

Fresh produce prices in some Australian supermarkets have skyrocketed over the last couple of weeks due to panic buying, local media reports.

Prices of many vegetable items like lettuce have reportedly risen by around three-fold, ABC News reports.

"We have seen the tripling in prices, and with items like lettuces up around the \$10 mark at some [stores]," Master Grocers Australia CEO Jos De Bruin was quoted as saying.

On Sunday, prices for sugar snap peas at one supermarket were set at A\$6.99 (US\$4) each, a kilogram of Roma Tomatoes is A\$9.99 (US\$5.80) and one cauliflower costs A\$14.99 (US\$8.60).

De Bruin said the food retail market has been rocked by panic buyers and people stocking up before self-isolating.

"[Australia's food retail market] was a market that's quite controlled, it's a market that's quite predictable," he told the publication.

He added that the food transport industry is under pressure and businesses are becoming strained.

With demand outstripping supply, the food transport industry is under pressure and businesses are becoming strained with huge added costs, he said.

Meanwhile, in a statement, Woolworths said price increases had been driven by a range of factors.

"We've seen an extraordinary level of demand for groceries across the country over the past week, including on fresh fruit and vegetables," a spokesperson said.

"This elevated demand has impacted the availability of a few vegetable lines that are typically in shorter supply at this time of year across the whole market.

"We're working closely with our fresh food suppliers to manage the impact of this increased demand, alongside the environmental impact of drought and unseasonal weather in different parts of the country.

"We understand the pressures facing Australian households right now and remain focused on offering quality fresh food to our customers at competitive prices."

Vegetable prices have also reportedly soared in Spain, driven by a spike in demand for fresh produce as more people cook at home rather than eat out.

Eduardo López of farming association COAG Andalucía said that prices that had been very low just a week ago have almost doubled in the past few days.