

China Economics

Inflation Turns Negative, Raise 2023 GDP Growth to 5.2%

CPI Inflation Falls to -0.2% Due to Hog Cycle

Consumer prices returned to contraction and fell by -0.2% in October (Consensus: -0.1%, September: 0%), mainly because food inflation dropped to a three-year low of -4% (Fig 1). Headline inflation emerged from a month of negative reading (July: -0.3%) but was weighed down by an intensifying plunge in hog prices (-30.1%) as longstanding boom-bust dynamics played out in the farming industry (Fig 3). Wholesale pork prices continued to plunge in early November (-40.7%), suggesting that food costs will continue exerting downward pressure on headline inflation for the rest of the year. Food accounts for an estimated one-fifth of the CPI basket. Hogs, in turn, account for around 13% of the food basket.

Besides the softening prices of goods (-1.1%), consumer services inflation also eased mildly to 1.2% in October (September 1.3%) on lower transport and communication costs (Fig 2). Revenge spending on domestic travel had increased the costs of tourism-related services since 2Q, but has since ebbed to 11% in October, from a peak of 14.8% in August. We project that CPI inflation will average 0.3% in 2023, before rising to a still-muted 1.1% in 2024.

Core Inflation Cools After Holding Firm in 3Q

Besides idiosyncratic food price declines, underlying cost pressures in the economy also showed signs of receding in October. Core inflation fell to 0.6%, after edging up to 0.8% in July—September (Fig 1). Weakness in core inflation, if it persists, will be more of a concern than food price declines induced by supply swings, as it suggests cooling consumer demand.

Producer Price Deflation Widened Marginally to -2.6%

On the Producer Price Index (PPI) front, deflation continued into its 13th month and came in at -2.6% (Consensus: -2.7%, Sep:-2.5%). Even though the mining industry prices bottomed and posed less of a drag on overall PPI, the price falls in the manufacturing industry steepened, including durable goods (Fig 4). We expect PPI inflation to average -2.6% this year, and recover modestly to 1.4% in 2024.

Raise 2023 GDP Growth Forecast to 5.2% as Modest Policy Support Steadies Momentum

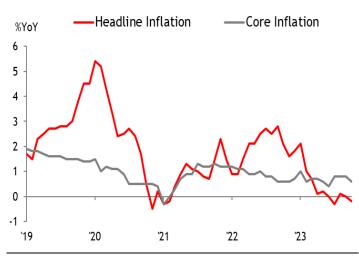
In October, the government raised its fiscal deficit target for 2023 to 3.8% of GDP (from 3%). It also committed to rapidly deploy fiscal resources to local governments for use in disaster reconstruction. Yesterday, People's Bank of China governor Pan Gongsheng pledged to provide "emergency liquidity" to aid heavily indebted local governments. We expect the funding support to boost public spending and steady the growth momentum in 4Q 2023. We raise our GDP growth forecast to 5.2% for 2023 (from 5.0%), and maintain the projection at 4.4% for 2024.

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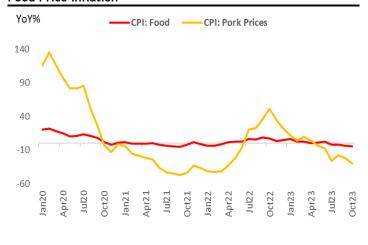
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Fig 1: CPI Inflation Fell Back into Negative Territory (-0.2%) In October While Core Inflation Eased by 0.2% Points to 0.6%



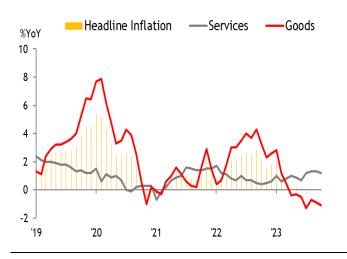
Source: CEIC

Fig 3: Boom-Bust Swings in the Hog Cycle Exerted a Drag on Food Price Inflation



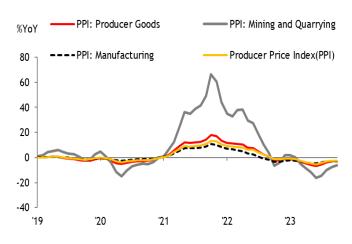
Source: CEIC

Fig 2: CPI Goods Inflation Turned More Negative (-1.1%), Alongside Falling CPI Services Inflation (1.2%)



Source: CEIC

Fig 4: Producer Prices Remained in Deflation (-2.6%) With the Decline in Manufacturing Sector Prices Widening



Source: CEIC

Table 1: Consumer Price Index Inflation (YoY%)

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	2Q23	3Q23	2022
Headline Inflation	0.0	-0.3	0.1	0.0	-0.2	0.1	-0.1	2.0
Food, Tobacco & Liquor	2.0	-0.5	-0.5	-1.5	-2.1	1.3	-0.8	2.5
Clothing	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.5
Household Articles & Services	-0.5	-0.2	-0.5	-0.4	-0.6	-0.2	-0.4	1.2
Healthcare	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.2	0.6
Transportation and Communication	-6.5	-4.7	-2.1	-1.3	-0.9	-4.6	-2.7	5.2
Education Services	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.8	1.8	1.2	1.4	2.1
Tourism	6.4	13.1	14.8	12.3	11.0	7.8	13.4	3.3
Rent	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.3	-0.1	-0.2
Water, Electricity and Fuel	-0.2	-0.1	0.3	0.5	0.6	-0.3	0.2	3.0
Other Goods & Services	2.4	4.1	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.0	3.9	1.6
Core Inflation	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.9

Source: CEIC

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