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Producers' Selling Prices Hold Steady

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Producers' selling prices stayed flat in September, more evidence of U.S. inflation cooling.

The producer-price index was unchanged last month compared with August, versus the 0.1% increase economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected. During the past 12 months, producer prices have risen by 1.8%. In September, a 0.2% increase in producers' services prices offset a 0.2% decline in goods prices.

The figures are a gauge of how much more companies are charging for their output. But one of the PPI's most important roles is as a data source for the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of overall in-flation, the personal-consumption expenditures price index.

The next update is due Oct. 31—a week before the Fed's next rate-setting meeting.

A big share of the data that go into PCE inflation flow from the consumer-price index, which came in higher than expected on Thursday, at 0.2% month-over-month in September. But the PPI's inflation figures for healthcare services, airfare and financial services, to name a few key categories, are important too.

Friday's producer-price figures will help analysts nail down their guesses about September's PCE reading, which should be influential as the Fed decides whether to continue cutting rates, and how fast.

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