

The rise in beverages is due to a recent rise in tea and coffee. The last column shows the change in the average price of the forty-five commodities, including minerals, oils, and materials.

12. In order to estimate the real increase in cost to the consumer we must take account of the relative importance to him of the articles in his food budget—*i.e.*, “weight” the articles according to their relative importance before proceeding to take the averages. This method was used by Professor Segar (pages 304–5), who used the system of weighting recommended by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and also took triennial averages in order to get the normal trend. He reclassified Dr. McIlraith’s foodstuffs and used his index numbers. The result is summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 5.—INCREASE IN FOOD-PRICES BETWEEN 1894–96 AND 1908–10.

	1894–96.	1908–10.
Breadstuffs (including wheat, flour, barley, rice, sago, oatmeal) ..	100	114
Meat and fish (beef, mutton, lamb, and salmon) ..	100	115
Butter and cheese ..	100	149
Weighted according to relative importance ..	100	121

This shows an increase in the cost of living as measured by changes in these important foodstuffs of 21 per cent. during the last seventeen years, and in the opinion of the Commission affords the most satisfactory estimate. The effect of weighting and of selecting only the foods of prime importance is seen if we compare the rise observed with the rise for the same period, taking the prices of Table 2, which is only 14·6 per cent.

A review of these tables of wholesale prices of foodstuffs supports the opinion that the change in the cost of living as measured by the variations in food-prices between the middle nineties and 1911 is a rise of a little more than 21 per cent. Table 2 shows a rise of 20 per cent. from 1894–96 to 1911, and Table 5 a rise of 21 per cent. between 1894–96 and 1908–10. But since the latter average is weighted according to the relative importance of the foods, and since the year 1911 saw an advance in most food-prices, we believe that the rise over the period in question exceeds 21 per cent.

But this result may be modified by an examination of (a) retail prices and (b) other items in the schedule of living besides food. It is in respect of these matters that the Commission found most difficulty in getting satisfactory data and in piecing the information together.

Table 6 gives Professor Segar’s estimate of the increased cost of living in the City of Auckland between 1894–96 and 1908–10. A description of the method he adopted—the only one available in the present condition of our economic statistics—and his interpretation of the figures are added :—

TABLE 6.—ESTIMATE OF INCREASE IN COST OF LIVING IN AUCKLAND, FROM 1894–96 TO 1908–10 (WEEKLY AVERAGE).

	1894–96.	1908–10.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Rent	0 7 11½	0 12 0
Bread	0 1 9½	0 2 2½
Meat	0 3 11	0 4 7½
Vegetables	0 1 1½	0 2 5½
Milk	0 2 0½	0 2 4½
Butter and cheese	0 2 0½	0 2 8½
Sugar	0 1 0½	0 1 0½
Tea and coffee	0 1 3	0 1 1
Sundry other foods	0 3 6½	0 3 8
Clothing	0 6 10	0 8 2½
Fuel and light	0 3 0	0 3 1
Groceries other than food	0 2 1	0 2 2
Total	1 16 7½	2 5 7½
Miscellaneous	0 13 5½
Total, with miscellaneous	£2 19 1

An increase (excluding miscellaneous items) of 24·6 per cent. This accounts for 77 per cent. of the expenditure. If we exclude “miscellaneous,” and “clothing,” we get a total of £1 9s. 9½d. in the