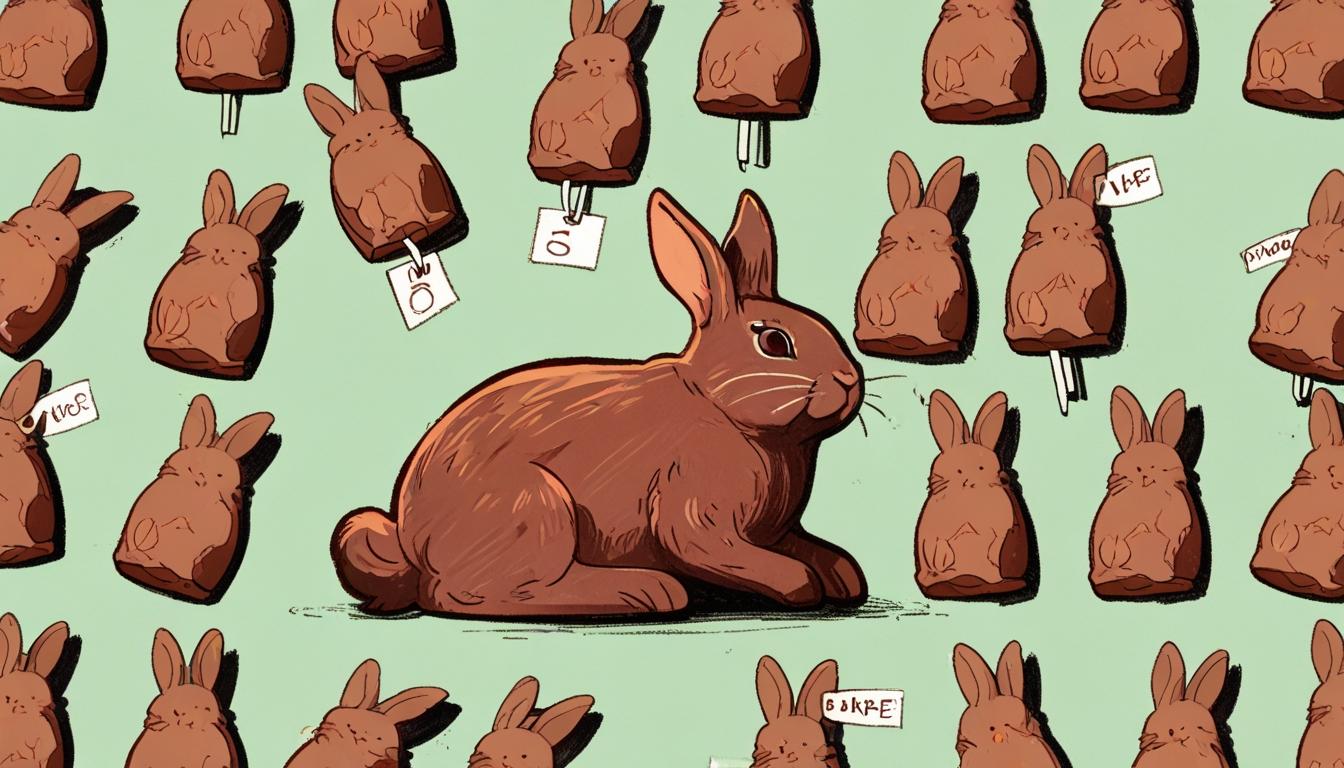
# Easter chocolate prices soar as cocoa shortage impacts supply chains



As Easter approaches, consumers find themselves grappling with significantly increased prices for chocolate, with some items soaring by as much as 50%. This escalation stems from a global shortage of cocoa, which has caught the attention of retailers and manufacturers concerned about the implications for consumer behaviour and market stability during peak demand periods. According to the consumer advocacy group Which?, the surge in prices is closely linked to poor harvests in major cocoa-producing nations, further compounded by ongoing inflationary pressures.

Martin Lockwood, Senior Director at Manhattan Associates, has provided insights into how businesses can navigate such challenges. Speaking to ChannelX, Lockwood noted that while seasonal surges are typically predictable, the unforeseen circumstances causing price hikes—like the current cocoa crisis—are often beyond retailers' control. He stated, "What is within their control is how agile and resilient their supply chains are in responding to these shocks."

Lockwood emphasised that retailers must re-evaluate their seasonal strategies to effectively handle price volatility and supply issues. He advised against relying on outdated forecasting models and siloed inventory planning, suggesting instead that businesses adopt unified, real-time insights throughout their supply chains. This approach allows them to react swiftly to disruptions and make informed decisions about rebalancing stock. "Being able to pivot quickly to alternative suppliers, reroute shipments, or dynamically adjust pricing and promotions based on availability is what separates the prepared from the panicked," Lockwood elaborated.

The impact of these supply chain challenges extends beyond chocolate, as the principles discussed apply to various seasonal products—from swimwear to school supplies. Lockwood also highlighted the strategies of onshoring and friendshoring, which have gained traction amidst geopolitical uncertainties. According to him, sourcing closer to home or building regional fulfilment models can help brands reduce lead times and enhance agility, which is particularly important for perishable or trend-driven products.

Although there is no straightforward solution to the rising costs of cocoa or the unpredictability of harvests, Lockwood believes that creating smarter and more responsive supply chains could be pivotal in ensuring product availability during high-demand seasons. He states, "Building a smarter, more responsive supply chain can be the difference between empty shelves and Easter success."

The ramifications of these chocolate price hikes extend to families, not just factory operations, as they significantly affect everyday lives. The phenomenon underscores the vulnerability of global trade networks, which can lead to higher prices at checkout and potential product shortages in retail environments. This supply chain volatility has become an increasingly relevant topic for consumers as they prepare for seasonal celebrations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)