Soaring Prices are Clouding Festive Season





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Theme Story

Soaring prices is clouding the festive season

April 2022 is supposed to be a time of feasting and bounty, as people all over the country prepare to celebrate both Easter and Ramadan. Unfortunately, the month is shaping up to look different than expected for Nigerian consumers. In the last few months, domestic food prices

have soared by over 50% due to rising global



commodity prices and the 167.86% spike in diesel prices to N700/litre (the major fuel for haulage). While commodity prices are going through the roof, households' income levels have remained static, leading to squeezed disposable income. The dampening impact will affect the hopes of having the usual merriment come next month.

Nigeria risks food scarcity in the coming months

More importantly, Nigeria is likely to witness food scarcity, particularly wheat-related products, in the coming months due to the on-going Russian-Ukraine conflict. The country imported wheat worth N1.29trn in 2021. Given how close the price of wheat is tied to Russia and Ukraine, this means that the price of wheat-related products will increase further with a cross elasticity effect on other substitutes like yam, rice, beans, etc.

Impact of higher commodity prices on Festive season

We expect this festive period to be very conservative because of depressed disposable income and low consumer demand. Spending will be rational and demand for commodities will be low due to the rising prices of food items and high cost of living.

Economic & Business Update

Brent climbs to \$130pb briefly, diesel prices surge to N600/\$

As the Russian-Ukraine crisis continues, energy prices continue to climb. Brent – the benchmark crude oil price - rose by 106.4% to \$130pb briefly (the highest level since 2008) before retreating to \$111pb as Saudi Arabia hinted that it will encourage OPEC to increase supply. The US and UK have enacted tougher sanctions on the Kremlin, including cutting oil and natural gas supply. For Nigeria, higher oil prices would be highly beneficial to the coun-



try's current account balance and forex inflows. However, the downside remains that Nigeria is a net importer of refined petroleum products and the surge in oil prices mean an attendant increase in the price of these commodities. With fuel scarcity persisting, still due to the crisis, the price of PMS has increased across several filling stations to N200/litre. In addition, the retail price of diesel, which is a true reflection of the global market trend has increased to N600/litre from N225/litre last year. The market for diesel is deregulated, hence prices are determined by the forces of demand and supply. The increase in the price of diesel and PMS coupled with scarcity will increase transport and logistics costs across the country, further fuelling inflationary pressures and eroding consumer disposable income in the near term.



Aviation sector under pressure due to forex and aviation fuel scarcity

Foreign airlines operating in Nigeria have started cutting down on the number of flight tickets sold for Nige-



rian routes due to forex shortages. The dearth has made it extremely difficult for them to repatriate funds (over \$144mn - N60bn) generated from ticket sales to their head offices abroad. Forex scarcity in the country continues to bite despite higher oil prices and this has forced the CBN to intensify its rationing move. This issue will force airlines to not only sustain the decline in ticket sales but begin to price in dollars, a step that will continue to worsen consumer

disposable income as travel expenses surge.

Meanwhile, domestic airfares have climbed due to the scarcity of aviation fuel. This coupled with the lingering dollar scarcity and high maintenance costs would slow travel recovery and negatively affect the aviation sector, which grew by 19.70% in Q4'21. Flight delays and cancellations which will in turn hamper passenger traffic are expected to persist in the near term. The CBN could gradually increase FX supply on the back of higher reserves as oil prices stay high. This could support repatriation efforts, albeit slowly, possibly improve aviation fuel imports and assist airline ticket sales to return to normal in the coming weeks.

Foreign direct investments (FDI) drop to \$698.8mn in 2021

Nigeria's FDIs dipped by 32.14% to \$698.8mn from \$1.03bn recorded in 2020. This is the fourth time the country's FDI inflows have fallen below the \$1bn benchmark since the financial crisis in 2008. The decline was driven by the lingering effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several developing countries including Nigeria, depend on increased FDIs as it is relatively more stable than hot money (FPIs) and its impact is largely beneficial to economic growth and development.



Recently, FDI inflows into Nigeria have remained rather lacklustre and if this trend persists aggregate output could significantly decline.

In the interim, the decline in investments will worsen the country's dollar dearth, continue to exact immense pressure on the value of the naira and keep balance of payments negative. Also, noting that FDIs also come in the form of infrastructure development, reduced inflows will continue to widen Nigeria's infrastructure deficit that is currently estimated at \$100bn annually and in turn deter growth. Furthermore, if insecurity, double digit inflation, sluggish growth, policy inconsistency and uncertainty persist, the country will continue to remain unattractive to investors, especially now that many international investors are eyeing other African countries as the AfCFTA progresses.



OPEC maintains 400tb/d output increase, domestic oil production up (1.4mbpd)



In the heat of the Russian- Ukraine tensions, OPEC was caught in a tight dilemma of increasing its supply to taper energy induced global inflationary pressures or maintain status quo. The cartel at its March meeting, decided to retain its 400,000bpd increase on the premise that that the current volatility is not caused by changes in market fundamentals but by geopolitical developments out of its control. The decision of OPEC alongside sanctions on Russia's oil exports pushed oil prices to record highs.

Brent is currently trading at \$111pb and could climb to \$150pb if the crisis lingers. Meanwhile, domestic oil production that has been distorted by vandalism, theft and operational challenges edged higher to 1.4mbpd in January from 1.32mbpd in December 2021. Higher oil prices coupled with the marginal uptick in Nigeria's output levels will boost government revenue, which could support agriculture and manufacturing sector intervention efforts and as a result, output levels in the near term.

CBN implements N65/\$ rebate for non-oil exports



The CBN recently stated that exporters will get a N65 rebate for every US Dollar on non-oil exports. The rebate, which is a benefit attached to the RT200 Non-Oil Exports Proceed Repatriation Rebate Scheme is meant to grow the country's non-oil export earnings. In the meantime, this policy move will increase participation at the IEFX window and narrow the parallel market premium to about N97/\$ (from its current level

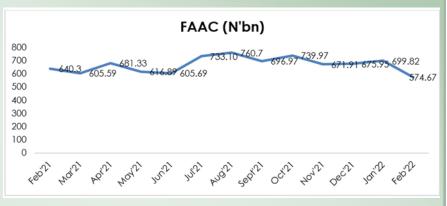
of N162/\$). It would also support forex inflows and bolster gross external reserves that have been slowly creeping up (\$39bn) in spite of the sharp increase in global oil prices (\$111pb).

An increase in FX supply should increase the CBN's intervention efforts at the official window and as a result reduce the blended rate for manufacturers and relatively stabilize the naira. The parallel market rate is currently trading at \$578/\$ while the IEFX rate oscillates between N415/\$ and N416/\$. The rebate strategy could also significantly assist the CBN in achieving its goal of \$200bn in FX earnings over the next 3-5 years. Unfortunately, the arbitrage corridor that still exists will limit the success of this CBN's policy goal.

FAAC down to N574.67bn from N699.82bn

The total amount disbursed to the three tiers of government declined sharply by 17.88% to N574.67bn from

N699.82bn in the previous month, despite the uptick in oil prices. On average, Brent crude rose by 10% to \$94.12pb in February, compared to the \$85.57pb recorded in January 2022. The fall in FAAC allocation was also driven by the 4.99% drop in VAT receipts to N191.22bn from N201.26bn in December 2021. The total amount



distributed comprised of statutory revenue of N291.4bn, exchange rate gain (N5.2bn) and non-mineral revenue of N100bn.

FAAC allocations could pick up mildly to N600bn – N650bn on higher oil prices and tax revenues. This could support the state and local governments to meet their administrative obligations like salary payments and possibly increase their capacity to continue or finalize existing infrastructure projects. The linked impact will likely be an increase in aggregate demand/consumption levels that will be positive for growth in the near term. However, lingering tepid oil production levels and the NNPC deducting from its contribution due to subsidy payments poses a significant threat to this outlook.



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Business Update

(Review Period: March 1st - 11th, 2022)

The Foreign Exchange Market







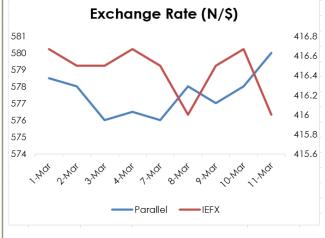
Forex: Parallel (N/\$)

Forex: 1EFX (H/\$)

External Reserves (\$/bn)

At the parallel market, the naira depreciated by 0.35% to close at N580/\$ from the N578/\$ recorded at the close of the previous period. The IEFX rate traded relatively flat at N416/\$ as the average daily turnover at the I & E window rose by 15.1% to \$127.38mn from \$110.67mn in the second half of February.

The gross external reserves rose consistently from March 1 - 7, before declining marginally by 0.26% to close the review period at \$39.77bn. Reserves can now cover 9.02months of imports.

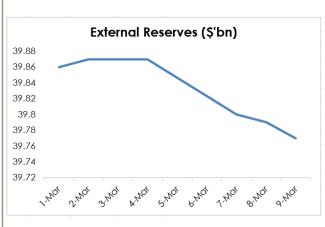


SOURCE: FDC Think Tank, FMDQ

Implications & Outlook

Higher oil prices are expected to increase oil revenue and in turn improve the fiscal position of the government. However, sub-optimal oil production levels could slow the pace of increase in oil receipts.

The naira would continue to trade at current levels at the parallel and IEFX markets barring any fundamental changes to the forex market structure in the near term.



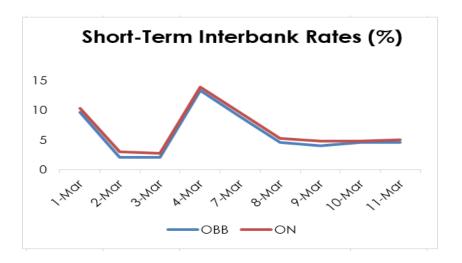
SOURCE: FDC Think Tank, CBN

The Money Markets



NIBOR: OBB (%p. a)

NIBOR: O/N (%p.a)



SOURCE: FDC Think Tank, FMDQ

In the review period, the average opening position for banks rose by 22.42% to N292.4bn from the N238.85bn recorded in the second half of February. The increase in money market liquidity led to the sharp decline in the average short term interbank (NIBOR) rates by 294bps to 6.25% from 9.19% in the previous period. As at March 11, the OBB and ON rate stood at 4.5% and 5.0% respectively.

Outlook

We expect short term interbank rates to remain at current levels pending any significant withdrawals or injections into the system. The CBN will likely continue its use of unorthodox monetary policy tools (CRR debits and OMO auction) to manage market liquidity in the near term.

The Stock Market



SOURCE: FDC Think Tank, NGX

The NSE ASI gained 0.09% to close the review period at 47,437.48points from the 47,394.53 recorded at the end of the previous period. In tandem, the market cap also rose by 0.12% to close the period at N25.57bn from N25.54bn on February 28. Of the 9 trading days, the bourse gained in 4 days and lost in 5 days. As at March 11, the 52 week and YTD returns stood at 22.59% and 11.05% respectively.

Outlook & Implications

The overall positive performance of the NGX will continue to be driven by relatively low yields on fixed income instruments. Investor appetite towards equities will remain high, further influencing the stock market performance. More so, the positive correlation between higher oil prices and the NSE ASI would be more evident in the coming weeks. However, as energy prices rise, triggering an increase in operating costs for listed companies, profitability could fall and this could negatively affect stock prices.

The Commodities Market

Brent prices (\$/b)





Outlook & Implications

During the review period, Brent crude climbed to \$138pb (intraday) - the highest level since 2008, before retreating to close at \$111pb. The decline was due to Saudi Arabia's announcement that it would encourage OPEC to increase oil supply. This came after the US and UK confirmed the ban on Russian oil exports. The cartel and its allies have maintained the gradual 400tb/d increase in spite of the Russia-Ukraine war.

The likelihood of an uptick in supply from OPEC in the near term means lower oil prices and a further rise in Nigeria's quota, probably to 1.75mbpd. However, the country will continue to struggle to boost output, which will remain a limitation to government revenue and subsequent FAAC allocations.

Natural gas (\$/mmbtu)





Corn (\$/bushel)





Wheat (\$/bushel)





Sugar (\$/pound)





Cocoa (\$/mt)





SOURCE: FDC Think Tank, Bloomberg

Outlook & Implications

The cut in Russian gas exports amid rising demand for heating in the US and Europe will continue to buoy LNG prices. This could boost the FG's coffers but with Nigeria still a net importer of refined gas products like LPG, the domestic price of the commodity could climb further in the near term.

Outlook & Implications

Corn prices are likely to stay strong on limited supply from major producing countries (Brazil and Argentina). This combined with surging demand and the escalating Russia-Ukraine war, will worsen the food import bill for emerging markets like Nigeria. The attendant impact is an increase in the price of other commodities like cereals and animal feed that require corn as an input.

Outlook & Implications

In the period, the global price of wheat climbed to a 14-year high on the lingering Russian-Ukraine war and projections of lower output from the US. Russia & Ukraine account for about 29% of global wheat exports. As Australia steps up output and the buying frenzy cools, prices could soften and this would possibly taper Nigeria's wheat imports in the near term.

Outlook & Implications

Sugar prices could decline mildly in a few days on the expectation of increased supply from India - the 2nd largest global producer. This will reduce Nigeria's sugar import bill and likely taper the price of commodities like confectionaries that require sugar as a raw material.

Outlook & Implications

Reduced supply from West African producing countries could keep prices elevated. However, Nigeria is unlikely to benefit in terms of higher export earnings as cocoa output remains constrained. Currently, haulage rates are rising in the country due to rising fuel prices.



Happy

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

#BREAK THE BIAS

#WomenAtWork #WomenOfUnity #IWD2022 #BreakTheBias



Unity Bank News

IWD: Unity Bank, AltSchool Africa Partner to Empower Female Software Engineers

In commemoration of International Women's Day, IWD 2022, Nigeria's retail lender, Unity Bank Plc is partnering AltSchool Africa to sponsor female students towards the acquisition of specialist software skills – an empowerment initiative to boost the capacity of the female gender.

AltSchool Africa is a school for individuals looking to gain technical skills and kick start a career in Software Engineering. The school currently prides itself on the large enrolment of female students. Unity Bank Plc is providing funds to encourage enrolment of young female students into AltSchool who will pursue a career in Informational Technology.

The Bank said in a statement that the gesture has become imperative to #BreakTheBias against women in the emerging information technology industry, where a recent study by ONE Campaign and the Center for Global Development, showed that less than 30 per cent of technology companies in Nigeria are owned by women, even as the female members of the entire tech ecosystem workforce constituted less than 20 per cent.

Speaking on the partnership, Unity Bank's Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Tomi Somefun said the initiative to extend the scholarships to the young women looking to start a career in the IT industry not only aligned with the theme of the IWD 2022, "#BreakTheBias," but is in tandem with the Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability initiative targeting education and empowerment.

She said, "The International Women's Day is yet another opportunity to re-examine the critical role that women continue to play in building a peaceful and prosperous society. Today, more than ever before, we are confronted by the harsh realities of gender-based exclusivity, especially in the work-place.

"I agree that some progress has been made but we must not be distracted by this momentary success because, over the next decade, the share of jobs requiring medium to digital skills would have risen to more than 50 per cent. Therefore, we must remain committed to empowering women who are courageous to make a difference in careers that have hitherto excluded the women, such as the IT industry.".

According to Mrs. Somefun, "The advancement in technology has created a new world order that must be deliberate about inclusivity, removing biases and unlearning stereotypes. If future prosperity shall be defined by technological and requisite skills, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past by ensuring diversity, equity and inclusivity and empower our women to take an active part in creating that future."

The International Women's Day, IWD is a day set aside globally to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and reflect on action to accelerate gender equality.

This years' theme #BreakTheBias "imagines a gender-equal world, a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination; a world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive; a world where difference is valued and celebrated."

Social Corner





MTN becomes the first African company to make Metaverse investment

- ⇒ A metaverse is a 3D virtual world that is focused on social connection. People live, work, shop, and network with others from their homes in the physical world.
- ⇒ Metaverse became a household word when Facebook officially changed its name to Meta in October 2021.
- ⇒ The MTN Group announced its acquisition of 144 plots of digital land in 'Africarare', a South African metaverse.
- ⇒ This makes MTN the first African company to purchase such a space.
- \Rightarrow Africarare was launched in October 2021 and is the first African virtual reality metaverse to launch.
- ⇒ Africarare's metaverse called Ubuntuland is centered on showcasing the work of African artists. The platform sold out its debut Non-Fungible Token art (NFT) collection of approximately \$50,000.
- \Rightarrow The mobile network operator did not disclose the price paid for the land, but the plots of land have an overall area of 12x12m.



SAG Awards 2022 Highlights

- ⇒ The 28th Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards took place on the 27th of February 2022 at the Barker Hanger in Santa Monica, California.
- ⇒ The SAG awards recognizes and honors outstanding performances in movie and prime time television.
- ⇒ A wealth of high fashion garments was flaunted on the red carpet with key fashion personalities such as Lady Gaga, Selena Gomez and Cynthia Erivo showing out as usual.
- ⇒ The popular Netflix series, Squid Game won big which was no surprise. The show hit #1 on Netflix's Top 10 lists in 95 countries around the globe, including Nigeria.
- ⇒ Some other key winnings included Will Smith as Best Actor for King Richard, Kate Winslet as Best Actress in a limited series, and Helen Mirren receiving the Lifetime Achievement honor.





Puzzle

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Awards	Scarcity	Russia
Forex	Conflict	Ticket
Oil	Invasion	Diesel
Production	Outcome	Meeting
Prices	Sales	Ukraine

6 Productivity Tips for Your New Hybrid Work Life

Culled from Wirecutter¹



Lifestyle

The pandemic forced many career office workers to learn to do their jobs from home. But now that a lot of companies are welcoming staff back into the office, some are setting up hybrid work arrangements to allow employees to continue to work remotely, at least part-time.

Having two different workspaces one at home and the other at the office has its perks, but there are also many challenges. How do you keep up your momentum and productivity when you're switching locations? How can you stay organized and ensure that everything you need (files, devices and tech accessories, and personal items) is available all the time?

I can help. I've spent over a decade working remotely while going into the office occasionally. These are the tips I've learned along the way.

1. Replicate your work office's setup at home.

Working at your desk should feel natural and comfortable, no matter where you are. One way to reduce the friction that comes with maintaining multiple workspaces is to make the different work environments match as closely as you can especially in terms of organization and ergonomics.

In his e-book, how to set up your desk, Matt Perman recommends mirroring your desk setup in both places. For example, if you have a paper inbox and phone on the left side of your desk and a filing cabinet to the right at the office, set up your home office



similarly. If you keep certain supplies in specific desk drawers, maintain that same organization everywhere. You might go as far as having the same monitor, keyboard, and even furniture at home. It might not be possible to make everything match, but when your desk layout is similar in both places, it's easier to transition between home and office.

In the same vein, if at work your company provides snacks and drinks that you enjoy (bottomless LaCroix is a wonderful perk), consider keeping a stash of the same treats at home. Consistency and familiarity help our brains focus on the important stuff.

2. Invest in mobile accessories.

Buying a second laptop charger and leaving it in my laptop bag changed my life in a small but meaningful way I no longer had to crawl under my desk to unplug or plug in my charger whenever I went to the office.

If you have a dedicated desk at the office, you can keep duplicates of your laptop charger, external keyboard, mouse, and other accessories (like a USB hub) there, to avoid having to lug everything back and forth. Your company might buy or reimburse you for those essentials, too. If you don't have a permanent desk at work, keep these items in your "go bag" to save some time in the morning when you're getting ready.

3. Go paperless as much as possible.

Some industries still depend on paper files, and if yours is among them, there's no getting around the hassle of hauling those files back and forth between home and the office. But if you're able to go paperless and haven't done so yet, now's a great time.

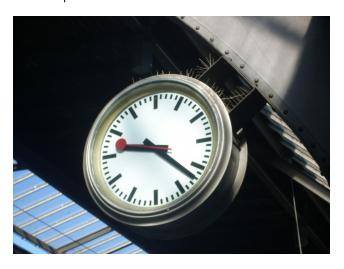
Our pick for the best mobile scanning app, Adobe Scan (iOS, Android), is free and snappy. A portable document scanner, like the Brother ADS-1250W, is even faster to use and doesn't have a large footprint. With one of these tools, you can store documents in the cloud to easily access and share from anywhere.

and doesn't have a large footprint. With one of these tools, you can store documents in the cloud to easily access and share from anywhere.

4. Create time blocks to manage your days.

A screenshot of a calendar app, showing a work week with color-coded blocked out times for various activities.

On the days you work remotely, it might be tempting to wake up later because you don't have to commute. Conversely, you might find yourself working later. Instead, try to keep a consistent schedule, and dedicate that "extra" non-commuting time to doing things that fuel your brain and happiness. That might be listening to podcasts, exercising, working on a passion project, or spending more time with your family. Block out those times on your calendar to commit to this practice.



Because the energy at the company office can be different from the work-from-home vibe, plan out your tasks in advance based on where you'll be working. If you have flexibility on what you do each day, create theme days for better focus. If you work from home on Mondays and Fridays, for example, you might set aside those days for deep, focused work and the other days for in-person meetings or other collaborative tasks.

If it's important for your boss or co-workers to know when you're at the office or at home—to plan in-person meetings, for example—update your calendar and Slack or Microsoft Teams status to reflect that. If your company uses Slack, you can do this automatically by syncing your Google or Outlook Calendar. Or you can update your work profile to note your WFH and in-office days.

5. Stay connected to your co-workers.

On the days you work from home, you might feel isolated, especially if some of your co-workers are at the office when you aren't. When you're not at the office, make an effort to be more sociable over your company's team chat tool to keep the spirit of teamwork alive. Perhaps start a weekly game everyone can play remotely on their own time. For example, at my previous job,

my fully remote team played games like Two Truths and a Lie and a version of the Pictionary-like game Telestrations. There are several apps you can connect to Slack for virtual team-building.

On days when you go to the office, make the most of being in person with your teammates by setting up lunch dates or leaving your desk to deliver a message instead of using email or chat. Some companies don't assign dedicated desks at work on purpose, so that staff can move around to different desks and get to know more people; find out whether this is an option for you.

6. If you're a manager, set clear expectations about hybrid work.

Ask your team what questions they have about the logistics of working from home part-time. For example, they might want to know whether they'll be required to be available for in-person meetings or activities, or if they'll be able to change their inoffice schedule on a weekly basis. Then set up a hybrid work policy to address their questions and concerns and make sure everyone understands what's expected.

One common challenge with hybrid work arrangements is making sure everyone has access to the same information. It's easy for in-office communication to leave out those

who are working from home. Develop a plan to avoid this issue. For example, set



rules against impromptu meetings at the office if key employees aren't able to join in the conversation remotely. Encourage asynchronous communication where team members can discuss matters without the expectation that they have to answer right away. Use project-management tools like Basecamp and Trello to keep notes, files, and other resources in one central location.

This might sound strange, but if you have meetings where some people are at the office and some are working from home, encourage everyone at the office to log in from their individual computers, rather than from one room. This way, remote workers will be less likely to feel like they're missing out.

Finally, hybrid work is new territory for most people, so keep experimenting with your team.

Contact

Would you like to open an account with us?

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