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**SOUTHERN AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION**



## **SACU INFLATION REPORT**

**September 2017**

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## INTRODUCTION

The report examines the monthly inflation rate performance of individual SACU Member States and selected international economies. The report also looks at the trend in oil prices and the world food prices using the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Food Price Index.

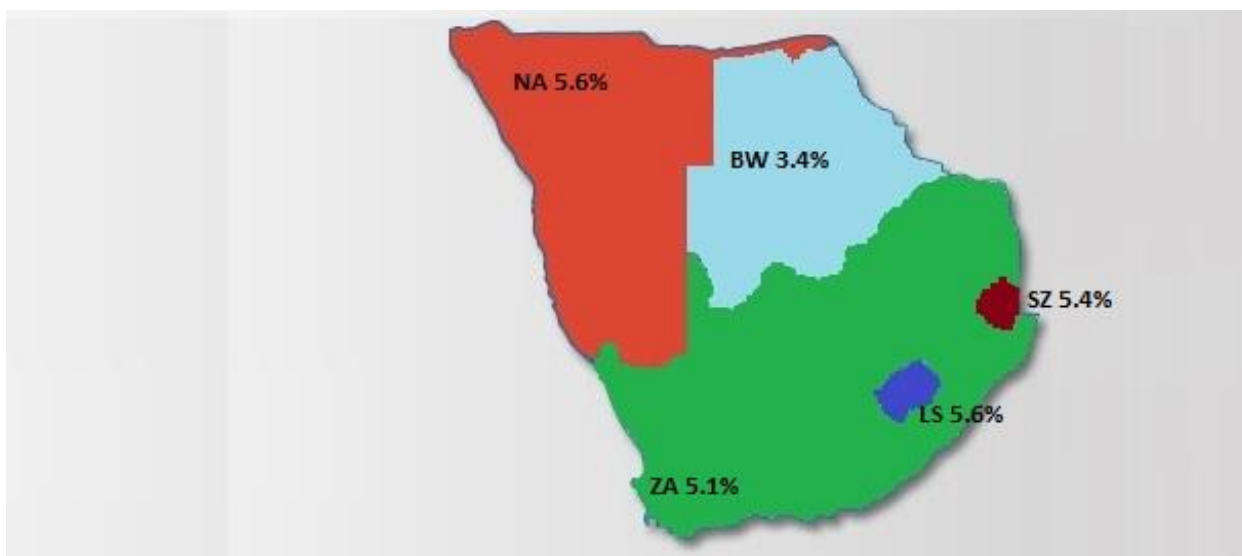
The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used as the basis to calculate the rate of inflation as experienced by consumers. The inflation rate measures the change in the CPI for the month under review to the previous month (month-on-month change) as well as to the corresponding month in the previous year (year-on-year change). The inflation rate is vital for purposes of economic policy-making, especially the conduct of monetary policy and to consumers in general. It is further used in a wide variety of public and private contracts for the purposes of adjusting payments (such as wages, rents, interest and social security benefits).

For the month of September 2017 compared to the preceding month, it was observed that prices remained unchanged in Botswana, while prices increased in Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa but declined in Swaziland. It was further observed that Lesotho and Namibia recorded the highest change in consumer prices of 5.6 per cent, respectively, followed by Swaziland (5.4 per cent), South Africa (5.1 per cent), and Botswana (3.4 per cent). All Member States continued to record a single digit annual inflation rate during the month of September 2017.

## Inflation Rate in SACU Member States

Consumer prices remained unchanged in Botswana in September 2017, while prices increased in Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa but declined in Swaziland. **Map I** shows that Lesotho and Namibia recorded the highest change in consumer prices in September 2017 recording a rate of 5.6 per cent, respectively, followed by Swaziland (5.4 per cent), South Africa (5.1 per cent), and Botswana (3.4 per cent). All Member States continued to record a single digit annual inflation rate during the month of September 2017.

**Map I: Annual Inflation Rates (%) for September 2017 in SACU Member States**

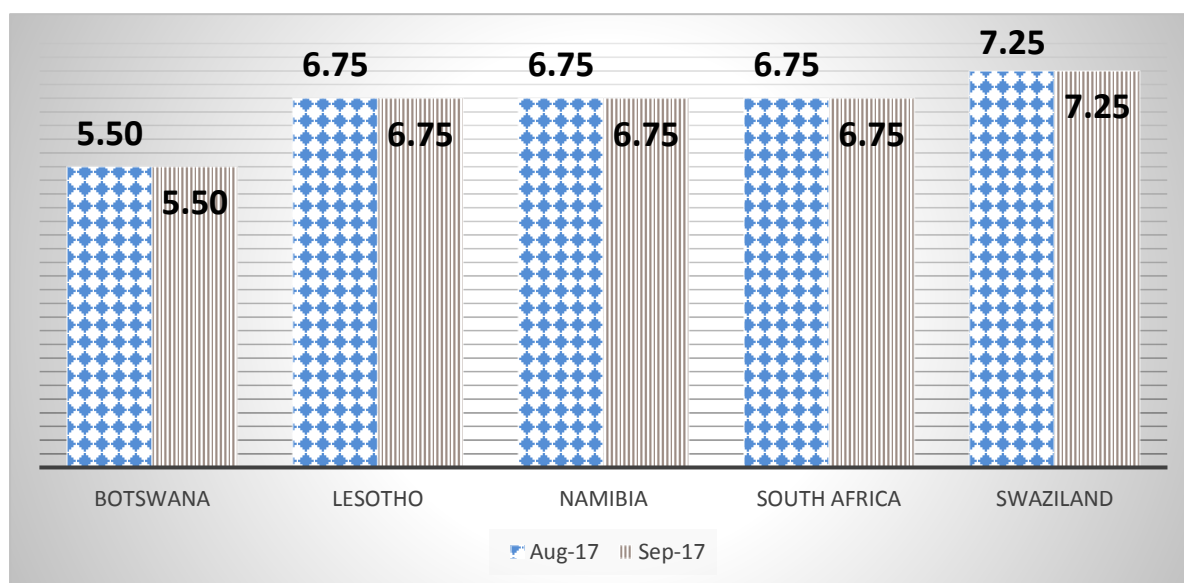


Source: Member States Statistics Offices; (BW-Botswana; LS –Lesotho; NA-Namibia; ZA-South Africa; SZ- Swaziland)

By the end of September 2017, monetary policy stance in Member States continued to remain accommodative with the repo rate / bank rate<sup>1</sup> ranging between 5.50 per cent and 7.25 per cent, as depicted in **Chart I**. Monetary stance was unaltered between September 2017 and August 2017 in all Member States. During the month of September 2017, the highest prime lending rate was observed in Lesotho at 11.63 per cent, followed by Swaziland at 10.75 per cent, Namibia at 10.50 per cent, South Africa at 10.25 per cent, and Botswana at 7.00 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> Bank rate is the rate at which the Central Bank lends to Commercial Banks

**Chart I: Member States' Repo/Bank rates**

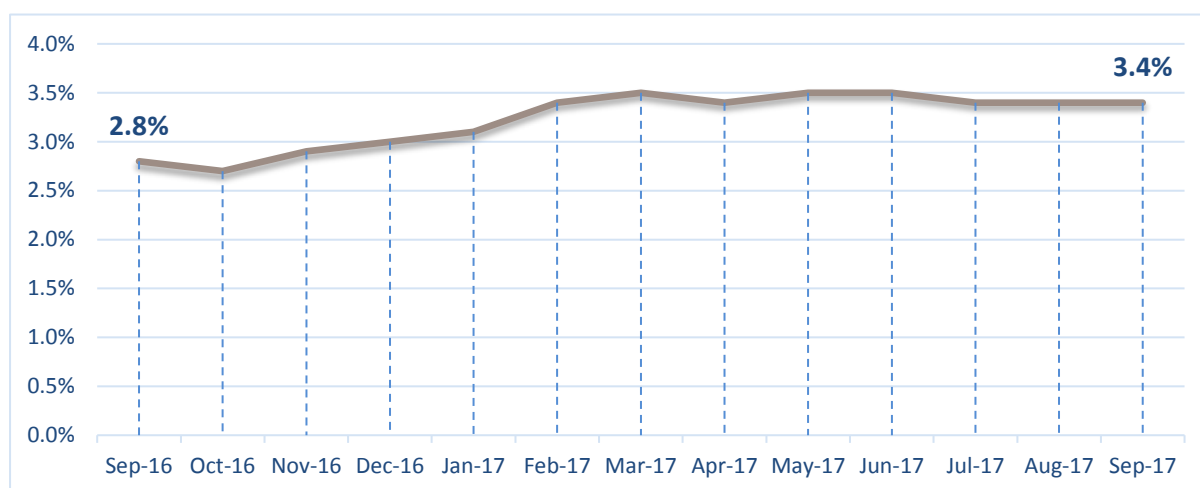


Source: Member States' Central Banks

In **Botswana**, the annual inflation rate increased by 3.4 per cent in September 2017 unchanged for the third consecutive month, as reflected in **Chart 2**. The annual rate in September 2017 was higher than the 2.8 per cent recorded during a similar month in 2016. The increase in the annual inflation rate to 3.4 per cent between September 2017 and September 2016 was mainly reflected in the rising prices in *transport* (1.7 per cent compared to -1.7 per cent in September 2016) which accounts for 20.65 per cent of the overall inflation basket. Inflation rates of the other main categories based on the basket weights shows that *food & non-alcoholic beverages* rose by 2.8 per cent in September 2017 as opposed to 3.1 per cent during the corresponding month in 2016, while, *housing & utilities* recorded an increase of 5.8 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent in September 2016.

On average, consumer prices increased by 0.1 per cent between September 2017 and August 2017. The annual inflation rate recorded in September 2017 continued to be within the inflation target range of 3 – 6 per cent set out by the Bank of Botswana.

**Chart 2: Botswana Annual Inflation Rates**



Source: Statistics Botswana

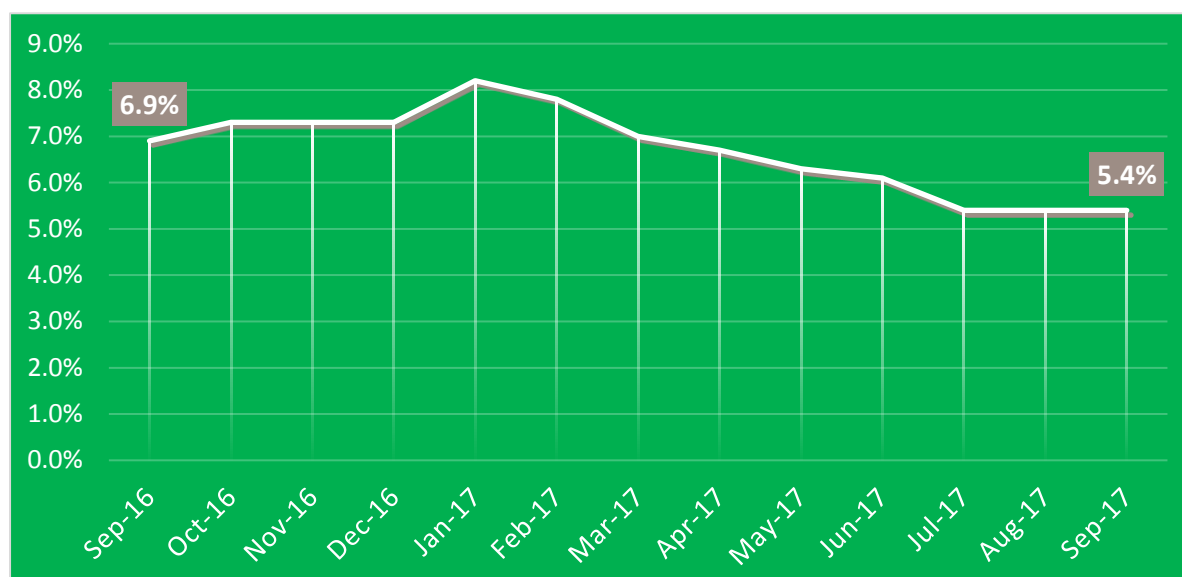
In **Lesotho**, the annual inflation rate increased by 5.6 per cent in September 2017 compared to 5.4 per cent in the preceding month as reflected in **Chart 3**. A year earlier inflation rate was 6.0 per cent during the corresponding month. The deceleration in the annual inflation rate between September 2017 and September 2016 was mainly due to the decline in the cost of *food & non-alcoholic beverages* (7.5 per cent down from 10.7 per cent in September 2016) that accounts for 36.1 per cent of the overall inflation basket. The other main categories based on the basket weights, the *clothing & footwear* category reflected that prices increased by 2.0 per cent in September 2017, while the prices of the third main category, *housing & utilities* rose by 6.6 per cent. On average, prices increased by 0.1 per cent between September 2017 and August 2017.

### Chart 3: Lesotho Annual Inflation Rates

Source: Lesotho Bureau of Statistics

In **Namibia**, the annual inflation rate increased by 5.6 per cent in September 2017 compared to 5.4 per cent from the preceding month. A year earlier inflation rate was 6.9 per cent during the corresponding month as reflected in **Chart 4**. The deceleration in the annual inflation rate between September 2017 and September 2016 was mainly reflected in *food & non-alcoholic beverages*

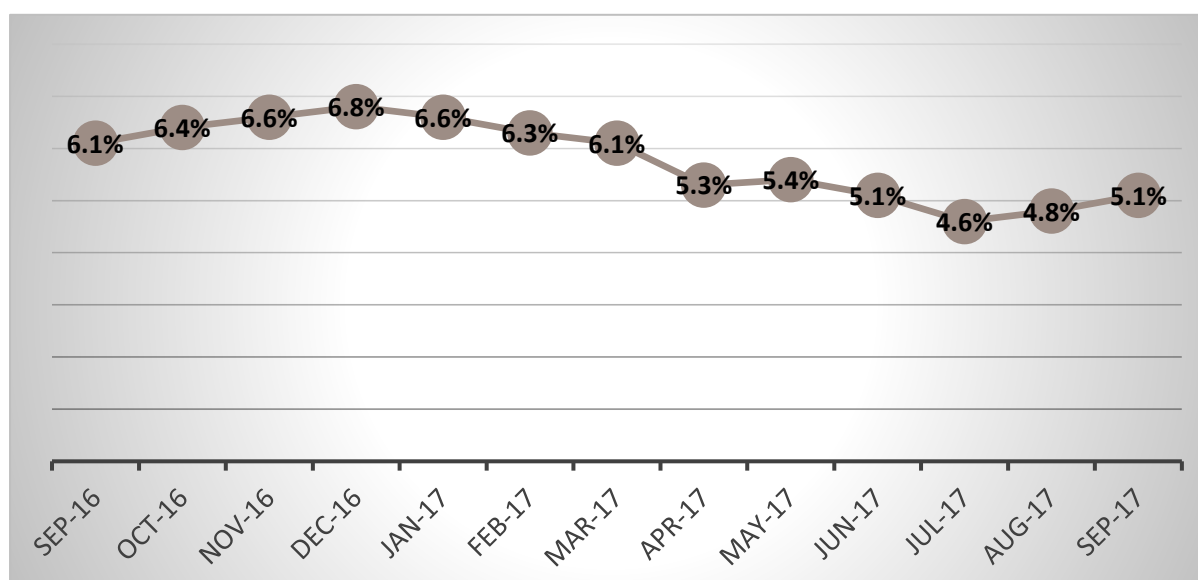
**Chart 4: Namibia Annual Inflation Rates**



Source: Namibia Statistics Agency

In **South Africa**, the annual inflation rate increased by 5.1 per cent in September 2017 compared to 4.8 per cent recorded in the previous month as depicted in **Chart 5**. The annual rate in September 2017 was lower than the 6.1 per cent recorded during the similar month in 2016. The main contributors to the annual inflation rate in September 2017 were by *housing & utilities (1.2 percentage points)* followed by *miscellaneous goods & services (1.2 percentage points)* and *food & non-alcoholic beverages (0.9 percentage points)*. On average, prices increased by 0.5 per cent between September 2017 and August 2017. The annual inflation rate in September 2017 remained within the target range of 3-6 per cent set out by the South African Reserve Bank.

**Chart 5: South Africa Annual Inflation Rates**

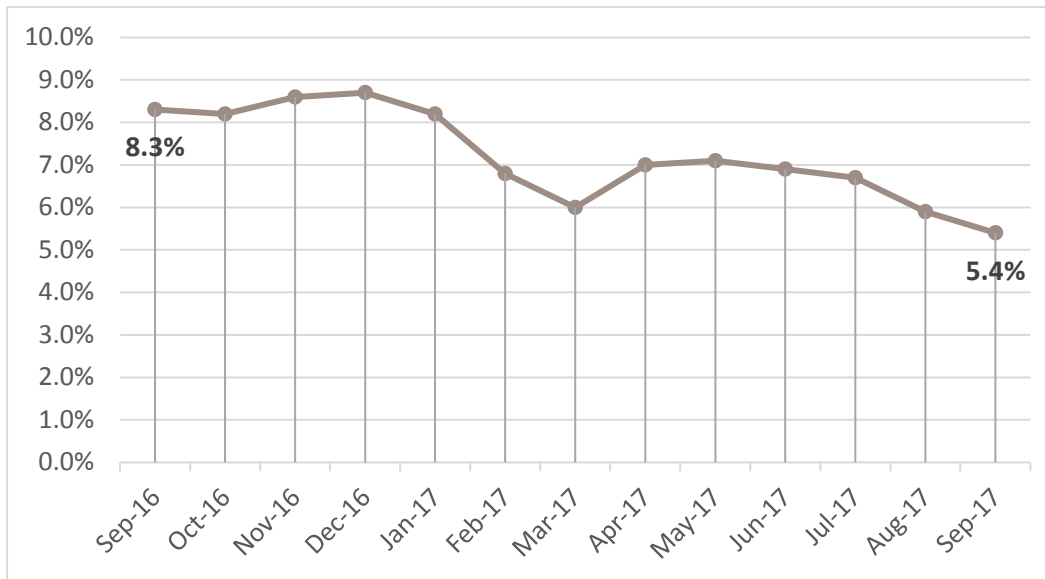


Source: Statistics South Africa

In **Swaziland**, the annual inflation rate continued to be on a downward trend in September 2017, recording a rate of 5.4 per cent compared to 5.9 per cent in the preceding month as indicated in **Chart 6**. Annual inflation rate in September 2017 was lower than the 8.3 per cent recorded during a similar month in 2016. The main contributor to the deceleration in prices between September 2017 and September 2016 was mainly the cost of *food & non-alcoholic beverages* (4.9 per cent down from 17.5 per cent in September 2016) which accounts for 29.22 per cent of the overall inflation basket. The other main categories in the basket based on the weight, the *housing & utilities* and *transport* increased by 8.1 per cent and 3.4 per cent, respectively, in September 2017. On average, prices remained stagnant between September 2017 and August 2017.



**Chart 6: Swaziland Annual Inflation Rates**

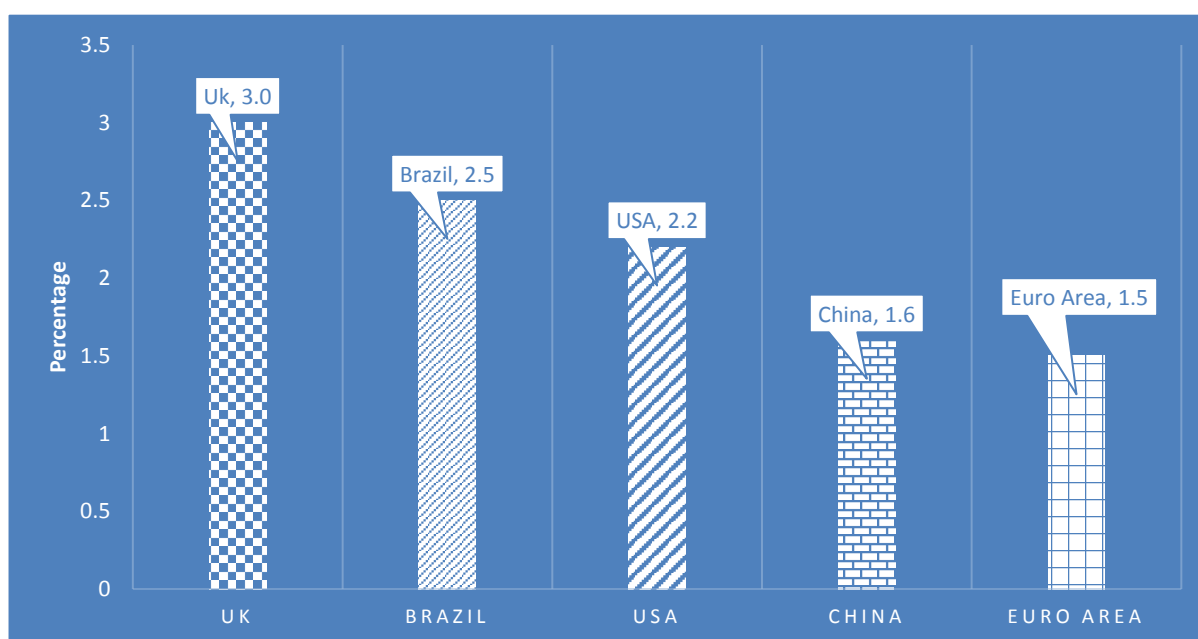


Source: Central Statistics Office

## Inflation Rate for Selected Economies

**Chart 7**, indicates inflation rates in selected economies for the month of September 2017. In **Brazil** consumer prices was 2.5 per cent in September 2017 stable compared with the preceding month, while the rate was 8.5 per cent in September 2016. While in the **UK**, inflation rate rose by 3.0 per cent compared to 2.9 per cent in the previous month and the rate was 1.0 per cent in September 2016. In the **USA**, inflation rate rose by 2.2 per cent in September 2017 compared to 1.9 per cent in August 2017, and 1.5 per cent in September 2016. In September 2017 consumer prices in **China** rose by 1.6 per cent compared to 1.8 per cent in the preceding month while the rate was 1.9 per cent during a similar month in 2016. **Euro area** annual inflation was 1.5 per cent in September 2017 stable compared with August 2017, while the rate was 0.4 per cent in September 2016.

**Chart 7:** Annual Inflation Rates for Selected Economies (September 2017)



Source: [inflation.eu](http://inflation.eu)

## FAO Food Price Index

**Chart 8** shows that the FAO Food Price Index<sup>2</sup> (FFPI) averaged at 178.4 points in September 2017, up by 0.8 per cent from August and by 4.3 per cent above September 2016. Firmer prices in the vegetable oil and dairy sectors were behind the small month-on-month rise in the value of the FFPI.

**Chart 8:** FAO Food Price Index



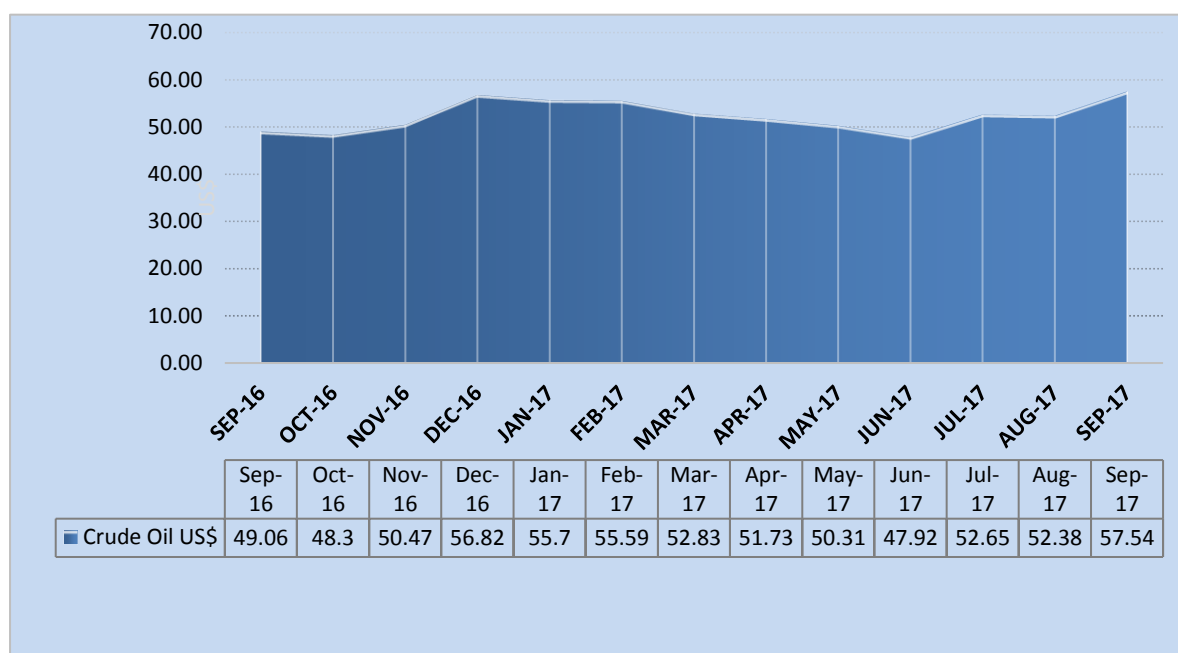
Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<sup>2</sup> Food Price index: consist of the average of 5 commodity group price indices (meat, dairy, cereals, oil & fat, and sugar) weighted with the average export share of each of the groups for 2002-2004

## Brent Crude Oil Prices

Brent crude oil price closed at USD57.54 per barrel at the end of September 2017, which was 9.9 per cent higher than at the end of August 2017. Year on year, the price level was higher than the USD49.06 per barrel recorded at the end of September 2016 as highlighted in **Chart 8**.

**Chart 8: Brent Crude Oil**



Source: [www.cnb.com](http://www.cnb.com)

## Appendix

### Annual Inflation Rates by Main Categories (September 2017)

Main Categories	Botswana	Lesotho	Namibia	South Africa	Swaziland
Food & non-alcoholic beverages	2.8	7.5	4.2	5.5	4.9
Alcoholic beverages & tobacco	5.0	4.8	5.3	4.7	8.3
Clothing & footwear	3.0	2.0	-1.7	2.3	1.6
Housing, water, electricity, gas & other fuels	5.8	6.6	8.9	4.9	8.1
Furnishings, household equipment &...	3.1	6.1	3.6	2.1	5.4
Health	2.0	0.1	5.9	7.2	0.6
Transport	1.7	0.6	3.9	5.6	3.4
Communications	1.3	0.0	4.3	-1.4	-1.3
Recreation & Culture	2.2	6.3	3.1	2.2	6.6
Education	4.2	6.6	7.8	7.0	7.4
Hotels, cafés & restaurants	3.7	1.7	6.2	3.4	4.3
Miscellaneous goods & services	2.8	4.7	4.1	7.6	3.1
<b>All Items</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>

Source: SACU Member States Statistics Offices

### Consumer Price Index Basket Weights

Main Categories	Botswana	Lesotho	Namibia	South Africa	Swaziland
<i>Food &amp; non-alcoholic beverages</i>	16.51	36.1	16.45	15.41	29.22
<i>Alcoholic beverages &amp; tobacco</i>	7.83	3.3	12.59	5.43	0.39
<i>Clothing &amp; footwear</i>	6.27	13.1	3.05	4.07	3.42
<i>Housing, water, electricity, gas &amp; other fuels</i>	14.90	12.4	28.36	24.52	29.15
<i>Furnishings, household equipment &amp;...</i>	6.39	8.5	5.47	4.79	4.75
<i>Health</i>	3.62	1.5	2.01	1.46	3.39
<i>Transport</i>	20.65	4.8	14.28	16.43	10.50
<i>Communications</i>	4.27	2.1	3.81	2.63	2.74
<i>Recreation &amp; Culture</i>	2.92	5.7	3.55	4.09	1.07
<i>Education</i>	3.34	4.2	3.65	2.95	9.11
<i>Hotels, cafés &amp; restaurants</i>	2.76	1.0	1.39	3.50	1.79
<i>Miscellaneous goods &amp; services</i>	10.55	7.3	5.39	14.72	4.47
<b>All Items</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: SACU Member States Statistics Offices