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PRICING PRACTICES OF BASIC NECESSITIES (SEMBAKO) TRADERS IN RESPONDING TO PRICE FLUCTUATIONS FROM AN ISLAMIC ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE AT THE PALANGKA RAYA MAIN MARKET

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the pricing practices applied by semi-wholesale sembako *(basic necessities) traders at the Palangka Raya Main Market in responding to price fluctuations and to assess their conformity with Islamic economic principles. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Primary data were obtained through interviews with semi-wholesale traders and consumers, while secondary data were drawn from official price-development documentation published by the Department of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Industry (DPKUKMP) of Palangka Raya City for the period March–May 2026. The findings show that traders determine prices through a simple calculation, namely Selling Price = Capital + Margin, with a margin of 3–5% for wholesale sales and approximately 10% for retail sales. Price fluctuations were influenced by inflation and by rising purchase prices from distributors resulting from higher distribution and packaging costs. In responding to these conditions, traders first reduced their profit margins and then adjusted prices gradually in order to maintain business competitiveness and customer loyalty. These practices are consistent with Abu Yusuf's thought and with the concepts of* tsaman al-mitsl *and* irtifā' al-as'ār *of Ibn Taimiyah, as pricing was carried out fairly and transparently and followed market mechanisms*

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets play an important role in supporting the distribution of basic necessities in Indonesia. Their function is not limited to serving as a venue for buying and selling; they also act as a meeting point for producers, distributors, traders, and consumers within the trade chain. One market that performs this function is the Palangka Raya Main Market (Pasar Besar Palangka Raya), the principal traditional market in Central Kalimantan. Besides being a trading center for various basic necessities (*sembako*), the market also serves as a distribution hub that supplies Palangka Raya City and its surrounding areas (Rohmania, 2025).

As a distribution center for basic necessities in Central Kalimantan, price developments at the Palangka Raya Main Market are inseparable from regional macroeconomic conditions, particularly inflation. In April 2026, Central Kalimantan Province recorded annual (year-on-year) inflation of 3.66%, with the highest inflation occurring in Kapuas Regency at 3.97% (BPS, 2026a). Inflationary pressure came mainly from the food, beverages, and tobacco expenditure group, reflecting price increases across various food commodities. Subsequently, in May 2026, inflation in Palangka Raya City rose to 4.48% (y-on-y), with the food, beverages, and tobacco group contributing 6.58% to inflation (BPS, 2026b). These conditions indicate that inflationary pressure in Central Kalimantan was driven not only by seasonal demand but also by changes in distribution costs and food commodity prices, which directly affect trading activity in traditional markets.

Pricing practices among *sembako* traders are a crucial issue because they bear directly on the sustainability of traders' businesses, on the one hand, and on public purchasing power, on the other. Monitoring data from the Department of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Industry (DPKUKMP) of Palangka Raya City show that, until mid-April 2026, the prices of several basic commodities, including branded cooking oil and rice, remained relatively stable. This situation changed after PT Pertamina Patra Niaga raised the price of non-subsidized Dexlite fuel in Central Kalimantan from IDR 14,500 to IDR 24,150 per liter, an increase of approximately 66%, effective 18 April 2026 (Zainal, 2026).

The adjustment of non-subsidized Dexlite prices on 18 April 2026 is a relevant external context for understanding possible changes in the distribution costs of basic necessities. Theoretically, higher fuel prices can increase freight costs. However, the extent of their effect on traders' purchase prices depends on distribution conditions, distributors' pricing policies, and the characteristics of each commodity. Therefore, in this study, the relationship between the fuel price adjustment and changes in *sembako* prices is understood as a possible association that must be read together with the interview results and price-development data, rather than as a directly proven causal relationship. This caution is warranted because the trucks that carry goods from distributors' warehouses to traders' shops at the Palangka Raya Main Market, including goods shipped from Banjarmasin and from outside Kalimantan such as Surabaya and elsewhere in Java, generally run on Dexlite, as is common in long-distance freight services (Meliana, 2026). At roughly the same time, the price of plastic raw materials for packaging also rose by approximately 50–80% after Eid al-Fitr (Lebaran) 2026. The increase was influenced by

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the national plastics industry's heavy dependence on imported raw materials, such as resin and naphtha, whose prices were affected by global supply disruptions (Abdurrahman, 2026). All of these additional transportation and packaging costs were first borne by distributors before being reflected in the selling prices charged to semi-wholesale traders. In this study, the rise in purchase prices from distributors is understood as an increase in capital; thus, traders do not incur distribution or packaging costs separately but receive them as part of the adjusted purchase price of goods (Noni Rozaini, 2022).

DPKUKMP data for the following period show that this cost pressure drove price adjustments in commodities that had previously been relatively stable. The price of Bimoli cooking oil rose from IDR 23,000 to IDR 24,000/liter and that of Fortune cooking oil from IDR 19,000 to IDR 21,000/liter shortly after the fuel price increase, while the price of local rice (Karang Dukuh) rose gradually from IDR 19,000 to IDR 25,000/kg, the price of granulated sugar rose from IDR 17,500 to IDR 20,000/kg, and the price of commercial chicken eggs was adjusted from IDR 30,400 to IDR 29,000/kg over the same period. This non-uniform and non-simultaneous pattern of increases indicates that traders' pricing decisions were driven not solely by rising capital costs from distributors but also took into account margin structures, supply availability, and the level of competition among traders (Rizal, 2026).

From an Islamic economic perspective, pricing is oriented not only toward earning profit but also reflects traders' moral and social responsibility toward consumers. Ibn Taimiyah explained the concepts of *tsaman al-mitsl* (the just price) and *irtifā' al-as'ār* (naturally occurring price increases) as a basis for distinguishing price increases arising from market mechanisms from those caused by unfair practices, monopoly, or exploitation (Hannanong et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Abu Yusuf held that price formation is influenced not only by the availability of goods but also by various other factors within the distribution chain, so that price changes are not always related to supply conditions alone (Sifa, 2021).

Riyanty (2022), in a study at Jatilawang Market, Banyumas, showed that traders set prices based on a balance between demand, supply, and a level of profit regarded as reasonable. However, that study did not examine in depth the obstacles to applying Islamic economic principles when prices fluctuate sharply. Rohmania (2025), in a study at Patikraja Market, also found differences in profit margins among traders but did not link them to the effect of rising costs from external factors. In contrast to these studies, the present study focuses on how semi-wholesale *sembako* traders respond to price fluctuations triggered by simultaneous price increases from distributors. In addition, it analyzes the mechanism of capital calculation and the application of a tiered margin strategy in wholesale and retail sales, and is therefore expected to fill the research gap that remains in previous studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Market Mechanisms in Islam According to Abu Yusuf

A market mechanism is a process that governs economic activity as a means of fulfilling society's needs and as a place where producers and consumers meet to transact (Sifa, 2021). According to Abu Yusuf, the ideal market mechanism in Islamic economics is one that allows economic actors the freedom to transact voluntarily, so that prices are

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formed through the interaction of demand and supply without coercion (Lily Astrin Agustiana, 2023). Nevertheless, Abu Yusuf disagreed with the assumption that scarcity always causes prices to rise or, conversely, that abundance always causes prices to fall. In his view, price formation is also influenced by various other factors within the distribution chain, so that the relationship between production volume and price level is not always linear (Muharam, 2022).

This view is elaborated in *Kitab al-Kharaj*, in which Abu Yusuf states that the high or low price of a commodity is determined not only by the abundance or scarcity of supply but also by other factors that influence the market mechanism. Accordingly, a good may remain highly valued even when it is available in large quantities, or remain cheap even when its supply is limited (Muhammad Yafiz, 2025). This thinking shows that price formation is also influenced by factors beyond the production process, such as distribution costs, transportation, and conditions in the marketing chain. On this basis, the state has an important role as supervisor in ensuring that the market mechanism operates in an open and fair manner (Putri Diesy Fitriani, 2025). In the context of this study, the rise in *sembako* prices at the Palangka Raya Main Market was influenced not only by the availability of goods but also by rising distribution costs, such as transportation and packaging costs that distributors had already passed on to traders.

The Just Price (*Tsaman al-Mitsl*) and *Irtifā' al-As'ār* According to Ibn Taimiyah

Ibn Taimiyah put forward the concept of *tsaman al-mitsl* as a price formed through a market mechanism operating fairly, free from injustice, fraud, monopoly, and manipulation. In his view, a just price does not mean the lowest price but one that corresponds to actual market conditions (Fany et al., 2025). Terminologically, *tsaman al-mitsl* is understood as the prevailing price of a good at a particular time and place that is accepted by society without elements of exploitation. Such a price arises from the natural and voluntary interaction of demand and supply, without intervention that disrupts the market mechanism (Amin, 2025). This concept shows that Ibn Taimiyah sought to balance business actors' freedom to earn a fair profit with their social responsibility toward consumers, so that trade does not impose excessive burdens or losses on society (Farah Qalbia & M. Reza Saputra, 2023).

In addition to *tsaman al-mitsl*, Ibn Taimiyah also described *irtifā' al-as'ār*, a concept explaining that price increases can occur naturally as a result of reduced supply or increased market demand. Therefore, not every price increase can be regarded as an injustice committed by traders. Ibn Taimiyah clearly distinguished between price increases that arise from market mechanisms and those caused by monopoly or the exploitation of public needs. Price increases that result from such manipulative acts are considered contrary to the principle of justice in Islamic economics and cannot be justified (Farma, 2019).

Semi-Wholesale *Sembako* Traders and the Margin Mechanism

Semi-wholesale traders are business actors who sell goods in relatively large quantities to retailers and end consumers, although their sales scale remains below that of the main distributors. This position places semi-wholesale traders as intermediaries between distributors and consumers, because they obtain supplies directly from

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distributors while serving two groups of buyers: retailers purchasing in bulk and consumers purchasing by the unit. As a result, semi-wholesale traders are the first to feel the impact of any price change set by distributors (Syukria, 2023).

In operational practice, the determination of the selling price begins with calculating capital, which derives from the purchase price of goods from the distributor. This purchase price already includes various cost components borne by the distributor, such as raw material costs, transportation from the warehouse to the trader's shop, and packaging costs. Traders then add a profit margin as the basis for the selling price using a simple formula: Selling Price = Capital + Margin. The size of the margin is adjusted to the type of buyer. For wholesale or bulk sales, a margin of around 3–5% is applied, supported by high transaction volumes and rapid inventory turnover, so that profit can still be earned even though the margin per unit is relatively small. Retail sales, meanwhile, carry a margin of around 10%, especially for fast-moving commodities such as cooking oil and rice, in order to safeguard profit without undermining price competitiveness in the market. Applying different margins to different buyer segments is a strategy commonly used by intermediary traders to balance sales volume, cash-flow continuity, and the ability to compete with other traders (Ramdani & Bekti, 2026).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design (Sugiyono, 2022). The approach is used to describe the pricing practices of *sembako* traders in responding to price fluctuations at the Palangka Raya Main Market. The research focus covers traders' considerations in setting selling prices, changes in purchase prices, the calculation of capital and profit margins, and price adjustments based on market conditions. The study also examines these pricing practices from an Islamic economic perspective. The research was conducted at the Palangka Raya Main Market in June–July 2026.

The study involved 10 informants, consisting of five semi-wholesale *sembako* traders as key informants and five consumers as supporting informants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, that is, selection based on considerations and criteria consistent with the research objectives. Traders were selected based on the following criteria: (1) actively selling at the Palangka Raya Main Market in Pahandut District; (2) having at least 15 years of business experience; (3) selling a complete range of *sembako* on a semi-wholesale scale; (4) understanding the pricing process, including capital, profit margin, and market prices; and (5) being willing to serve as informants and to provide information openly. Trader informants were coded P1 to P5 to facilitate the organization and presentation of the research data. Consumers were selected based on the following criteria: (1) having purchased *sembako* regularly or repeatedly at one of the five shops that served as research sites in the Palangka Raya Main Market; (2) being aware of or having experienced changes in *sembako* prices in the market; and (3) being willing to provide the information required by the study. The identities of consumer informants are presented using codes or initials in accordance with the research data.

The number of informants was determined by considering the fit between informants' characteristics and the research focus, as well as field conditions. The number of traders who met the research criteria was relatively limited, particularly those with at

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least 15 years of business experience who sold a relatively complete range of *sembako* on a semi-wholesale scale. Some other traders operated only on a wholesale or retail basis and thus did not fully meet the established criteria. In addition, the responses of individual traders showed similarities on several of the aspects studied. Additional interviews were also conducted to check the adequacy of the information, with the result that little or no new information emerged. These considerations were used to assess whether the data were sufficient to describe the pricing practices that are the focus of the study.

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews lasted approximately 15–30 minutes, with the duration being flexible because the shops were busy with buying and selling activity, and were held at each trader's shop or place of business and, for consumers, in the market area. The interviews aimed to obtain information on pricing practices, considerations in determining capital and profit margins, responses to changes in purchase prices, and consumers' experiences in facing changes in *sembako* prices. Interview results were recorded and subsequently developed into transcripts to facilitate the organization and analysis of the data. Participant observation was carried out by observing and interacting directly during transactions, and was used to gain an overview of trading activity and of the transaction situations related to pricing practices. Documentation was carried out by taking photographs of the market, shops, and goods as supporting data. In addition to primary data, the study used secondary data in the form of commodity price data from the Department of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Industry of Palangka Raya City (DPKUKMP) for the period March–May 2026, to provide context for commodity price changes during the research period.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises three stages: data condensation (reduction), data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, information from interviews, observations, documentation, and secondary data was selected and grouped according to its relevance to the research focus. The data were organized into themes related to changes in purchase prices, capital calculation, profit margin determination, selling price adjustment, and traders' considerations in responding to market conditions. The data were then presented as descriptive narrative and supporting tables, so that similarities and differences among informants could be identified. In the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the findings were re-examined by comparing information across informants and matching it with observation data, documentation, and relevant commodity price data. The results of this analysis were used to explain the pricing practices of *sembako* traders and to examine them from an Islamic economic perspective.

Data validity was checked through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from traders and consumers to identify agreement and differences in views on *sembako* pricing practices. Technique triangulation, meanwhile, was carried out by comparing interview findings with observations, documentation, and relevant commodity price data. These comparisons were used to check the consistency of the information and to strengthen the basis for drawing conclusions. During the research, informants were first given an explanation of the interviews and gave their verbal consent to participate.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fluctuations in *Sembako* Prices at the Palangka Raya Main Market

The results show that the pricing practices of semi-wholesale *sembako* traders at the Palangka Raya Main Market are related to changes in purchase prices from distributors, profit margin considerations, and conditions of competition and consumer purchasing power. During the March–May 2026 observation period, several commodity prices changed at times close to the adjustment of non-subsidized Dexlite fuel prices on 18 April 2026 and to news reports of rising plastic raw material prices. Both events provide a relevant context for examining possible cost pressures on distribution and packaging. Nevertheless, the price monitoring data used in this study are not sufficient to establish the magnitude of the influence of each factor on the price change of each commodity. The following discussion therefore describes the observed patterns of price change and relates them to the pricing considerations expressed by the informants.

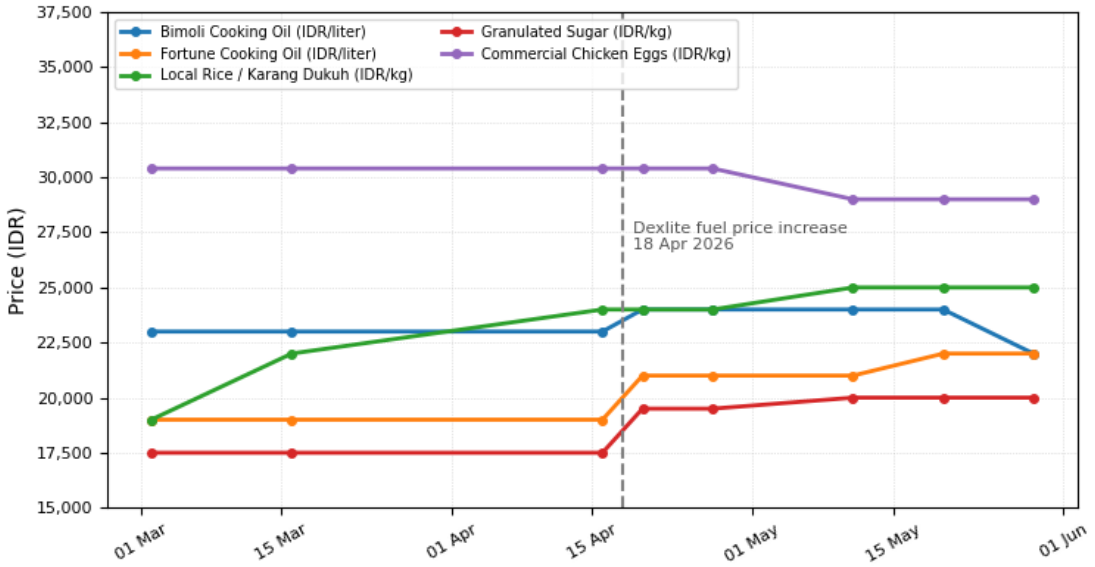
The Dexlite price adjustment on 18 April 2026, from IDR 14,500 to IDR 24,150 per liter (about 66%), directly increased distributors' operating costs (Zainal, 2026). Most distribution fleets carrying goods from warehouses in Banjarmasin and from outside Kalimantan, such as Surabaya and elsewhere in Java, to the Palangka Raya Main Market use diesel-fueled trucks equivalent to Dexlite, which are commonly used for long-distance deliveries. Consequently, the fuel price increase raised the distribution costs borne by distributors, which were then reflected in higher selling prices to semi-wholesale traders as a new purchase price, or capital (Fahrul Ichsan Syafa'at, 2026).

At the same time, the surge in plastic packaging prices of around 50–80% in April 2026 added to distributors' cost burden on the packaging component of goods (Aqilla, 2026). The surge stemmed from the national plastics industry's dependence on imported raw materials such as resin and naphtha, whose prices were disrupted by volatility in global supply, which was felt directly in domestic packaging prices. Because plastic packaging is supplied and charged by distributors as part of the selling price of goods to traders, the higher cost of plastic raw materials also pushed up the purchase price (capital) received by semi-wholesale traders, rather than constituting an additional cost levied separately by the traders.

This dual pressure from delivery and packaging costs is reflected in the movement of the official price data of the DPKUKMP of Palangka Raya City. Field observations show that the most evident price fluctuations during March–May 2026 occurred in branded cooking oil (Bimoli and Fortune), local rice, granulated sugar, and commercial chicken eggs, rather than in medium-grade rice or subsidized cooking oil, whose prices are bound by the Highest Retail Price (*Harga Eceran Tertinggi*, HET). The developments in these five commodities are presented in Figure 1 and Table 1.

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Figure 1. Price Developments of Bimoli Cooking Oil, Fortune Cooking Oil, Local Rice, Granulated Sugar, and Commercial Chicken Eggs at the Palangka Raya Main Market, March–May 2026



Source: processed from DPKUKMP Palangka Raya City data, Report on the Development of Average Prices of Selected Basic Commodities, March–May 2026

Table 1. Price Developments of Five Fluctuating *Sembako* Commodities at the Palangka Raya Main Market

Monitoring Date	Bimoli Cooking Oil (IDR/liter)	Fortune Cooking Oil (IDR/liter)	Local Rice / Karang Dukuh (IDR/kg)	Granulated Sugar (IDR/kg)	Commercial Chicken Eggs (IDR/kg)
02 Mar 2026	23,000	19,000	19,000	17,500	30,400
16 Mar 2026	23,000	19,000	22,000	17,500	30,400
16 Apr 2026	23,000	19,000	24,000	17,500	30,400
20 Apr 2026	24,000	21,000	24,000	19,500	30,400
27 Apr 2026	24,000	21,000	24,000	19,500	30,400
11 May 2026	24,000	21,000	25,000	20,000	29,000
20 May 2026	24,000	22,000	25,000	20,000	29,000
29 May 2026	22,000	22,000	25,000	20,000	29,000

Note: 16 April 2026 was the monitoring point before the non-subsidized fuel price adjustment that took effect on 18 April 2026. Source: processed from DPKUKMP Palangka Raya City data, 2026

The dashed line in Figure 1 marks 18 April 2026, when the Dexlite price increase and the surge in plastic prices began to translate into higher purchase prices from distributors. The price of Bimoli cooking oil rose from IDR 23,000 to IDR 24,000/liter shortly after that date, while Fortune cooking oil rose twice during the observation period,

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from IDR 19,000 to IDR 21,000/liter at the end of April and again to IDR 22,000/liter at the end of May, a cumulative increase of about 16%. The price of local rice (Karang Dukuh) increased most consistently, from IDR 19,000/kg in early March to IDR 25,000/kg at the end of May, a rise of about 32% in less than three months. The price of granulated sugar also rose, from IDR 17,500/kg to IDR 20,000/kg over the same period, with the sharpest jump on 20 April 2026, two days after the Dexlite price increase, when it rose from IDR 17,500 to IDR 19,500/kg, or about 11% in a single day. Commercial chicken eggs showed a different pattern, falling from IDR 30,400 to IDR 29,000/kg in early May. This indicates that not all commodities moved in the same direction even though distributors' delivery-truck and packaging costs generally increased: egg supply was rising and abundant, so egg prices were still undergoing adjustment. It also confirms that supply and competition among traders continued to play a role alongside cost pressure.

The decline in commercial chicken egg prices can be linked to post-Ramadan and post-Eid al-Fitr market conditions. The Ministry of Agriculture, citing an explanation from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in May 2026, stated that the national decline in egg prices was related to the normalization of demand after the religious holiday and to more adequate supply (Kementan, 2026). This explanation provides a relevant context for understanding the decline in egg prices at the Main Market, although the causal factors at the local level still require confirmation through supplier data and trader interviews.

During the same period, the rise in plastic raw material prices and the adjustment of non-subsidized fuel prices had the potential to add to trade operating costs, particularly in packaging and distribution. However, these cost increases did not automatically lead to price increases for all commodities. Changes in selling prices continued to be influenced by purchase prices from suppliers, inventory conditions, the level of demand, competition among traders, and margin-setting decisions. Therefore, the decline in the price of Bimoli in May 2026 cannot immediately be regarded as contradicting the rise in operating costs; rather, it requires adjustment through changes in purchase prices, inventory, and traders' sales strategies.

These findings show that traders' pricing practices in responding to price fluctuations differ according to commodity characteristics. To establish the relationship between rising operating costs and changes in selling prices, it would be necessary to compare purchase and selling prices over the same period and to obtain informants' accounts of the components of the cost of goods sold. In this way, the analysis would rest not only on the coincidence in timing between cost changes and price changes but also on evidence that explains the mechanism of those price changes.

Traders' Practices in Responding to Price Fluctuations

This study finds that the selling prices of semi-wholesale *sembako* traders at the Palangka Raya Main Market are set using the simple formula Selling Price = Capital + Margin. Capital here is the purchase price from the distributor, which, as described in the previous section, already reflects the increases in delivery and plastic packaging costs borne by the distributor. On top of this capital, traders apply two different margin levels according to buyer segment, as summarized in Table 2.

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Table 2. Capital and Margin Scheme of Semi-Wholesale Traders

Sales Segment	Pricing Basis	Margin	Rationale for Margin Setting
Wholesale / Bulk (to fellow retail traders)	Purchase price from distributor (capital)	3%–5%	Rapid inventory turnover and large sales volume, so that a thin per-unit margin remains profitable in aggregate
Retail / Unit (to end consumers)	Purchase price from distributor (capital)	10%	Keeps prices competitive with other traders around the market without sacrificing business sustainability
When distributor prices rise	New capital from distributor	Margin reduced to about IDR 500–1,000 per unit before prices are raised	Traders first squeeze their profits so that the price increase is not immediately passed on to consumers. The new price is adjusted after old stock is sold out or the increase is judged to be permanent.

Source: processed from research data, Palangka Raya Main Market, 2026

The scheme in Table 2 reveals a consistent business logic. In the wholesale segment, a thin margin (3–5%) is tolerated because large transaction volumes and rapid turnover keep profits adequate, while also sustaining long-term trading relationships with partner retailers. Conversely, in the retail segment for fast-moving products such as cooking oil and rice, a higher margin (10%) is needed to cover the operating costs of smaller individual transactions, yet it is kept competitive through routine comparison with the prices of other traders around the market. This finding is reinforced by P1's statement: "If it's for traders who buy in bulk, I take a thin margin, about three to five percent. For retail it's higher, around ten percent." (P1, interview, 17 June 2026). P5 also explained that profit margins are not always the same for every item. P5 stated, "Bulk is the thinnest, three to five percent. For retail I take about ten, but not always. Items that sell out quickly can have a thinner margin." (P5, interview, 25 June 2026). This practice of comparing prices with one another is consistent with Abu Yusuf's idea that prices are determined not merely by the availability of goods but also by interactions among actors in the distribution chain.

The practices found show that traders do not immediately change their selling prices when distributors raise purchase prices. Old stock bought at the old capital is sold off first, and prices are then raised gradually as new goods bought at a higher capital arrive, so that customers are not startled and do not move to other traders. This was conveyed by P1: "We sell off the old stock at the old price first, or raise the price little by little. Once the new stock comes in, the price adjusts. If everything goes up at once, buyers are shocked." (P1, interview, 17 June 2026). Price changes are generally held for several days so that fellow traders can be consulted on whether the increase is temporary or permanent, while the old price continues to be given priority for reseller customers. The most recent purchase invoice and daily purchase price records serve as the benchmark for capital before selling prices are adjusted.

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The pricing mechanism proceeds through a tiered process: when the increase from distributors is quite sharp, the first step consistently taken is to reduce the profit margin rather than to raise the selling price to consumers immediately. The margin per unit is lowered to the lowest level that still covers the shop's operating costs; a new selling price is set only if the reduced margin remains insufficient. As a concrete illustration, under normal conditions traders typically take a margin of IDR 800–1,500 per unit; once the purchase price from the distributor rises, this margin is temporarily squeezed to only about IDR 500–1,000 per unit. This was explained by P2: "Usually I take about eight hundred to one thousand five hundred per unit. If the capital goes up, I lower it to five hundred to one thousand. Just temporarily, until it's clear whether the increase is permanent or only brief." (P2, interview, 18 June 2026).

This narrowed margin is temporary and will be restored or readjusted once traders confirm that the distributor's price increase is permanent rather than a short-term fluctuation. For some traders, accelerating inventory turnover with a thin margin is even the main strategy, because goods stored for long periods in the warehouse are seen as causing hidden losses in the form of storage costs and the risk of quality deterioration. This pattern is in line with the thin 3–5% margin strategy in the wholesale/bulk segment (Table 2), where a small margin is tolerated in order to maintain sales volume and smooth cash flow.

Analysis of the research data indicates that the main factor influencing pricing decisions is the purchase price from the distributor (capital), which already includes the increased costs of delivery trucks and plastic packaging. The level of competition among traders and the decline in consumer purchasing power are also important considerations; the prices of nearby shops are monitored routinely before a trader's own selling price is adjusted, a practice that directly supports the competitively maintained retail margin scheme outlined in Table 2.

The research data indicate that traders do not automatically pass the entire increase in capital on to consumers. When the purchase price from distributors rises, the first step is to recalculate whether the reduced margin is still sufficient to cover the shop's operating costs for the month; the new selling price is raised only when that margin can no longer cover costs at all. This pattern is consistent with the two-tier margin scheme in Table 2: the 10% retail margin serves as an absorption buffer for traders before fuel and plastic price increases, already reflected in capital, are passed on in full to end consumers. Conversely, for commercial chicken eggs, whose distributor price actually softened during the same period, traders had no reason to raise prices even though delivery-truck costs generally rose, because the margin already set for that commodity had not been squeezed.

Islamic Economic Perspective on Traders' Pricing Practices

Referring to Ibn Taimiyah's concept of *irtifā' al-as'ār*, the price increases in branded cooking oil, local rice, and granulated sugar after 18 April 2026 can be categorized as natural price increases, because they originated from external factors beyond traders' control, namely PT Pertamina Patra Niaga's adjustment of non-subsidized fuel prices, which raised the price of Dexlite, and the surge in the prices of imported plastic packaging raw materials at the producer level (Antara, 2026).

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In addition to Ibn Taimiyah's perspective, the pricing practices in this study can also be understood through Abu Yusuf's thought. In *Kitab al-Kharaj*, Abu Yusuf explained that changes in the price of a commodity are influenced not only by the abundance or scarcity of goods but also by various other factors that lie outside the simple mechanism of demand and supply (Sifa, 2021). This view is in line with the findings of this study, in which the price increases in cooking oil, local rice, and granulated sugar at the Palangka Raya Main Market were driven more by rising distribution costs than by supply scarcity. Those cost increases stemmed from higher transportation costs due to the non-subsidized Dexlite price adjustment and from additional packaging costs due to higher plastic raw material prices charged to distributors. The price fluctuations that occurred therefore reflect the influence of factors within the distribution chain rather than changes in the quantity of goods available in the market. This reinforces Abu Yusuf's view that the relationship between price and production volume is not always linear (Muharam, 2022).

In addition, the results highlight the importance of the role of the DPKUKMP of Palangka Raya City as the authority monitoring price developments in the market. The existence of this institution supports an open and fair market mechanism, so that the price increases that occurred can be understood as a consequence of rising distribution costs rather than the result of manipulation or unilateral action by traders (Putri Diesy Fitriani, 2025).

The pattern of gradual price adjustment, accompanied by openness toward consumers and beginning with a reduction in profit margins, demonstrates the application of the concept of *tsaman al-mitsl*. This concept explains that a just price is one formed fairly through the market mechanism without elements of injustice or exploitation (Ida Hapni Harahap, Sri Sudiarti, 2023). The findings also show that traders explain to customers the reasons for price increases, mainly the rise in purchase prices from distributors. This account was corroborated by interviews with consumers as supporting informants, who confirmed the transparency of the information conveyed. The practice reflects the values of honesty and openness, which are among the characteristics of a just price in Ibn Taimiyah's thought.

The application of different margins to wholesale and retail sales, accompanied by price adjustments, also does not contradict Islamic economic principles as long as the size of the margin is commensurate with the costs and risks of each type of transaction. The relatively small margin on wholesale sales reflects lower costs per transaction supported by large sales volumes, whereas the higher margin on retail sales is proportionate to the greater operating costs of each small-quantity transaction. Based on these findings, the pricing practices applied by semi-wholesale *sembako* traders at the Palangka Raya Main Market in responding to price fluctuations resulting from the rise in Dexlite and plastic raw material prices in April 2026 generally reflect the principles of justice, balance, and public welfare (*maslahah*) in Islamic economics.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the pricing practices of semi-wholesale *sembako* traders at the Palangka Raya Main Market use the calculation selling price = capital + margin. Traders apply a margin of around 3–5% for wholesale sales and 10% for retail

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sales. When purchase prices from distributors increase, traders tend to sell off old stock, reduce profit margins, and adjust prices gradually, taking into account competition and consumer purchasing power. The March–May 2026 data show that price changes were not uniform: the prices of local rice and granulated sugar rose, while those of commercial chicken eggs and Bimoli fell at the end of the observation period. These differences indicate that price changes are also related to supply conditions, demand, purchase prices, and the sales strategy for each commodity. The rise in non-subsidized fuel and plastic raw material prices provided a context of cost pressure, but the available data do not prove that these two factors directly caused all of the price changes.

From an Islamic economic perspective, these pricing practices are relevant to Abu Yusuf's thought that prices are determined not only by the availability of goods but also by other factors in the distribution chain. The practices can also be examined through the concepts of *tsaman al-mitsl* and *irtifā' al-as'ār* according to Ibn Taimiyah, particularly when prices are adjusted fairly, transparently, and without exploitation. However, conformity with the Islamic principle of justice must be assessed on the basis of evidence regarding the fairness of prices, the openness of information, and the absence of actions that harm consumers. Thus, pricing that takes into account real costs, competition, and consumers' capacity can support fair and sustainable trade.

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