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DLCA Says Virgin Islanders Should Prepare for Higher Grocery Prices as Pandemic Continues

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The V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs on Wednesday said the public should expect higher grocery prices as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to disrupt supply chains.

“During my last trip to the grocery, I thought I was imagining things, the price of steak gave me sticker shock,” said DLCA Commissioner Richard Evangelista. “Although I was completing my personal to-do list, I turned on my DLCA hat and contacted a manager to confirm the item was not mispriced.”

According to DLCA, “Unfortunately, the price was accurate. The cost of steak is really pricier than usual — and so are your eggs, bacon, and other household staples.”

DLCA provided an article from the Washington Examiner that delves into the price increases.

"Grocery bills have been steadily rising in the United States as the coronavirus pandemic has continued to wreak havoc on supply chains and as businesses have faced worker shortages in recent months. Those disruptions have been exacerbated by higher demand, droughts, and major storms that have decimated crops and halted food production in some areas," reads the article.

It continues, "The consumer price index for food at home, which measures grocery prices, rose 3% in the last 12 months, according to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in August of 2021. Meanwhile, the producer price index for food, which measures costs from the point of view of producers or wholesale prices, has gone up 12.7% since last August, the bureau reported.

"The hike in food prices is part of broader inflation in the cost of goods and services that has been hitting people's pocketbooks at a time when money is already tight for those who have lost jobs or taken pay cuts due to the pandemic. Overall, the producer price index rose 8.3% in the last 12 months, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said — the most significant jump since it started calculating the number more than 10 years ago."

DLCA did not provide any recourse, nor did the release speak to any enforcement action the department planned to ascertain that local grocery outlets are not marking up prices beyond reasonable profit.