Russia's ways to ensure food security (control food prices) in 2020-2022, and their impact on consumers[1]

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Abstract. This year confirmed an ambiguous situation with food security in Russia. On the one hand, the government insists on the achieved sustainable food self-sufficiency/sovereignty: "Russia is self-sufficient in all basic types of food"[2]; "the level of food security in Russia is one of the most reliable in the world"[3]; "the Eurasian Economic Union has reached a level of self-sufficiency in most food products (grain, vegetable oils, pork, lamb, sugar, eggs)"[4]. The Russian leadership admits the "very complex nature" of food sovereignty as depending on climate change, population growth, trade wars, sanctions, and so on[5]. However, the official discourse emphasizes that "we should not be pessimists", "a country striving to be sovereign must provide itself with food", and Russia solves this task so successfully that has become one of the largest food exporters. Therefore, "in 2023, food inflation in Russia will be one of the lowest in the world due to self-sufficiency in basic products" [6] and "systemic measures of anti-crisis sup-

1. The article was written on the basis of the RANEPA state assignment research program
2. Russia provides itself with the basic types of food, Putin said. 18.05.2023. URL: https://ria.ru/20230518/prodovolstvie-1872601897.html?ysclid=llrw0ogh3f828613799.
3. Mishustin praised the level of Russia' food security. 23.03.2023. URL: https://ria.ru/20230323/prodbezopasnost-1860018791.html?ysclid=llrvy7n5km581093894.
4. Prime Minister Mishustin: Russia's level of food security is one of the most reliable in the world. 21.06.2023. URL: https://rg.ru/2023/06/21/baranina-sahar-i-iajca.html?ysclid=llrvyekkl1646198537.
5. African food sovereignty: A joint solution to the African problem. 07.27.2023. URL: https://www.interfax.ru/russia/913622.
6. In 2023, Russia's food inflation will be one of the lowest in the world. 18.07.2023. URL: https://dzen.ru/a/ZLZqCeL2qmgyOXh3.

port for enterprises and sectors that ensure food security"[7]. Since mid-2020, rising prices on world markets have determined higher prices on domestic markets, and high food inflation affected many countries. In Russia, food inflation is lower compared to other regions (10% vs 19.1% in the EU or 14.9% in the OECD), and the rate of increase in food prices is lower than general inflation, while in other countries food prices became key drivers of accelerating retail prices. The article considers Russia's measures for keeping food prices down and its population's everyday food-consumer practices for keeping usual diet under rising prices. The survey confirmed the persistent inconsistency of Russians' assessment of food practices, which can be explained by the trend to 'normalize' one's life situation in general and in its most essential part (daily diet) in particular.

Key words: rising food prices, foreign and domestic markets, food inflation, food prices volatility, food (in)security, (everyday) food-consumer practices, economic and physical access to food, sociological data

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Food self-sufficiency, prices volatility and government measures

In Russia, the need for self-sufficiency is considered urgent in all economic spheres, including the functioning of all national systems under cataclysms in world markets. However, the first serious efforts were made by the state to increase the level of food self-sufficiency. From 2010 to 2020, food independence indicators (80%–95% of national consumption for main product groups) were the only indicators of the national food security according to the Doctrine of Food Security[8]. Today for all main food groups, except dairy products and fruits, the country has achieved food independence. The state focused on the highest possible level of self-sufficiency/independence to ensure stable food supplies and to reduce the dependence of national food prices on fluctuations on foreign markets. The integral level of food dependence, calculated as the ratio of the import-export balance to the population's food expenses, reached negative values already in 2020. However, as the rising prices have shown since 2020, high self-sufficiency does not protect the national economy from price volatility under the rising prices on foreign markets.

In 2022, Russia's food independence did not decrease, as evidenced by the growth rate of agricultural production (+10.2%) compared to 2021. This growth, the country's status of a net food exporter and the state support for agriculture (1.1%–1% of spendings in the consolidated budget) prove the sustainability of Russia's food system (Fig. 1–2).

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7. Food at the safe line. 15.06.2023. URL: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6042042?ysclid=llrvy4x2ul103550459.
8. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of January 21, 2020, No. 20 "On Approval of the Doctrine of Food Security of the Russian Federation"

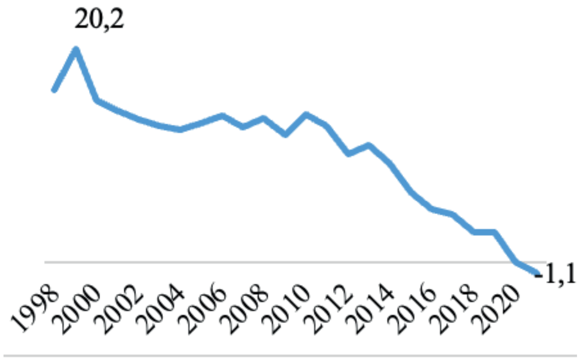

Fig. 1. Integral level of food dependence on imports, %[9]

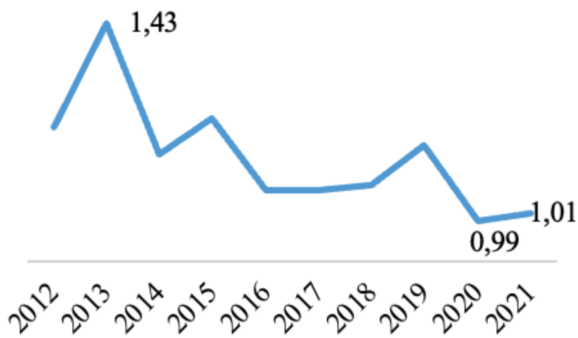

Fig. 2. Share of agricultural expenditures in the consolidated budget

From the beginning of 2020 to September 2020, the increase in food prices on the domestic market was 2%–5% (compared to the same months of the previous year); in December 2020, prices increased by 6.7% compared to December 2019. This trend made the government react urgently and publicly — by revising the rules for introducing maximum retail prices for socially significant food products. According to the new rules, maximum retail prices can be introduced for three months if the price of the socially significant product increases by 10% in 60 days (previously 30% in 30 days); and maximum retail prices were introduced for sugar and vegetable oil[10]. In addition, the Russian

9. Calculated on the Rosstat data with V.Ya. Uzun's method: Shagaida N. I., Uzun V.Ya. (2015) Food security: Assessment issues. *Economic Issues*, no 5.
10. "On approval of the rules for introducing maximum retail prices for certain types of socially significant, essential food products, of the list of socially significant, essential food products for which maximum retail prices can be introduced, and of the list of socially significant food products for the purchase of certain quantities of which the trader (business entity) is

government took many measures used in other countries such as specific restrictions/incentives to curb price increases for certain products, bans on export of some products, new export duties and quotas, reduced import duties, increased government support, revised lists of socially important companies (they were promised support in difficult situation), some money were paid to families with children three times.

As expected, the introduced maximum retail prices for certain types of sugar and vegetable oil did not stop but slowed down rising prices for sugar and vegetable oil in general. Moreover, price restrictions did not significantly affect the dynamics of food prices. Thus, the accumulated consumer price index for food increased from 1.76 in November 2020 to 1.91 in November 2021, and in April 2022 the growth accelerated — in 5 months this index increased from 1.91 to 2.06. The growth rate of food prices increased every year, and in February 2022 food prices already exceeded the prices of February 2021 by 11% (in February 2020/2019 — +1.8%, in February 2021/2020 — +7.8%, in February 2022/2021 — +11.5%). Since February 2022, food prices have been rising steeply — in April 2022, by 20% compared to April 2021.

The list of socially significant products and maximum retail prices for them are highly appreciated by the Russian population but are criticized by experts[11]. The government does not want to abandon or reduce the list of socially significant products[12]: to curb retail prices, the government prefers agreements with manufacturers and retailers to the introduction of maximum retail prices. It should be noted that the condition for applying new rules (an increase in price of the socially significant product by 10% in 60 days) was fulfilled only in a few months of 2022 for 14–16 products from the list of 24 socially significant ones.

Not only rising prices are important but also the position of the product in consumption and its share in food expenses. Thus, the price of sugar increased by 50% from August 2021 to August 2022, but, considering its share in food expenses, this increase turned into 0.5% in the total increase in food prices (14.7%), and the share of all 24 socially significant products — into 3.2%. In other words, under rising prices, maximum prices for some products were of little use, that is, such measures were ineffective but had a positive psychological effect on consumers.

The idea of controlling retail prices is extremely popular in Russia: older generations remember the Soviet era with prices that did not change for decades, which explains the enviable regularity of populist bills prom-

not allowed to be paid remuneration”. Federal Law of December 28, 2009, No. 381-FZ “On the Basics of the State Regulation of Trade in the Russian Federation”, Article 8.

11. Experts suggested to exclude beef and apples from the list of socially significant products. URL: https://www.rbc.ru/business/13/12/2022/63931a959a79470deac2e8a6.
12. Ministry of Economic Development denied the exclusion of apples and beef from the list of socially significant products. URL: https://www.vedomosti.ru/economics/news/2022/12/13/955090-minek-oproverg-isklyuchenie.

ising to keep retail prices or trade margins down[13]. However, any limitations of trade margin for a product or a group of socially significant products only redistribute trading costs and rate of return to other groups of products in stores. Thus, when the maximum retail price was set for one type of sunflower oil, prices for unrefined sunflower oil increased together with average prices for other types of vegetable oil (Uzun 2023). There is a more effective measure — to allow retailers to select several types of socially significant goods for setting maximum retail prices. However, there is an indisputable psychological effect of discussing and introducing measures to keep trade margins down or to limit profits of trading organizations — such measures are easy to implement and administer, and customers believe to be taken care of. This is why bills with different trade margins (5%, 10% or 20%) appear and disappear with enviable regularity[14].

Our analysis of food prices volatility allowed to identify some features of its dynamics since 2006: a reduction in normal volatility intervals; an increase in the amplitude of volatility; an increase in the period of high volatility (Fig. 3).

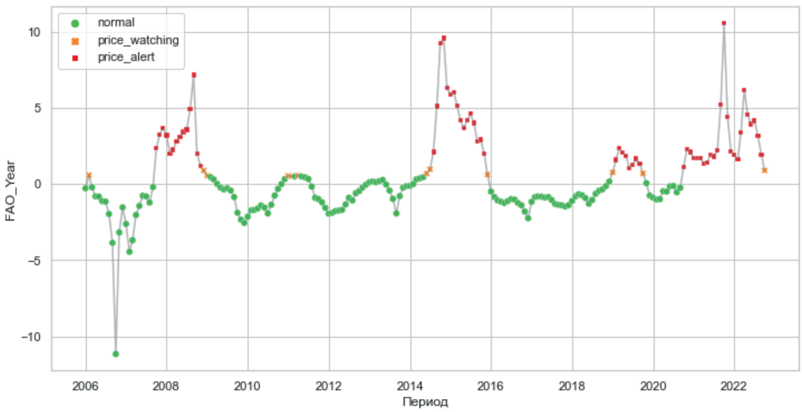

Fig. 3. Volatility of food prices and the population's reaction to rising prices (*Rosstat* data, FAO volatility assessment methodology) (Baquedano 2015)[15]

13. A bill for keeping trade margins on socially significant products down was submitted to the State Duma. URL: https://www.interfax.ru/russia/824449; The maximum trade margin on some products in Russia is to be limited to 5%. URL: https://www.interfax.ru/business/820134.
14. Deputies proposed to limit trade margin on socially significant products to 10%. URL: https://www.finam.ru/publications/item/deputaty-predlozhili-ogranichit-10-torgovuyu-nacenku-na-socialno-znachimye-produkty-20220225-130600; Deputies are rewriting price tags. URL: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4322009.
Keeping trade margin on food products down? The Altai deputy also advocates ration cards. URL: https://regnum.ru/news/economy/3497060.html.
15. Methodology for assessing excessive volatility in the food market. IFPA Indicator (2018). URL: https://www.fao.org/3/cb0764ru/cb0764ru.pdf.

At the end of 2020, the long period of the abnormally high volatility began (based on the observations since 2006) and has not yet ended: only on October 1, 2022, the annual FAO volatility index left the anomalous zone for the moderately high one and in December — for the normal one. The maximum annual volatility (calculated by the FAO method) was observed on October 1, 2021 (10.57), although volatility is considered normal up to 0.5, and from 1 — as abnormally high. However, despite the extreme volatility, in 2022 the food price increase was not maximum: in 2008, 2015 and 2016, the price index was higher than in 2021 and 2022 (Fig. 4).

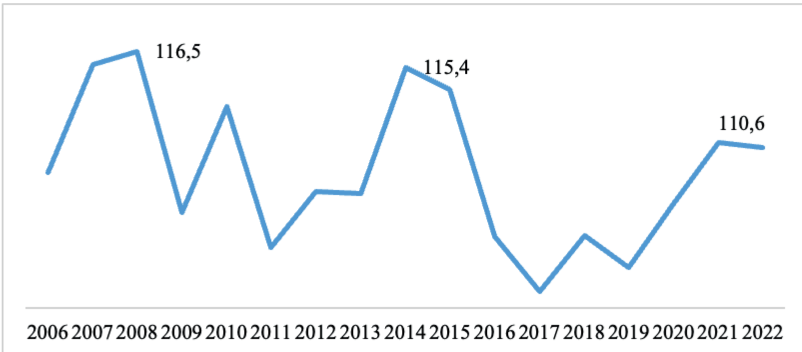

Fig. 4. Food price index, % (December to December)

In 2020–2022, the reaction to rising prices was as sharp as in 2015, when the Russian government did not take any measures to keep prices down. We used two ways to assess the population's reaction: counted the number of publications on rising prices in the media (Fig. 5) and conducted a sociological survey.

Thus, not so much rising prices as the features of price volatility matter: under less price increase but long-term high volatility the situation was considered more dangerous than in previous years despite greater government efforts. Our estimates of the influence of price volatility show that families with low incomes were more affected (Shagaida et al 2023). The high level of national food self-sufficiency failed to reduce social tension caused by rising prices since this high level did not lead to low price volatility. Russia was self-sufficient in potatoes, cabbage, eggs and flour, but their prices were extremely volatile; there was a high dependence on imports of apples, but their price volatility was relatively low. The same applies to countries with different levels of self-sufficiency: in 2020–2021, they showed different price increases, that is, a high level of self-sufficiency does not guarantee low food inflation or low volatility.

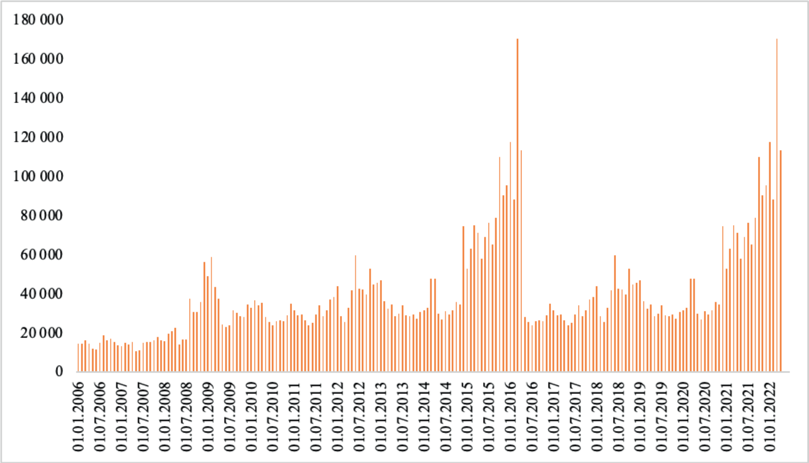

Fig. 5. Number of publications in the Russian media by the search query "rising prices" (based on the data of Medialogia)

It would be logical to assume that rising prices would increase the share of households' food expenses. However, in 2021, this share decreased compared to 2020 — from 37% to 36.3%. As a rule, a decrease in the share of food expenses is considered a good sign, but in 2021 it was accompanied by a deterioration of diet: in 2020, the average cost of the food set ensured 96% of the rational consumption, while in 2021 — 94%. Despite a decrease, this average indicator was still very high, and the share of households assessing their financial situation as a lack of money for food was very low (above 0 only in 9 subjects of the Russian Federation out of almost 80 — from 0.1% to 1.3% of households[16]). In the village, the share of food expenses did not change (in 2021 and 2022 — 42.5%) and the worse diet remained (higher consumption of cheaper products, including sugar, reduced consumption of meat and fruits, a slight increase in the consumption of dairy products and eggs).

In Russia, when the levels of production, self-sufficiency and prices change, the access to food remains the same, according to the long-term observations of three decile groups: 30% of households can afford only up to 85% of rational consumption (Shagaida, Uzun 2015; Shagaida et al 2019; 2022). Probably, the most vulnerable families have the lowest incomes but receive social subsidies and benefits, which does not allow their life situation to worsen under rising prices. Thereby, government's efforts to support the poor seem to be the most successful: when prices rise, the group affording up to 85% of rational consumption does not increase. The idea of a food aid pro-

16. Rosstat: Sample surveys of household budgets. 2021. URL: https://obdx.gks.ru.

gram for vulnerable groups is constantly discussed especially under rising prices. The refusal to introduce such a program in Russia is explained not so much by inflation risks as by "acceleration of inflation"[17]. But this explanation has no justification: under the pandemic, social payments did not accelerate inflation that was lower than in 2015–2016, when there were no additional payments (Fig. 6).

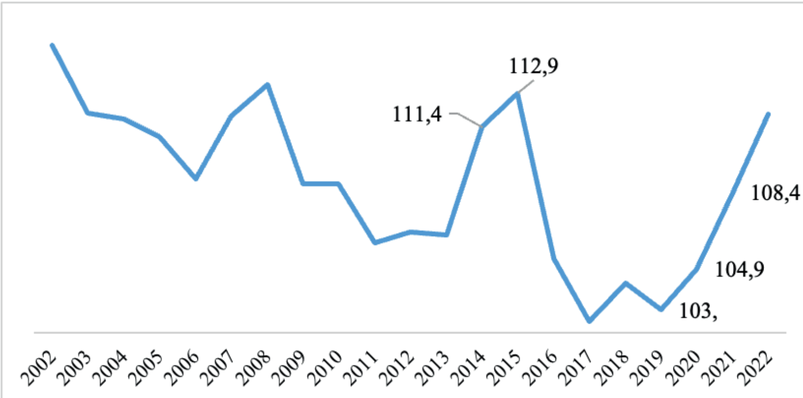

Fig. 6. Price index for goods and services, % (December to December)

Although since December 2022, price volatility has kept normal distribution, price increases remain a pressing problem. In 2023, 58% considered rising prices the most worrying social problem[18]. Food was named the most increased-in-price goods by every fourth in the first half of 2020 vs 38% in December 2021 and 40% in April 2022[19]. In December 2022, 35% expected prices to rise significantly, while 49% were more optimistic — expected a slight increase[20]. Most Russians (82%), "when choosing food products, focus primarily on price; for 88% discounts and promotions are important"[21]; "there is a growing share of

17. Pokatovich G. How to curb price increases. 2021. URL: https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/economics/22/10/2021/6172db069a79474dd66bdee4.
18. The most pressing problems of the Russian society: March 2023. URL: https://www.levada.ru/2023/04/14/predstavleniya-o-naibolee-ostryh-problemah-rossijskogo-obshhestva-mart-2023-goda. The Russian non-governmental research organization "Yuri Levada Analytical Center" ("Levada-Center") was included by the Ministry of Justice in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent.
19. Question: In your opinion, in the past one or two months, for what goods and services prices have increased the most? URL: https://bd.wciom.ru/trzh/print_q.php?s_id=499&q_id=48528&date=27.02.2022.
20. Question: How do you think, will the prices for basic consumer goods and services change in the next one or two months? URL: https://bd.wciom.ru/trzh/print_q.php?s_id=635&q_id=64161&date=25.12.2022.
21. Trends in Russians' food consumption. 06.04.2023. URL: https://www.vedomosti.ru/press_releases/2023/04/06/trendi-potrebleniya-rossiyanami-pro-

Russians planning to save on food and essential goods... and the most popular ways to save on are to buy food on promotions and discounts, choose cheaper shops/products or refuse to buy some other goods"[22]. "For every fifth Russian, food products are expensive — vegetables, fruits, meat, seafood, etc. (21%). In the group of 60+ year-olds and in the group with a low consumer status, the top three most expensive goods include food products (26% and 37%, respectively)" [23]. "Most Russians say that they have food reserves (85%)... due to the fear of rising prices (46%)... even in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (35%)"[24]. In other words, the Russian government is concerned primarily with physical access to food (sufficient volumes of production) and food exports, while the Russian population is worried mainly about economic access to food.

Sociological dimension of Russia's food security under rising prices

Our sociological monitoring of food security aims at considering it not through state programs or national strategies but through households' everyday food practices and consumers' perception of food risks. The sixth all-Russian survey was conducted on March 13–15, 2023 on a sample of 1818 respondents (completed telephone interviews) by 95 operators of the Omsk call center (the average interview took about 26 minutes). This sample's differences from the official *Rosstat* data by gender, age and settlement are not statistically significant, just as the differences from our previous surveys. 76% live in cities and towns, 21% — in rural areas; 58% are employed (including part-time jobs and self-employment), 33% — retired, 7% — unemployed; most households consist of two (32%) or three (22%) members.

Most respondents believe that their families eat enough meat (73%) but not fish (46%); every fifth (18% vs 7% for meat) explains insufficient fish consumption by a conscious choice, every fourth (24 and 17%, respectively) — by lack of money (Fig. 7): *"Fish is more expensive than meat! How is it possible? Where such prices come from?!... And meat is very expensive. I cannot afford it as often as I want"*.

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duktov-pitaniya?ysclid=llttqt1ndx982112383.

22. The share of Russians planning to save on food and essential goods has increased. 17.08.2023. URL: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6162445?ysclid=lltzxit1rg145583903.
23. Shopping in Russia: Trends, challenges, guidelines. 03.07.2023. URL: https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/shoping-v-rossii-trendy-vyzovy-orientiry.
24. Products for future use, or the art of stocking up. 13.04.2023. URL: https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/produkty-vprok-ili-ob-iskusstve-delat-zapasy.

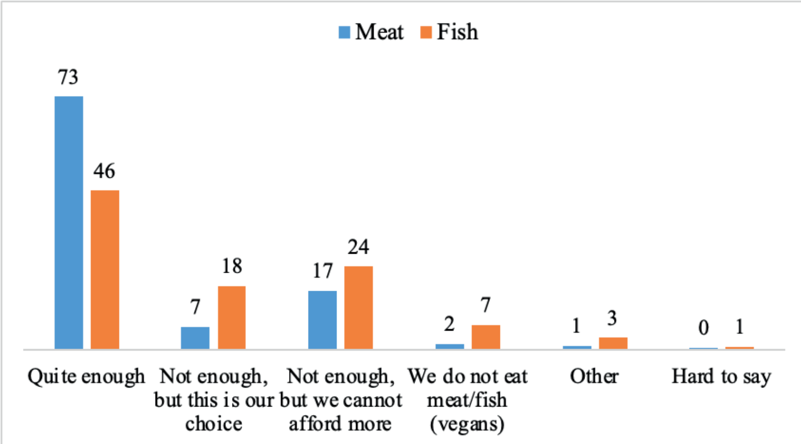

Fig. 7. Family consumption of meat/fish (%)

A specific feature of the Russian public opinion is a kind of social 'normalization' — respondents tend to give socially approved answers even to minimally sensitive questions: 'normal' family ('normal' income, 'normal' diet, etc.) should have 'normal' food products, primarily nutritious (meat) and vitamin-rich (fruits), which should be purchased even in straits: "*We eat meat every day. Me, my wife, two children and my mother-in-law — we love meat and eat it every day*"; "*It depends on income, and it's not that simple to buy as much as we want. For instance, I go to the farmer, buy a half of pork, and we eat it… I would like to eat not only pork but also beef, but we cannot afford beef. We can afford poultry*"; "*We buy fruits only for children, my wife and I, we do not eat fruits, we buy fruits only for children… and not every day… and only apples and bananas*".

Every second respondent says that in winter his family buys as much fresh fruit as they want, 40% buy fruits as far as possible, every tenth — extremely rarely due to lack of money. Almost every tenth says that his family does not buy fresh fruit in winter (11%, but 9% mention food reserves) (Fig. 8). The changed wording of the question does not allow to make comparisons: previously we focused on the frequency of consumption of fresh fruits in winter (an objective indicator), in 2023 — on the subjective aspect of consumption, i.e., whether respondents can afford fresh fruit in winter in principle. However, the answer "we don't buy fresh fruit in winter" was used in all surveys, which allows to make a comparison (Fig. 9).

In 2023, the share of respondents not buying fresh fruit in winter almost doubled (11% vs 6%). On the one hand, the social-economic (sanctions and special military operation) and financial (ruble volatility and its declining purchasing power) situation has hit Russians' pockets, and people "tighten their belts" by reducing consumption of off-season food products. On the other hand, by breaking the answer "we don't buy" into two options — the very fact and its explanation — we gave respondents an opportunity to admit self-restraint but to "save one's blushes" by referring to food reserves (made of organic, cheap, self-grown seasonal fruits), which is considered socially 'normal': *"We don't buy fresh fruit in winter because we eat frozen and canned self-grown fruits and berries... and because we don't have enough money"*. Russian families seem to have developed sustainable patterns of fruit consumption, which are unlikely to change without a sharp deterioration of the financial situation (purchasing power) of households. *"We have dacha and we provide ourselves with fruits, but we buy some exotic fruits: bananas, watermelons, etc. as far as possible"*.

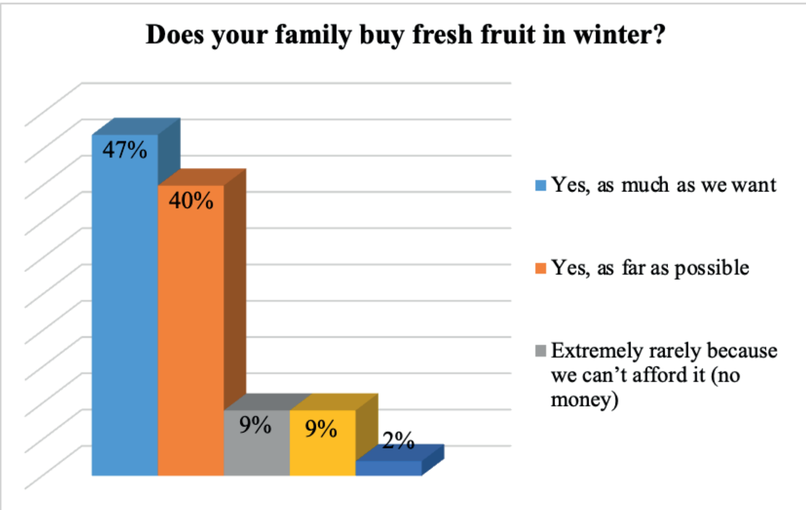

Fig. 8. Consumption of fresh fruit in winter (%)

In general, assessments of the diet quality have not changed significantly since 2017 (fluctuations do not exceed the statistical error) (Fig. 10).

Most respondents qualify their family diet as 'normal' — good or satisfactory (84% in 2017, 80% in 2020, 82% in 2021, 81% in 2022, 79% in 2023; the sum of 'excellent' and 'good' estimates is, respectively, 55%, 61%, 56%, 58% and, unexpectedly, 66% in 2023). Such food 'optimism' can be explained by the "social desirability" effect, and its impact increases in a difficult social-economic situation in which respondents tend to hyper-normalize basic aspects of their life. This is confirmed by the trend of worsening diet with age, i.e., due to low incomes of the elderly, although they also assess their diet as 'normal'/'good'. 24% of the youth (17% in 2022), 18% of 35–54-year-olds (13%) and 9% (8%) of the elderly assess their diet as excellent; 51%, 51% and 49%, respectively (52%, 45% and 43% in 2022) — as good; 21%, 27% and 37% (26%, 35% and 40%) — as satisfactory. Gender differences are insignificant: men more often assess their diet as excellent (20% vs 13%), women — as satisfactory (33% vs 25%), which can be explained by the traditionally greater concern of women about their family diet.

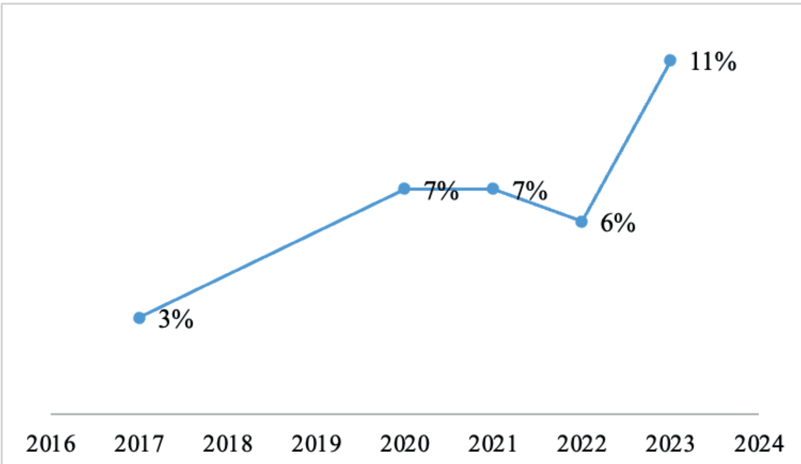

Fig. 9. Shares of respondents not buying fresh fruit in winter

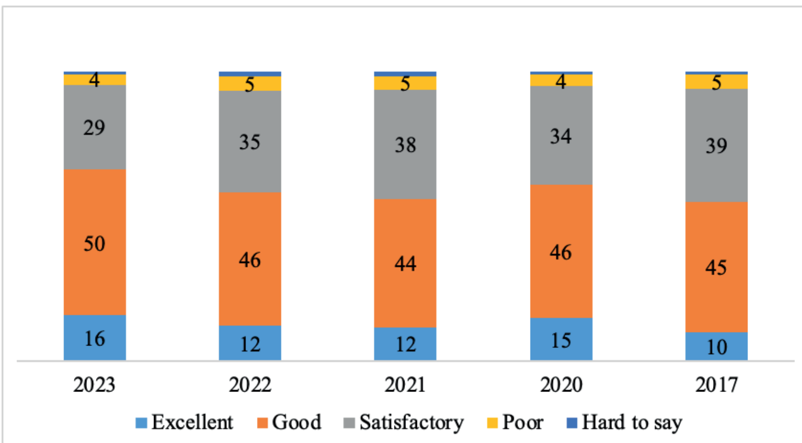

Fig. 10. Assessments of the diet quality (%)

Since in 2022 some indicators did not change compared to 2021 and 2020 (fluctuations did not exceed the statistical error), we slightly changed a few questions' wording to focus on respondents' 'self-examination'. In 2020, the share of respondents with relatives or friends who ate poorly or were malnourished decreased from 29% (2017) to 23%, in 2021 this share was 25%, in 2022 — 22%, and in 2023 — 25%. In 2023, we removed the question about whether the share of such people had changed over the year, since from 2017 to 2020 there was a positive trend (decreasing share of those noting an increase in the number of poorly eating families), and since 2021 — a negative one (every second noted an increase in this number). Thus, we wanted to identify the very fact of knowing malnourished families rather than to confirm the previously identified trend in assessing the situation of such families: *The number of poorly eating people among those I know has increased due to rising prices"; "There is no malnutrition among my friends or relatives, but there is malnutrition among other people I know"*.

The fact that there are malnourished families in the close social circle of every fourth respondent is an extremely negative indicator, especially considering the methodological function of this question: given the Russians' desire for social 'hyper-normalization', the question about one's social circle provides more reliable data than a direct personal one which makes respondents assess their life situation more positively: 69% say that in the past three years the quality of their diet has not changed, 14% — that it has improved, 16% — that it has deteriorated. In 2022, we changed the period — from "three years" to "the last year", but the distribution of answers did not change: 72% said that the quality of their diet had not changed (60% in 2021), 8% — that it had improved (15%), every fifth (23%) — had deteriorated. Since the three-year period is perceived as a more obvious 'past' and by March 2023 there had been no radical transformations in the Russian society (compared to March 2022), we returned to the three-year period: the share of those noting improvements in the quality of their diet increased from 8% to 14% due to a reduction in the shares of those noting deterioration (from 19% to 16%) or no changes (from 72% to 69%).

In 2021–2022, we asked respondents to assess sufficiency of their diet and requests to it for a certain period: in 2021 — for six months, in 2022 — for a month, since a shorter period provides more reliable data. However, the differences were insignificant, which seems to confirm the pressure of social desirability in direct questions: in 2021, 85% said that their families did not suffer from insufficient nutrition (45% had enough food they wanted, 40% — enough but not always of the desired type); in 2022, respectively, 88% (48% and 40%). The main reason for not having the desired food was "not enough money" (85%; 82% in 2021) (Fig. 11). In 2023, we changed the wording: since respondents had already given a qualitative assessment of their diet, we replaced its comparisons with a clarification — whether respondents could always afford the desired food. The sample split into two equal groups: 49% could, 49% could not, and the latter were asked to explain their answer (Fig. 12). Most respondents in this group could not afford the desired food due to rising prices (72%), every third (30 %) — due to a decrease in income (Fig. 13).

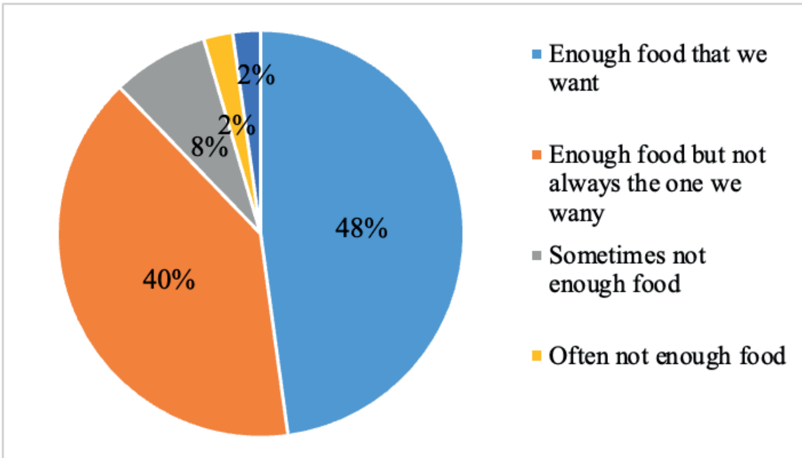

Fig. 11. "What is the best description of your diet?" (2022)

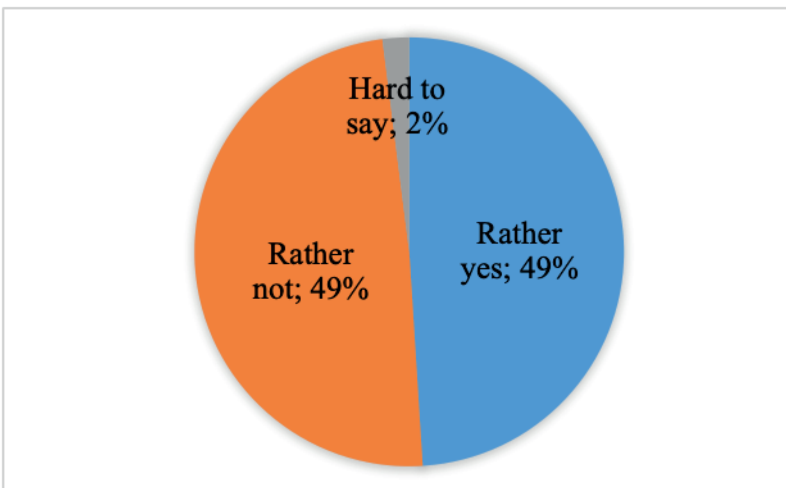

Fig. 12. "Can you always afford the food you want?"

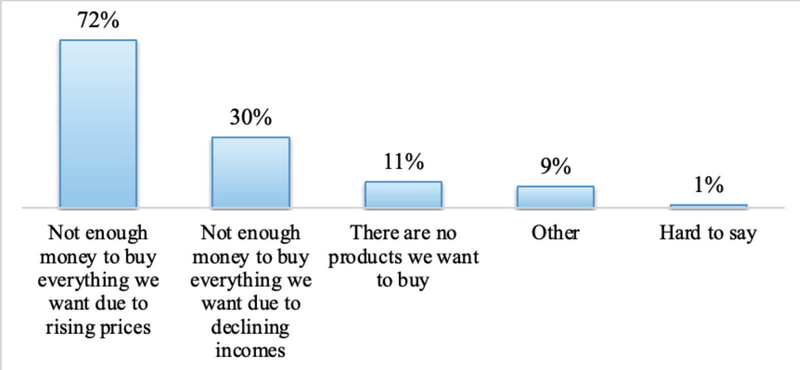

Fig. 13. Reasons for food self-restraint

The distribution of self-restrictive strategies has changed since 2017 (a half began to use such strategies, a half did not): in 2020, the share of self-restricting families decreased to 39% (60% avoided such strategies); in 2021, the ratio changed to 43% vs 55%, in 2022 — 41% vs 57%, and in 2023 — 35% vs 63% (Fig. 14).

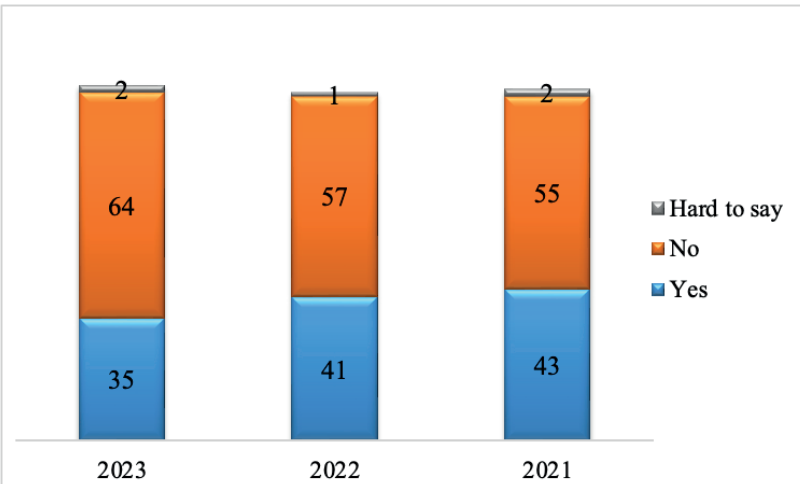

Fig. 14. "If you compare last year and this year, has your family started limiting food expenses?" (%)

The set of products in which families limit themselves has changed little since 2017 (Fig. 15), but there are clear negative trends.

As a rule, respondents buy less meat (67% in 2017, 60% in 2020, 57% in 2021, 55% in 2022 and 2023) and fish (respectively, 49 %, 51%, 55%, 47% and 58%), that is, Russians react to rising prices by reducing primarily the fish and meat parts of their diet. Since 2017, from a quarter to a third of respondents chose to buy less dairy products (since 2021 — a third), 39%–40% — less fruits. The shares of those buying less fruits and dairy products change little, while the share of those buying less vegetables began to grow in 2021: in 2017, it was every fourth respondent, in 2020 — every fifth, then every third (34% in 2021, 37% in 2022, 33% in 2023). *"This year vegetables became very expensive... a kilogram of cucumbers and a kilogram of meat are equal in price. I'd rather buy a kilogram of meat"*.

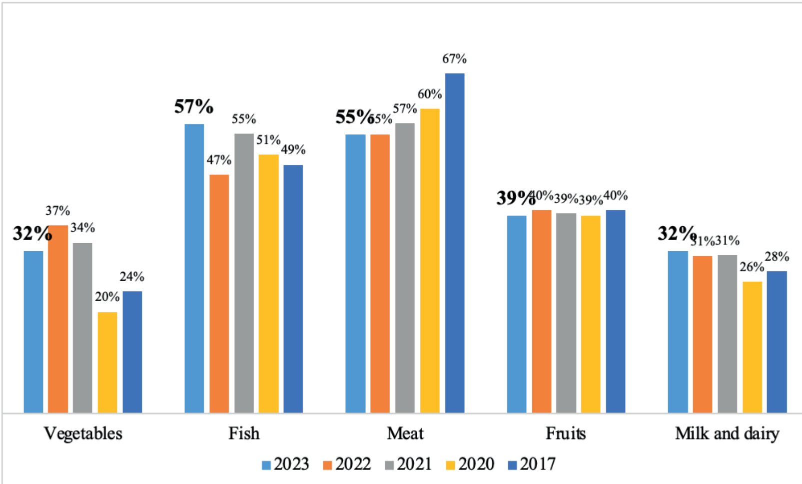

Fig. 15. "What food products does your family buy less?"

The households' response strategies to rising food prices do not change much (Table 1; Fig. 16): respondents look for places (shops, markets) with cheaper prices (71%) or choose cheaper products in usual places (59% vs 69% in previous years, which seems to indicate both a consumer habit and coming to terms with constantly rising prices); then comes a reduction in purchases (39%) partly compensated by the personal subsidiary plot (32%), although the potential of the latter has decreased; the least used strategy is to ask relatives with personal subsidiary plots for food aid (14%), while every third (36%) began to give more food to relatives. *"I prefer not to buy cheaper products, because cheap means low-quality... For example, sausages: you shouldn't buy sausages for 100 rubles, at least for 500 rubles to be sure that there's some meat in them"*.

Table 1. Households' response strategies to rising food prices

Strategy		2023	2022	2021	2020	2017
We try to keep our diet but buy less food (2023) / We buy less food	Yes	39%	43%	42%	38%	49%
	No	58%	56%	56%	61%	50%
	Hard to say	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%

We try to find a place (shops, markets) with cheaper prices	Yes	71%	71%	70%	69%	78%
	No	28%	27%	27%	29%	21%
	Hard to say	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
We buy cheaper products in usual places	Yes	59%	69%	68%	67%	68%
	No	38%	28%	30%	30%	30%
	Hard to say	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%
We get more food from relatives with personal subsidiary plots	Yes	14%	15%	20%	17%	23%
	No	86%	84%	78%	82%	76%
	Hard to say	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
We started to grow (more) fruits and vegetables	Yes	32%	32%	36%	37%	40%
	No	67%	65%	63%	62%	59%
	Hard to say	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%
We give more products to relatives	Yes	32%				
	No	67%				
	Hard to say	1%				

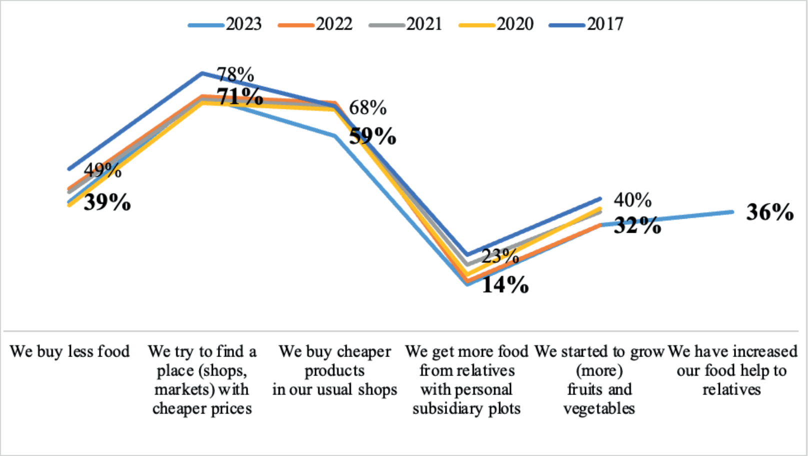

Fig. 16. Households' response strategies to rising food prices

Since 2017, the share of those intensifying self-sufficiency practices under rising prices has decreased, that is, of those who start/increase food production in personal subsidiary plots (32% in 2022–2023, 40% in 2017) or rely on such efforts of relatives (14%–15% and 23%) (Fig. 17). Self-sufficient practices have consistently reached their limit: in 2021, the share of those growing vegetables and fruits in their subsidiary plots increased to 88%, and in 2023 — to 92%. It is unlikely that Russians' passion for gardening is determined by the desire to provide their families with organic food, it is rather a reaction to the social-economic situation (rising prices, economic inaccessibility of food, the special military operation that followed the pandemic restrictions, etc.) in which many households reconsider their self-sufficiency decisions. This is confirmed by the fact that until 2022 there was no increase in potato production (from 2017 to 2022, the share of those growing it decreased from 78% to 66% of families with personal subsidiary plots, and in 2023 this share increased to 72%).

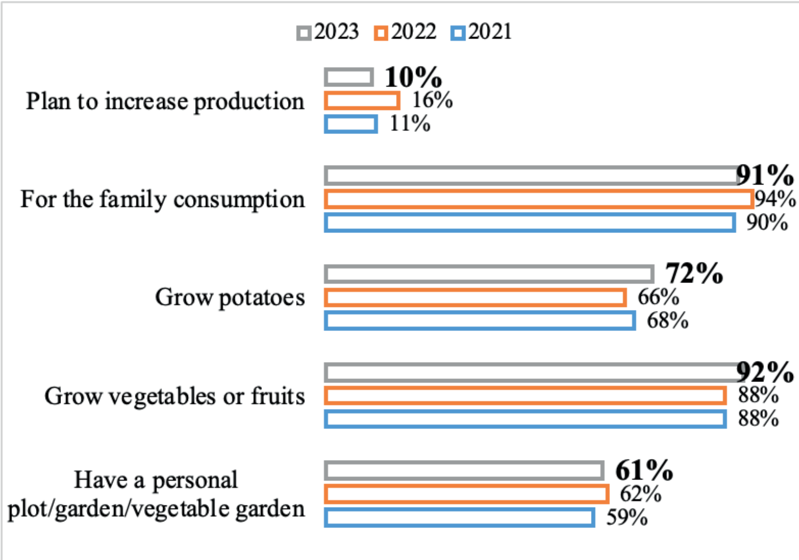

Fig. 17. Households' situation under rising food prices

In 2022, the share of those not growing potatoes/vegetables/fruits due to unprofitability decreased (23% vs 29% in 2021; in 2023 — 24%), while the shares of other reasons almost did not change: every fifth (22%; 21% in 2021) did not consider it necessary; 14% (13% in 2021, 16% in 2023) did not want to be engaged in such activities; every second (48%; 45% in 2021) named some objective reasons (a small plot, poor quality of land, etc.) or physical inability (poor health, old age, etc.). In 2023, the share of those not seeing the need for growing potatoes/vegetables/fruits increased to 29%, and every fifth (19%) mentioned physical inability/difficulty.

The group keeping poultry and/or livestock is even smaller (15%; 13% in 2022, 16% in 2021), such respondents prefer chickens and ducks (88%; 91% in 2022, 88% in 2021), and this figure increased significantly from 2017 (55%) to 2020 (89%). In 2021, we explained the expansion of self-sufficiency practices by the fact that their dairy and meat parts had become more in demand and more marketable since city dwellers moved to villages under the pandemic. In 2022, the situation changed due to rising prices on poultry and livestock production: "*What fool raised prices for forage crops? How can one keep poultry if a kilogram of feed costs 20 rubles?*". The deteriorating social-economic situation made households return to poultry and meat production: in 2022–2023, most such households provided their diet (over 90%), that is, reached the limit of self-sufficiency, which is confirmed by the share of those not planning to expand their farm production — 89% (87% in 2021; 81% in 2022). As a rule, respondents plan to grow more potatoes, vegetables and fruits (66% in this group, 71% in 2022), less often to keep more poultry (37% and 39%) and livestock (33% and 22%). In general, there are no generational differences, but with age the share of those mainly providing themselves, relatives and friends with the produce of their personal subsidiary plots increases: every third among 18–34-year-olds, 40% of 35–54-year-olds, every second among the elderly (53%).

In previous surveys, most respondents did not notice the disappearance of their usual products (84% in 2021, 85% in 2020, 82% in 2017), but in 2022 this figure was 50%: before a small share noticed a reduction in their usual assortment (7% in 2021, 8% in 2020, 7% in 2017), in 2022 — 44%. It seems that from spring 2022 to spring 2023, Russians adapted to new realities: in 2023, the majority (78%) did not notice the disappearance of their usual products, and such respondents do not worry about a reduction in their usual assortment — almost every second in this group (49% in 2022, 46% in 2021) before and 62% in 2023. Perhaps, consumers got used to the 'product' consequences of sanctions and geopolitical decisions: changes in the food assortment have become routine and given rise to jokes, for instance, about the bans of Turkish tomatoes in response to unfriendly decisions of the Turkish leadership: "*I don't know what food products have disappeared... I do not experience any inconvenience due to a reduction in food assortment... We are unpretentious in food... We are rather short of money than of food*".

In 2022, there were significant changes in the assessment of missing products: previously, every fifth in this group mentioned vegetables, fish and fruits, every third — dairy products, every fourth — groceries; in 2022, the leaders were grocery (52%) and 'other' (61%), and the shares of dairy products and fruits (7%), vegetables (6%), fish (5%) and meat (3%) decreased. The share of the 'other' increased significantly due to the sugar rush: 93% in these group named sugar. In 2023, the list of missing products confirmed the trends identified before 2022 (Fig. 18): every third named dairy products or 'other', every fourth — groceries and fish, every fifth — vegetables, 15% — meat and fruits. The fact that 2022 stands out from the trends can be explained, on the one hand, by the increased sanction pressure after the start of the special military operation; on the other hand, by the question wording in 2022 — in March we asked whether any food products had disappeared, and respondents could not help but contextualize their answers with anti-Russian sanctions. In 2023, the wording became more time-specific and neutral: respondents were asked to name usual food products that had been missing since the beginning of 2023. "*I cannot say that some specific products are missing, but the assortment has decreased in general, and we have to choose from products we didn't buy before*".

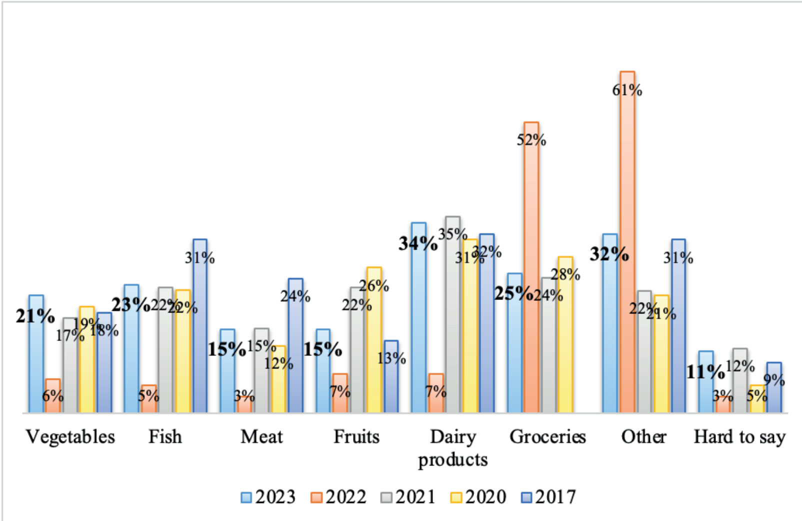

Fig. 18. Missing food products (in the relevant group)

The key part of the sociological monitoring is the economic access to food, and its main indicator is the share of food expenses in the total monthly family income (Fig. 19), which has remained almost unchanged since 2017: a half of respondents spend from a third to a half of their income on food; over 40% — from a half to two thirds (45% in 2023, 43% in 2022, 45% in 2021 and 2020, 48% in 2017). In 2023, 16% (13% in 2022, 14% in 2021, 13% in 2020, 12% in 2017) spent less than a third of their income on food (the richest group), while every tenth (9% in 2023, 11% in 2022 and 2021, 12% in 2020, 10% in 2017) — more than two thirds (the poorest group). In 2021, the older group spent the largest share of income on food (65% vs every second in the younger groups); in 2022, the ratio changed to 57% in two older groups vs 46% among 18–34-year olds; in 2023, generational differences decreased even more — 59% in the older group vs every second in two other groups.

Until 2023, in younger groups changes in the share of food expenses did not exceed the statistical error, and in the older group the share with the highest food expenses was decreasing (perhaps, due to the indexation of pensions and social benefits, which partly compensated for rising prices). In 2023, the situation changed: the share of food expenses in the older group did not change (57% in 2022, 59% in 2023), while in two younger groups changes in the share of food expenses exceeded the statistical error — 57% and 50% among 35–54-year-olds, 46% and 53% — among 18–34-year-olds. In the older group, the share of those not noticing changes in food expenses compared to the last year is higher (33% vs 24% in younger groups; in 2022 — 22% vs 14%–

12%), and the share of those whose food expenses increased is lower (61% vs 69% and 73%; in 2022 — 72% vs 83%). Moreover, in 2022, in the older group, there was a higher share of those reporting an increase in family income (24% vs 19% and 13%) and a lower share of those reporting its decrease (18% vs 25% and 27%). In 2023, generational differences do not exceed the statistical error, and every second respondent says that the family income remained the same. "*The pension was increased, but what's the point? All pension is spent on food... Everything has become more expensive*".

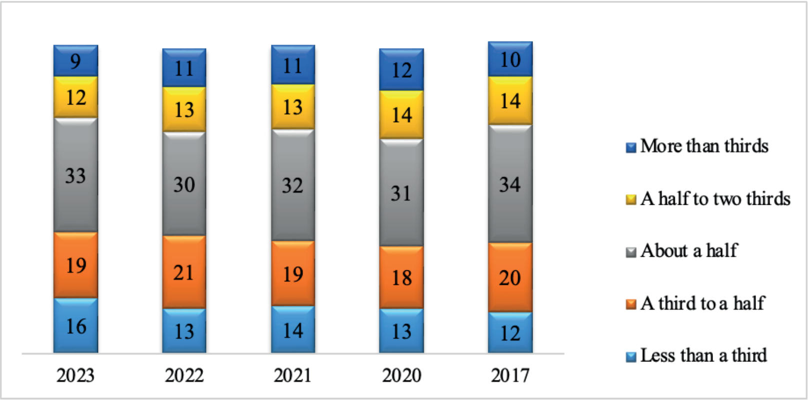

Fig. 19. Shares of food expenses in the total monthly family income, %

Russians' low food purchasing power is confirmed by the estimates of changes in family food expenses, when respondents compare the beginning of 2022 and 2023 (Fig. 20).

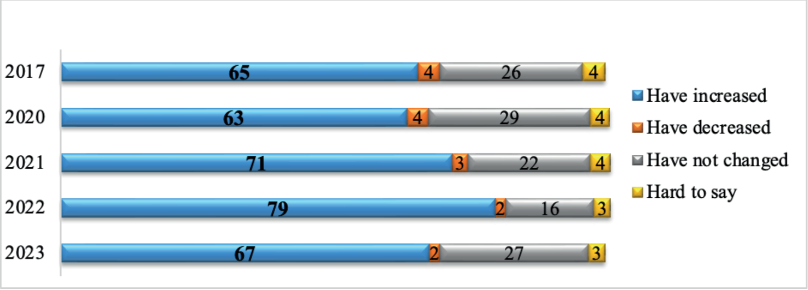

Fig. 20. Changes in family food expenses, %

Until 2022, an increasing share of respondents had reported an increase in family food expenses — from 65% in 2017 to 79% in 2022, but in 2023 this share returned to 67%. Since there are no significant changes in the total monthly family income (Fig. 21), Russians seem to spend constantly indexed social benefits, pensions and wages on their usual food basket in order to assess their financial situation as good/'normal' (more than 70% in 2023; 63% in 2022).

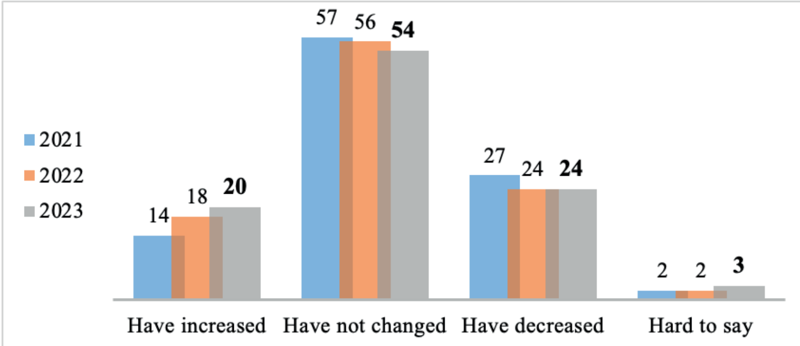

Fig. 21. Changes in the total monthly family income in the last 12 months, %

As in previous surveys, in 2023 there are no significant differences by social-demographic group (except for those mentioned above). There are some expected gender differences, but less than in 2022: as a rule, women assess their family diet more adequately, are less likely to consider fish consumption sufficient and explain the situation by both family preferences and income, more often admit that the family cannot afford the desired diet. "*I eat whatever my wife cooks... If you really want something, you can go and buy it if you have money, but I don't have money... But if you're an adult, you... deny yourself... to buy something for your children*". Women more often prefer to maintain 'quality' rather than 'quantity' of the family diet under rising prices and to buy cheaper products but in usual places. Women assess their family's access to food more realistically, more often reporting that their food self-restraint is determined by rising prices.

The older generation has developed specific self-limiting food patterns under the constantly rising prices and low family income: they less often notice a reduction in food assortment and mention rising prices as the reason for food self-restraint; less respondents in this group assess their financial situation as good. "*We are forced to buy cheap products as we are retired*"; "*Usually I buy a piece of meat and a piece of fish... and divide these pieces for a month... we are not starving*"; "*We spend all money on food and utility services... I have to save up for months to buy such things as a coat or boots*"; "*If you pay your utilities, you only have money left to buy bread... But I'm 69 years old, I do not need much, but I have to help my children... We don't follow the trends, we don't change fur coats every year, we have a car, we have a dacha — what else do we need?*".

There are some differences by the type of settlement, but in 2023 we replaced the 'urban/rural' dichotomy with an expanded scale (from million-plus cities to villages) and identified significant variations instead of a linear change according to an increase/decrease in 'rurality'. For instance, in small towns, urban settlements and villages the level of food nationalism is higher (mainly due to the lack of foreign products) and 'food aid' to relatives is more common. In general, the concentration of poverty in rural areas is not the highest — rather urban settlements stand out due to a worse situation than in villages. There are no significant differences between basic types of settlements by most indicators of food security, which indicates not so much settlement-spatial as social-demographic concentration and persistence of poverty under a kind of 'standardization' of consumer-food practices.

In 2023, the survey data confirmed the previously (from 2020) identified inconsistency of Russians' assessments of food practices and capabilities, which can be explained by two factors. On the one hand, respondents not only evaluate their past and present food-consumption routines but also compare their life situation with those around them, concluding that 'they are ok'. On the other hand, before the pandemic, the food assortment of Russians had been expanding, and under the pandemic food became a source of a sense of 'normality'. In 2023, both factors remain, and the influence of the second one is increasing, because the population's purchasing power is decreasing (despite the state measures for ensuring the economic accessibility of the normal diet for the average Russian) due to rising prices, sanction pressure and the state mobilization of resources for the goals of the special military operation. Since in food consumption Russians developed seasonally specific strategies based on food price volatility and show confident food nationalism, the state should introduce seasonally and regionally differentiated measures to support local producers, including those involved in processing, in addition to the already taken macro-economic and agro-industrial measures for ensuring national food security.

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Российские подходы к обеспечению продовольственной безопасности (сдерживанию цен) в 2020–2022 годы и их влияние на потребителей[25]

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25. Статья подготовлена в рамках выполнения научно-исследовательской работы государственного задания РАНХиГС

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Аннотация. 2023 год подтвердил, что в сфере продовольственной безопасности в России складывается неоднозначная ситуация. С одной стороны, декларируется, что на макроуровне цели продовольственного самообеспечения/суверенитета страны достигнуты и не подвержены серьезным рискам: «мы обеспечиваем себя всеми основными видами продовольствия»[26]; «уровень продовольственной безопасности в России — один из самых надежных в мире»[27]; «Евразийский экономический союз достиг уровня самообеспеченности по большинству продовольственных товаров (зерну, растительным маслам, свинине, баранине, сахару, яйцам)»[28]. Руководство страны признает «очень комплексный характер» продовольственного суверенитета, отмечая среди его объективных факторов изменения климата, рост населения, торговые войны, санкционное давление и т. д.[29] В то же время официальный дискурс подчеркивает, что «мы не должны быть пессимистами», «страна, если она стремится быть суверенной, должна обеспечивать себя продуктами питания», и Россия с этой задачей справляется настолько успешно, что стала одним из крупнейших экспортеров продовольствия. В результате прогнозируется, что «продовольственная инфляция в России в 2023 году будет одной из самых низких в мире благодаря полной самообеспеченности основными продуктами»[30] и «системным мерам антикризисной поддержки предприятий и секторов, которые обеспечивают продовольственную безопасность»[31]. Однако рост цен на мировых рынках с середины 2020 года привел к росту цен на внутренних рынках, и продовольственная инфляция остается высокой в большинстве регионов мира. В России она ниже, чем во многих странах (10% против 19,1% в ЕС или 14,9% в ОЭСР), а темпы роста цен на продовольствие — ниже уровня общей инфляции, в то время как в других странах цены на продукты питания стали драйверами разгона розничных цен. В статье рассмотрены меры, которые вводились в России для сдерживания роста

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цен, и те продовольственно-потребительские практики, что использовались населением для сохранения привычного рациона в условиях роста цен. Общероссийский опрос 2023 года подтвердил выявленную ранее устойчивую противоречивость оценок продовольственных практик и возможностей, что можно объяснить общей тенденцией к «нормализации» своей жизненной ситуации в целом и ее основополагающей части (ежедневного рациона) в частности.

Ключевые слова: рост цен на продукты питания, внешний и внутренний рынки, продовольственная инфляция, волатильность цен на продовольственные товары, продовольственная (не)безопасность, (повседневные) продовольственно-потребительские практики, экономический и физический доступ к продовольствию, социологические данные