

Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

May 2016

Cash-Based Responses
Technical Working Group

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in northern Syria and how markets cope with challenges created by the conflict, the Cash-Based Responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) and REACH conduct monthly monitoring of key markets. In each assessed market, field teams record the prices and stock levels of selected food and non-food items (NFIs) sold by local traders and retailers. Commodities have been identified based on what is typically available, sold and used by an average Syrian household. Many are components of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), detailed in the table to the right, which outlines the minimum culturally adjusted group of items required to support a six-person household over a one-month period.

This report provides an overview of price ranges and medians for key foods, NFIs and types of fuel across the areas assessed, as well as of water trucking expenses and currency exchange rates. In order to illustrate variation in prices and availability, REACH has used the collected data to map the price of an SMEB in each subdistrict. The cleaned data sets are available on the REACH Resource Centre and are distributed to CBR-TWG partners, as well as to the clusters.

WHAT IS THE CASH-BASED RESPONSES TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP?

The Cash-Based Responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) was established in March 2014 to analyse the impact of the ongoing conflict on markets in Syria and guide the implementation of humanitarian cash and voucher programmes within those markets.

METHODOLOGY

Between 13 and 24 May 2016, a network of enumerators affiliated with CBR-TWG members collected detailed information about the availability and prices of key food items, non-food items and fuel in northern Syria. Eight partners (CARE/Shafak, Concern, GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH and Solidarités International) contributed data from 31 subdistricts across Idlib, Lattakia, Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor and al-Hasakeh governorates.

Ten survey forms were deployed on KoBo to capture price and stock information from different types of establishments, including grocery stores, fuel traders, currency exchange shops and water trucking services, among others. In most cases, enumerators used the KoBoCollect Android app to upload data.

In order to be included in the Market Monitoring Exercise, markets had to be permanent in nature, large enough to support at least two wholesalers, and diverse enough to provide a sufficient variety of goods and commodities. The shops surveyed within each market had to be housed in permanent structures and had to sell certain items to be eligible for inclusion.

Enumerators were trained on methodology and tools by REACH and CBR-TWG members. Each enumerator assessed three to five shops of each type in the main market in their assigned subdistrict, using surveys to collect information about prices, current product inventory and the time needed to replace current stocks. In subdistricts where direct surveying by enumerators was not possible, such as Lattakia, ar-Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor, data collection was conducted directly through key informants such as shop owners, suppliers, and consumers.

Following data collection, REACH and CBR-TWG compiled and cleaned all partners' data,

normalising prices and cross-checking outliers. The cleaned data was then analysed by commodity and by subdistrict. Prices were divided into quartiles and boxplots were created to help CBR-TWG members understand the distribution of prices. In addition, REACH calculated and mapped the average cost of an SMEB in each subdistrict.

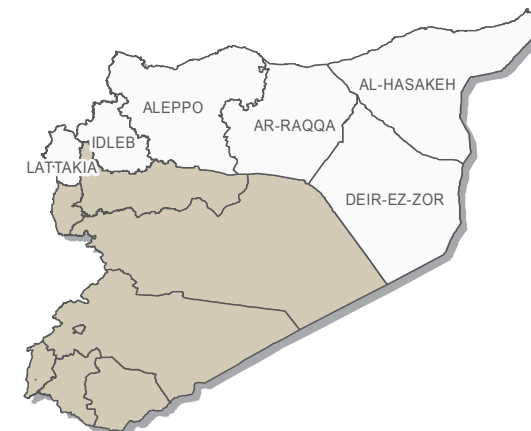
CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

CBR-TWG partners closely monitor the security context in the subdistricts where they have committed to collect data and are encouraged not to expose their enumerators to undue risk. In some subdistricts, this means that enumerators cannot collect data from certain communities or neighbourhoods. This was the case in the divided cities of al-Hasakeh, Qamishli and Deir ez-Zor, where some neighbourhoods could not be surveyed.

In this round, restrictions on the use of mobile devices for data collection imposed by authorities in parts of northern Idlib governorate meant that markets in those areas could not be directly assessed using the KoBoCollect app. Instead, data was collected using paper forms and entered into KoBo afterwards. For methodological reasons, restocking data from al-Hasakeh governorate could not be analysed alongside data from other governorates and had to be excluded.

Coordinating a cross-border price monitoring exercise via remote management is inherently challenging. CBR-TWG members have sought to overcome these issues by harmonising procedures and data collection tools to ensure that the data uploaded are as accurate as possible.

ASSESSED GOVERNORATES



SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (SMEB) CONTENTS

	Item	Quantity
Food Items	Bread	37 kg
	Bulgur	15 kg
	Chicken	4 kg
	Dried pulses	19 kg
	Eggs	6 kg
	Fresh vegetables	6 kg
	Ghee	7 kg
	Rice	19 kg
	Salt	1 kg
	Sugar	5 kg
Non-Food Items	Tomato paste	6 kg
	Individual soap	12 pcs
	Laundry/dish soap	2 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Fuel	Toothpaste	2 pcs
	Kerosene (manually refined)	25 L
Water	Water	2790 L
Other	6% float*	6% total value

* 6% float was excluded from SMEB calculations due to the commonality of incomplete baskets.

May 2016: NORTHERN SYRIA CONTEXT

The deterioration of the ceasefire signed on February 27, 2016 continued to shape the humanitarian situation throughout northern Syria throughout April and May. Clashes continued to prevent access to many of the areas the Market Monitoring Exercise has covered in previous rounds of data collection, including urban Aleppo, Southern Idleb and Northern Hama. More concerning still, markets continued to be the target of airstrikes in May, with reported attacks on marketplaces in Bennsh and Saraqeb in Idleb governorate in May.

In spite of a challenging security context, April coverage levels were maintained and expanded. Partners regained access to Jawadiyah in al-Hasakeh, which was not possible to assess in April due to restrictions imposed by local authorities. For the first time, it was possible to assess al-Mayadin in Deir ez-Zor and Karama in ar-Raqqa remotely. Markets in Idleb city, which had been visited by enumerators in the past were assessed remotely for the first time. Despite continued instability in A'zaz, it was still possible to assess markets there.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

The median informal US dollar sell rate was 635 SYP/USD, up from 514 SYP/USD in April. This represented a 23.5% rise since April and a 59.5% rise since January, suggesting that inflation has continued to accelerate throughout 2016. Local exchange rates varied widely -- from 580 to 660 SYP/USD -- reflecting local variations as well as a notable level of volatility throughout the data collection period. As for the Turkish lira, the median sell rate in May was 211 SYP/TRY, a 17.2% rise

MEDIAN EXCHANGE RATES

635 SYP/USD
211 SYP/TRY

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

**TOMATO PASTE,
TEA, EGGS, FUEL**

since April, when the rate was 180 SYP/TRY and a 61.1% rise since January. Local rates also varied more widely than in previous months, ranging from 200 to 225 SYP, reflecting regional variations as well as volatility throughout the data collection period.

The median cost of nearly all food items rose, in some cases, sharply, between the April and May rounds, with localized price spikes for some commodities. For example, the median price of tomato paste rose by 36% from 550 SYP to 750 SYP (1.07 to 1.18 USD). Remarkably high prices for tomato paste were reported in some markets in al-Hasakeh and ar-Raqqa, where recorded prices were as high as 1700 SYP in some cases.

Shortages of some commodities suggested that supply chain issues may have been a contributing factor to some price rises. Widespread shortages of sugar, which were reported in May for the first time, affected nine subdistricts in al-Hasakeh and along the Turkish border and coincided with a sharp rise in the median prices since April (340 SYP to 450 SYP, 0.66 to 0.71 USD or 32.4%).

Similarly, localized shortages of eggs and chicken were reported in the May round, which also may have affected price trends. For the first time in recent rounds of data collection, the price of eggs rose dramatically (950 to 1225 SYP, 1.85 to 1.93 USD, an increase of 28.9%). The price of chicken continued to increase (950 SYP to 1025 SYP, 1.85 to 1.61 USD, 7.9%) but rose less dramatically than in the April round, when widespread shortages and price increases were reported.

Other SMEB staples, while generally present across assessed markets, also increased in cost. These included ghee, vegetable oil, red lentils, rice,

MAIN SHORTAGES

**KEROSENE, WATER,
SUGAR**

and bulgur. The median price of bread across areas assessed remained the same, despite localized shortages. While prices for food commodities generally increased, prices for fresh vegetables fell since the April round, with the median prices of cucumbers and tomatoes each falling from 225 SYP to 175 SYP (0.44 USD to 0.28 USD) and onions (200 SYP to 150 SYP, 0.39 USD to 0.24 USD).

After falling in April, fuel prices rose again in May for most fuels. Government petrol remained unchanged (375 SYP) after rising by 90 SYP in April. Modest increases were noted for kerosene, gas, and manually refined diesel. Manually refined petrol rose to 188 SYP from 100 SYP, following a fall by 100 SYP between March and April. Following a fall by the same amount, government diesel rose by 215 SYP in May, selling for a median price of 250 SYP/L. It is important to note that such large fluctuations in the price of government diesel as well as other fuels may be largely attributable to idiosyncrasies in data collection, including monthly changes in coverage, and therefore do not necessarily reflect instability in fuel markets.

The median price for water delivery was 0.65 SYP per litre, a substantial increase since April, when the price was 0.38 SYP/L. In Deir ez-Zor city, prices have consistently been the highest amongst markets surveyed, one litre of water remained unchanged from April, 1.25 SYP/L. Prices were lowest in Ain al-Arab, where the cost was 0.34 SYP/L.

AVAILABILITY

Shortages of SMEB commodities increased during the month of May, with geographically widespread shortages of specific commodities reported. For the

first time in which the Market Monitoring Exercise has been conducted, sugar was widely unavailable, with shortages reported in nine subdistricts, primarily in al-Hasekeh governorate and along the Turkish border (Armuda, Qahtaniyah, al-Malikeyyeh, Jawadih, Qamishli, Yaroubiah, Ras al Ain, Ain al Arab, Tell Abiad). While chicken was not present in assessed markets in eight subdistricts in April, availability improved in May with only three subdistricts in Aleppo and al-Hasakeh -- Lower Shyookh, Yaroubiah, and Ras al Ain -- reporting shortages. Eggs were also unavailable in three subdistricts: Tell Abiad, Suluk, and al-Mayadin.

Kaz was unavailable in seven subdistricts (Ain al-Arab, Lower Shyookh, Saraqeb, Atareb, Daret Azza, and Ma'arrat Tamasrin); Private water trucking services were unavailable in eight subdistricts (Afrin, Teftnaz, Suluk, Quouqeen, Atareb, al-Mayadin, Lattakia, and ar-Raqqa).

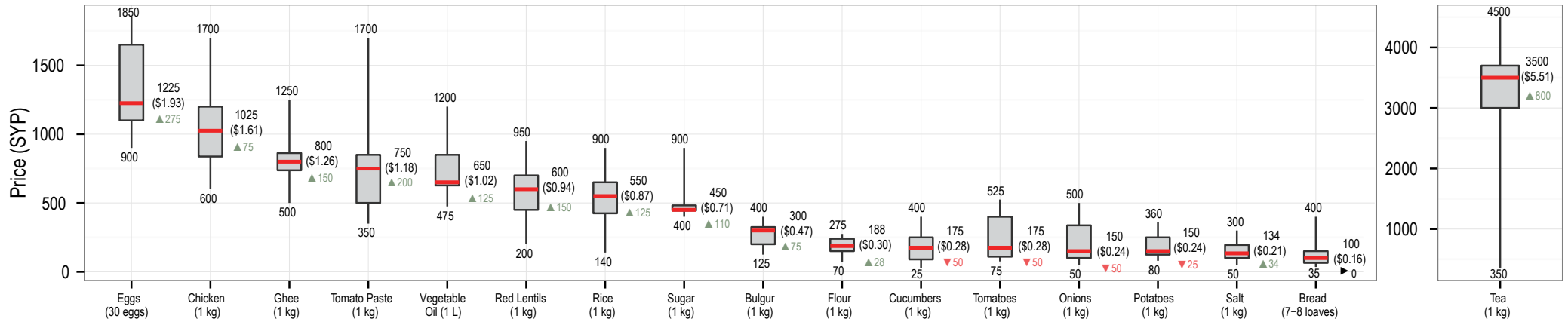
SMEBs

The value of a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is calculated for each assessed subdistrict by calculating the median prices of all SMEB commodities in that subdistrict and multiplying these medians by the number of units that an average northern Syrian household must purchase in a month. Because shortages for specific items included in the SMEB became increasingly widespread in May, complete SMEBs could only be obtained in 5 out of the 31 assessed subdistricts.

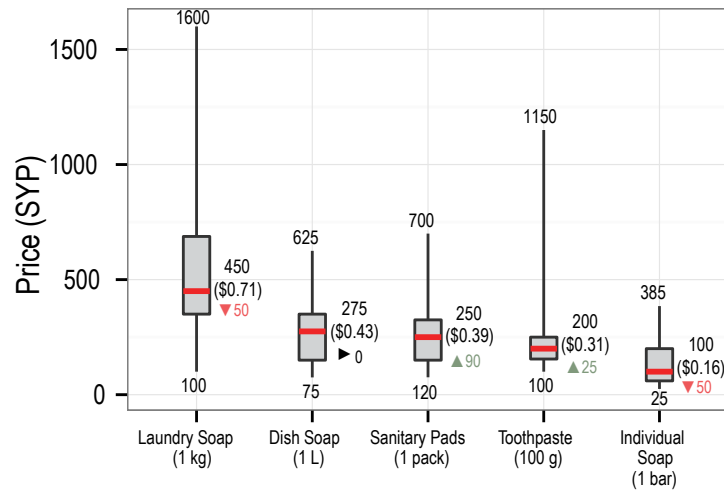
The least expensive complete SMEB was in Armanaz, in Idleb governorate, which reported 54,221 SYP or 85.39 USD. The most expensive complete SMEB was in Deir ez-Zor city (87,000 SYP, 137.01 USD) representing a rise of 16.6% in Syrian pounds but a decrease of 6% in US dollars respectively since April.

Included in the Market Monitoring exercise for the first time, Al Maydin, a hard to reach area in Deir ez-Zor governorate, reported an even higher-priced incomplete SMEB (excluding eggs, toothpaste, and water) which cost 89044 SYP or 140.23 USD.

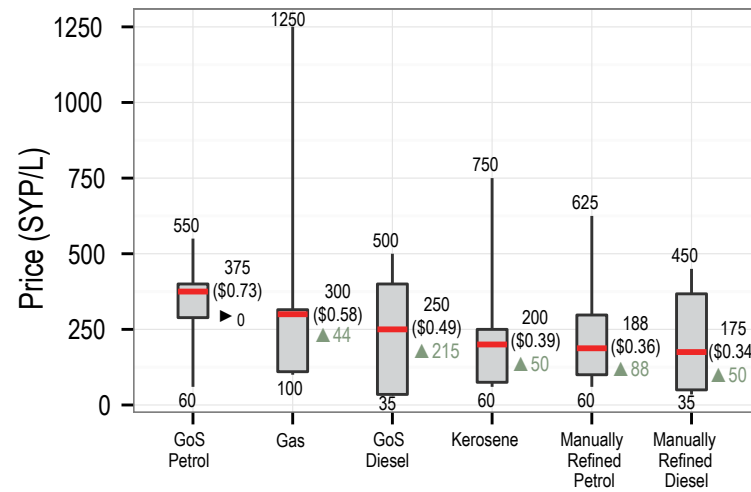
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

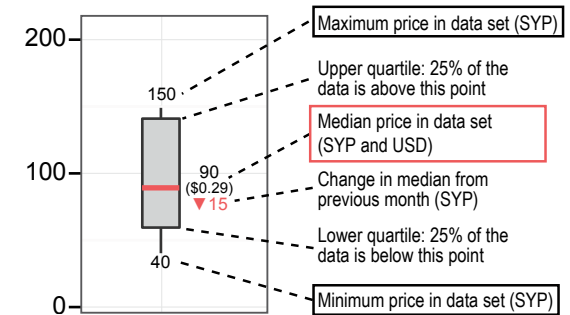


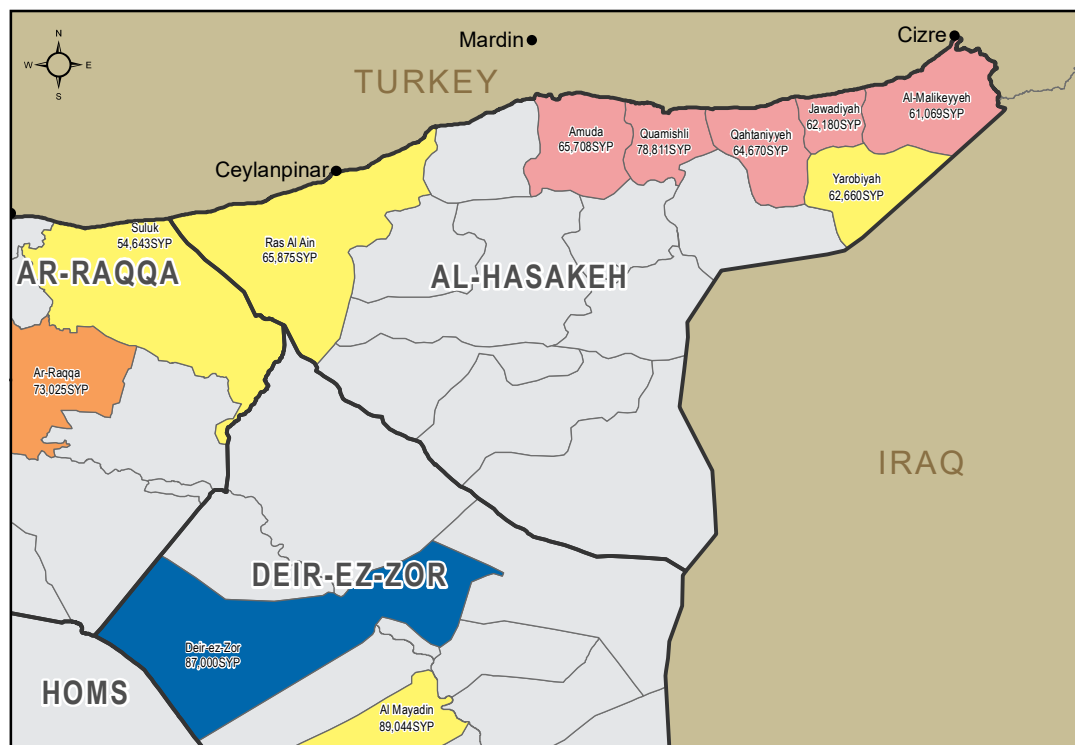
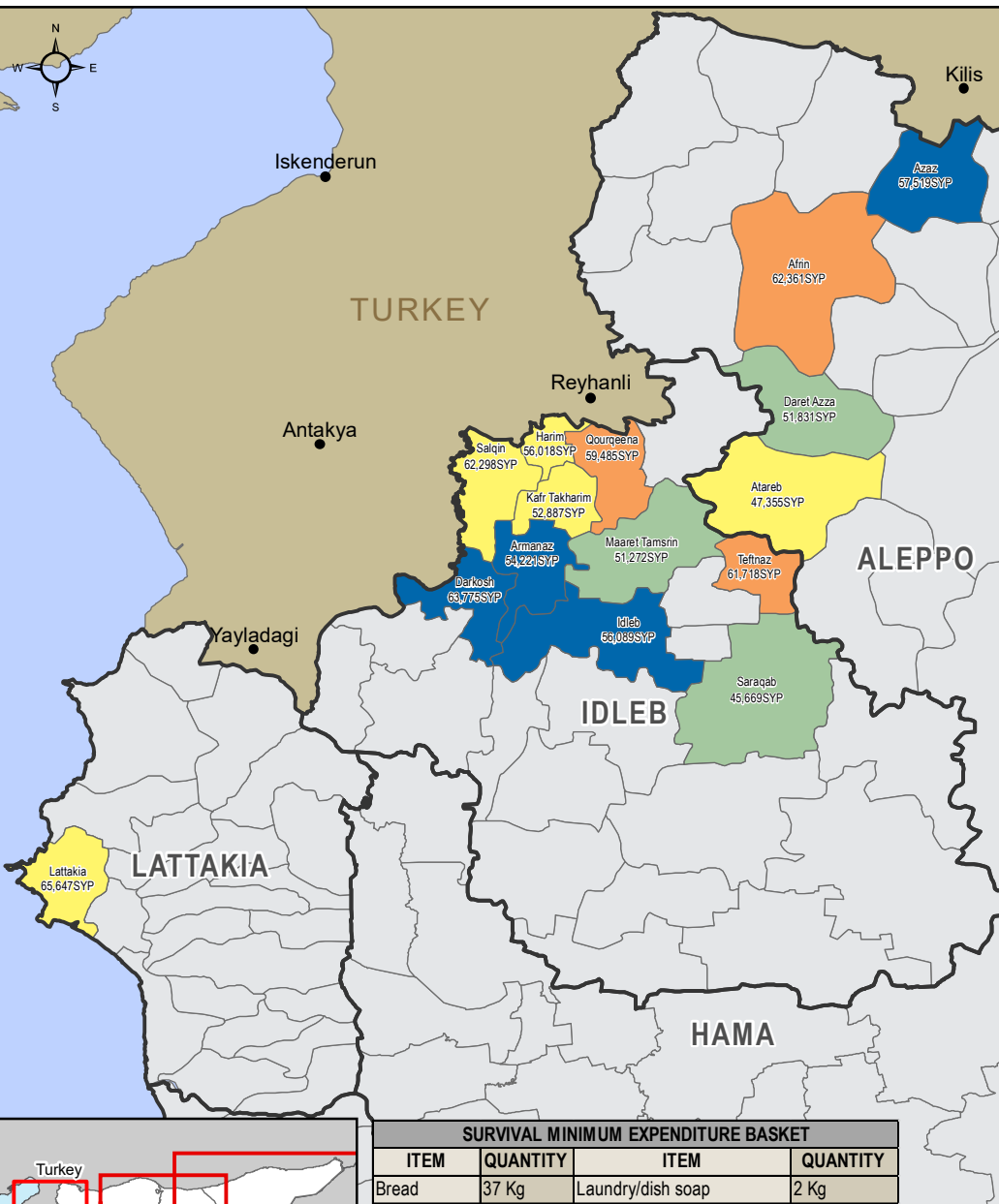
FUEL



How to read a box plot

Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.





SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET			
ITEM	QUANTITY	ITEM	QUANTITY
Bread	37 Kg	Laundry/dish soap	2 Kg
Rice	19 Kg	Individual soap	12 Pcs
Bulgur	15 Kg	Toothpaste	2 Pcs
Ghee	7 Kg	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Sugar	5 Kg	Dried Pulses	19 Kg
Tomato paste	6 Kg	Fresh vegetables	6 Kg
Chicken	4 Kg	Kerosene (manually refined)	25 L
Eggs	6 Kg	Water	2790 L
Salt	1 Kg	6% float*	6% total value

- SMEB Complete
- SMEB Incomplete
- SMEB Excluding Kerosene
- SMEB Excluding Sugar
- SMEB Excluding Water
- Subdistricts Not Surveyed

Data sources:
Boundaries - OCHA COD, USDS HIU
Market monitoring data - REACH, CBR-TWG
Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
File: 20160530_REACH_SYR_SMEB_A4
Contact: reach.mapping@impact-initiatives.org

Note: Data, designations and boundaries contained on this map are not warranted to be error-free and do not imply acceptance by the REACH partners, associates or donors mentioned on this map.