

Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

April 2017

Cash-Based Responses
Technical Working Group

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in 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 throughout the country. 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. The SMEB was created in 2014 and updated in February 2017 to reflect changing household consumption patterns.

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. 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 broader humanitarian community.

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 17 and 24 April 2017, a network of NGOs involved in cash-based responses in Syria collected detailed information about the availability and prices of key food items, non-food items and fuel in northern Syria, as well as monitoring the prices of private water trucking and smartphone data. Eleven partners (ACTED, CARE/Shafak, Concern, GOAL, Ihsan, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH, Solidarités International and Violet) contributed data from 64 subdistricts in 10 governorates (see map at right).

Five 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, water trucking services and mobile phone shops, 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. Partners have sought to overcome these issues by harmonising procedures and data collection tools to ensure that the data uploaded are as accurate as possible.

Partners closely monitor the security context in the subdistricts where they plan 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

structures and had to sell certain items to be eligible for inclusion.

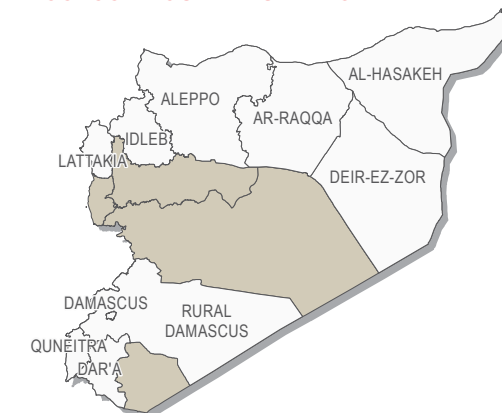
Enumerators were trained on methodology and tools by REACH and its partners. Each enumerator assessed three to five shops of each type in the main market in their assigned subdistrict, using surveys to collect information about prices, current product inventory and the time needed to replace current stocks. In subdistricts where direct surveying by enumerators was not possible, 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 different regions of Syria. In addition, REACH calculated and mapped the average cost of an SMEB in each subdistrict based on the composition at right.

case in the divided cities of al-Hasakeh and Qamishli and Deir-ez-Zor, where only markets on one side of the frontline could be surveyed. Additionally, operational difficulties led to only partial data collection in Abu Qalqal and Daret Azza subdistricts, and no data from Idleb subdistrict.

In northwestern Syria, new restrictions on mobile data collection meant that several partners were unable to collect data in the field using KoBoCollect. With this in mind, all participating partners were invited to use paper versions of the forms to collect data if needed; the partners then uploaded all collected data to KoBo afterwards.

ASSESSED GOVERNORATES



SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (SMEB) CONTENTS

	Item	Quantity
Food Items	Bread	37 kg
	Bulgur	15 kg
	Chicken	6 kg
	Eggs	6 kg
	Fresh vegetables	12 kg
	Ghee/vegetable oil	7 kg
	Red lentils	15 kg
	Rice	19 kg
	Salt	1 kg
	Sugar	5 kg
	Tomato paste	6 kg
Non-Food Items	Bathing soap	12 bars
	Laundry/dish soap	3 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
	Toothpaste	25 pieces
Fuel	Cooking fuel*	2 L
Water	Water	4500 L
Telecom	Smartphone data	1 GB
Other	Float (other costs)**	7.5% total value

* Kerosene in northern Syria; LPG in southern Syria.

** Float was excluded from SMEB calculations due to the commonality of incomplete baskets.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

Currency

The median informal US dollar exchange rate across all assessed communities was 551 SYP/USD in April, a 6 SYP increase from March. The reported exchange rates varied by 62 SYP with the lowest rates reported in Rural Damascus and the highest rates in Deir-ez-Zor and Lattakia.

The median informal sell rate for the Turkish lira decreased by 1 SYP to 151 SYP/TRY in April. Local exchange rates varied by 7 SYP across all assessed markets. The media sell rate for the Jordanian dinar increased by 6 SYP to 756 SYP/JOD in April, with a 66 SYP variation in assessed market rates.

Food

In April, partners observed massive price increases in Rural Damascus. In these besieged communities, median reported prices were highly volatile, changing by an average of 57% from March.

Outside Rural Damascus, the median reported price of a kilo of tomatoes increased between 42% (125 SYP) and 70% (175 SYP) throughout Syria, building on smaller increases from last month. The median reported price of a litre of milk more than doubled (167%, 275 SYP) in the northeast with increases also observed in the northwest (25%, 50 SYP). The median reported prices of salt and potatoes also significantly changed in some regions. The median prices of flour, rice, vegetable oil, tomato paste, ghee, bulgur and tea did not vary more than 5% in any non-besieged community since March. The remaining food prices were subject to regional price dynamics which caused fluctuations of no more than 20%.

EXCHANGE RATES

551	151	756
SYP/USD	SYP/TRY	SYP/JOD

LEAST ACCESSIBLE GOODS

LP GAS, SANITARY PADS, CUCUMBERS, TOMATOES, MILK

Fuel

Regional price dynamics were particularly strong with regards to fuels. In Rural Damascus, significant price increases occurred in liquefied petroleum gas (LP gas) (1,337 SYP, 104%) and manually refined diesel (450 SYP, 27%). In the northeast, the price of manually refined petrol and diesel rose by approximately 25 SYP (25% and 41% increase, respectively). Significant median reported price changes were also observed with LP gas in the northwest and south, and with manually refined petrol in the northwest. The remaining fuel prices were subject to smaller regional price dynamics which caused fluctuations of no more than 20%.

NFI

In the besieged communities of Rural Damascus, no sanitary pad prices were reported, and the prices of all remaining hygiene goods increased by an average of 73% from March. Outside of Rural Damascus, only one significant price change was noted in the median reported price of dishwashing liquid in the south, which decreased by 25% (100 SYP). All other reported hygiene prices either did not change or fluctuated by no more than 20%.

Water

Water trucking price data was collected in 44 of the 64 assessed subdistricts across Syria. No water data was collected in Al-Hasakeh, Al-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor or Lattakia governorates. Additionally, no water data was collected in Sarin, Suran or Teftnaz subdistricts.

The median water price collected in the northeast (all in Ain al Arab and Lower Shyookh subdistricts of Aleppo) was 0.53 SYP/litre, as has been the case since at least February. In the northeast, the rate was reported as 0.55 SYP/litre in April. In Quneitra

MOST AT-RISK MARKETS

DEIR EZ-ZOR, EASTERN GHOUTA

and Dar'a, the median reported water trucking price was around 0.45 SYP/litre since February. In Damascus and Rural Damascus, the median price was reported as 2.50 SYP/litre in Eastern Ghouta, and 1 SYP/litre in Kisweh, Babella and Damascus subdistricts.

Data

Internet price data was collected in 61 of 64 assessed subdistricts in April, with no internet price data collected in Deir-ez-Zor, Teftnaz or Jisr-ash-Shugur subdistricts. The median reported price for a gigabyte of internet data in the northeast was 2,000 SYP; in the northwest, 575 SYP; in Dar'a and Quneitra, 2,500 SYP; in Kisweh, Babella and Damascus, 4,000 SYP; and in Eastern Ghouta, 1,000 SYP.

ISSUES OF AVAILABILITY

Deir-ez-Zor continued to report extensive shortages, as the majority of Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) items were reported unavailable, as has been the case for several months. Additionally, food shortages of vegetables and chicken, along with dramatic price increases, were reported in Eastern Ghouta, evidence of the deteriorating humanitarian situation there.

Chicken and sanitary pads were reported unavailable in Lower Shyookh, with Sarin also reporting a lack of sanitary pads in the community. Cucumbers were reported unavailable in Heish and were absent from assessed shops in Kafr Nobol. Toothpaste was also reported as unavailable in Sarin and Khan Shaykhun.

No shortages outside the above listed goods and locations were confirmed. The remaining subdistricts with incomplete price data were due to

partial coverage or lack of confirmation of shortages in the community; these gaps did not necessarily indicate issues of availability.

SMEB VALUES

The value of a 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 Syrian household must purchase in a month.

In April, complete SMEBs could be assembled for 47 out of 64 assessed subdistricts, compared to 51 out of 66 in March. The median cost of a complete SMEB was 67,646 (122.77 USD), effectively equivalent to March. Of the 43 completed SMEBs, four of the five most expensive were in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates.

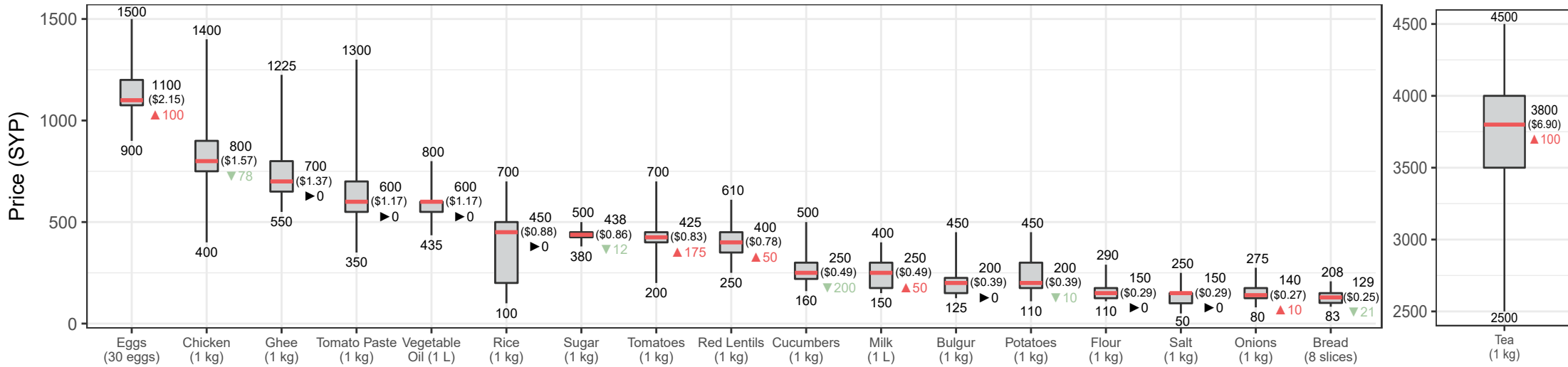
The Idleb, Aleppo and Al-Hasakeh governorates all included subdistricts with completed SMEB values under 60,000. However, the two least expensive completed SMEBs were in Qahtaniyyeh (49,230 SYP, 89.35 USD) and Menbij (49,499 SYP, 89.84 USD).

The three most expensive SMEBs, however, were in the besieged Deir-ez-Zor and the Eastern Ghouta regions, despite the lack of many food and hygiene items incorporated into these calculations. The incomplete SMEB prices in the Eastern Ghouta regions of Kafr Batna and Arbin increased by over 50% from last month to 221,299 SYP (401.63 USD) and 220,786 SYP (400.70 USD), respectively. The last round of data collection took place the same week the informal access points closed, with media reports noting significant price increases since the closure.

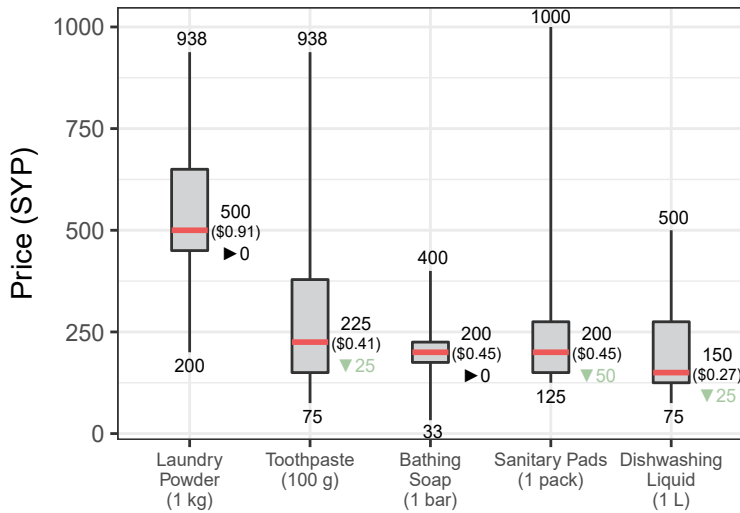
The Eastern Ghouta prices observed in April were only 60% of the SMEB prices seen in western Deir-ez-Zor city, despite the fact that a majority of SMEB commodities were not reported there; a partial basket cost 362,240 SYP (657.42 USD), with no significant change from the previous month.

Distribution of Commodity Prices: Northwestern Syria

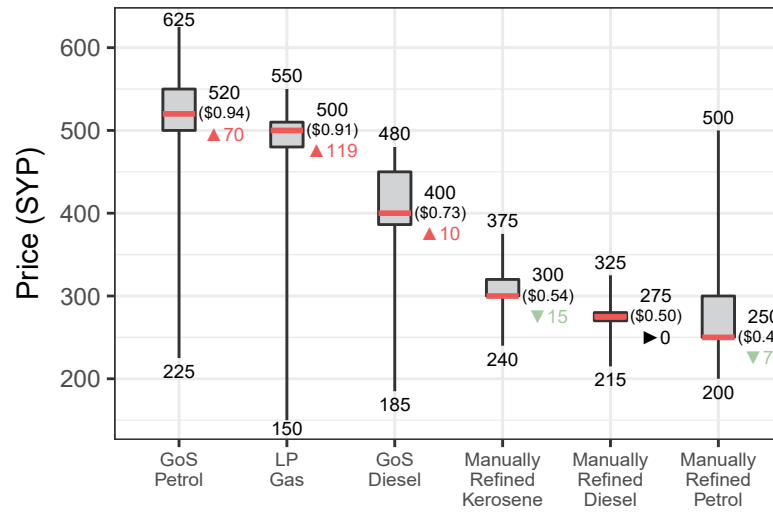
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

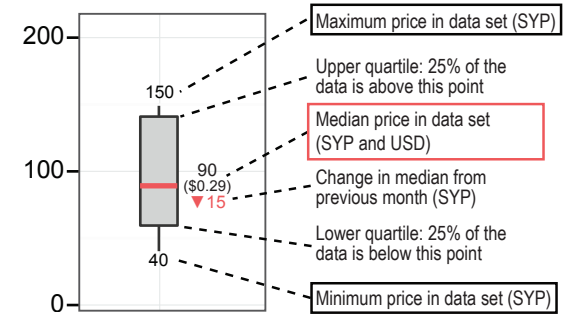


FUEL



How to read a box plot

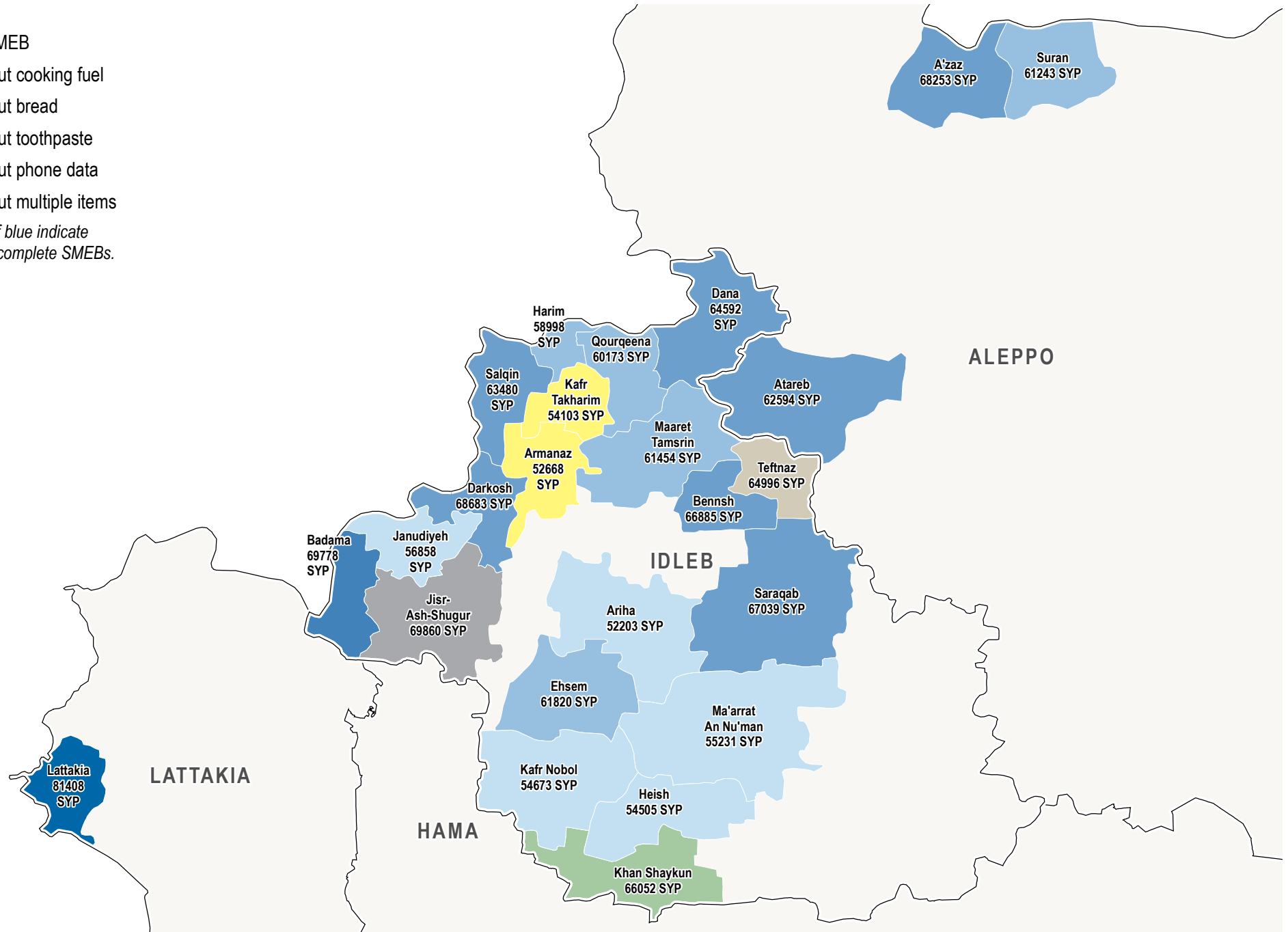
Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.



SMEB Prices: Northwestern Syria

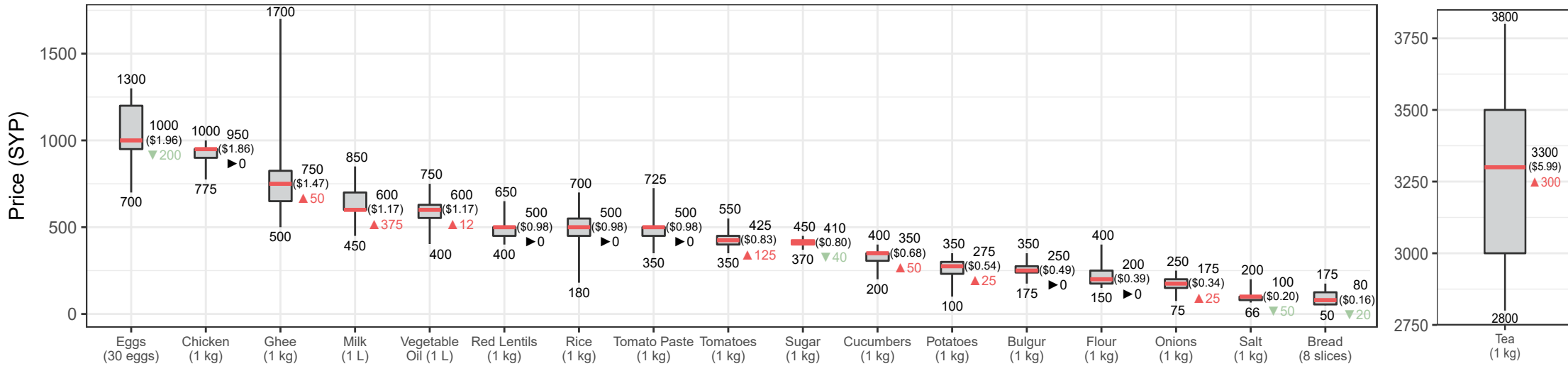
- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without cooking fuel
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without toothpaste
- SMEB without phone data
- SMEB without multiple items

Darker shades of blue indicate more expensive complete SMEBs.

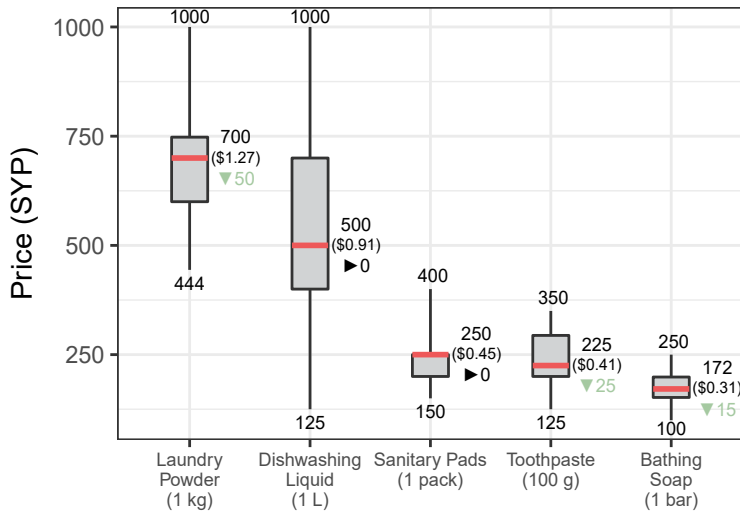


Distribution of Commodity Prices: Northeastern Syria

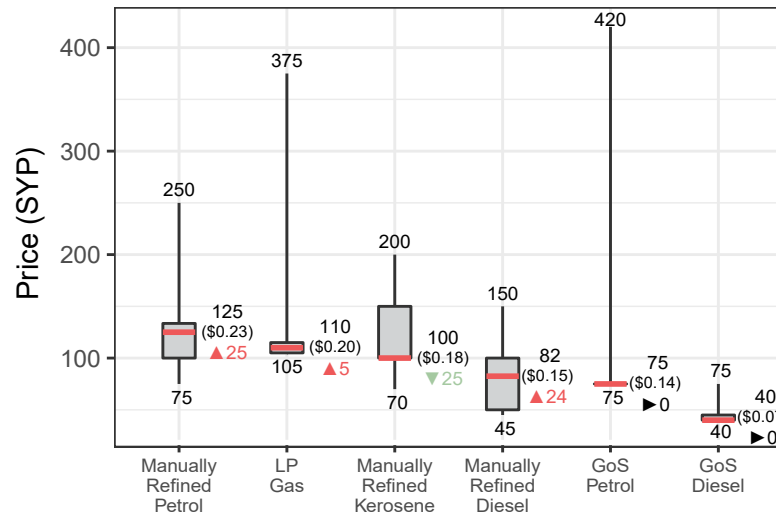
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

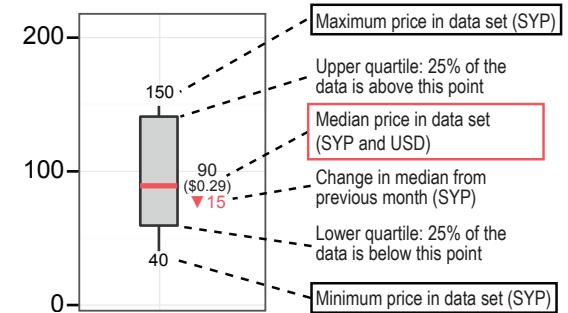


FUEL



How to read a box plot

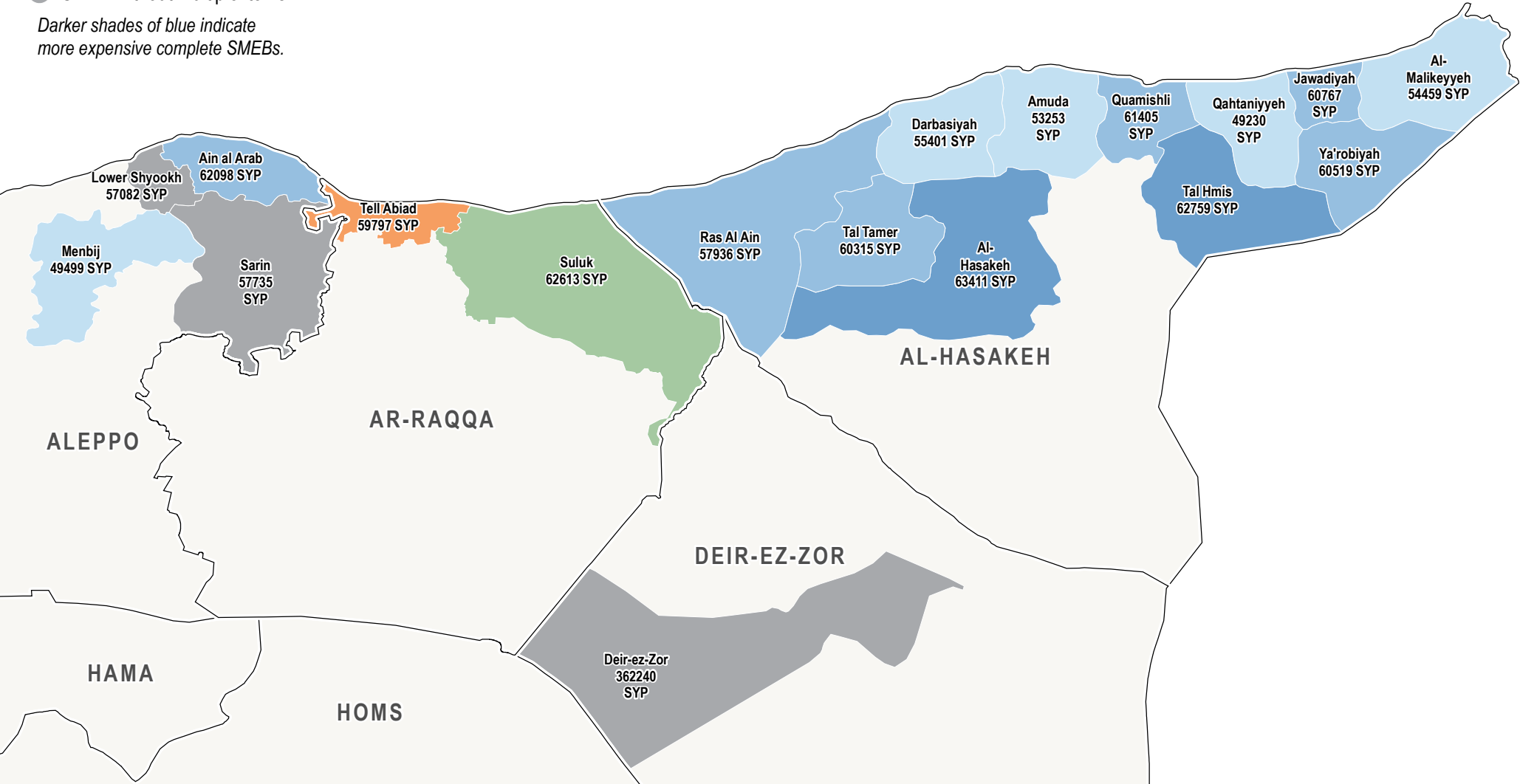
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SMEB Prices: Northeastern Syria

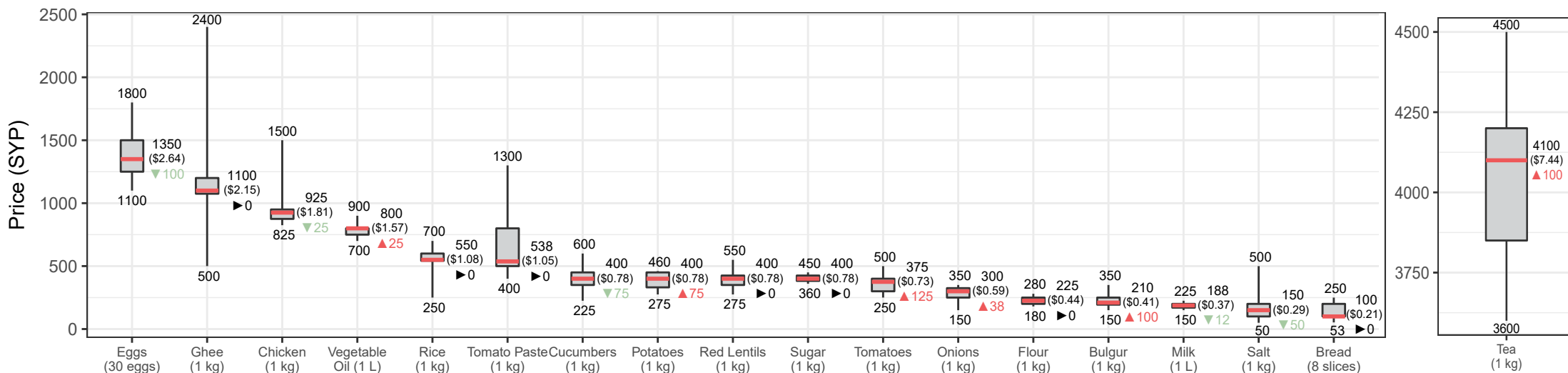
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- SMEB without multiple items

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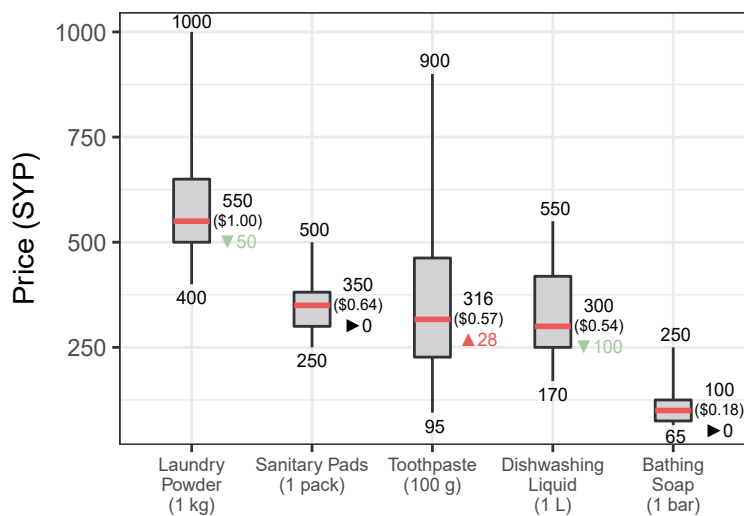


Distribution of Commodity Prices: Southern Syria

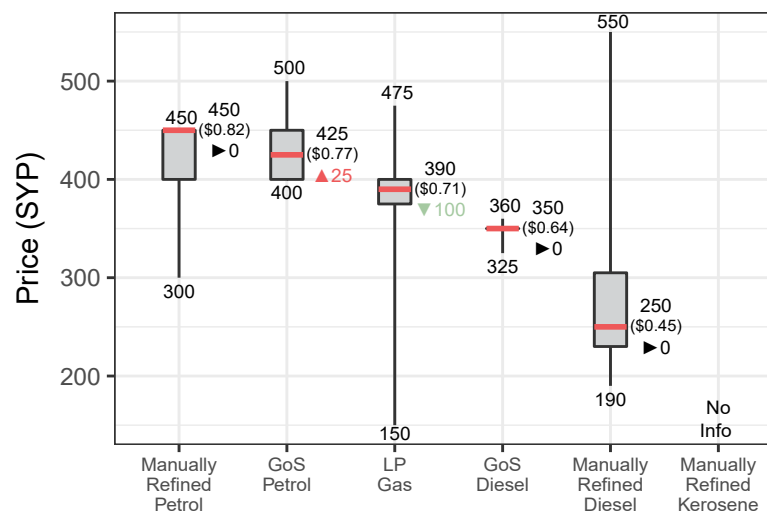
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

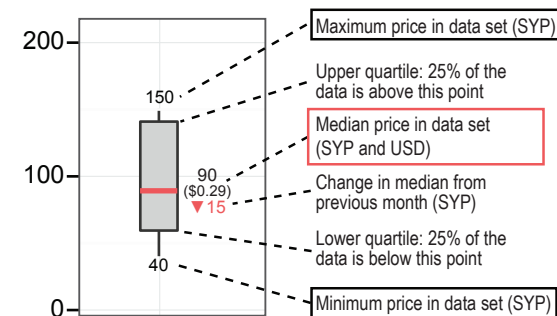


FUEL



How to read a box plot

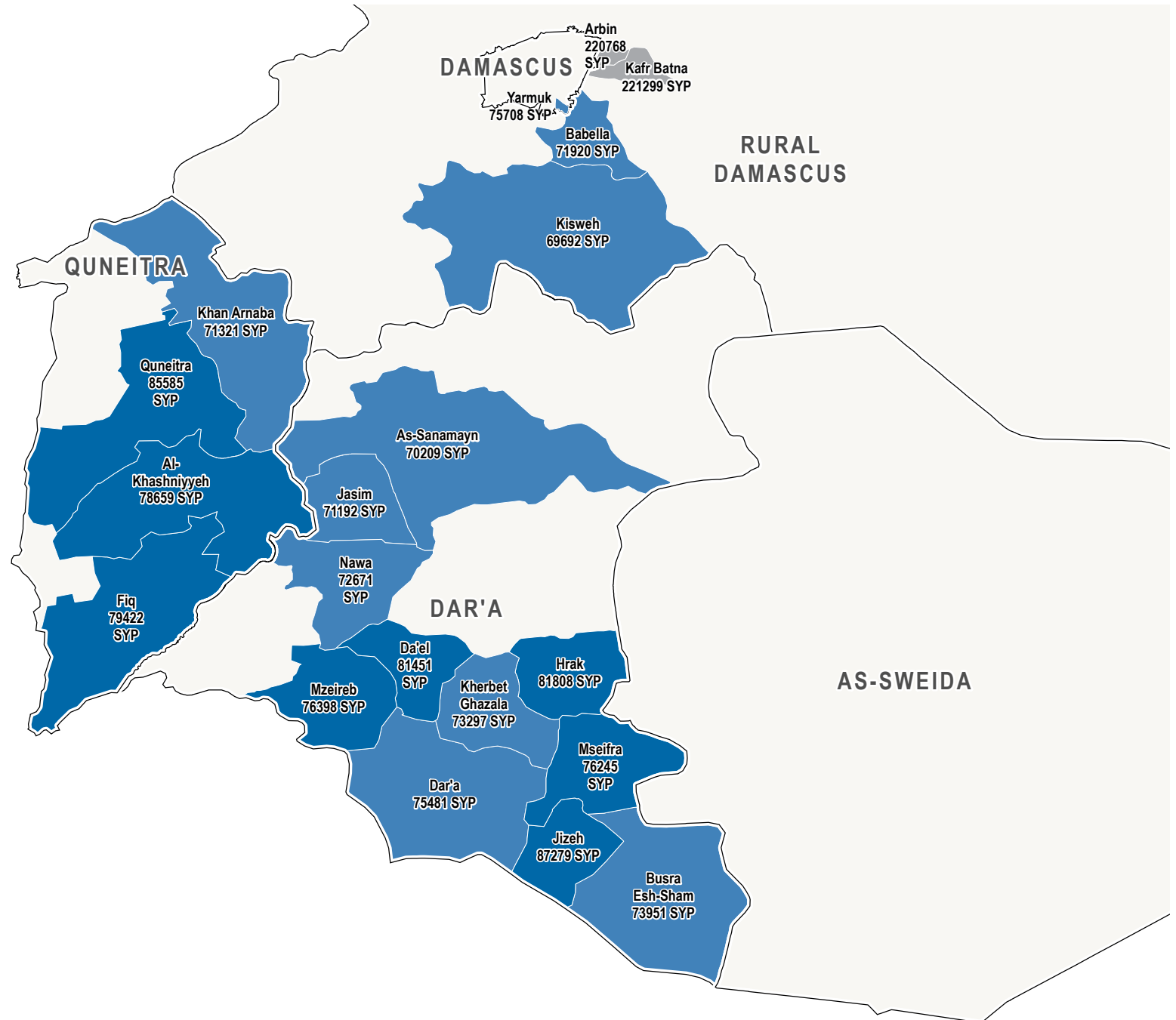
Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.



SMEB Prices: Southern Syria

- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without cooking fuel
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without toothpaste
- SMEB without phone data
- SMEB without multiple items

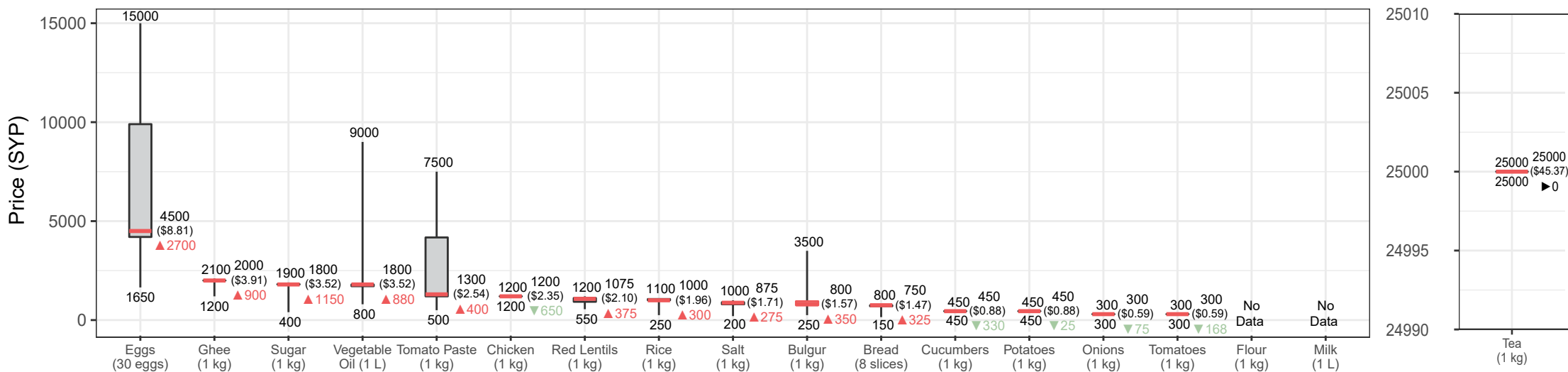
Darker shades of blue indicate more expensive complete SMEBs.



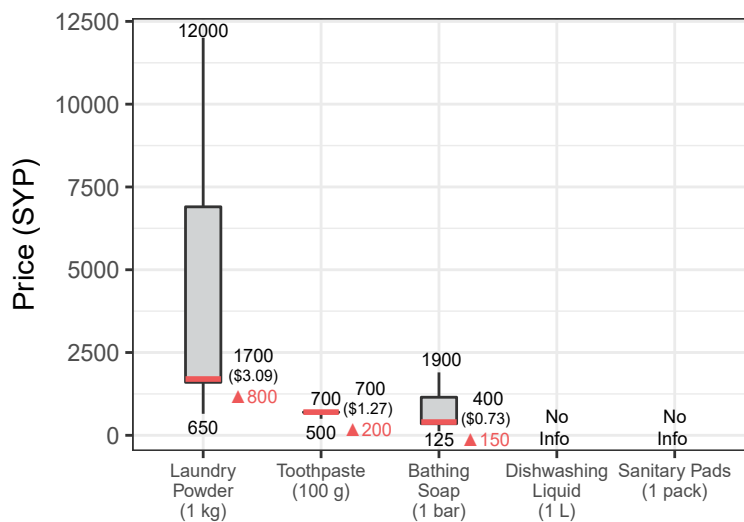
Distribution of Commodity Prices: Besieged Communities*

* Eastern Ghouta, Yarmuk, Deir-ez-Zor

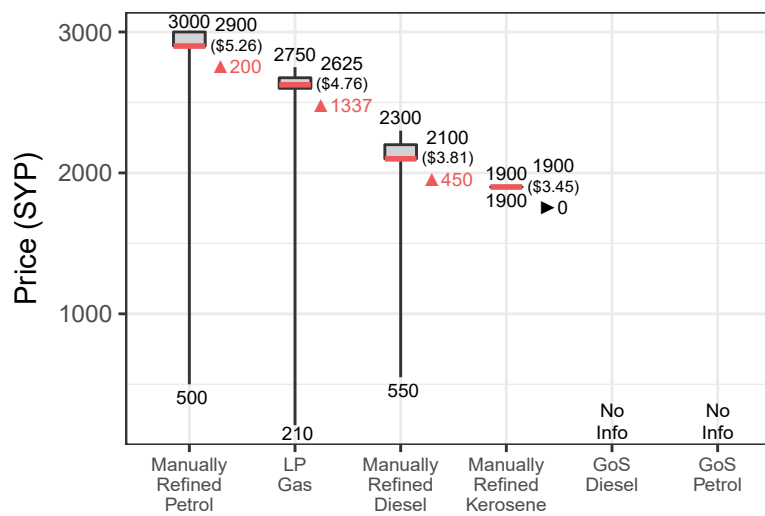
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS



FUEL



How to read a box plot

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