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Spain consumer goods sales rise on worries over supply

Madrid.—Sales of consumer goods rose 13% in Spain in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as supply concerns, exacerbated by a partial transport strike, prompted shoppers to stock up on staples, market research firm Kantar said yesterday.

Kantar measured the sales between March 6 and 20, compared to the same period a year ago, and their total increase far outpaced a 5% rise in Spanish mass consumer products prices in the same two weeks, meaning sales volumes were growing. “Spain’s shoppers

are starting to change their habits and it is directly related to the concern they are showing about the current scenario,” said Kantar, adding that 90% of consumers surveyed were worried about the impact of the conflict that began on Feb. 24.

Supermarket chains across the country have limited sales of sunflower oil, which is mostly imported from Ukraine, and the truck-drivers strike created sporadic shortages of staples like milk and flour.

Earlier this week, Spain temporarily

authorised stores to limit the sale of some products to prevent sell-outs when markets are under stress

Customers were buying more packaged foods and beverages, which accounted for 48.4% of an average grocery basket, compared to 44% a year ago.

Spanish consumer prices rose 9.8% in March, the fastest increase since 1985, preliminary data showed on Wednesday.

Young people have been particularly hard hit, the Kantar report showed, with consumers under 35 spending 20%

more on their purchases of basic goods than a year ago. In response, consumers are increasingly looking to buy cheaper own-brand products and some 40% are trying to reduce their out-of-home consumption, Kantar said.

“Consumers are becoming more selective, spending more time looking for cheaper alternatives,” Juan Aznar, a professor at Barcelona business school Esade told Reuters.

“Large shops with the capacity to maintain lower prices will be favoured in this circumstances.”

Paella for 300 Ukrainian refugees from leading Spanish chef

Valencia.—Every Tuesday chef Ciriaco Vicente turns his beachside restaurant in the Spanish city of Valencia into a dining room for more than a hundred Ukrainian refugees to enjoy a free hearty lunch.

“They’ve been left with nothing,” said Vicente, 47, as his waiters doled out generous portions of steaming yellow rice peppered with hunks of chicken and small succulent snails.

“We’re here to give them some love and affection through gastronomy,” he said. Some 4 million Ukrainians have fled their country since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, according to the United Nations. Around 80,000 have come to Spain, the migration minister said in an interview with *La Vanguardia* newspaper on



Sunday. The dining room at Las Torres de Ciriaco filled up with the happy chatter of families tucking into their food, but memories of the ordeals they faced are never far away.

“It’s a difficult situation all over the territory of Ukraine,” said Alina Zahoeta, 28, who used to manage a

branch of sporting-goods store Inter-sport in Kyiv.

After an arduous five day journey to Ukraine’s border with Hungary, she and her family eventually made it to Spain. Besides providing food, Vicente’s restaurant has become a meeting place for Ukrainians to trade stories and seek help with paperwork.

“People are very supportive,” said Bohdan Turinsk.