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New Zealand food service sales volumes rose 1.9% in the September quarter

Stats NZ said cafes and restaurants added NZ$113 million in sales, signaling stronger real demand beyond price increases

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New Zealand’s food and beverage services sector posted a seasonally adjusted 1.9% rise in sales volume in the September 2026 quarter from the June 2026 quarter, according to a Stats NZ retail trade survey released on Monday, November 23. The

increase matters for restaurants and other hospitality operators because the volume measure removes price changes, showing that businesses in the sector sold more in real terms rather than relying only on higher prices to lift revenue.

Stats NZ said the same sector, which it classifies as food and beverage services and includes businesses such as cafes and restaurants, recorded a 2.7% increase in seasonally adjusted sales value over the quarter. That amounted to an added NZ$113 million. The gap between the value increase and the volume increase suggests prices still played some role, but the volume gain indicates underlying demand also improved.

The hospitality-related improvement came as retail activity strengthened more broadly across New Zealand. Stats NZ said the total volume of seasonally adjusted retail sales reached NZ$26 billion in the September 2026 quarter, up 2.2% from the June 2026 quarter. The total value of seasonally adjusted retail sales rose 2.4% to NZ$33 billion, an increase of NZ$791 million.

The September quarter figures showed gains across most parts of the retail economy. Eleven of the 15 industries tracked by the survey had higher seasonally adjusted sales volumes than in the June quarter, while 12 of the 15 posted higher sales values. Food and beverage services was among the industries with the largest volume increases, though it was outpaced by fuel retailing, which rose 9.5%, pharmaceutical and other store-based retailing, up 6.4%, motor vehicle and parts retailing, up 3.8%, and supermarket and grocery stores, up 1.7%.

In value terms, which include price effects, food and beverage services also ranked among the larger quarterly contributors. Stats NZ said motor vehicle and parts retailing led the increase with a 5.9% rise worth NZ$252 million, followed by supermarket and grocery stores, up 2.4% or NZ$170 million. Food and beverage services came next with its 2.7% gain, or NZ$113 million, ahead of pharmaceutical and other store-based retailing, up 3.4% or NZ$85 million, and accommodation, up 3.4% or NZ$49 million.

The accommodation figures point to a wider pickup across parts of hospitality beyond restaurants and cafes. While Stats NZ highlighted accommodation mainly in value terms, the increase suggests travelers were also spending more during the quarter. Taken together with the improvement in food and beverage services, the survey points

to firmer demand in customer-facing hospitality businesses in the three months through September.

The gains were spread across the country. Stats NZ said all 16 regions recorded higher seasonally adjusted retail sales values in the September 2026 quarter than in the June 2026 quarter. Auckland posted the largest increase, rising 2.5% or NZ$314 million. Otago was up 3.7% or NZ$73 million, Canterbury rose 1.4% or NZ$64 million, Waikato increased 1.3% or NZ$39 million, and Bay of Plenty climbed 1.9% or NZ$37 million. Broad regional growth can be important for hospitality businesses because local restaurants, cafes, and lodging operators often depend on regional consumer spending as much as on national trends.

Stats NZ also reported stronger annual sales when measured in actual dollars, which are not adjusted for inflation or seasonal patterns. The total value of actual retail sales was NZ$32 billion in the September 2026 quarter, up 7.0% or NZ$2.1 billion from the September 2025 quarter. Because those figures are in current prices, they cannot by themselves show whether demand rose in real terms. That is why the quarter’s 1.9% increase in food and beverage services volume stands out for the hospitality industry.

Stock levels also moved higher across retail. The total value of actual stock held on September 30, 2026 was NZ$9.5 billion, up 3.6% or NZ$329 million from September 30, 2025, Stats NZ said. The largest stock increases were in motor vehicle and parts retailing, up 9.8% or NZ$198 million, and fuel retailing, up 49% or NZ$98 million. Those stock figures do not directly measure hospitality inventories, but they add to the broader picture of retail businesses carrying more goods than a year earlier.

Stats NZ said it updated the retail trade sales deflator weights in the September 2026 quarter. Those deflators are used to remove price changes from sales data and estimate volume movements. The agency said the weights reflect the relative mix of goods and services sold across the 15 retail industries and are drawn mainly from the consumers price index. That technical update is relevant because it affects how real growth, including the 1.9% rise in food and beverage services volume, is measured.

The next Stats NZ retail trade survey, covering the December 2026 quarter, is scheduled for release on February 22, 2027.