

# Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

November 2016

Cash-Based Responses  
Technical Working Group

**REACH** Informing  
more effective  
humanitarian action

## INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in northern Syria and the ways in which 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. Monitored 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 represents the minimum culturally adjusted group of items required to support a six-person Syrian household for one month.

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 costs 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 14 and 20 November 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. Nine partners (ACTED, CARE/Shafak, Concern, GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH and Violet) contributed data from 37 subdistricts across Lattakia, Idlib, Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor and al-Hasakeh governorates.

Nine 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

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Coordinating a cross-border price monitoring exercise via remote management is inherently challenging, as issues of enumerator training, consistent communication and verification of results are harder to resolve from afar. 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.

CBR-TWG partners closely monitor the security context in the subdistricts where they plan to collect data and are encouraged not to expose their

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 remotely through key informants such as shop owners, suppliers and consumers.

Following data collection, REACH 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.

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, Deir-ez-Zor and Aleppo, where only markets on one side of the frontline could be surveyed. Moreover, in November, three partners had to scale back coverage and one temporarily suspended its participation due to security concerns.

## ASSESSED GOVERNORATES



## SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (SMEB) CONTENTS

	Item	Quantity
<b>Food Items</b>	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
<b>Non-Food Items</b>	Tomato paste	6 kg
	Individual soap	12 pcs
	Laundry/dish soap	2 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
<b>Fuel</b>	Toothpaste	2 pcs
	Kerosene (manually refined)	25 L
<b>Water</b>	Water	2790 L
<b>Other</b>	6% float*	6% total value

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

## NOVEMBER 2016: NORTHERN SYRIA CONTEXT

The humanitarian situation in the city of Aleppo deteriorated sharply in November, with clashes escalating further and the eastern part of the city still under besiegement. The last food stocks in eastern Aleppo were reportedly distributed in mid-November, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk of starvation.

November saw an upsurge in violence across northern Syria more generally. Ongoing conflict worsened around the town of al-Bab in northern Aleppo governorate and north of the city of ar-Raqqa, causing IDP movements, particularly towards Suluk and Tell Abiad, and putting pressure on markets in those areas. In addition, many parts of Idleb governorate and western Aleppo governorate faced sporadic shelling, creating challenges in access to markets and the functionality of infrastructure.

### COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

Exchange rates for the Syrian pound decreased slightly from October to November, with the median informal US dollar sell rate shifting by 1.7% from 539 SYP/USD to 530 SYP/USD. The range of sell rates was far greater in November than in October, with 50 SYP separating the highest rate of 545 SYP/USD in Deir-ez-Zor city and the lowest rate of 492 SYP/USD, which was reported in the al-Fardous neighbourhood of eastern Aleppo city. The median sell rate for the Turkish lira fell from 175 SYP/TRY in October to 160 SYP/TRY, due to the continued weakening of the Turkish lira, with local exchange rates ranging from 195 SYP/TRY in ar-Raqqa city to 148 SYP/TRY in eastern Aleppo.

**MEDIAN EXCHANGE RATES  
NOVEMBER 2016**  
**530 SYP/USD**  
**160 SYP/TRY**

## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

**CHICKEN, BATHING SOAP, GoS PETROL,  
MANUALLY REFINED PETROL AND DIESEL**

Median food prices were more stable than in October, with only the price of salt changing by more than 15%, in contrast with six shifts of greater than 15% in median food item prices in the previous month. The median prices of vegetable oil, bulgur and flour have not changed since August, while that of potatoes has remained the same since September. In addition to these, the median prices of rice and red lentils were unchanged from October. Having increased significantly since August, likely due to the end of the harvest season, the prices of fresh vegetables other than potatoes appeared to stabilise at their new higher levels in November. Median onion and tomato prices both fell by 25 SYP to 200 SYP and 225 SYP respectively between October and November, while cucumber prices rose by just 25 SYP to 325 SYP.

Other prices experienced more volatility. The median price of chicken rose to 950 SYP, an increase of 100 SYP from October, continuing recent patterns of fluctuation. The median price of tea increased by 300 SYP to 3300 SYP in November, its first price change since August. The median salt price, meanwhile, experienced its second consecutive monthly decrease by over 15%, falling by 20 SYP to 100 SYP, and that of bread increased by over 10% for the second consecutive month, rising from 115 to 133 SYP since October.

Sanitation and hygiene item prices were very stable between October and November, continuing a trend towards stability seen since September. The median price of a pack of 10 sanitary pads has not changed since July, while those of laundry powder, sanitary pads and toothpaste were unchanged from October. The price of dishwashing liquid saw a small increase from 300 to 325 SYP between October and November. The only hygiene item to have seen a large median price change in

## MAIN SHORTAGES

**BREAD, TOMATO PASTE, CHICKEN,  
ALL TYPES OF FUEL**

November is bathing soap, which doubled from 100 to 200 SYP. This reflects two factors: an expansion of coverage in Idleb governorate, where soap prices have tended to be higher, and an increase in soap prices in al-Hasakeh governorate.

The median prices of most fuels decreased between October and November, with the exception of natural gas, which remained the same, and manually refined diesel, which increased from 225 to 290 SYP. This increase was due to the expansion of coverage in Idleb governorate, as localised prices of manually refined diesel have largely remained the same. As in October, GoS petrol saw the largest price decrease while the price of GoS diesel barely changed. Natural gas and manually refined petrol saw median price decreases of 14% and 12% respectively.

In November, the median rate for private water trucking services fell by 21% to 0.48 SYP per litre of water, the first decrease since June. Prices ranged from a minimum of 0.25 SYP per litre in Menbij to a maximum of 1.67 SYP per litre in Darkosh.

### ISSUES OF AVAILABILITY

Patterns of shortages of SMEB items in November were similar to those seen in October, with kerosene and bread once again the most commonly missing items. Six communities reported shortages of kerosene, while three were missing bread. Unlike in October, when numerous subdistricts in al-Hasakeh governorate reported kerosene shortages, the reported kerosene shortages in November were all in Aleppo governorate, with the exception of Sarmin in Idleb governorate.

For non-SMEB fuels, natural gas became easier to obtain and manually refined petrol became harder relative to October, with the former only reported as unavailable in eastern Aleppo. Shortages of

GoS petrol and diesel, as well as manually refined diesel, remained at similar levels to those seen in October, with seven subdistricts reportedly missing GoS petrol, three missing manually refined diesel, six missing kerosene, and 13 missing GoS diesel.

The assessed community reporting the highest number of shortages was, by a large margin, eastern Aleppo, where the only available monitored food items were bulgur, red lentils and vegetable oil, and no fuel was available. Numerous SMEB items were also reportedly missing in the cities of ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor.

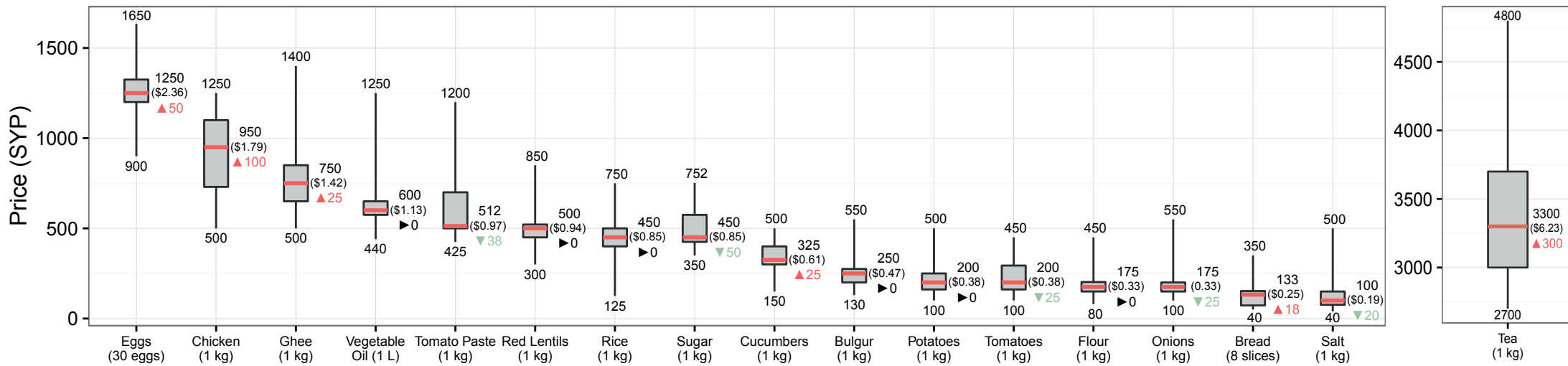
### SMEB VALUES

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. In November, it was possible to assemble complete SMEBs for 26 out of 37 assessed subdistricts, a slightly higher rate than in October. Of these, the least expensive complete SMEB, at 51,122 SYP (96.46 USD), was available in Be'r Al-Hulo Al-Wardeyyeh subdistrict, followed by that in Idleb city (53,858 SYP, 101.62 USD), which was 6% cheaper than in October.

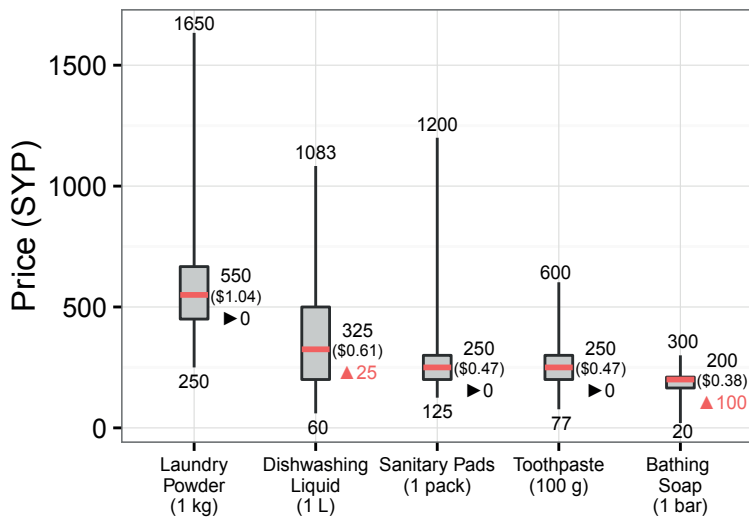
The most expensive complete SMEB, meanwhile, was observed in Darkosh (74,674 SYP, 140.89 USD), followed by the basket in Armanaz at 68,388 SYP (129.03 USD). However, the incomplete baskets from the cities of Deir-ez-Zor and ar-Raqqa were also expensive, at 65,445 SYP (123.48 USD) and 58,425 SYP (110.24 USD) respectively, despite missing multiple items. The largest price increase from October of a complete SMEB, 14%, was seen in the two adjacent subdistricts of Harim and Dana.

The values of all baskets can be compared using the SMEB map, though caution should be taken to compare only baskets that are missing the same commodities.

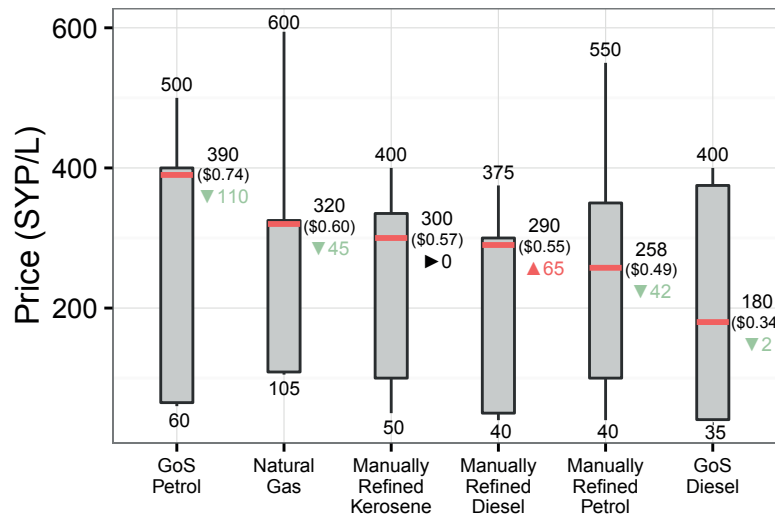
## FOOD ITEMS



## NON-FOOD ITEMS

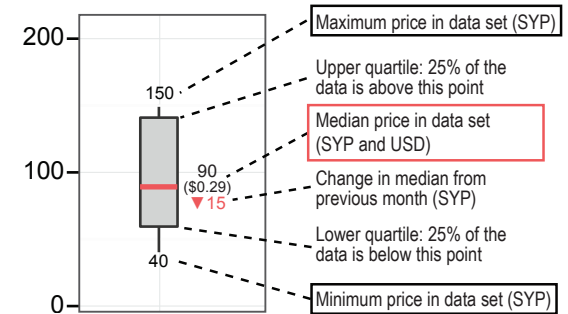


## FUEL



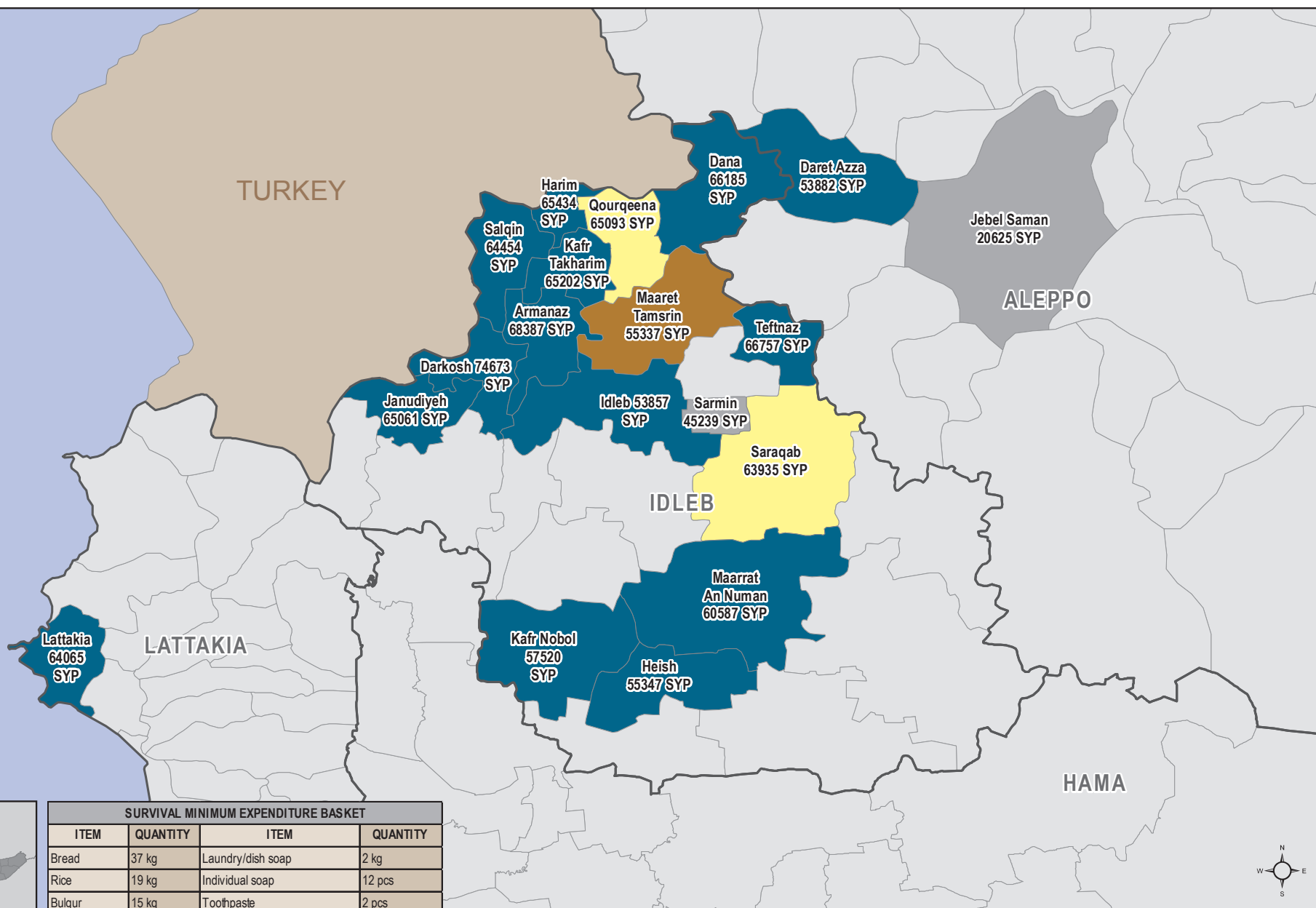
## How to read a box plot

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



# SYRIA - Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

## SMEB Prices in Northwestern Governorates - November 2016



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
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Eggs	6 kg	Water	2790 L
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\* not included in SMEB calculations

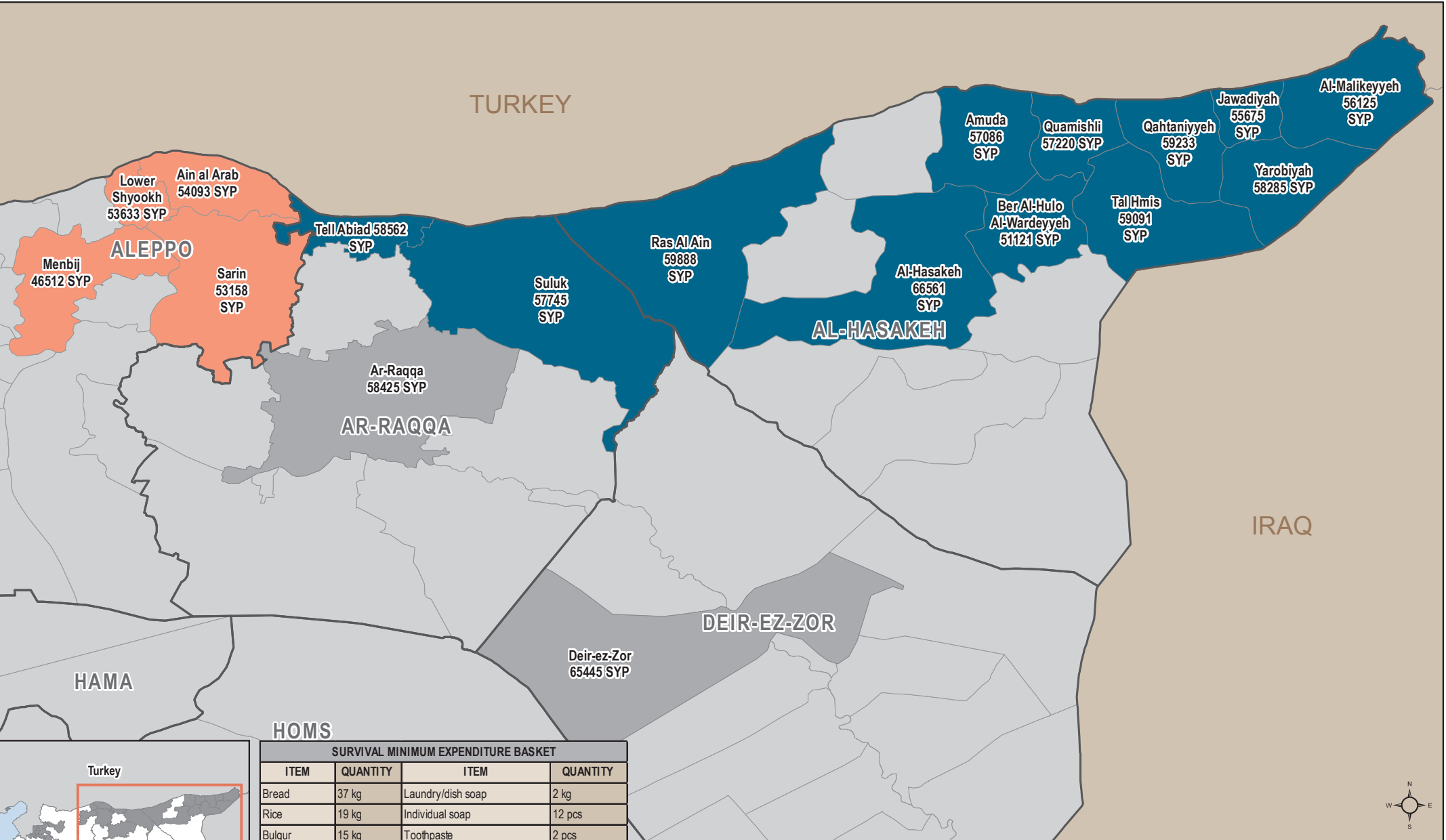
- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without sanitary pads
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without multiple items
- SMEB without kerosene

Data sources:  
 Boundaries - UN OCHA COD  
 Market monitoring data - REACH, CBR-TWG

Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984  
 File: REACH\_SYR\_SMEB\_Nov2016\_NW\_A4\_V1  
 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.





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