vinetur

Chinese restaurant chains faced a 20.7% jump in domestic beef prices in October

A procurement report said vegetable prices fell 17.3%, easing costs for canteens and value chains

Tuesday, November 24, 2026

Chinese restaurant operators faced sharply different ingredient costs in October, with domestic beef prices staying high while vegetable prices fell, according to a monthly procurement report released on Monday, November 23, by Hongcan Industry Research Institute and several industry partners. The report said the divergence matters for food service chains because it changes menu costs in different ways: beef remained expensive, imported frozen beef was still costly enough to curb buying, and vegetables moved back into a lower seasonal price range.

The report, titled a monthly procurement reference for food and restaurant chain companies, placed the average domestic beef price in October at 74.16 yuan per kilogram. That was up 3.68% from September and 20.7% from October 2025. Hongcan said supply remained tight even after demand eased following the National Day holiday. It said earlier herd reduction, continued reluctance by breeders to sell, and a shortage of market-ready heavier cattle pushed slaughterhouses to keep paying high procurement prices. On the demand side, the report said holiday consumption had been partly brought forward, but slaughter volumes returned to normal relatively quickly, showing what it described as resilient market demand.

For restaurants, the report pointed to a split between domestic and imported beef. It said prices for Brazilian beef cuts mostly fell in October, with declines ranging from 0.19% to 1.40% depending on the product. But that did not translate into aggressive buying by food service operators. Hongcan said Brazilian beef arrivals into China declined after September and port inventories shifted from accumulation to drawdown. Even so, imported beef prices remained near a two-year high, and downstream restaurant and food processing companies showed weak willingness to buy high-cost frozen beef, which limited any broader price increase.

The report said the cattle market in November was likely to be shaped by tighter supply and a seasonal pickup in demand, supporting a higher price center. It projected a trading range of 32.5 to 34.5 yuan per kilogram for cattle. That suggests continued cost pressure for restaurant groups with menus heavily exposed to beef, even as some other ingredients become cheaper.

Chicken and duck offered a different picture. The average price for white-feather broilers in October was 3.07 yuan per jin, a standard Chinese unit equal to 500 grams. That was up 2.68% from September but down 9.44% from October 2025. Hongcan said broiler prices rose from low levels early in the month because slaughterhouses had relatively strong margins and bought actively while live bird supply was limited. Later in October, product sales were described as ordinary, slaughter margins narrowed, and some processors reduced slaughter volumes, leaving prices largely stable. For November, the report said broiler prices could edge up from low levels because supply remains limited.

The duck market was weaker. Hongcan said most prices across the meat duck supply chain fell in October, including live ducks, breeder eggs, ducklings and processed products such as whole duck carcasses. It said demand stayed soft, customers bought cautiously and market movement remained slow compared with past years. Upstream breeding and slaughtering segments were still losing money, and the report said the November market was likely to remain weak because supply is relatively ample while downstream demand has not improved enough.

Pork also remained under pressure. According to monitoring by Zhuochuang Information, cited in the report, the national average trading price for market hogs in October was 9.72 yuan per kilogram, down 8.93% from September and 15.57% from October 2025. Hongcan said supply tightened briefly during the National Day holiday, giving prices some support, but that effect faded as producers resumed shipments and market hog availability became plentiful. Demand did not keep pace, and prices moved lower through much of the month. In the latter part of October, the report said some producers still needed to meet monthly sales targets and kept shipments moving quickly, adding to downward pressure.

In edible oils, the report described soybean oil as moving in a high but volatile range. As of October 28, the monthly average spot price for first-grade soybean oil in China was 9,096 yuan per metric ton, down 45 yuan, or 0.49%, from September but up 634 yuan, or 7.49%, from a year earlier. Hongcan said continued Chinese purchases of U.S. soybeans and producers' efforts to support prices provided some backing, but weak demand, international uncertainty and a drop in Brazil's currency weighed on the market. Peanut oil held firmer. In Shandong, the monthly average ex-factory price for first-grade pressed bulk peanut oil was 14,450 yuan per metric ton, up 0.27% from September and 0.19% from a year earlier. The report said lower raw material costs offered only limited relief and that firms were largely holding prices steady while watching for better winter demand.

Vegetables brought the clearest cost relief for restaurants. The report cited Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs monitoring showing that the national average wholesale price for 28 kinds of vegetables was 4.25 yuan per kilogram in October. That was down 7.6% from September and down 17.3% from October 2025. Hongcan said prices returned to a normal seasonal downward track because supply was abundant. Weather conditions were generally favorable in major autumn producing areas, and harvests accelerated in the Huang-Huai-Hai region and the Yangtze River basin. It said concentrated market arrivals of products including Chinese cabbage, white radish and cauliflower increased available supply and pushed prices lower.

That drop in vegetables stands in contrast to the beef market and helps explain why the report matters to restaurants. Operators focused on stir-fried vegetables, canteens and value-oriented chains may see some input relief, while beef-centered formats continue to face pressure from both domestic and imported supply costs. The report also put those food movements against a broader inflation backdrop, saying China’s consumer price index rose 0.7% year over year in October and was flat from September, while food prices fell 2.9% from a year earlier and 1.0% from the previous month.

For November, Hongcan said vegetable prices were expected to stay low, though the room for further declines had narrowed. It said traders and restaurant buyers should watch for cold waves, frost and other disruptive weather that could affect open-field vegetable production and the efficiency of shipping produce from southern growing regions to northern markets.