Marikiti vs a supplier: the real cost of the market run.



THE SHORT ANSWER

Marikiti and Wakulima prices are often around 10% lower than a supplier's, but they change every week and so does the quality. Once you count what is damaged or unusable, the staff time and transport of the early run, and paying cash with no credit, the cost per usable kilo is often higher than the price you saw at the stall.

What the market does well

Marikiti and Wakulima are the heart of Nairobi's fresh produce trade, and they deserve their reputation. The markets are busy, full of culture, and run by traders with years of experience who know their produce better than anyone. You see what you buy, you can bargain, and on a good day you leave with a good price.

So the question is not whether the market is good or bad. It is what a kilo you can actually cook really costs your kitchen, once everything is counted.

What the price at the stall leaves out

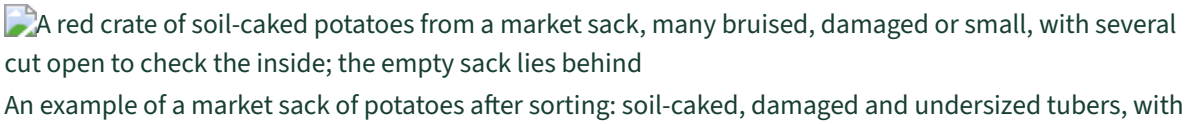
FACTOR	AT THE MARKET	WHY IT MATTERS TO A KITCHEN
Price	Often around 10% lower, and it changes week to week	Hard to cost a menu on a price you only learn on the morning you buy.
Quality	Shifts every week and is not guaranteed	A good sack one week says little about the next.
Handling	Sacks are thrown, stacked and carried roughly	Bruised and crushed produce looks fine on the day and spoils quickly after.
Hygiene	Produce is handled on the ground and in the open	More washing and sorting before it reaches the kitchen, and more risk.
Time	An early start, the trip there and back, and sorting afterwards	A staff member's morning, every time you buy.
Mobilisation	You need people, transport and cash ready	The run depends on the right person being free on the day.
Credit	Cash or M-Pesa on the day, no credit lines	Money leaves the business before the food is sold.

FACTOR	AT THE MARKET	WHY IT MATTERS TO A KITCHEN
Brokers	Middlemen who stand between you and the trader	They add a cut, and you are further from the person who knows the stock.

A real example: the 90 kg sack of potatoes

One of the kitchens we work with bought a 90 kg sack of potatoes at the market for KSh 4,500. That is KSh 50 a kilo, and it looked like a win.

Then the sack was opened. About half the potatoes were unusable. Another share were tiny, the size farmers keep as seed (mbegu), which are slow to peel and give little usable potato. Others were mouldy. Out of 90 kg, the kitchen could use 27 kg.


A red crate of soil-caked potatoes from a market sack, many bruised, damaged or small, with several cut open to check the inside; the empty sack lies behind

An example of a market sack of potatoes after sorting: soil-caked, damaged and undersized tubers, with a few cut open to check the inside. Much of a sack like this never reaches the plate.

	WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE	WHAT IT REALLY WAS
Paid	KSh 4,500	KSh 4,500
Kilos	90 kg	27 kg usable
Cost per kilo	KSh 50	About KSh 167 per usable kilo

For comparison, potatoes were KSh 85 a kilo on the Wapishi price list for the week of 10 November 2026. The other 63 kg went in the bin, which is the part that hurts most: food that was grown, harvested, transported and paid for, then thrown away. Cutting that waste is a large part of why Wapishi exists.

How to work out the real cost

01 **Weigh what you can use.** After sorting and prep, weigh the usable produce from a market buy, not the sack.

02 **Divide what you paid by the usable kilos.** KSh 4,500 ÷ 27 kg is about KSh 167 a kilo.

03 **Add the run.** Transport, fares and the hours of the person who went, divided across what you bought.

04 **Do the same for your supplier** on the same items for two weeks, using the receiving checklist.

05 **Compare the cost per usable kilo**, not the price per kilo. That is the number that reaches your food cost.

If you do buy at the market

- ☐ **Build a relationship with a few traders** and buy from the same ones each time. Good traders look after regular customers.
- ☐ **Look out for brokers.** Deal with the person who owns the stock, not someone offering to get you a better deal.
- ☐ **Open the sack and look at the bottom.** The top layer is the best layer.

- [ ] **Check the size.** A sack padded with mbegu potatoes or undersized onions weighs the same and gives you far less.
- [ ] **Smell and squeeze.** Mould and soft rot often show by smell before you see them.
- [ ] **Weigh before you pay**, and move produce in crates rather than piled sacks so it is not crushed on the way.
- [ ] **Buy the hardy items there, if anything.** Delicate produce such as greens, herbs, tomatoes and ripe fruit suffers most from rough handling.

Where Wapishi fits

Wapishi was built for kitchens that want the market's produce without the market run. You can see this week's prices on the price list and order in the online shop, priced per kilo, bunch or piece, for example potatoes, tomatoes and onions.

- [ ] **Delivered** to 14 areas in and around Nairobi at a time agreed with your kitchen, with early-morning and night deliveries on request.
- [ ] **On account** for qualified partners: 30-day terms with Wapishi Wallet. See kitchen credit.
- [ ] **eTIMS invoices** for every order, and a minimum order of KSh 5,000.
- [ ] **Try us first** with a free sample pack: WhatsApp 0769 912 227.

Quick answers

Is Marikiti cheaper than a produce supplier?

The price at the stall is often around 10% lower and changes every week. The cost per usable kilo can be higher once you count damaged or poor-quality stock, staff time, transport and paying cash.

What are mbegu potatoes?

Very small potatoes, the size farmers keep as seed (mbegu). They are slow to peel and give little usable potato, so a sack with many of them gives far fewer usable kilos than its weight suggests.

How do I avoid brokers at the market?

Buy from the same traders every time, deal with the person who owns the stock, and be wary of anyone who offers to find you a better price for a fee or a cut.

Can I get credit at Marikiti or Wakulima?

Generally no. Market buying is cash or M-Pesa on the day. A supplier with account terms lets you pay later and keep cash in the business.

What should I check when buying a sack at the market?

Open it and look at the bottom, not just the top. Check the size of what is inside, smell for rot or mould, and weigh it before you pay.

Buying for a kitchen in Nairobi?

Wapishi supplies fresh produce and kitchen staples to restaurants, hotels, caterers and canteens. Prices are published every week, and the latest version of this guide is online.

Read online	**info.wapishi.online/guides/marikiti-vs-produce-supplier/**
Prices	**info.wapishi.online/prices**
Order	**wapishi.online**
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