

This email exchange between the Turners and Sainsbury's took place over a period of 18 months between 28th November 2012 and 7th April 2014 (start at the bottom and work up). I hope that our badgering Sainsbury's went some way towards reducing canned, vegetarian curry prices initially by about 7% (to £1.30) but now, since around the latter part of 2014, by about 14% (to £1.20) and now, since 2016 to just £1

Dear Mr and Mrs Turner

Thank you for your email. I am sorry you are disappointed with the price of our canned curries and that the response from our Careline did not provide a satisfactory resolution.

Where possible we try to absorb fluctuating costs of ingredients that make up a product, however, if it is necessary to pass some of the increases on we sometimes spread this across the range as a whole rather than loading it on the individually affected line. Whilst we try to absorb these increases for as long as we can, sometimes we have to put the price up to reflect the cost to us.

Your comments have been shared with our buyers who will continue to work hard to source the best products, whilst remaining competitive in the market place. As you are aware the cost of the chickpea dhal and vegetable curry has recently gone down to £1.30.

I appreciate you bringing the weight and pricing error on our gherkin signage to our attention. We do not intend to mislead our customers in any way. Our buyer has been made aware of the inaccuracy and they have updated the signage to show the correct information and we will ensure we are more vigilant going forward to avoid this happening again.

I am grateful to you for taking the time to contact me, giving me the chance to address your concerns. I hope I have reassured you of our commitment to offering our customers great value and we look forward to serving you for many years to come.

Yours sincerely

Justin King
CEO

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Asif,

I was in Sainsbury's, Chippenham tonight doing some late-night shopping and I saw that the price of the vegetarian curries has been reduced to £1.30. I was so chuffed I bought six!

Anything to do with our pestering you?

Regards

Paul Turner

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Asif,

Thanks for the update.

This seems to be proving a tough nut (or chick pea) to crack.

We must be almost at the two-month mark now!

Regards

Paul & Esther Turner

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Dear Mr and Mrs Turner

Thank you for your email and for your patience whilst we investigate your comments.

As your Case Manager, I would like to assure you we are still looking into your concerns and we will be back in touch soon.

We appreciate you taking the time to contact us, giving us a chance to look into this for you.

Yours sincerely

Asif Ali  
Executive Office

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Dear Sainsbury's,

Your response is superficial and unclear.

What original shelf pricing?

Of the chick pea dahl or the beef curry? Or both?

Your statement: "the pricing had not gone up as much as we had thought" is ambiguous. Do you mean that the cost of the product (to Sainsbury's) had not increased (or perhaps even decreased) and that you were overcharging your customers?

We queried pricing of these products with your Executive Office in April last year and received the following response:

"We are committed to offering great quality products at fair prices and review over 15,000 prices each week to ensure we remain competitive. We know our customers often stick to strict budgets and we are dedicated to making your money go further, helping you live well for less every day. There are many factors which can affect pricing, such as the rising costs of raw materials, production, packaging and transportation. We do try to absorb any increases for as long as we can. Once these prices are no longer sustainable we sometimes have to put the price up to reflect the cost to us. We will continue to work closely with our buyers and suppliers to minimise the impact of price increases on our customers and I do hope you will still find our range great value for money, as well as great quality."

Now, if we read your email correctly, Sainsbury's has been overcharging for (at least one of) these products all along. Having made this statement, you then do not say what Sainsbury's intends to do about this situation.

And we do not appreciate your 'stock', platitudinous last paragraph in place of a proper, detailed response.

Sincerely
Paul & Esther Turner

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Dear Mr & Mrs Paul Turner

Thank you for your email and further comments.

I am sorry you are unhappy with my response to your query. I appreciate your disappointment as this has not been answer to your satisfaction.

I would like to assure you that I have read over your note thoroughly to help me understand your email. We have been advised by our buyers that the original shelf pricing was incorrect meaning the pricing had not gone up as much as we had thought. This has been the official response direct from our buyers.

Please be assured we take customer feedback seriously as it constantly helps us improve our products and services. We are grateful you have taken the time to bring this to our attention and we hope you will continue to shop with us as one of our valued customers.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Raphael

Customer Manager  
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd | 33 Holborn, London | EC1N 2HT

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Dear Sainsbury's,

The response we are waiting for has nothing to do with shelf tickets! We are waiting for a response to the chick pea dahl/beef curry 'issue' with regard to world chick pea and beef prices and the reflection of those prices in your tinned curry prices. Please check the history of this query - Sainsbury's emails of 8th Feb, 10th Feb, 26th Feb and 4th March refer.

We are beginning to despair of Sainsbury's.

Sincerely

Paul & Esther Turner

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Dear Mr & Mrs Paul Turner

Thank you for your email. I am sorry you ever received a further response to your query. I understand your disappointment as you would have expected an answer by now.

I have checked my system and can confirm that we did receive an answer from our buyers, however, due to a technical error this was not relayed back to you.

We can now confirm that the original shelf edge ticket for this product was incorrect. It has now been changed to reflect the true grams. I do hope this has helped answer your questions about the pricing of these products.

We appreciate your patience while we look into this further and hope to see you in store again soon.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Raphel  
Customer Manager  
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd | 33 Holborn, London | EC1N 2HT

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Dear Sainsbury's,

Today marks 40 calendar days, or almost 6 weeks, since we made our enquiry about chick pea dahl and beef curry prices.

We hadn't anticipated that what we thought was a relatively straightforward question could take such an inordinate length of time to receive a response.

When will you be able to reply to our query?

Sincerely

Paul & Esther Turner

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Dear Mr & Mrs Turner

Thank you for your patience while we look into your query (*four weeks and counting – PT*)

We are currently still waiting on further information regarding your queries. Please be assured that we will be back in touch with you as soon as we have the relevant information to fully answer your query.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to get in touch with us and we hope to respond to your email as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Lillian Tarditi  
Customer Manager  
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd | 33 Holborn, London | EC1N 2HT

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Dear Mr & Mrs Turner

Thank you for your patience at this time (*three weeks so far – PT*).

We are currently waiting on further information regarding your queries. Please be assured that we will be back in touch with you as soon as we have the relevant information to fully answer your enquiry.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to get in touch with us and we hope to respond to your email as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Siobhan Hogarty | Customer Manager
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd | 33 Holborn, London | EC1N 2HT

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Dear Lorraine,

Thanks for the response.

However, we're not sure it was worth waiting for. You have merely repeated our statement (with price tables) that the chickpea product (and other vegetarian products) has risen by about 17% over the last 2/3 years whilst the meat products (beef in your table) have remained static. As we said, vegetarian products and meat products are nearing parity.

The market price of chickpeas has fallen dramatically over recent months/years - see the January 2014 article below from: <http://www.prairiecropcharts.com/other%20crops.html>

This says: "**Chickpeas: dramatic weakness.** In recent weeks, chickpea prices seem to have given up all hope. Important support levels were violated and prices tumbled. Now confronted with the lowest prices in years, chickpeas will be struggling to a bottom in unfamiliar territory."

So why has the price of your chickpea product risen by 17%?

World beef prices have been rising over the same period. This *Farmers Guardian* article of December 2013 illustrates the point:

<http://www.farmersguardian.com/home/livestock/world-beef-price-expected-to-remain-strong-into-2014/61057.article>

"**World beef price expected to remain strong in 2014.** High world beef prices are expected to continue into 2014 on the back of continued Chinese demand. .... the beef sector reported a 6% rise in its global cattle price index ... a bullish outlook for beef in the new year."

So why has the price of your beef product remained, effectively, static?

We would like an in-depth response to our question please rather than the superficial one provided. Trust this doesn't come across as too discourteous but we feel that this is an important point.

Sincerely

Paul & Esther Turner

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Dear Mr & Mrs Turner

Thank you for your patience.

We are committed to offering great quality food at fair prices which is [sourced with integrity](#). We regularly review our prices to make sure we offer value for money whilst remaining competitive.

Although we try to keep our pricing as fair as possible, sometimes prices can go up as well as down. As you can see from the pricing history for both products below.

Item: 425803 - JS CHICK PEA DHAL 395G

07-01-14 - £1.40
29-01-13 - £1.39
16-11-12 - £1.29
18-11-11 - £1.19

Item: 1058703- JS MILD BEEF CURRY 400G

07-01-14 - £1.50
23-04-13 - £1.49
29-01-13 - £1.59
16-11-12 - £1.49

I have also passed your comments regarding the price label for our crinkle cut gherkins in sweet vinegar on to the relevant department so they can look in to the matter further. We will also continue to monitor any similar feedback we may receive and we will work hard to ensure our price labels are clear and accurate so our customers can make an informed decision.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to contact us with your feedback as this helps us improve the products and services we provide.

We hope to see you in store again soon.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Douglas | Customer Manager
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd | 33 Holborn, London | EC1N 2HT

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Dear Sainsbury's,

Visited your Melksham store today, just for bread and milk ... and the cost .... over £178!  
Outrageous!

Just kidding of course, however there were some strange anomalies with your pricing.

Firstly the prices of your vegetarian and meat canned meals are nearing parity - £1.40 for vegetarian curries (395/400g) and £1.50 for meat curries (400g) - see attached pictures. This is a strange phenomenon as meat and its associated products have always been far more expensive than vegetables and vegetable products, weight for weight. Whilst the vegetable curry prices have

been rising gradually over the years £1.19 - £1.39 - (now) £1.40 since 2012, the meat curry prices appear to have stalled. I cannot imagine why this should be unless Sainsbury's is using the very cheapest factory farmed meat in these curries. Could you explain?

Secondly, on a cursory inspection of your pickles, olives etc section only, some shelf pricing is completely haywire and misleading for the customer. An example follows (picture attached):

Sliced gherkins in sweet vinegar (340g/180g drained) - 90p (**100g price as per shelf - 26.5p**)

Crinkle cut gherkins swt vinegar (340g/180g drained) - 90p (**100g price as per shelf - 50p**)

As I indicated, for shoppers using the weight/price comparisons, the second 100g price is completely incorrect.

Sincerely

Paul & Esther Turner  
Corsham

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Dear Mrs Turner

Thank you for your email to Justin King. Justin likes to respond to customers personally but he is away from the office and has asked me to respond to you on his behalf. He will see a copy of your email and this response when he returns.

I am sorry you are disappointed the price of our canned curries has increased and that the size of the can has reduced. I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

We try to make improvements to our products where we can and in September 2011 we introduced ring pulls on our cans to make them easier to open. Unfortunately to allow for this the top of our cans had to sit slightly lower which resulted in us not being able to fit quite as much curry in them. This is why they are now 395g instead of 400g.

We are committed to offering great quality products at fair prices and review over 15,000 prices each week to ensure we remain competitive. We know our customers often stick to strict budgets and we are dedicated to making your money go further, helping you live well for less every day.

There are many factors which can affect pricing, such as the rising costs of raw materials, production, packaging and transportation. We do try to absorb any increases for as long as we can. Once these

prices are no longer sustainable we sometimes have to put the price up to reflect the cost to us.

We will continue to work closely with our buyers and suppliers to minimise the impact of price increases on our customers and I do hope you will still find our range great value for money, as well as great quality.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to contact us, your feedback is very important to us. We look forward to seeing you in store again soon and hope to serve you for many years to come.

Yours sincerely

John Flynn
Manager, Executive Office

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Dear Sainsbury's

I have been buying your tinned curries, specifically chickpea dahl and vegetable curry, for more years than I can remember.

I was disappointed to see, some months (or perhaps a year or so - time flies) ago, that the can size was reduced from 410 grams (If I remember correctly) to the present 395 grams. Not a significant reduction in size, but a reduction nonetheless.

Now, this week, I see that the price of these two curries (and all others from what I saw on the shelves) has increased by 8.5% or thereabouts.

Value for money, it appears, is slowly being eroded through gradual, creeping increases (price) and decreases (size). This is most unwelcome for Sainsbury's shoppers, particularly after the recent announcement of a 5% rise in Sainsbury's half-year profits.

Commodity prices have, no doubt, increased because of poor global harvests but Sainsbury's profits are certainly not suffering!

Sincerely

Paul Turner