.

In the first 10 months of MY25, Bangladesh imported 14 lakh tonnes of maize, mainly from Brazil.

The USDA report estimates that ending stocks will reach 303,000 tonnes in MY26, down from 403,000 tonnes in the previous year.

While production prospects remain strong, challenges such as pest management persist, the report added.

Prada agrees to buy Versace for \$1.38b despite tariffs

REUTERS, Milan

Prada struck a deal on Thursday to buy smaller rival Versace from Capri Holdings for \$1.375 billion, which includes its debt, in a move that unites two of the biggest names in Italian fashion.

Prada is seeking to expand, having defied a slowdown in luxury demand, while Versace has been operating at a loss. The merger strengthens Italy's hand in a luxury industry led by French conglomerates.

The deal follows the announcement on March 13 that Donatella Versace was stepping down as the chief creative officer of the brand founded by her late brother Gianni.

"We aim to continue Versace's legacy celebrating and re-interpreting its bold and timeless aesthetic," said Prada Chairman Patrizio Bertelli.

"At the same time, we will provide it with a strong platform, reinforced by years of ongoing investments and rooted in longstanding relationships," added Bertelli, husband of Prada designer Miuccia Prada. The couple are leading shareholders in the company.

The price Prada has agreed to pay for Versace is a big discount to the roughly \$2.15 billion including debt that Capri paid for Versace in 2018.

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Prada is seeking to expand while Versace has been operating at a loss

Tariff war could cut US-China goods trade by 80%: WTO chief

AFP, Geneva

The World Trade Organization chief said Wednesday the US-China tariff war could reduce trade in goods between the two economic giants by 80 percent, pulling down the rest of the world economy.

President Donald Trump raised tariffs on China to 125 percent on Wednesday as the world's two largest economies fought over retaliatory levies.

"The escalating trade tensions between the United States and China pose a significant risk of a sharp contraction in bilateral trade. Our preliminary projections suggest that merchandise trade between these two economies could decrease by as much as 80 percent," WTO director general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in a statement.

She said the United States and China together accounted for three per cent of world trade and warned that the conflict could "severely damage the global economic outlook". Even as he slapped further



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

tariffs on China, Trump paused higher tariffs on the rest of the world for 90 days after dozens of countries reached out for negotiations.

Okonjo-Iweala warned that the world economy risked breaking into two blocs, one centred around the United States and the other China. "Of particular concern is the potential fragmentation of global trade along geopolitical lines. A division of the global economy into two blocs could lead to a long-term reduction in global real GDP by nearly seven percent," she said.

She urged all WTO members "to address this challenge through cooperation and dialogue". "It is critical for the global community to work together to preserve the openness of the international trading system," said Okonjo-Iweala.

"WTO members have agency to protect the open, rules-based trading system. The WTO serves as a vital platform for dialogue. Resolving these issues within a cooperative framework is essential."

Hours earlier, Trump ramped up duties on Chinese goods to 104 percent, only to hike them further when China retaliated by raising tariffs on US imports to 84 percent.

In a social media post announcing the moves, Trump said China had been singled out for special treatment because of "the lack of respect that China has shown to the World's Markets".

US stock markets had slumped around 10 percent in the past week as trade tensions grew, but they surged after Trump announced his pause.

Old roots, new realities

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

In our days, one landline served the entire moholla – and half the neighbourhood aunts answered your calls before your parents did. If you misbehaved, Amma's flying chappal had GPS-guided accuracy – one silent glare, one clean hit. Eid was pure magic: a new panjabi, some Tk 10 Eidi, and rooftop laughter with cousins till midnight. Fast forward to today, where kids have personal phones, fear screen time limits more than chappals, and won't call it Eid unless there's a new outfit, a viral reel, and at least 500 likes before lunch.

After reading the reviews, my wife and I watched Adolescence, a gripping Netflix series about 13-year-old Jamie Miller, arrested for murdering his classmate, Katie Leonard. The story exposes how parental awareness, personal choices, and Gen Z's digital world intertwine in tragic ways. Jamie's parents are consumed with guilt over missing the signs – his emotional struggles, his toxic online interactions. Influenced by bullying and extremist online groups like the "incel" subculture, Jamie's descent feels alarmingly real. The series powerfully captures how social media, digital radicalisation, and distorted ideas of masculinity are reshaping youth behaviour, often with devastating consequences.

Essential lessons include the critical need for parents to foster open communication with their children, actively monitor their social media engagement, and address the risks posed by harmful online environments, which deeply influence the behaviour and mindset of Gen Z.

Watching Adolescence, I realised how innocent our childhood in Bangladesh was – we worried about stealing mangoes or dodging neighbours after breaking windows with cricket balls. Our biggest "radicalisation" was sneaking into cinema halls or secretly reading comics (Dasyu Banhur, Masud Rana). Today's kids stress over Snapchat streaks, TikTok dances, and emoji breakups. Our "social networking" was tea-stall adda; theirs is virtual chats in cryptic acronyms the CIA might struggle with. Parents now track their kids via GPS; ours just hoped we returned before Maghrib. Maybe it's not the kids' fault – they're just busy scrolling.

Perhaps we're to blame for replacing mango trees and open fields with routers and smartphones, creating a generation fluent in hashtags but hilariously clueless about real-world messiness.

The evolving Gen Z culture will inevitably reshape future corporate environments, creating tension when traditional institutions fail to adapt. Consider Australia's political landscape: the current opposition recently pledged to end work-from-home arrangements if elected, proudly flaunting an outdated, pre-pandemic ideal of productivity. Ironically, this promise might become their political undoing. While they assume a firm stance against remote work signals strength and discipline, they're oblivious to the fact that it directly contradicts Gen Z's emphasis on flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance. Rejecting remote work isn't merely a questionable policy – it's practically political self-sabotage, especially among younger voters. Today's youth consider flexibility not a perk but a fundamental right; denying it is as politically astute as promising to ban TikTok or abolish emojis. In short, political parties unwilling to recognise the values of Gen Z risk losing the next election and their future relevance.

Leading global companies effectively engaging Gen Z include Google, Spotify, Salesforce, HubSpot, Microsoft, and Patagonia. They adopt flexible and hybrid working arrangements, continuous feedback, robust digital integration, strong diversity and inclusivity, purpose-driven cultures emphasising sustainability and societal impact, and comprehensive mental health and wellness initiatives. These practices align closely with Gen Z's values, expectations, and workplace preferences. In the case of local corporates, forget about doing anything – they lack even the basic awareness.

If we want to raise a generation that thrives at home, in society, and in the workplace – we must stop romanticising the past and start understanding the present. Denying Gen Z's reality won't change it. Adapt, engage, and guide – or be prepared to lose not just elections and employees but your Wi-Fi password privileges too.

The author is the president of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh and founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd

Will Trump kill globalisation?

AFP, Paris

Spilling your Mexican beer on your t-shirt sewn in Vietnam while watching a US series on Netflix on your Chinese-made smartphone sitting outside at a Parisian cafe is an ordinary occurrence in our globalised world.

But does the tariff war set off by US President Donald Trump spell the end for globalisation?

Many experts believe that countries will still trade and be interdependent, but that trade will be more costly and complex.

Trump on Wednesday said he will jack up tariffs on China to 125 percent, but he announced a 90-day pause on his threatened "reciprocal" levies on everyone else, leaving in place a recently introduced 10-percent across-the-board tariff.

Countries began reducing tariffs after the end of World War Two as a way to boost trade and growth via the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was signed in 1947.

It was succeeded by the World Trade Organization, uniting 166 nations that account for over 98 percent of global trade.

Often referred to as the "global trade police", the WTO is all but powerless against the protectionist wave washing over the globe.

"The international wave of

globalisation that began over thirty years ago is at its close," said economist Branko Milanovic, a specialist on inequality, in an article published last month in the US magazine Jacobin.

Nicolas Baverz, a partner at the French business law firm August Dehouy, agreed with that assessment.

"If we define it by a massive drop in economic barriers and the unification of markets for goods, as well as services, data and capita, then the cycle has definitely ended," he said.

Globalisation's weak spots have been prominently on display in recent years. First the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the extreme fragility of supply chains that have been extended across the world.

Then the war in Ukraine showed the risks associated with energy dependency on nations like Russia.

That added to the gradual nibbling away at global free trade by trading blocs that have formed around the United States, China, Russia and the European Union.

They have deployed a range of measures that impact trade, such as tariffs, limits on technology transfers, financial sanctions, immigration restrictions and subsidies.

"It is a very dramatic departure of

the trade policy" and "is bound to have knock-on effects in terms of protectionism elsewhere," economist Adam Slater at Oxford Economics told AFP.

Global trade in goods has grown

regularly over the past years to hit \$24 trillion in 2023, according to WTO.

Imports into the United States account for 13 percent of the global total, while US exports account for

8.5 percent of total exports.

Bringing production back home may play well politically, but businesses will be crunching the numbers.

Neil Shearing, group chief

economist at Capital Economics, said the high cost of shifting production and uncertainty about tariff levels over the long term, means "only a fraction of the manufacturing that has moved overseas is likely to move back to the US".

Even if tariffs are set high it may not be enough.

In some areas, for example toys, textiles and furniture, the cost advantage of emerging economies is so huge that even large tariffs don't make the US competitive," Shearing said.

Former WTO chief Pascal Lamy said Trump's tariff "Big Bang" would unlikely completely undermine the global trading system. "Thirteen percent of global imports are affected by Trump's follies," he told AFP.

"There's no reason the other 87 percent become contaminated."

He said that he expects that if the US closes up its economy other countries would open theirs.

Numerous nations have sought recently to breathe new life into trade deal talks in the hopes of compensating for lost business in the United States.

Japan, South Korea and China called Sunday for their negotiations for a comprehensive trilateral free-trade agreement to be speeded up, and agreed to create a predictable trade and investment environment".



People visit The Bund promenade along the Huangpu River in Shanghai on April 9, with the city's financial district seen in the background. Trump on Wednesday said he will jack up tariffs on China to 125 percent, but he announced a 90-day pause on his threatened "reciprocal" levies on everyone else.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE