Northeast Syria | Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

3-10 March 2024

MARKET OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

To facilitate humanitarian cash programming, the Northeast of Syria Cash Working Group (NES 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, 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.

6	Participating agencies
4	Assessed governorates
27	Assessed sub-districts
47	Assessed communities
1603	Shops surveyed

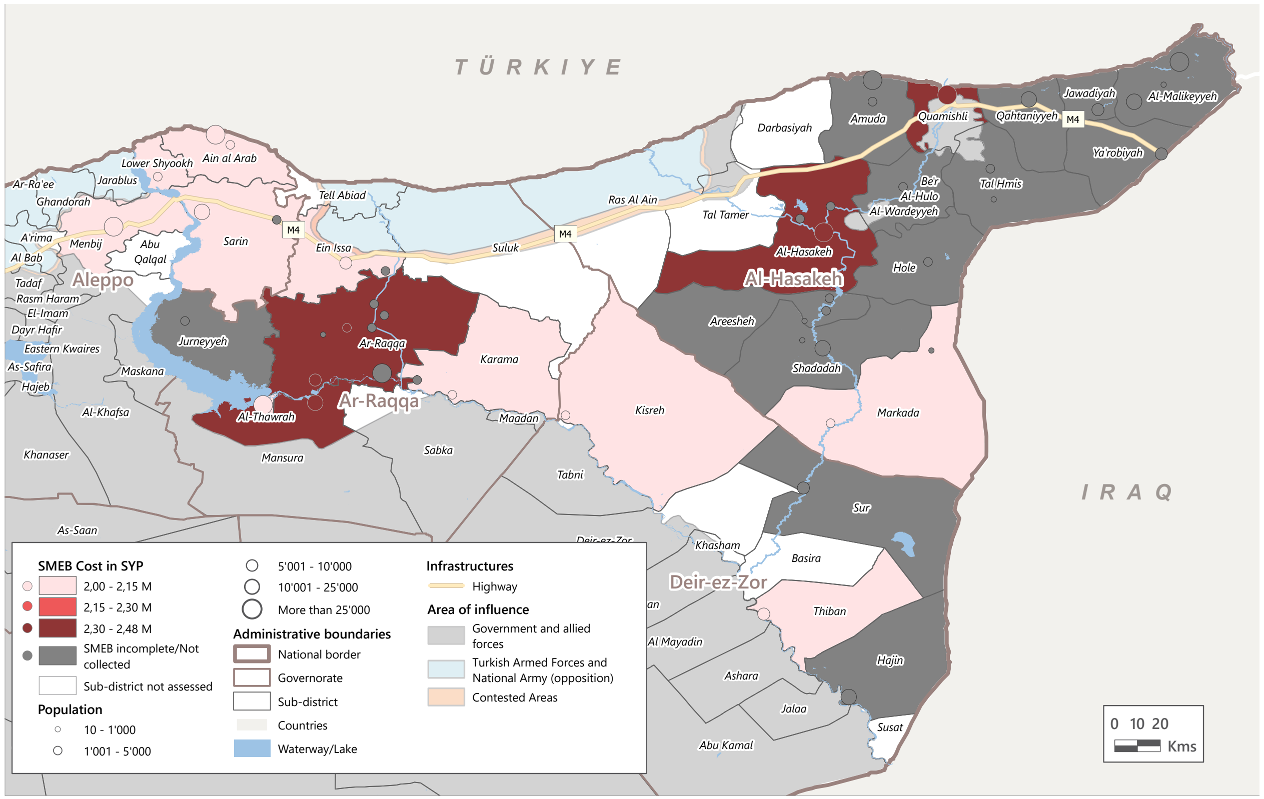
KEY INDICATORS

Cost of SMEB
2,079,098 SYP ▼-8%
144 USD ▼-4%

Cost of SMEB Food
1,506,600 SYP ▼ -3%
104 USD ▲ +1%

SYP/USD
informal exchange rate
14,500 SYP ▼ -4%

Cost of the SMEB, Sub-districts in Northeast Syria, SYP



KEY FINDINGS

- Between February and March 2024 the regional median informal exchange rate improved in NES (4% appreciation) leading to some moderate recovery in prices.
- Due to the decrease in the exchange rate the price of monitored imported commodities such as bulk food items and hygiene items also decreased. Where imports are often purchased in USD, a weaker exchange rate puts upward pressure on the price of these items.
- In March there was some recovery of seasonal monitored items such a fresh vegetables, and eggs that tend to be more expensive in the winter months.
- While affordability of fresh vegetables may continue to improve in the coming months as local production season starts, it is likely to be offset by the extreme price hikes of cooking fuels due to market shortages.
- Since the Turkish attacks on oil and gas facilities beginning in October 2023 and intensifying in January and February 2024[1], the price of manually refined kerosene has increased by 170% and the price of LPG gas has increased by 1150%.

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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.

SMEB Contents

Food	
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
Hygiene (NFI)	
Bathing soap	12 bars
Laundry / dish soap	3 kg
Toothpaste	200 kg
Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Other items	
Cooking fuel	15 L
Water trucking	4500 L
Phone data	1 GB
Float (other costs)	7.5 % of total

Exchange rate trends

Between February and March 2024 the regional median informal exchange rate improved in NES (4% appreciation) leading to some moderate recovery in prices of monitored items. Following a period in the second half of 2023 of rapid currency depreciation, the last months have seen some stabilisation in the exchange rate.

This will be an important trend to monitor in the coming months to see whether stabilisation turns to any actual recovery of the currency and potentially bring some relief to price inflation. Currently, the regional price of the SMEB is more than double what it was one year ago putting enormous pressure on households to be able to meet their basic needs.

REACH field teams reported that local authorities have issued a directive that vendors must accept both SYP and USD in their shops to counter increasing dollarisation that is impacting households ability to purchase goods. Majority of people in NES earn their salaries in SYP and yet vendors are increasingly demanding purchases in USD to enble them to import goods and pay the associated fees and taxes.[2]

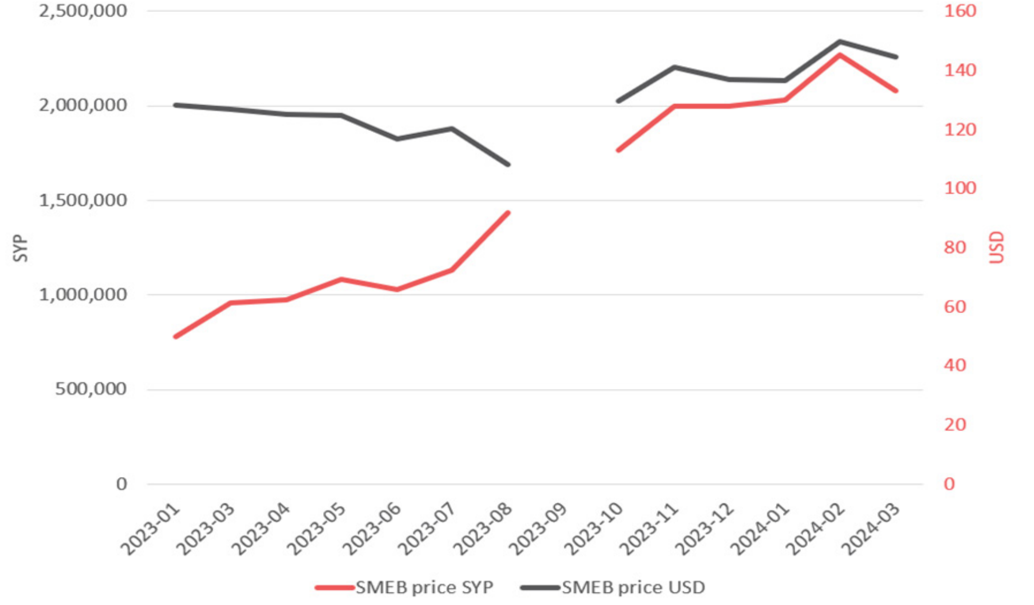
65%

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

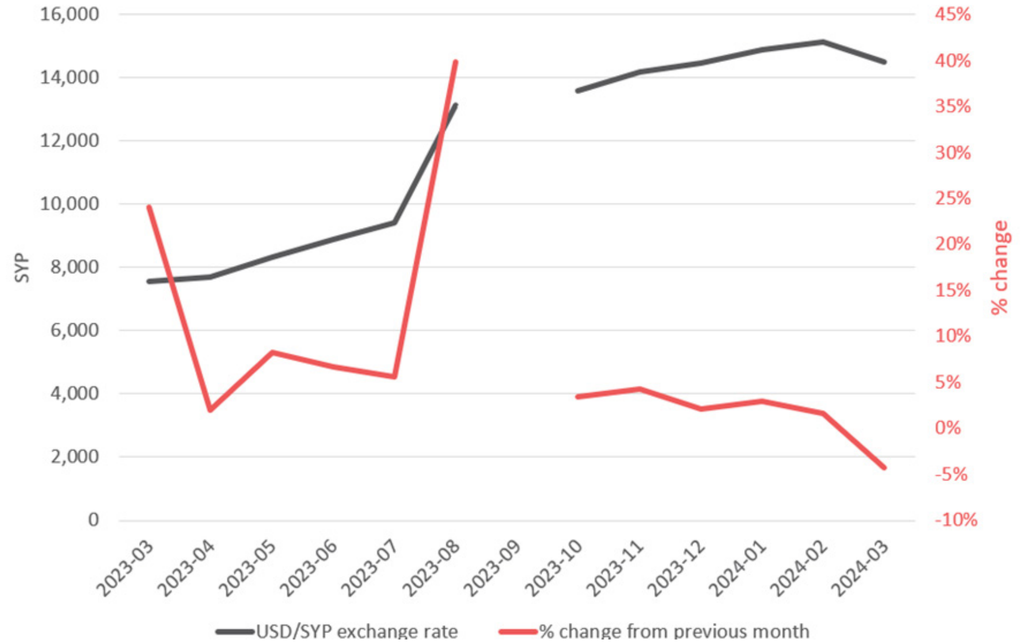
118%

The cost of the SMEB in SYP has more than doubled in the past year.

Regional median SMEB prices, SYP and USD*

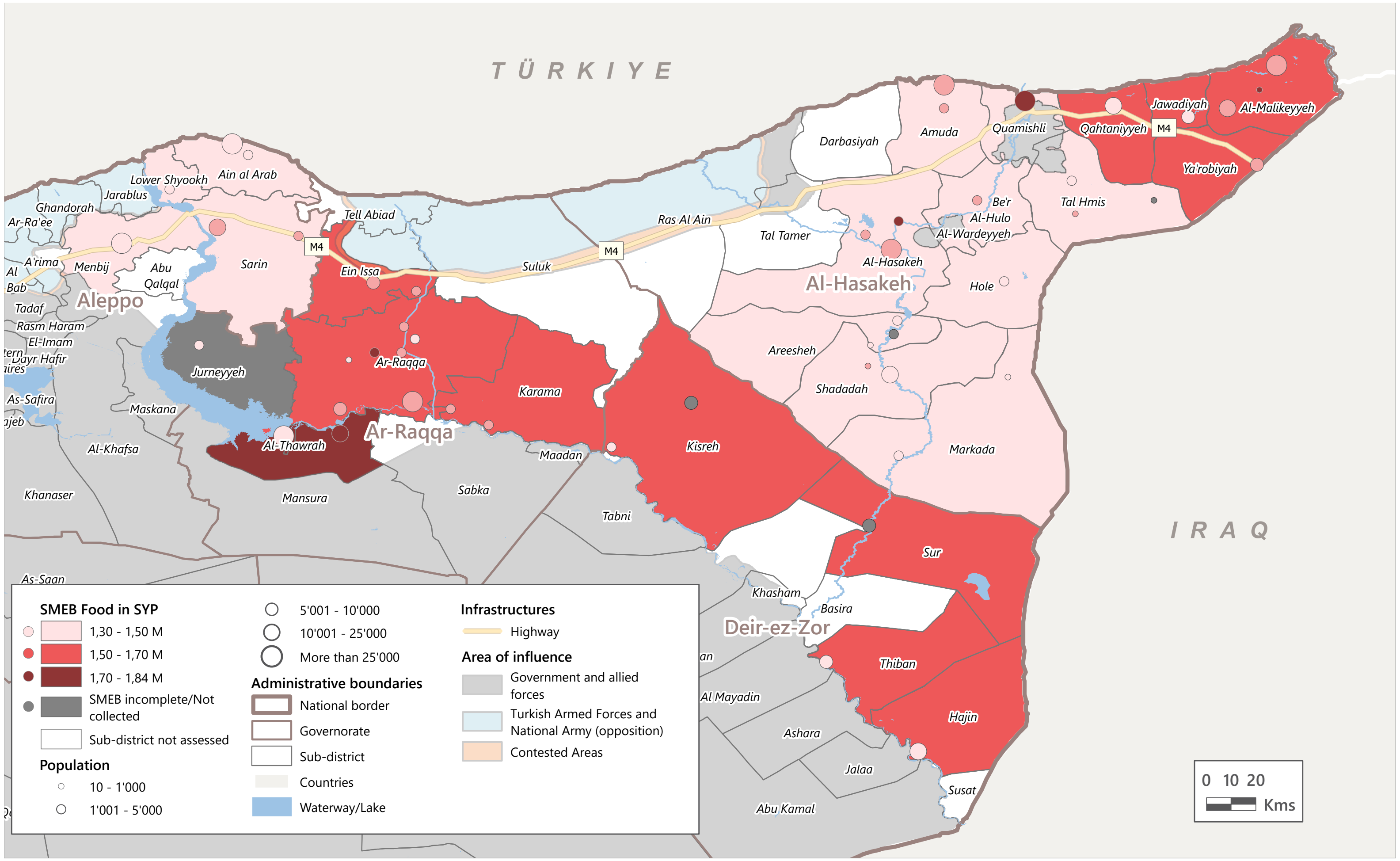


Regional median USD/SYP informal exchange rate trends*



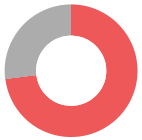
* No data was collected in September 2023. The % change represented in the graph between August and October 2023 is therefore over a 2-month period.

SMEB food prices, SYP



Price of SMEB Food, sub-district, SYP

Location	Median Price SYP	Change since Feb 2024	Median Price USD
Aleppo governorate			
Menbij	1,397,425	▼-10%	98
Ain al Arab	1,449,225	▼-6%	103
Lower Shyookh	1,614,938	▲10%	102
Sarin	1,392,000	▼-10%	105
Al-Hasakeh governorate			
Al-Hasakeh	1,310,000	▼-23%	111
Shadadah	1,830,518	▲15%	106
Markada	1,643,472	▲9%	96
Be'r Al-Hulo	1,629,786	▲4%	105
Areesheh	1,523,500	▲7%	90
Hole	1,422,500	▼-2%	98
Quamishli	1,442,561	▼-11%	127
Tal Hmis	1,615,292	▼-4%	108
Amuda	1,455,900	▼-16%	114
Qahtaniyyeh	1,491,250	▼-1%	100
Al-Malikeyyeh	1,478,575	▼-12%	113
Jawadiyah	1,520,750	▲1%	98
Ya'robiyah	1,542,000	▼-7%	106
Deir Ez-Zor			
Kisreh	1,528,139	▲2%	99
Sur	1,422,500	NA	NA
Hajin	1,562,000	NA	99
Thiban	1,446,764	▼-15%	100
Ar-Raqqa			
Ar-Raqqa	1,416,188	▼-11%	109
Karama	1,450,750	▲1%	111
Ein Issa	1,447,850	NA	107
Al-Thawrah	1,564,600	▲2%	102
Mansura	1,556,569	▼-9%	120
Jurneyyeh	1,738,523	▲12%	103



73%

KIs in 73% of communities assessed in Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria March round reported that food markets were functioning[3]

92%

Unaffordability was the most commonly reported barrier reported by KIs in 92% of HSOS assessed communities in March[3]

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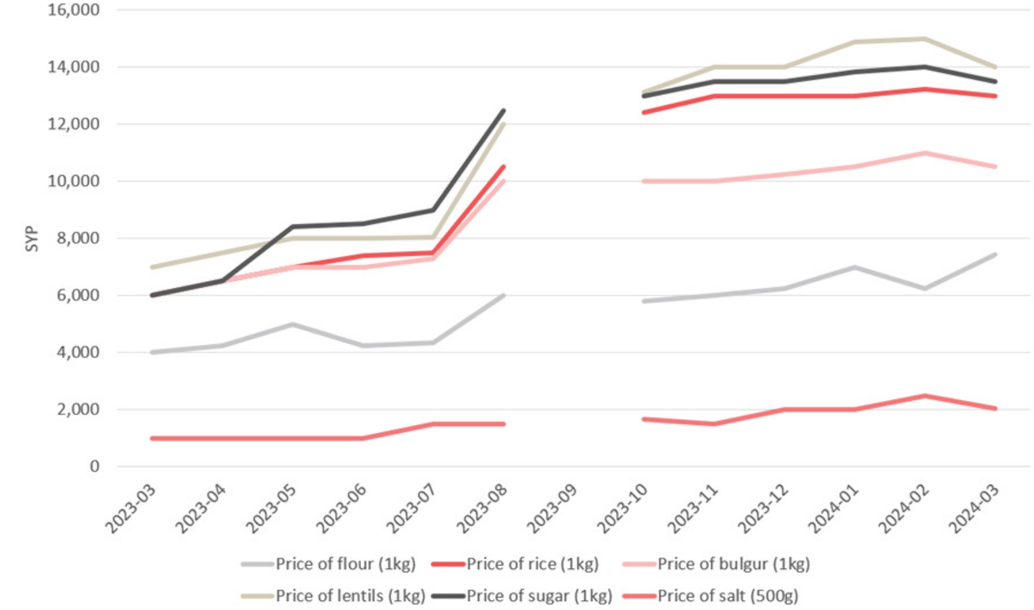
Food price trends

The regional median price of monitored bulk food items decreased between February and March 2024 likely driven by stabilisation in the informal exchange rate as the majority of bulk food items are imported into NES.

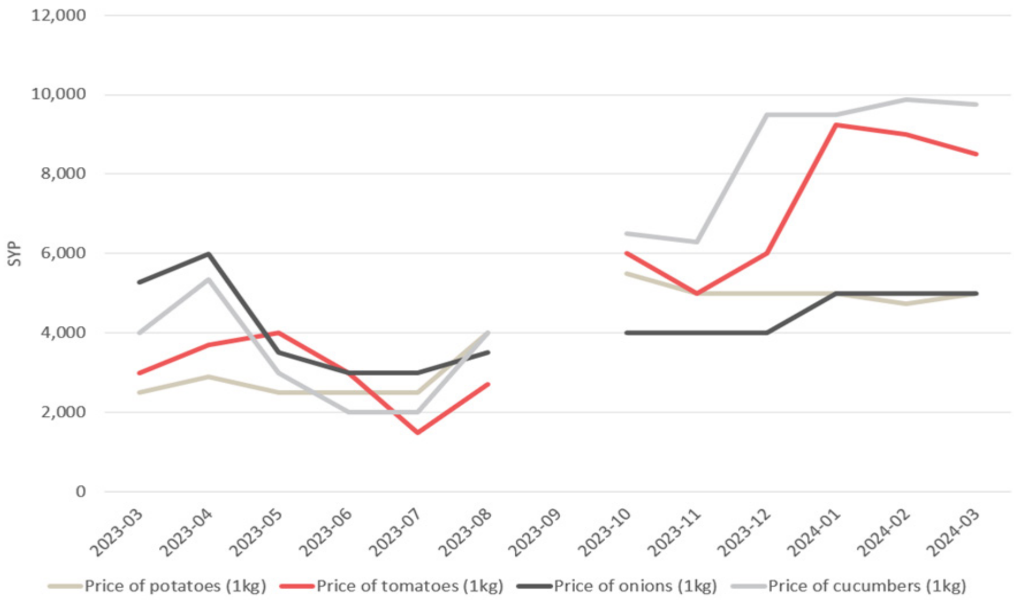
JMMI March data also indicated that monitored fresh vegetable prices have begun to come down with the end of winter and as local production increases. Cucumbers and tomatoes in particular however remain extremely expensive, costing a household 25% and 42% more than what they would have paid 5 months ago at the beginning of winter. While seasonal increases for fresh vegetables are expected, increases of this scale have become more exaggerated in the past years as production costs have become increasingly inflated and farmers are less resilient to cope with shocks and losses from unfavourable weather conditions.[4] This has serious implications for households' access to fresh foods and highlights the potential gains from supporting farmers to access and invest in greenhouses to increase local production in winter.

Food price changes month to month in NES since October 2023 appear to have become more varied between assessed sub-districts whereas historically monthly changes have tended to be more uniform. This could potentially be linked to disruptions in fuel distributions since the attacks on oil facilities since October 2023 which may have impacted some areas more than others, and at different times due to different delays in distributions of fuels, varying access and availability of subsidised fuel.[5] Lack of power since the attacks may also be impacting vendors ability to store fresh foods.

Regional median price of bulk food items, SYP*



Regional median price of vegetables, SYP*



Food price changes

Item	Unit	Median Price SYP	1-month change (SYP)	5-month change (SYP)	Median Price USD**
Bulk food items					
Bulgur	1kg	10,500	▼-5%	▲5%	0.72
Red lentils	1kg	14,000	▼-7%	▲7%	0.97
Rice	1kg	13,000	▼-2%	▲5%	0.90
Salt	500g	2,046	▼-18%	▲22%	0.14
Sugar	1kg	13,500	▼-4%	▲4%	0.93
Tomato Paste	1kg	15,500	▼-5%	▲1%	1.07
Vegetables					
Tomatoes	1kg	8,500	▼-6%	▲42%	0.59
Potatoes	1kg	5,000	▲6%	▼-9%	0.34
Cucumbers	1kg	5,000	0%	▲25%	0.34
Onions	1kg	9,750	▼-1%	▲50%	0.67

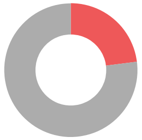
*No data was collected in September 2023.

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

Food price trends

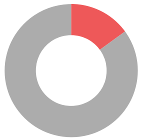
While the Turkish attacks on key infrastructure hit mills and silos JMMI data in the past months has indicated that bakeries have kept prices stable, many through the support of NGOs and the local administration. Price stabilty however may be tenuous as fuel shortages increase. In addition, the extent to which the current wheat season has been impacted by the attacks as a result of shortages of fuel needed to run farms and water contamination as a result of an oil spill remains unknown.[6] Local production capacity and supply is therefore a key concern for future bread prices in NES.

The price of vegetable oil between September 2023 and March 2024 has stabilised in line with the informal exchange rate. Vegetable oil is imported and is therefore sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations as shown in the graph to the right.



23%

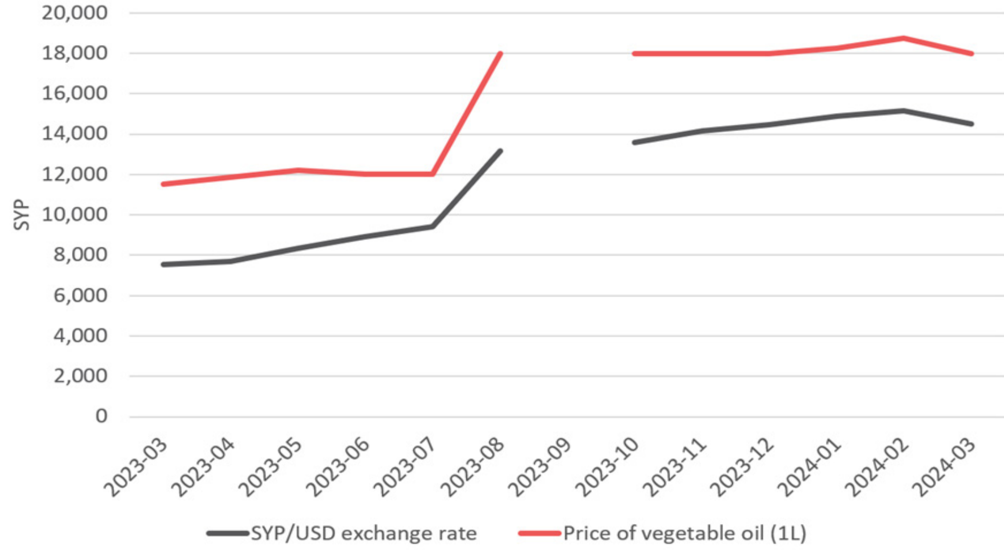
of surveyed vendors in March reported unsubsidised bread was not available in their community



15%

of surveyed vendors in March reported subsidised bread was not available in their community

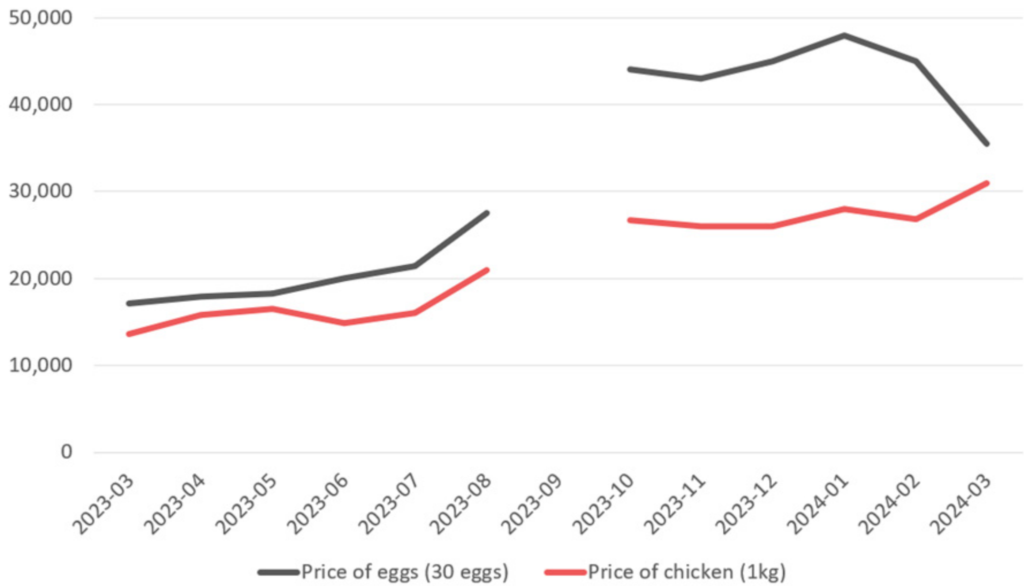
Regional median price of vegetable oil, SYP*



Food price changes

Item	Unit	Median Price SYP	1-month change (SYP)	6-month change (SYP)	Median Price USD**
Cooking oils					9.41
Ghee	1kg	21,000	▼-7%	NA	1.45
Vegetable oil	1L	18,000	▼-4%	0%	1.24
Poultry					
Chicken	1kg	31,000	▲15%	▲16%	2.14
Eggs	1kg	35,500	▼-21%	▼-19%	2.45
Bread					
Subsidised bread	8pc	1,000	0%	NA	0.07
Unsubsidised bread	8pc	4,650	▲1%	NA	0.32

Regional median price of poultry items, SYP*



Food price trends

The regional median price of eggs recovered in the past months following a period of substantial increase since the end of summer 2023. JMMI data shows that the price of eggs tends to fluctuate seasonally, increasing in winter. This is likely linked to reduced supply in winter when egg production is lower pushing farmers to increase market prices. While this seasonality is expected, price increases this winter were substantially higher than previous years. Many of the inputs that poultry farms require for their production are imported so accelerated currency depreciation between July and December 2023 likely impacted overall operating costs. Comparatively, the price of chicken increased by 15% in the last month potentially linked to higher demand during Ramadan but also reportedly attributed to an outbreak of Newcastle disease among chickens last month.[8]

*No data was collected in September 2023.

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Non food items

Of the monitored transportation fuels, petrol appears to have been most impacted in terms of price since the Turkish attacks oil facilities. This has caused reportedly widespread shortages of transportation and cooking fuels across NES with facilities operating at substantially lower production capacity. Increasing unavailability of fuels in station and delays in distributions of subsifised fuels is pushing households, industry and farmers to rely further on the parallel market at substantially higher prices.[9]

The price of cooking fuels has been particularly impacted by the drop in production and market shortages. The airstrikes in October caused the only producer of gas, the Swediyeh Gas Station, to become completely non-operational forcing the Autonomous Administration to import gas from the Kurdish Region of Iraq.[10] Such price increases and market shortages have serious implications for households' basic ability to prepare and cook nutritious foods.

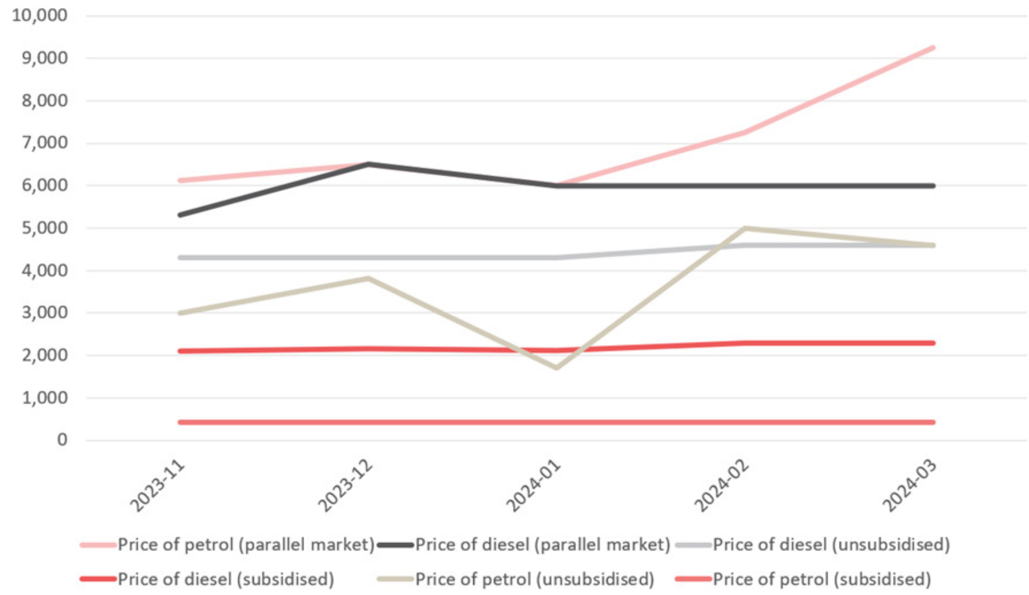
170%

In the past 5 months the price of locally produced kerosene has increased by 170%

1150%

In the past 5 months the price of gas has increased by 1150% on average costing households more than $10 USD for one canister of gas

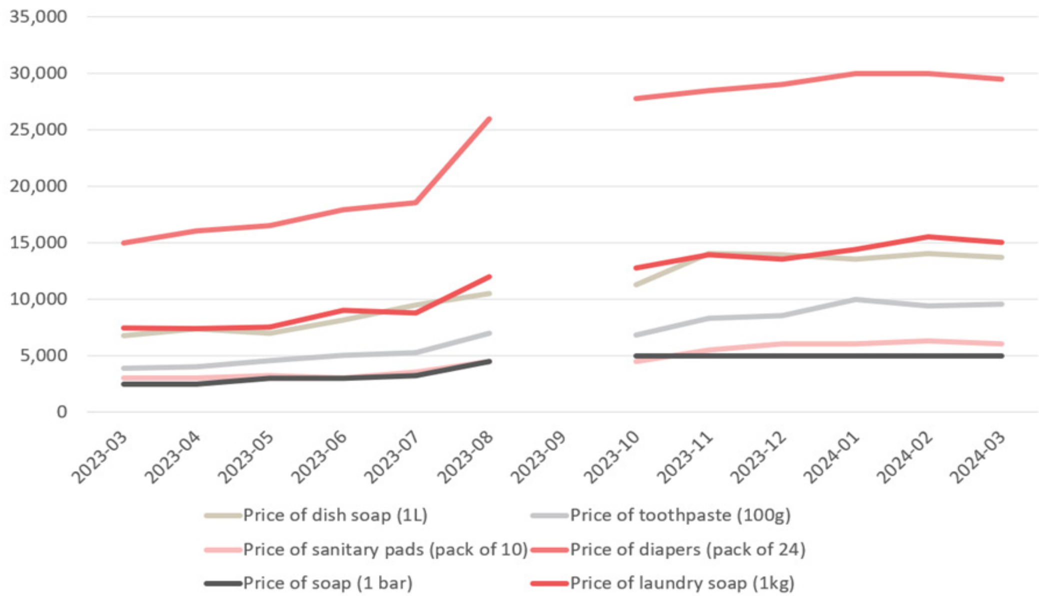
Regional median fuel prices, November 2023-March 2024, SYP



Price changes of monitored non-food items

Item	Unit	Median Price SYP	1-month change (SYP)	5-month change (SYP)	Median Price USD**
Non-food items	SMEB				
Bathing soap	1pc	5,000	0%	0%	0.34
Sanitary pads	10pc	6,000	▼-4%	▲33%	0.41
Toothpaste	100g	9,524	▲1%	▲39%	0.66
Laundry powder	5kg	22,500	▼-12%	▲18%	1.55
Dish soap	1L	13,667	▼-2%	▲21%	0.94
Cooking fuels					
Kerosene	1L	6,750	▲23%	▲170%	0.47
LPG gas	1L	7,500	▼-1%	▲1150%	0.88
Water trucking					
Water trucking	1L	15	▼-43%	▼-6%	0.001
Internet					
Mobile data	1gb	52,500	▼-5%	na	3.62
Transportation fuels					
Subsidised diesel	1L	2,300	0%	▲10%*	0.16
Unsubsidised diesel	1L	4,600	0%	▲7%*	0.32
Diesel (parallel market)	1L	6,000	0%	▲13%*	0.41
Subsidised petrol	1L	425	0%	0%	0.03
Unsubsidised petrol	1L	4,600	▼-8%	▲53%*	0.32
Petrol (parallel market)	1L	9,250	▲28%	▲51%*	0.64
Imported petrol	1L	16,000	0%	▲88%	1.10

Regional median price of hygiene items, SYP***



* % shows 4-month change due to data availability
**USD values are calculated as per the median regional informal exchange rate recorded in this round of JMMI.
*** No data was collected in September 2023.

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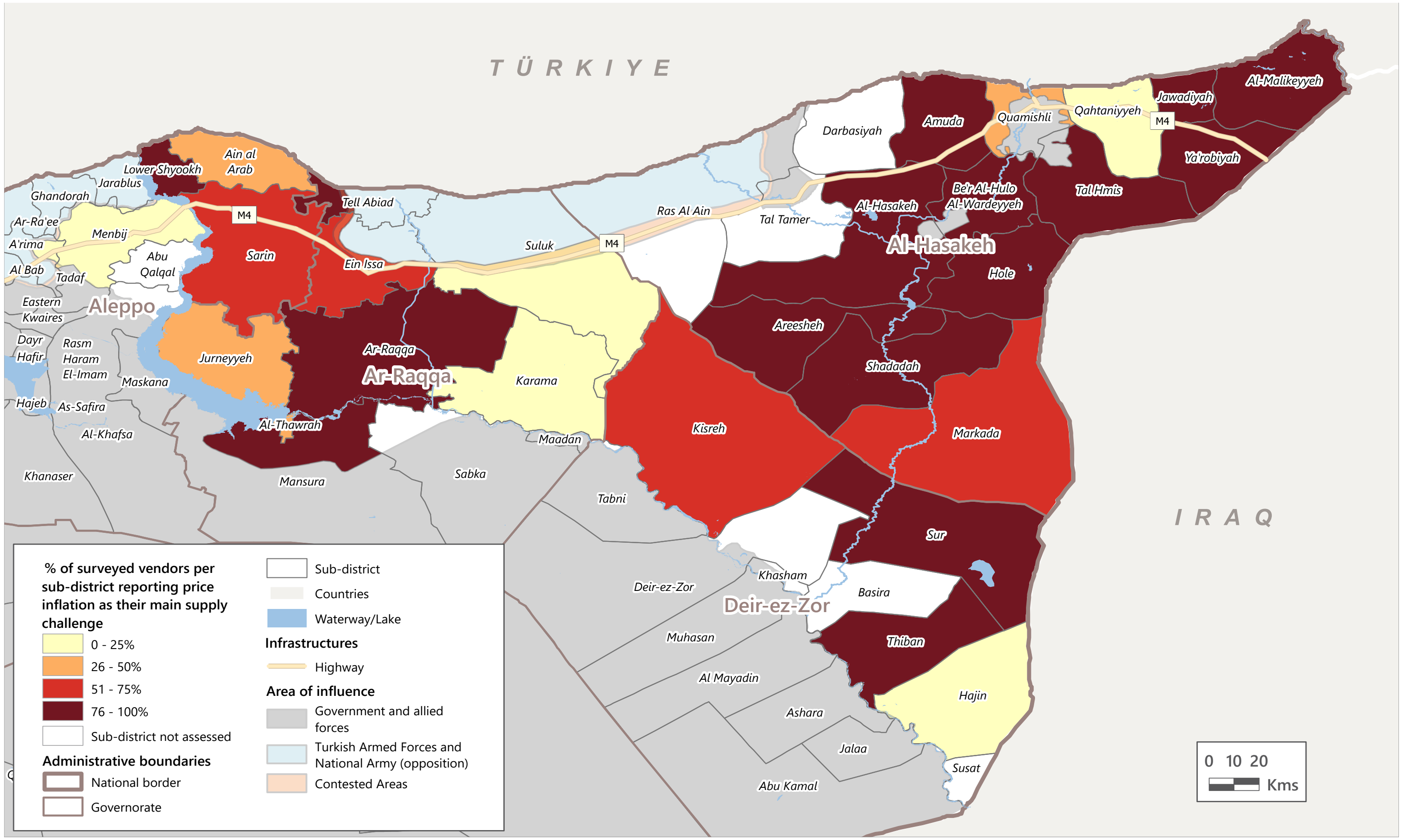
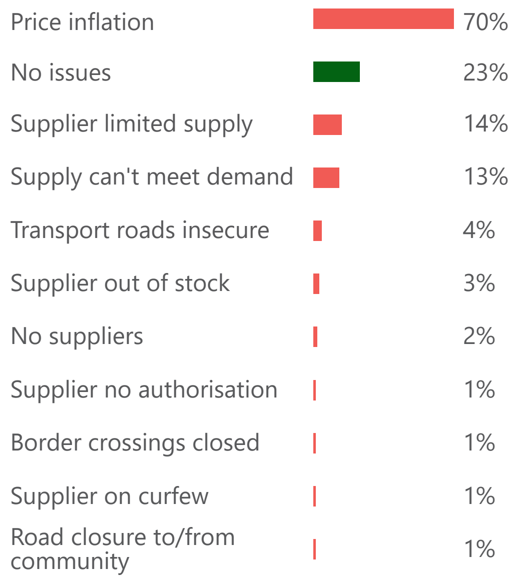
% of surveyed vendors reporting price inflation impacts their capacity to secure stocks



Top 5 reported supply challenges, % of surveyed vendors



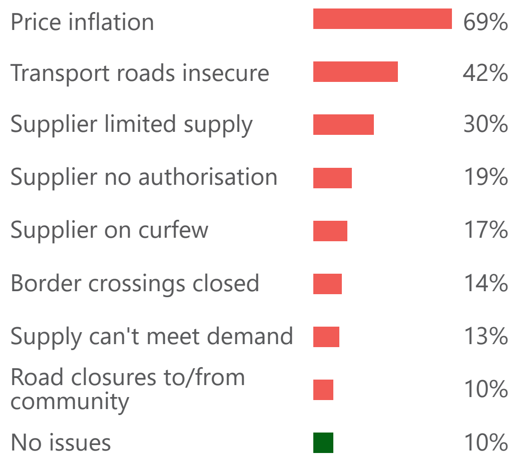
Supply challenges

While price inflation remained the most commonly reported challenge that vendors face in securing sufficient stocks, the worsening fuel situation in NES has in particular impacted fuel supply routes. Vendors selling transportation fuels most commonly reported that their supplier had limited supply impacting their capacity to re-stock (reported by 40% of surveyed transportation fuel vendors). In addition, fuel vendors more commonly reported that the stock they can secure is insufficient to meet market demand (reported by 34% of fuel vendors in March). This indicates that households and businesses who can afford to are pushed to purchase fuels on the parallel market at substantially higher prices, or otherwise go without. The cost of transportation is at the same time a key factor impacting household physical access to food markets. This was the most commonly reported physical barrier to markets according to 84% of KIs surveyed in HSOS March 2023 round.[11]

Supply challenges were more notable in Deir ez-Zor governorate, consistent with previous months as a result of on-going instability in the area. Reports of protests, and supply cuts have increased in the governorate in the context of the fuel crisis.

Liquidity of USD remains a challenge across NES. In March 2024, around two thirds of surveyed vendors reported shortages of each USD denomination. Vendors in Al-Hasakeh governorate in particular noted shortages of 10 USD notes. Shortages of smaller denominations is a key challenge for organisations distributing cash forcing them at times to distribute part of the assistance in SYP.

Supply challenges in Deir ez-Zor governorate, % of surveyed vendors



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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 The New Humanitarian, 'Turkish airstrikes in northeast Syria leave millions short of power, fuel, and water', 21 February 2024

2 Enab Baladi, 'Dollarization creates a gap between salaries and prices in al-Hasakah', 16 March 2024

3 REACH, Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria, Dataset, March 2024

4 North Press Agency, 'Weather Factors And High Costs. Potato Season In The Syrian Island Is Not Promising', 28 February 2024

5 The New Humanitarian, 'Turkish airstrikes in northeast Syria leave millions short of power, fuel, and water', 21 February 2024

6 NES NGO Forum, 'Flash Alert on the contamination of water sources across Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa Governorates', 15 March 2024

7 International Food Policy Research Institute, Impact of the Ukraine crisis on the global vegetable oil market, May 2022

8 North Press Agency, 'An Increase In The Prices Of Chicken Since The Beginning Of Ramadan In The Syrian Jazeera Region', 14 March 2024

9 North Press Agency, 'Farmers Resort To Parallel Markets. Fuel Shortages Threaten Agriculture In Hasaka Countryside', 5 March 2024

10 The New Humanitarian, 'Turkish airstrikes in northeast Syria leave millions short of power, fuel, and water', 21 February 2024

11 REACH, Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria, Dataset, March 2024

About the CWG

The JMMI exists within the framework of the Cash Working Group (CWG). In northeast Syria (NES), 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 NES, please contact the cash working group coordinator at cashcoordnes@gmail.com.

REACH

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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 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.

Concern worldwide

Solidarités International

People in Need Czech Republic

DCA actalliance

نسائم خير Nasaem Khair

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