

# Northwest Syria | Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

3-10 March 2024

## MARKET OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

To facilitate humanitarian cash programming, the Northwest of Syria Cash Working Group (NWS CWG), in collaboration with local and international NGOs, carries out a monthly Joint Market Monitoring Initiative in Northern Syria. This initiative assesses the availability and prices of basic commodities typically sold in markets and consumed by the average Syrian household. These include food, water, and non-food items such as fuel, shelter, and clothing items.

Among these commodities, 18 components (measured by 24 items) form the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which signifies the minimum culturally adjusted items necessary to sustain a household of six individuals for a month.

- 11 Participating agencies
- 3 Assessed governorates
- 37 Assessed sub-districts
- 99 Assessed communities
- 3948 Shops surveyed

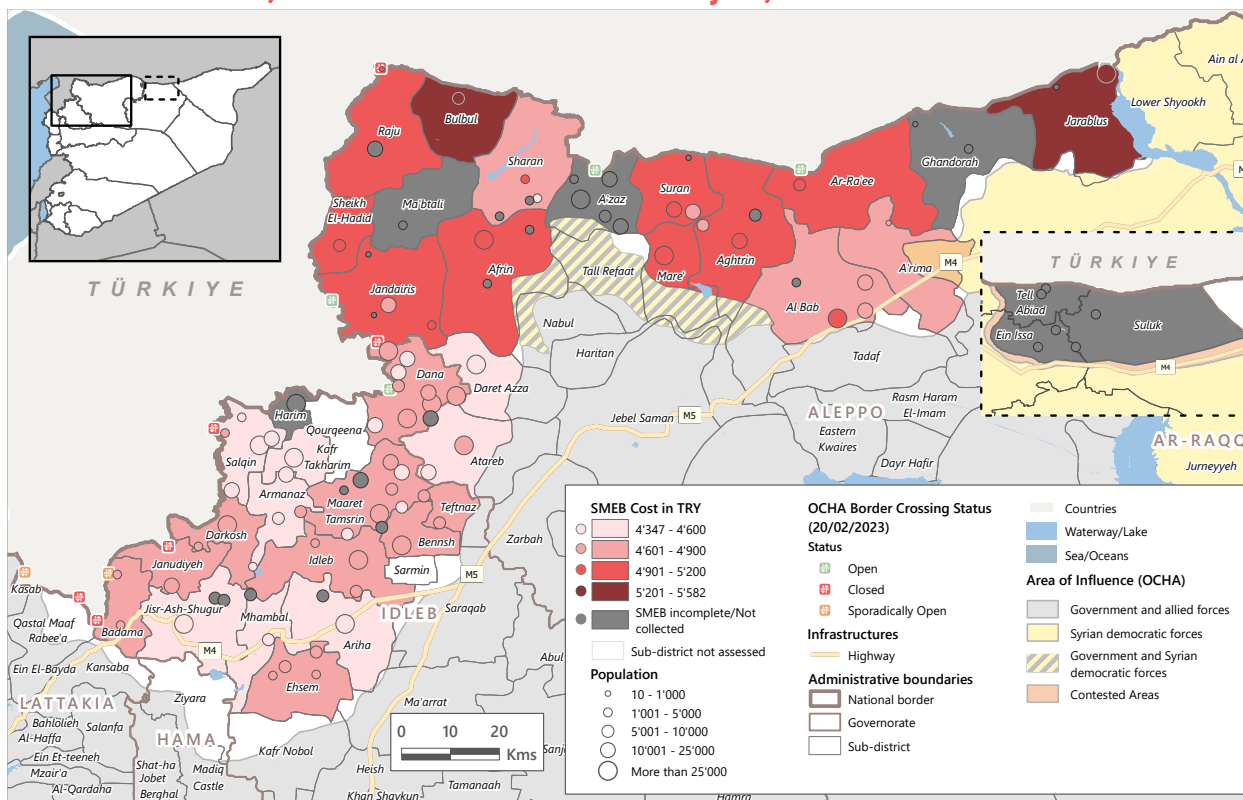
### KEY INDICATORS

<p><b>Cost of SMEB</b></p> <p>4,691 TRY <b>+5%</b> ▲</p> <p>148 USD <b>+2%</b> ▲</p>	<p><b>Cost of SMEB Food</b></p> <p>3,418 TRY <b>+5%</b> ▲</p> <p>108 USD <b>+2%</b> ▲</p>	<p><b>USD/TRY</b></p> <p>informal exchange rate</p> <p>32 TRY <b>+3.2%</b> ▲</p>
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### KEY FINDINGS

- Between February and March 2024, the regional median informal exchange rate in NWS decreased by 3.2%, further impacting the prices of essential goods.
- In March 2024, the cost of SMEB food saw a slight increase, averaging 3,418 TRY for a family of six. This marks a 60% increase compared to the previous year.
- The high SMEB prices could be attributed to several factors: currency depreciation against the United States Dollar (USD), conflict dynamics, and high fuel prices.
- A recent stabilization can be observed in the regional median USD/TRY informal exchange rates, with a reduction in the depreciation rate following a period of heightened fluctuations in mid-2023.
- The depreciation of the Turkish lira due to increasing inflation in Turkey and the northwest region have led to higher prices, particularly affecting items such as fuel and everyday household goods like bulgur and other food items.

### Cost of the SMEB, Sub-districts in Northwest Syria, TRY\*



\*TRY is the abbreviation for the official Turkish currency, the new lira.

## Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)

The SMEB is a tool designed by the Cash-based responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) for Northern Syria. The [first version of the SMEB](#) was developed in 2014 and formed the basis of the northern Syria joint market monitoring a partnership between CBR-TWG member NGOs & REACH. The current SMEB is based on the [2017 Revision](#).

The SMEB is designed as an indicator of the cost of the minimum, culturally-appropriate items that a family of 6 needs to survive for one month, while meeting basic standards for nutritious food, water use and hygiene in Northern Syria. The cost of the SMEB can be used as a proxy for the financial burdens facing households in different locations.

## Exchange rate trends

Between February and March 2024 the regional median informal exchange rate increased in NWS (3.2% depreciation of the Turkish lira) leading to increased prices, notably impacting essential items such as fuel, bulgur, and other everyday food goods.

Based on trends in the regional median USD/TRY informal exchange rates and the month-to-month percentage changes, we have observed a stabilization. The rate of depreciation has decreased in recent months, following a period of increased fluctuation in mid-2023.

However, the Turkish lira hit a new record low against the dollar in early March despite ongoing Turkish government attempts to combat sky-rocketing inflation and currency depreciation by adopting a more orthodox central bank monetary policy since the May 2023 elections. Several analysts are also anticipating increased volatility in the run up to and aftermath of the hotly contested municipal elections scheduled for March 31 2024. With most households in NWS already unable to meet their basic needs and overall humanitarian conditions in the region worsening, even relatively modest increases in the TRY/USD exchange can place significant additional economic pressure on households and increase the prevalence of negative coping strategies, such as reduced food consumption and withdrawing children from school.<sup>1</sup>

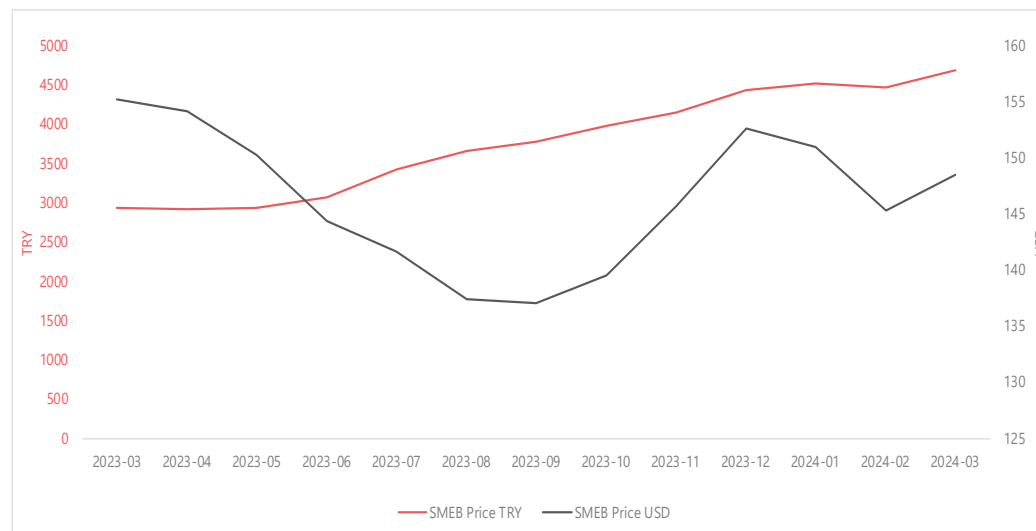
**65% ▼**

The value of the TRY has depreciated by 65% in the past year.

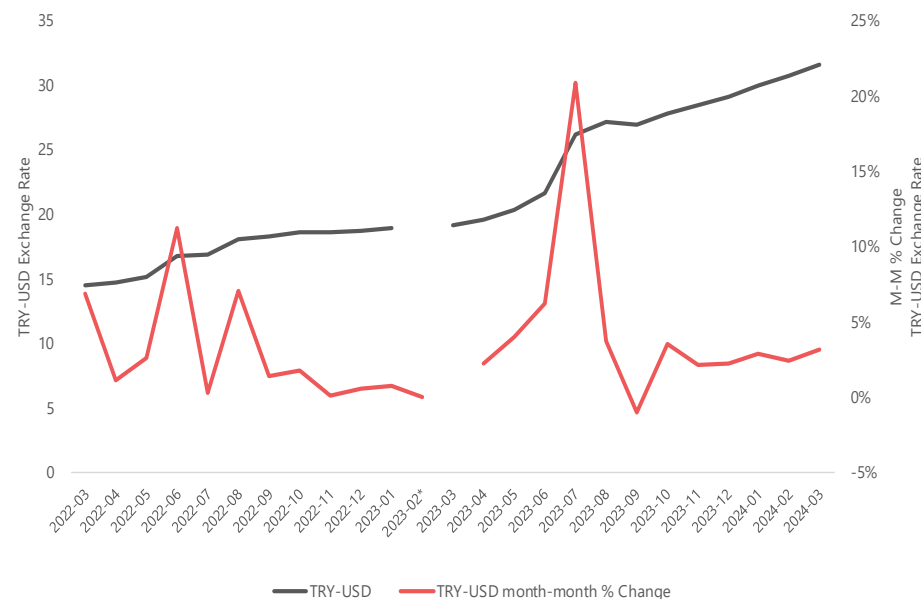
**60% ▲**

The cost of the SMEB in TRY has increased by 60% in the past year.

## Regional median SMEB prices, TRY and USD



## Regional median USD/TRY informal exchange rate trends\*

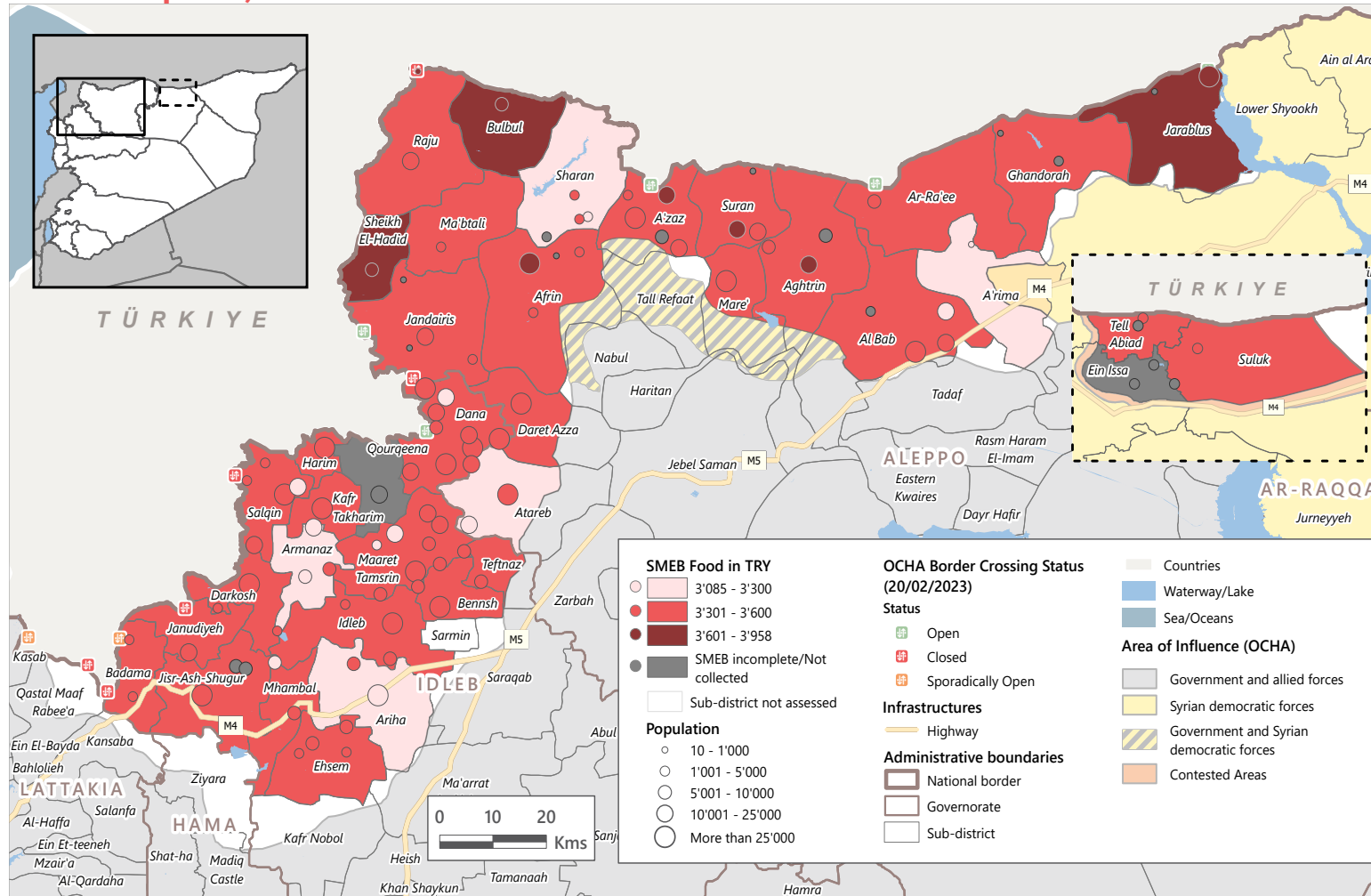


## SMEB Contents

<b>Food</b>	
Bread	37 kg
Bulgur	15 kg
Chicken	6 kg
Eggs	6 kg
Ghee (kg) / Vegetable oil (L)	7kg / L
Red Lentils	15 kg
Rice	19 kg
Salt	1 kg
Sugar	5 kg
Tomato paste	6 kg
Vegetables	12 kg
<b>Hygiene (NFI)</b>	
Bathing soap	12 bars
Laundry / dish soap	3 kg
Toothpaste	200 kg
Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
<b>Other items</b>	
Cooking fuel	15 L
Water trucking	4500 L
Phone data	1 GB
Float (other costs)	7.5 % of total

\* No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes.

## SMEB food prices, TRY



## Price of SMEB Food, sub-district, TRY

Location	Median Price TRY	Change since Feb 2024
<b>Aleppo governorate</b>		
Afrin	3,479	+5% ▲
Aghtrin	3,580	+3% ▲
Al Bab	3,304	+3% ▲
A'rima	3,085	-6% ▼
Ar-Ra'ee	3,305	+5% ▲
Atareb	3,197	-2% ▼
A'zaz	3,533	+5% ▲
Bulbul	3,680	+7% ▲
Daret Azza	3,359	+4% ▲
Ghandorah	3,447	+5% ▲
Jandarais	3,433	+7% ▲
Jarablus	3,613	+12% ▲
Ma'bтали	3,466	No Data
Mare'	3,352	+11% ▲
Raju	3,573	+2% ▲
Sharan	3,218	-1% ▼
Sheikh El-Hadid	3,649	+11% ▲
Suran	3,413	+11% ▲
<b>Idleb governorate</b>		
Ariha	3,278	0%
Armanaz	3,257	+3% ▲
Badama	3,557	+5% ▲
Bennsh	3,408	+3% ▲
Dana	3,456	+6% ▲
Darkosh	3,431	+6% ▲
Ehsem	3,454	+7% ▲
Harim	3,443	+6% ▲
Idleb	3,386	+4% ▲
Janudiyeh	3,592	+9% ▲
Jisr-Ash-Shugur	3,423	+5% ▲
Kafr Takharim	3,318	+1% ▲
Maaret Tamsrin	3,401	+6% ▲
Mhambal	3,356	+2% ▲
Salqin	3,412	+3% ▲
Teftnaz	3,399	+5% ▲



**84%**

KIs in 84% of assessed communities in Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria March round reported that food markets were functioning<sup>2</sup>

**83%**

Unaffordability of food was the most commonly barrier reported by KIs in 83% of HSOS assessed communities in March<sup>2</sup>

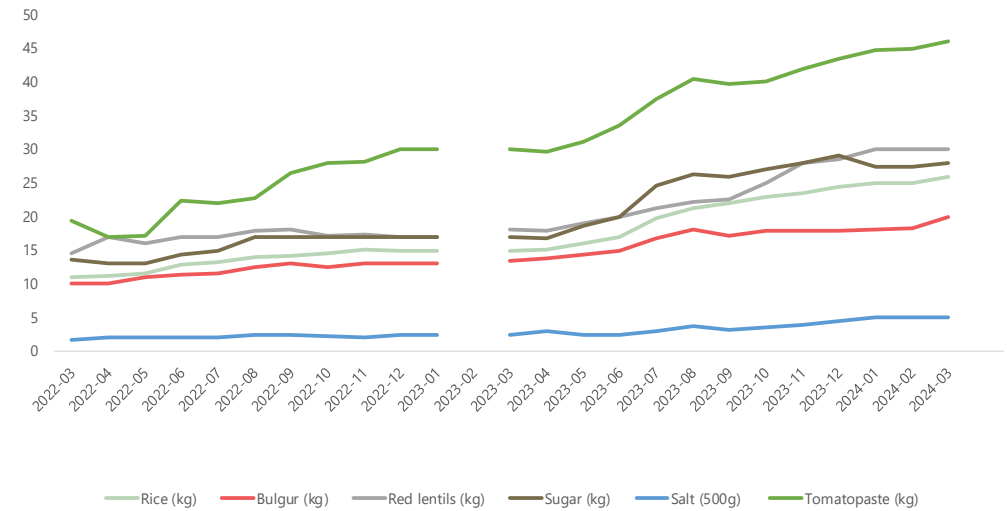
### Food price trends

The SMEB food prices generally increased in most areas of NWS from February to March 2024, with Ar-Raqqa governorate experiencing a notable 20% rise. Additionally, certain communities like Jandairis and Jarablus saw significant price increases during the same period, making these areas stand out compared to others where prices remained more stable.

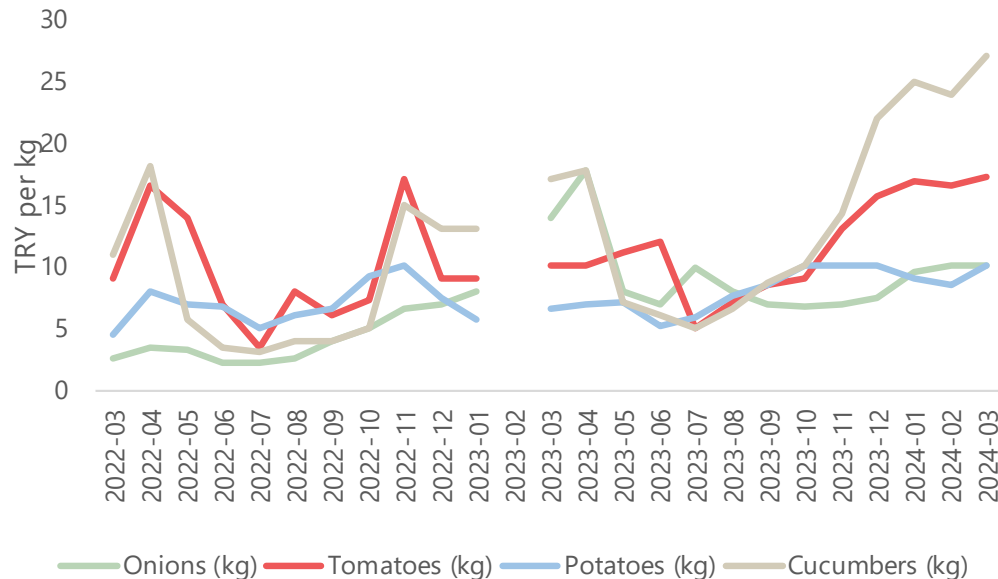
The regional median price of monitored bulk food items continued to rise alongside currency depreciation between February and March 2024, primarily driven by the rising cost of bulgur, which increased by 10%.

The regional median price of most monitored fresh vegetables rose between February and March 2024 due to local production being out of season and heavy dependence on imports. Each winter, there has been a consistent annual increase in vegetable prices, with recent years showing higher peak prices compared to previous ones, as observed through JMMI data. Despite the price of onions remaining stable, the overall cost of monitored fresh vegetables has nearly doubled for households compared to six months ago. While seasonal price hikes are normal, such significant increases pose serious challenges for households in accessing fresh foods.

### Regional median price of bulk food items, TRY\*



### Regional median price of vegetables, TRY\*



### Food price changes

Item	Unit	Median Price TRY	1-month change (TRY)	6-month change (TRY)	Median Price USD**
<b>Bulk food items</b>					
Bulgur	1kg	20	+10%▲	+16%▲	0.63
Red lentils	1kg	30	0%	+33%▲	0.95
Rice	1kg	26	+4%▲	+18%▲	0.82
Salt	500g	5	0%	+60%▲	0.16
Sugar	1kg	28	+2%▲	+8%▲	0.88
Tomato Paste	1kg	46	+2%▲	+16%▲	1.45
<b>Vegetables</b>					
Tomatoes	1kg	17	+5%▲	+103%▲	0.55
Potatoes	1kg	10	+18%▲	+18%▲	0.32
Cucumbers	1kg	27	+13%▲	+213%▲	0.85
Onions	1kg	10	0%	+43%▲	0.32

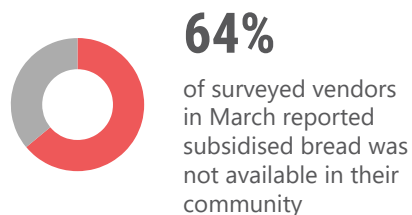
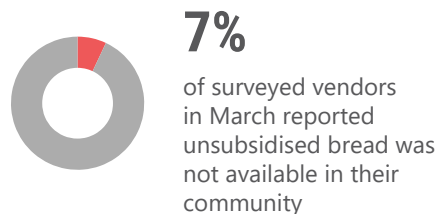
\*No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes.

\*\*USD values are calculated as per the median regional informal exchange rate recorded in this round of JMMI.

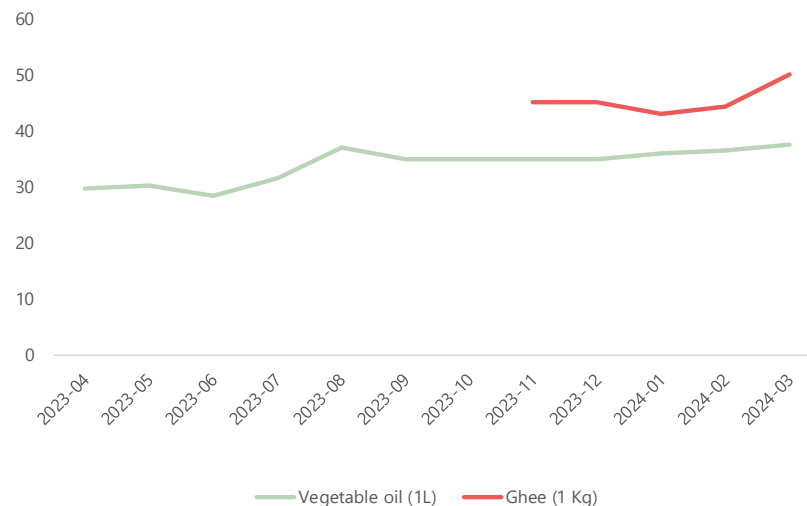
### Food price trends

Although 64% of surveyed vendors in March reported that subsidized bread was unavailable in their communities, the regional average prices of both unsubsidized and subsidized bread types remained stable during this period.

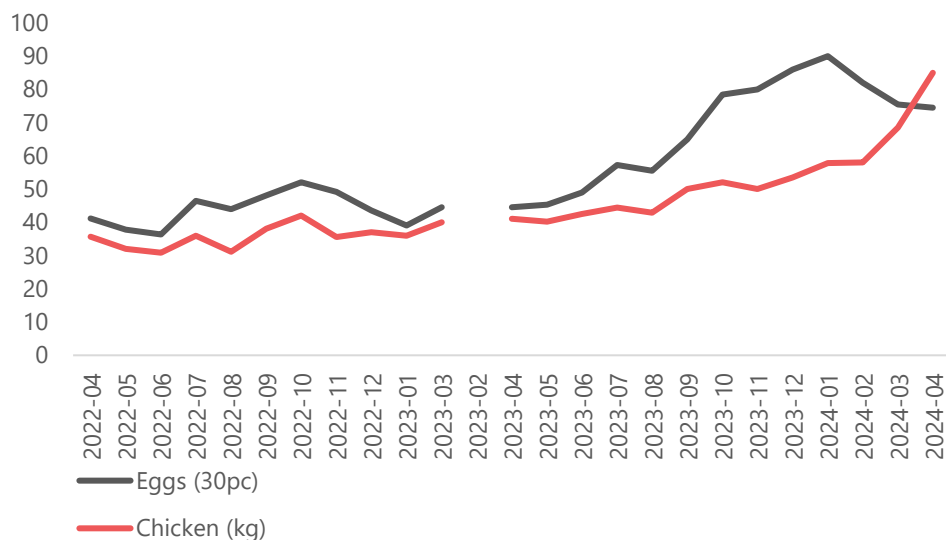
Cooking oil prices rose by 11%, with ghee and oil seeing increases of 13% and 3%, respectively.



### Regional median price of vegetable oil, TRY\*



### Regional median price of poultry items, TRY\*



### Food price changes

Item	Unit	Median Price TRY	1-month change (TRY)	6-month change (TRY)	Median Price USD**
<b>Cooking oils</b>					
Ghee	1kg	50	+13%▲	NA	1.58
Vegetable oil	1L	38	+3%▲	+7%▲	1.19
<b>Poultry</b>					
Chicken	1kg	69	+18%▲	+37%▲	2.16
Eggs	1kg	76	-8%▼	+16%▲	2.39
<b>Bread</b>					
Subsidised bread	8pc	7	-7%▼	NA	0.21
Unsubsidised bread	8pc	10	0%	NA	0.32

### Poultry price trends

The price of chicken increased between February and March 2024 by 18% due to rising demand days before Ramadan, despite production levels remaining unchanged, while the price of eggs decreased. JMMI data shows that egg prices tend to fluctuate seasonally, often rising in winter due to reduced daylight affecting production. This winter, price increases were significantly higher than in previous years, partly due to currency depreciation affecting the cost of imported inputs.

According to field teams in NWS, eggs cannot be stored for long due to the lack of refrigerators and high electricity costs. Consequently, sellers lower prices to sell eggs quickly before they spoil, leading to lower prices during summer and heatwaves.

\*No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes.

\*\*USD values are calculated as per the median regional informal exchange rate recorded in this round of JMMI.

### Non food items

In recent years of collecting JMMI data, Northern Aleppo has consistently experienced higher costs for water trucking. According to a 2023 REACH assessment on water trucking, this region tends to have fewer and less reliable water sources compared to Idleb governorate.<sup>3</sup> From February to March 2024, the median price of water trucking in Ar-Raqqa governorate exceeded that in Aleppo and Idleb governorates.

While seasonal trends may result in higher usage during the summer, water trucking prices do not consistently correlate with fuel price fluctuations, despite fuel being a significant operational cost for these services. Various local factors could influence water trucking prices, such as differences in NGO support for water distribution, access constraints related to security dynamics and armed groups, and the extent of price regulation enforced by authorities.



**72%**  
of surveyed vendors reported that Manually Refined Kerosene was unavailable in their community or neighborhood.



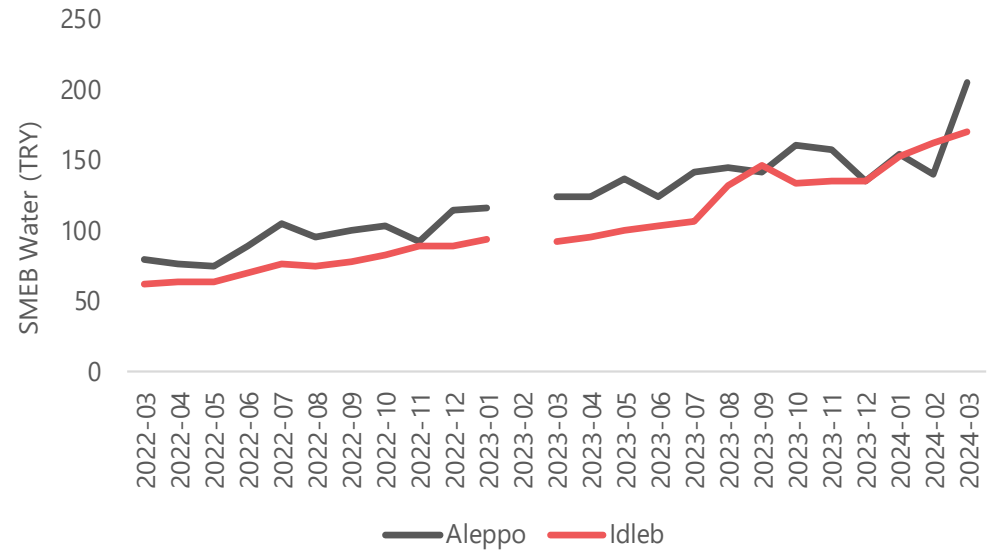
**99%**  
of surveyed vendors reported that petrol & diesel subsidized fuel was unavailable in their community or neighborhood.

### Price changes of monitored non-food items

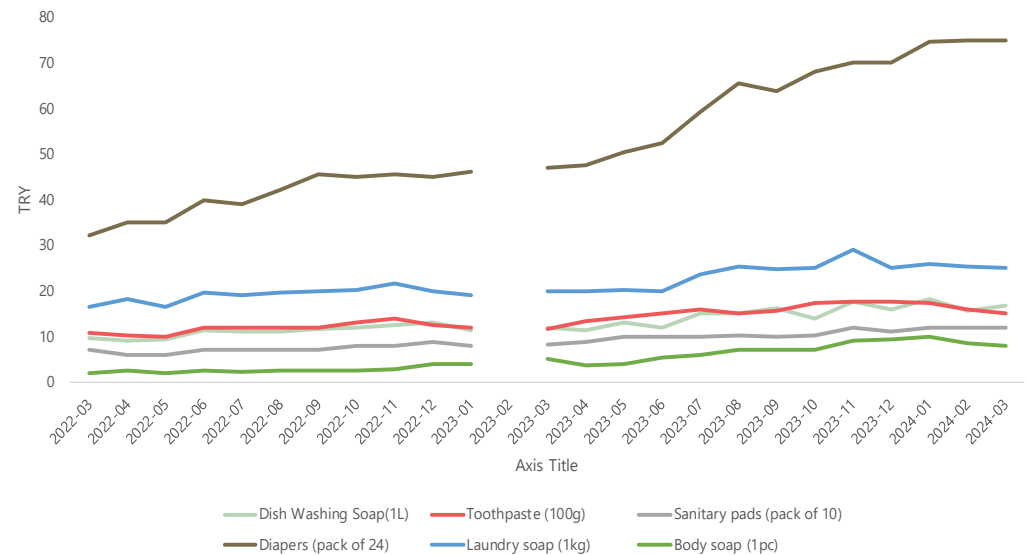
Item	Unit	Median Price TRY	1-month change (TRY)	6-month change (TRY)	Median Price USD*
<b>Non-food items</b>					
Bathing soap	1pc	8	-6% ▼	+14% ▲	0.25
Sanitary pads	10pc	12	0%	+20% ▲	0.38
Toothpaste	100g	15	-6% ▼	-3% ▼	0.48
Laundry powder	5kg	25	-1% ▼	0%	0.79
Dish soap	1L	17	+8% ▲	+4% ▲	0.53
<b>Cooking fuels</b>					
Kerosene	1L	25	0%	+29% ▲	0.47
LPG gas	1L	20	0%	+15% ▲	0.63
<b>Water trucking</b>					
Water trucking	1L	0.04	+20% ▲	+29% ▲	0.0013
<b>Internet</b>					
Mobile data	1gb	120	+20% ▲	NA	3.79
<b>Transportation fuels</b>					
Imported diesel	1L	32	-2% ▼	+12% ▲	1.02
Imported petrol	1L	39	-1% ▼	+13% ▲	1.23
Manually refined diesel	1L	20	-4%	NA	0.64
Manually refined petrol	1L	29	+16% ▲	NA	0.92

\*USD values are calculated as per the median regional informal exchange rate recorded in this round of JMMI.  
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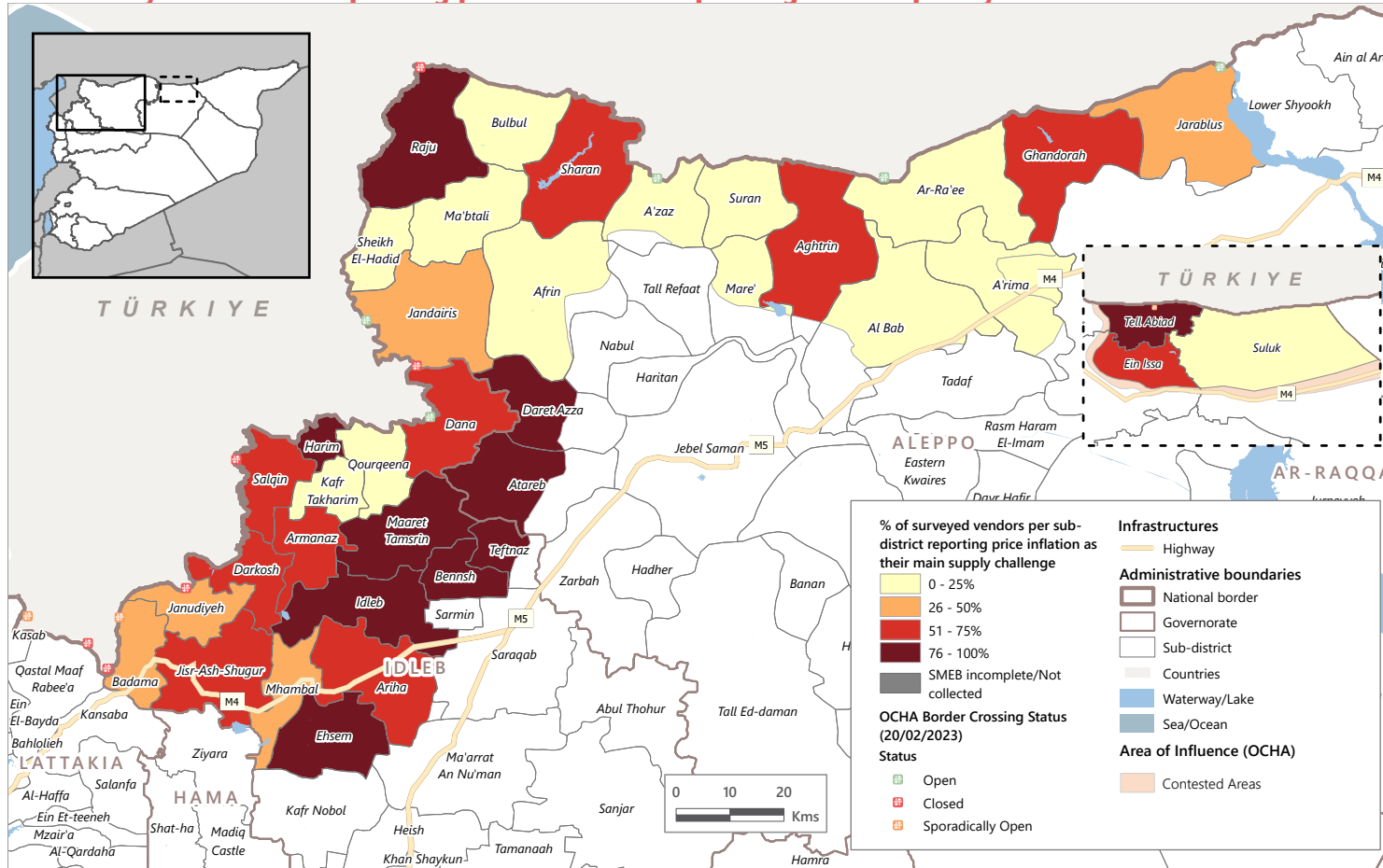
### Regional median SMEB water trucking prices, TRY\*\*



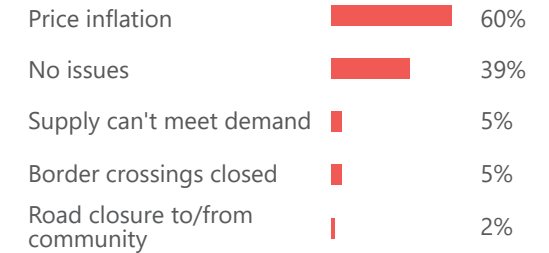
### Regional median price of hygiene items, TRY\*\*



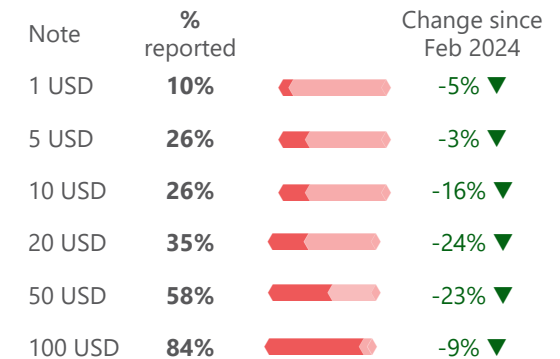
### % of surveyed vendors reporting price inflation impacting their capacity to secure stocks



### Top 5 reported supply challenges, % of surveyed vendors



### % of vendors reporting limited USD denominations



### Supply challenges

High prices were the main issue for vendors trying to stock goods. Border closures and supply problems were less common. This means vendors have less buying power due to high prices and low wages. As a result, they pass these costs on to consumers who buy basic goods.

### Liquidity

The percentage of vendors experiencing shortages of USD bank notes decreased between February and March 2024. Given that the Turkish Lira (TRY) has depreciated by more than 60% against the USD since 2021, households consider the USD a more stable currency to receive aid, especially amidst ongoing volatility and economic challenges

in NWS, including inflation and declining purchasing power. <sup>4</sup>

Reflecting this, REACH's January 2024 Post Distribution Monitoring Assessment showed that the vast majority of surveyed households prefer to receive cash assistance in USD.

## Methodology

The JMMI aims to inform market-based programming in Northern Syria.

### Coverage

Coverage is determined through a combination of identifying key market hubs and partners' field capacity. Firstly, key market hubs are identified using the [Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria](#) (HSOS), classifying all communities that 5 or more other communities report to rely on for markets as a key market hub. Secondly, these "key market hubs" are reviewed by the field teams for validity purposes. In this step, additional important markets in communities are included. These could be communities that either a) have significant markets but were not included in HSOS coverage, or b) communities that have markets that are important for people living in camps. Finally, we compare the ideal coverage with the capacity of partners and aim to ensure that key market hubs are covered. The actual coverage is, therefore, restricted to the capacity of partners.

### Data Collection

In each assessed location, at least three prices (ideally 4) per food & non-food item need to be collected from different traders to ensure the quality and consistency of the collected data. In line with the purpose of the JMMI, only the prices of the cheapest, most commonly bought type of item are recorded for each product, except in cases where otherwise indicated. For example, certain NFI items specific products are monitored at the request of the shelter cluster.

### SMEB Calculation:

The cost of the SMEB is determined by multiplying the median price of each item in the respective location by the quantity listed in the table on page 2.

### Identification of traders

Field teams identify traders to assess based on the following criteria:

- Traders are retailers selling directly to consumers.
- Traders need to be representative of the local price level.
- Traders have knowledge of the shop operations.

To the extent possible, the same traders are revisited in every data collection round.

### Enumerators and training

The data are collected by field staff familiar with local market conditions. They undergo training on the methodology and tools provided by REACH. Training sessions occur each time a new partner joins the JMMI, at partner request, and at scheduled intervals throughout the year, such as when the assessment undergoes changes. Additionally, field teams are equipped with a JMMI Standardised Operational Procedure (SOP) offering guidance on market identification, trader assessment, and pricing. The REACH JMMI team manages the integration of partner feedback on the JMMI SOP, sharing updates, and conducting re-training with the field, as needed. Data collection is carried out using the KOBO Collect mobile application.

### Data cleaning and analysis

After data collection, REACH compiles and cleans all partner data, standardizing prices, cross-checking outliers, and calculating the median cost of prices in each assessed location. Follow-ups are initiated with field teams to address data queries, including outliers, missing data, and incorrect entries. The median item prices reported in this factsheet are 'location medians,' designed to mitigate the impact of outliers and variations in data quantity among assessed locations.

### Aggregation

The published data is presented at the community, sub-district, district, governorate, and regional levels. At each aggregation level, the median of all prices collected within the unit of analysis is calculated. For example, at the regional level, the median of all prices collected for a specific product in the entire region is calculated, while at the governorate level, the median of all prices collected in that governorate is calculated, and so forth. All SMEB and price index calculations utilize this method.

### Challenges and limitations

- Price data is only indicative for the time frame within which it was collected. Prices may vary between data collection rounds.
- The JMMI data collection tool requests the cheapest, most commonly bought type of each item to be recorded, as availability varies across regions. Therefore, price comparisons across regions may be based on slightly varying products.
- With current coverage, data is mostly collected from main markets, which may not be representative of rural areas.
- As the JMMI continues to expand and is extended to additional locations, the reported changes in the overall median prices may be driven by shifts in coverage rather than actual price changes.

JMMI data is updated monthly through the [Interactive Dashboard](#) where users can filter for SMEB components of interest, currencies, and assessed areas. The [full dataset](#) is also available for download.

## About REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).



## Endnotes

- 1 Bloomberg, [Turkey Inflation Nears 70% in March Despite Rate Hikes](#), 4 April 2024
- 2 REACH, Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria, [Dataset](#), March 2024
- 3 REACH, [Water Trucking in NWS](#), dataset, 2024
- 4 REACH-NWS Cash Working Group, [NWS Post-Distribution Monitoring Assessment](#), January 2024
- 5 The [first version of the SMEB](#), 2014
- 6 The current SMEB is based on the [2017 Revision](#), 2017

## About the CWG

The JMMI exists within the framework of the Cash Working Group (CWG). In northwest Syria (NWS), the CWG was established in May 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. For more information about the CWG in NWS, please contact the cash working group coordinator at [cbr.twg@gmail.com](mailto:cbr.twg@gmail.com).

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More details on the methodology can be found in the JMMI [terms of reference \(ToR\)](#). For more information about REACH, please contact the REACH JMMI focal point, Adna Maiteh, at [adna.maiteh@reach-initiative.org](mailto:adna.maiteh@reach-initiative.org) or visit the REACH Syria Resource Centre.

## Participating organisations

Each month, around 20 different organisations work together to collect market data. Participating organisations train their enumerators on the JMMI methodology and data collection tools using standard training materials developed by REACH, who is then responsible for processing the data.

