Northwestern Syria | Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

2-8 March 2025

MARKET OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

To facilitate humanitarian cash programming, **the Northwest Syria Cash Working Group** (NWS CWG), in collaboration with **local and international NGOs**, carries out a monthly Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) 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.

Among these, 10 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.**

Coverage

3	Assessed governorates
6	Assessed districts
18	Assessed sub-districts
24	Assessed communities
530	Shops surveyed

Data collection in March 2025 faced significant limitations due to access challenges and a suspension of funding. As a result, REACH was unable to gather a sufficient number of surveys to enable detailed analysis of the different SMEB components at the governorate or sub-district level. Consequently, the findings from this round should be interpreted with caution, with reduced coverage affecting their reliability compared to previous and upcoming rounds.

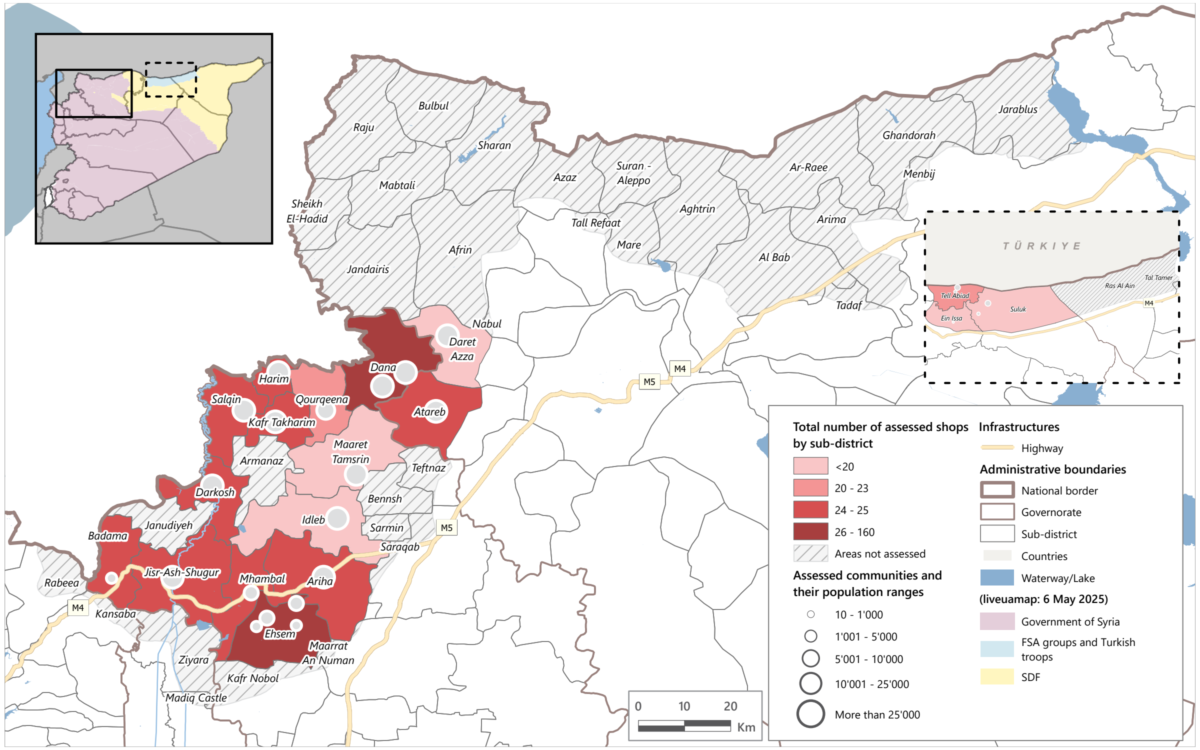
KEY INDICATORS

Cost of SMEB
5,857 TRY +10% ▲
159 USD +8% ▲

Cost of SMEB Food
4,495 TRY +14% ▲
121.5 USD +10% ▲

USD/TRY
informal exchange rate
37 TRY +3% ▲

Geographic coverage of the March 2025 JMMI in northwestern Syria (NWS)



KEY FINDINGS

- **The cost of the regional SMEB in Turkish Lira (TRY) rose by 25% over the past 12 months, with a 10% of that increase occurring in just the last two months (January–March 2025).** This sharp acceleration in price growth suggests a spike in the cost of basic goods and services, placing growing strain on household purchasing power.
- Between January 2025 and March 2025, **the TRY continued its year-long depreciation trend, with the regional median selling rate of the US Dollar (USD) rising by 3% to reach 37 TRY.**
- Between January 2025 and March 2025, the cost of the regional median SMEB food component surged by 14%, reaching a record high of 4,495 TRY. This sharp increase accounts for almost half of the total 30% rise observed over the past 12 months, underscoring a rapid escalation in food prices in the short term.
- While non-food items were reported as fully available by the assessed vendors, **fuel items, particularly subsidized ones, were frequently reported as completely unavailable in the assessed markets, with this trend especially pronounced in Idleb.**
- **Overall, markets in NWS were generally physically accessible, but many vendors reported that customers faced financial barriers to accessing goods.**

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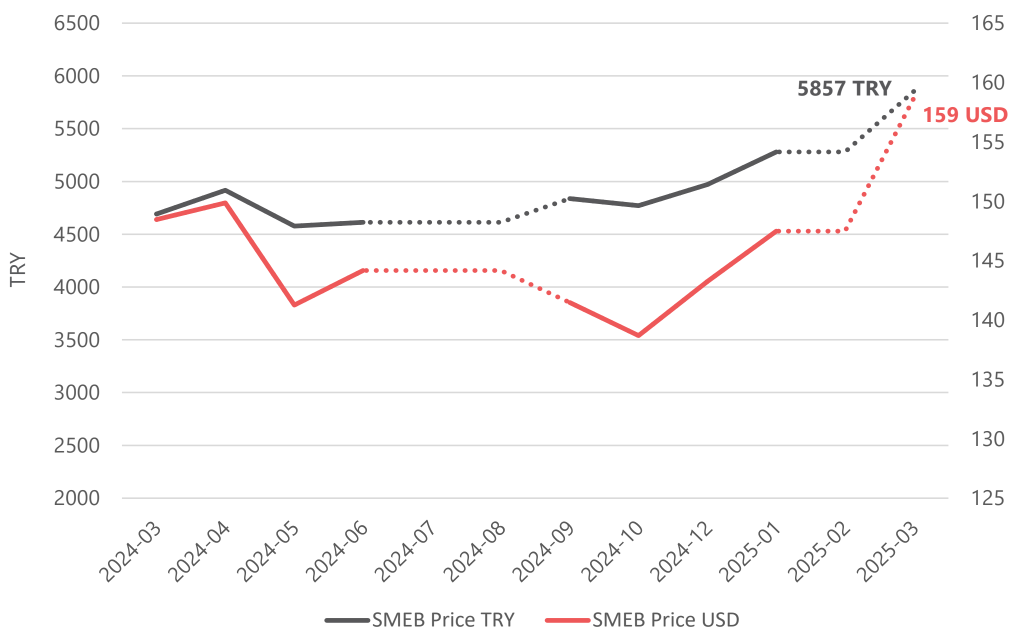
Regional median SMEB* prices, TRY and USD



SMEB trends

The cost of the regional median SMEB in TRY rose by 25% between March 2024 and March 2025, with a 10% of that increase occurring in just the last two months (January–March 2025). This sharp acceleration in price growth suggests a spike in the cost of basic goods and services, placing growing strain on household purchasing power. The fact that nearly half of the annual increase occurred in only two months points to a deteriorating economic environment, with rising inflation and currency instability driving up the cost of living at an increasing pace. This recent spike also coincided with the introduction, or revision, of customs tariffs in NWS, which reportedly led to immediate market disruptions, including temporary business closures as traders struggled to absorb the increased costs.[1, 2]

The spiking cost of the SMEB signals declining accessibility to food, hygiene items, and other basic items, particularly for vulnerable households with limited income sources. This raises the risk of deepening poverty, forcing households to reduce consumption, take on debt, or adopt other negative coping strategies.

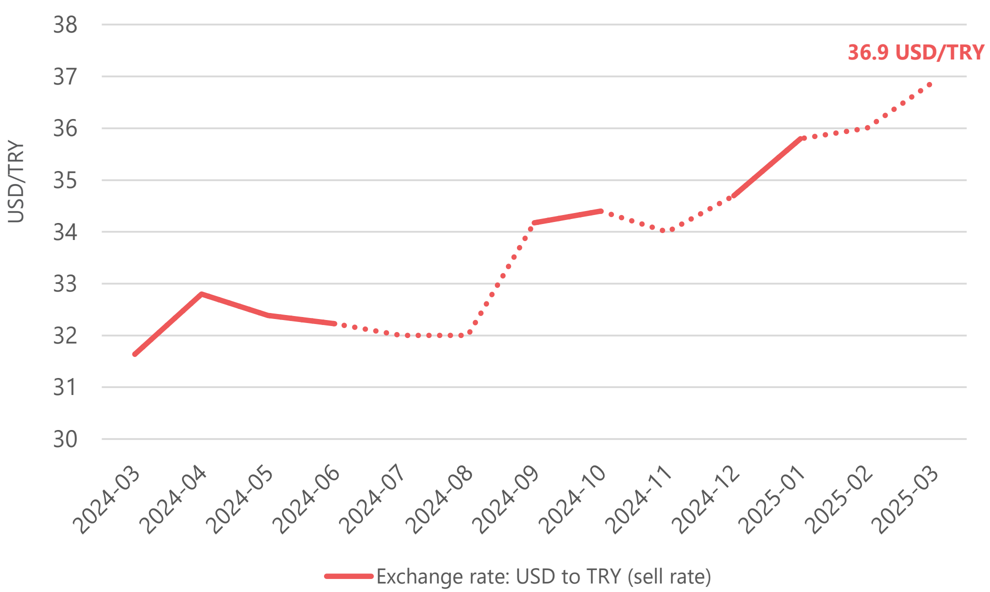
25% ▲

The cost of the SMEB in TRY increased by 25% **in the past year.**

10% ▲

The cost of the SMEB in TRY increased by 11% **in the past two months**

Regional median USD/TRY informal exchange rate trends



Exchange rate trends

Between January 2025 and March 2025, the TRY continued its year-long depreciation trend, with the selling rate of the USD rising by 3% to reach 37 TRY. Over the past 12 months, the TRY has lost 17% of its value against the USD, driving inflation, increasing the cost of imported goods, and placing growing pressure on supply chains, from importers to vendors to end consumers. In NWS, the TRY's instability and volatility have heightened economic uncertainty, undermined market stability, and made planning, budgeting, and investment decisions more challenging, ultimately impacting both the availability and accessibility of goods for households.

In addition to the depreciation of the currency, reports indicate a growing presence of the Syrian Pound (SYP) in markets across the NWS region since December 2024. This trend appears to be linked to changes in territorial control and boundaries, which have coincided with increasing population movements from previously Government of Syria (GoS) areas into NWS. These dynamics have reportedly contributed to uncertainty in markets regarding the preferred currency among vendors and consumers, with an increasing number of vendors now using and accepting the SYP.[3] However, it is worth noting that in Idleb and Aleppo, only 5% of vendors accepted SYP as of March 2025, compared to 23% in Raqqa.

17% ▼ **The TRY has lost 17% of its value against the USD over the past year.**

*For additional information on the SMEB composition, please refer to the SMEB contents section.

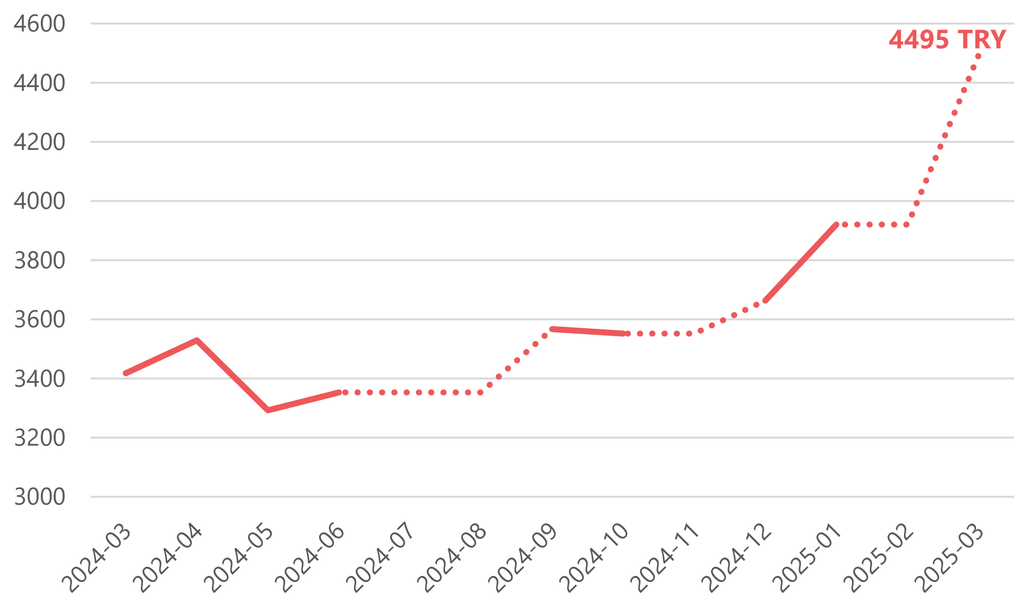
Food economic accessibility

Between January and March 2025, the cost of the regional median SMEB food component surged by 14% in NWS, reaching a record high of 4,495 TRY. This sharp increase accounts for half of the total 30% rise observed over the past year, underscoring a rapid escalation in food prices in the short term. Data collection in March 2025 was significantly constrained by access challenges and a suspension of funding. As a result, REACH was unable to gather a sufficient number of surveys to allow for detailed analysis of the SMEB food component at the governorate or sub-district level.

Chicken and eggs recorded the steepest price increases among all monitored food categories, followed by cooking oils, vegetables, and bulk staples. Secondary sources attribute the surge in poultry prices, reportedly most pronounced in Idleb governorate, to disease outbreaks and increased consumer demand.[4] This surge also coincided with the rollout of a unified customs tariff policy in NWS, which may have further contributed to rising costs of all food items categories.

As many households depend on these staples for their daily nutritional needs, rising prices place additional strain on already vulnerable populations, deepening food insecurity and further diminishing the purchasing power of low-income families.

Regional median price of the SMEB food component, TRY

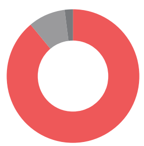


Regional median food prices (in TRY and USD) and percentage change

Item	Unit	Median Price TRY	2-months change (TRY) (January-March)	Median Price USD*
Bulk food items				
Bulgur	1kg	25	+14%▲	0.67
Red lentils	1kg	35	0%	0.95
Rice	1kg	34	+6%▲	0.92
Flour	1kg	17	+11%▲	0.46
Salt	500g	5	0%	0.14
Sugar	1kg	29	+12%▲	0.78
Tomato Paste	1kg	55	0%	1.49
Vegetables				
Tomatoes	1kg	25	0%	0.68
Potatoes	1kg	12	+20%▲	0.32
Cucumbers	1kg	35	+21%▲	0.95
Onions	1kg	12	+9%▲	0.33
Cooking oils				
Ghee	1kg	73	+22%▲	1.97
Vegetable oil	1L	63	+20%▲	1.70
Poultry				
Chicken	1kg	113	+32%▲	3.05
Eggs	1kg	105	+24%▲	2.84
Bread				
Non-subsidised	8pc	11.4	+14%▲	0.31
Subsidised	8pc	6.8	0%	0.18

Food items availability

All food items were generally reported as widely available by surveyed vendors, with no major shortages noted, except for subsidized bread. Despite being significantly cheaper than non-subsidized bread, subsidized bread was reported as unavailable in the surveyed communities, with 89% of vendors who sell bread indicating complete unavailability.

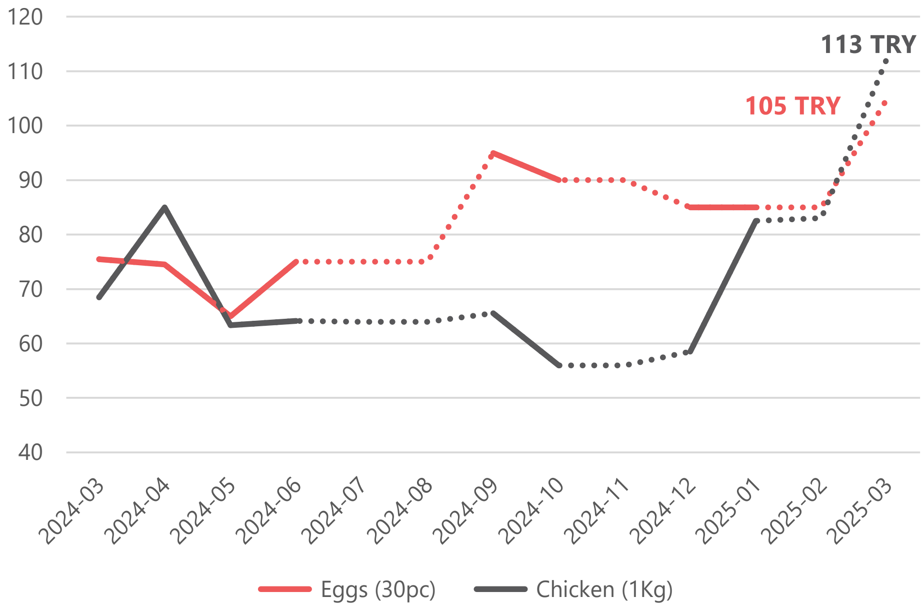


89%

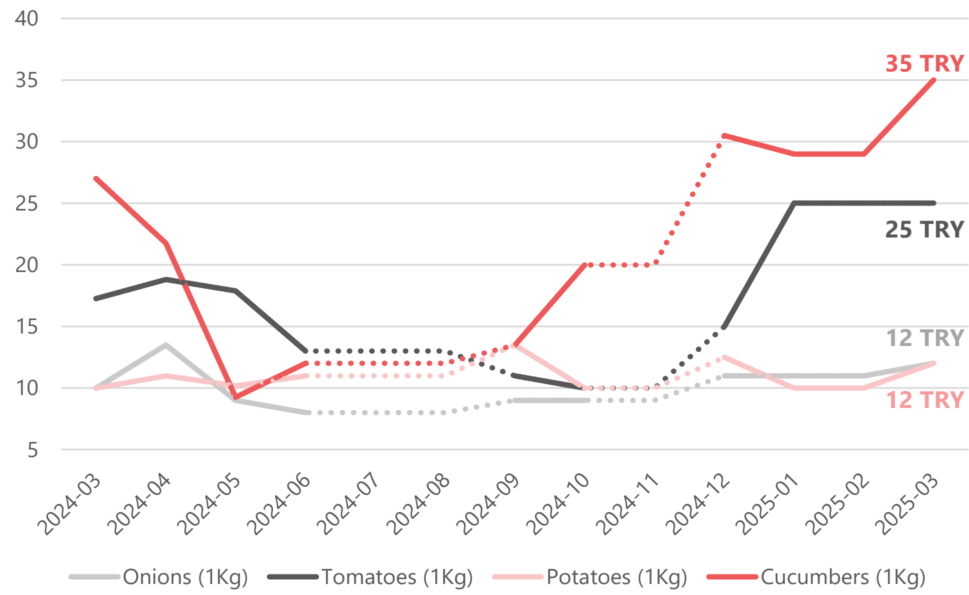
of surveyed vendors in March reported subsidised bread was not available in their community.

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

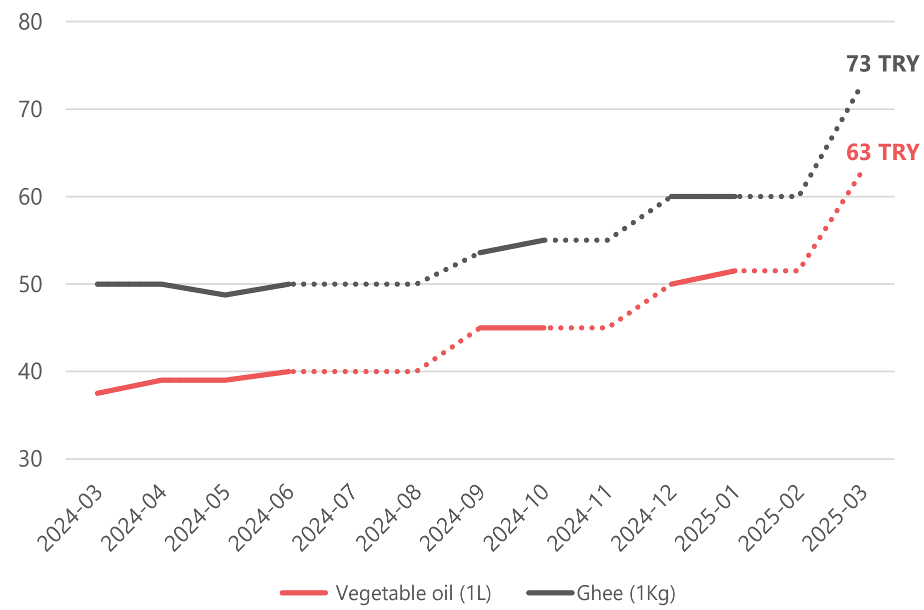
Regional median price of poultry items, TRY



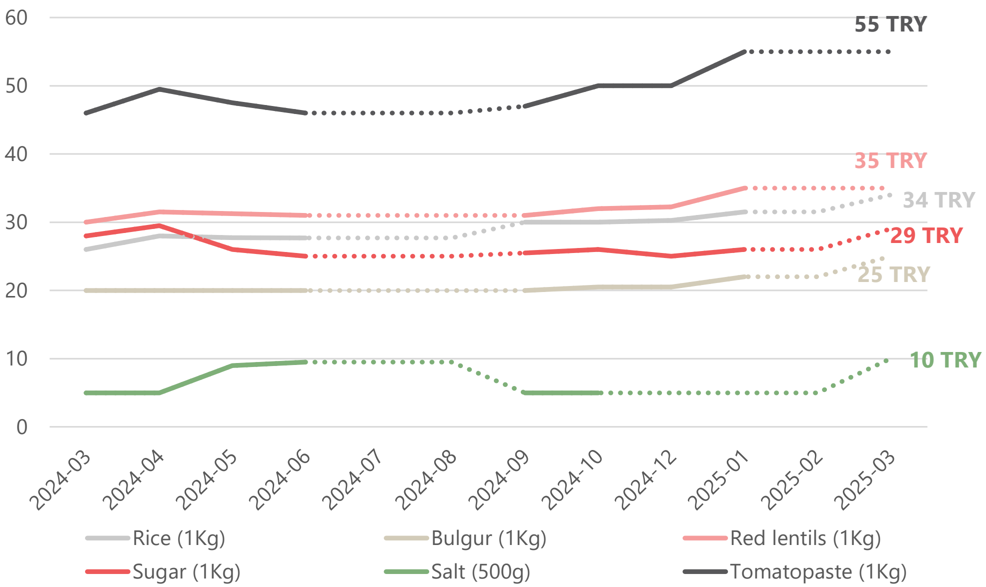
Regional median price of vegetables, TRY



Regional median price of vegetable oil, TRY



Regional median price of bulk food items, TRY



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

Non-food items economic accessibility

Between January and March 2025, **the cost of the SMEB non-food component**, which includes hygiene items such as toothpaste, sanitary pads, body soap, washing powder, and dishwashing liquid, **increased by 7%, reaching a median regional price of 283 TRY.** The majority of SMEB non-food item (NFI) prices appear to be following the upward price trend observed for food items, with the exception of body soap bars, which saw a decrease.

The governorate-level breakdown of the SMEB non-food component shows a bi-monthly increase in Idleb (24%) and Raqqa (4%), while Aleppo recorded a 20% decrease. The contrasting trends between Aleppo and Idleb may reflect differences in local conditions: Aleppo appears to have benefited from improved market access and trade flows,[5] while Idleb faced rising prices due to supply disruptions and heightened insecurity.

In contrast, the median prices of both cooking and transportation fuels either decreased or remained stable during the same period, with the regional SMEB cooking fuel price dropping by 5%.

Non-food items availability

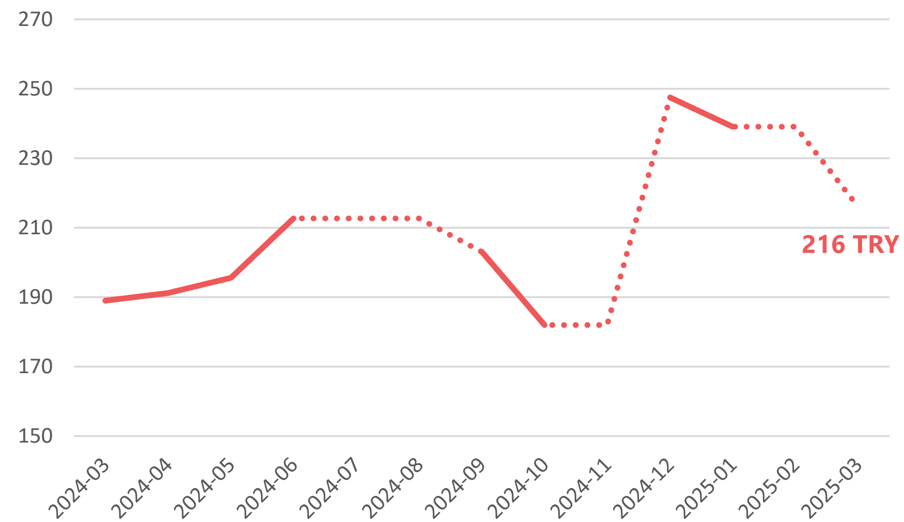
While non-food items were reported as fully available by the assessed vendors, fuel items, particularly subsidized ones, were frequently reported as completely unavailable in the assessed markets, with this trend especially pronounced in Idleb. Subsidized diesel, LPG, kerosene, and petrol were the fuel items most often reported as unavailable, with 98%, 95%, 95%, and 94% of vendors across NWS selling fuels, respectively, indicating their absence in their communities.

Regional median price of hygiene items, TRY

Regional median non-food items (NFI) prices (in TRY and USD) and percentage change

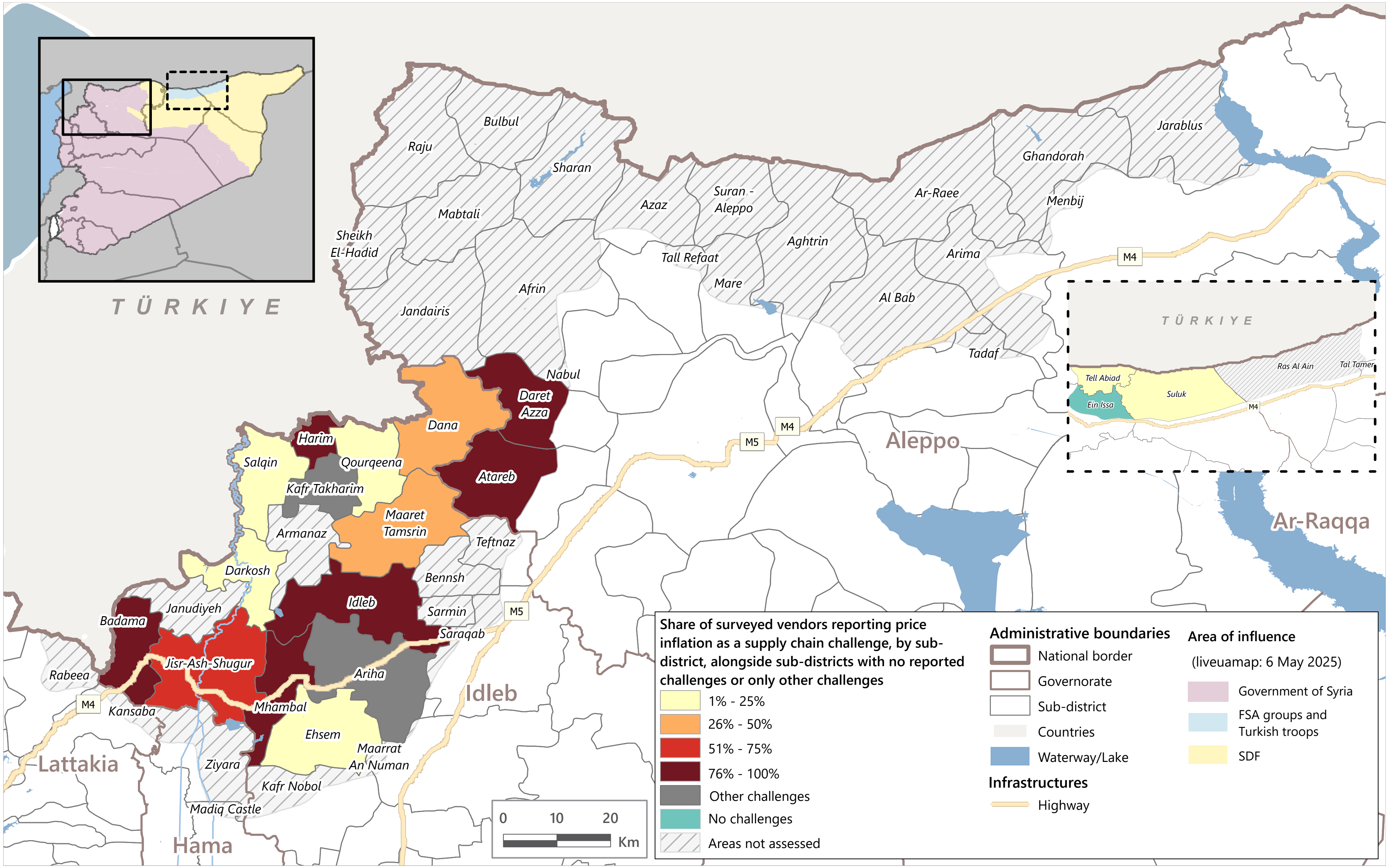
Item	Unit	Median Price	1-month change	Median Price USD*
Non-food items	SMEB			
Bathing soap	1pc	6	-28% ▼	0.16
Sanitary pads	10pc	15	+11% ▲	0.41
Toothpaste	100g	30	+48% ▲	0.81
Laundry powder	1kg	34	+12% ▲	0.92
Dish soap	1L	30	+58% ▲	0.81
Cooking fuels				
Kerosene	1L	No data	No data	No data
LPG gas	1L	62	-5% ▼	1.68
Water trucking				
Water trucking	1L	0.05	-10% ▼	0.0014
Internet				
Mobile data	1gb	18	-43% ▼	0.49
Transportation fuels				
Imported diesel	1L	35	-5% ▼	0.95
Imported petrol	1L	41	-3% ▼	1.11
Manually refined diesel	1L	29	-18% ▼	0.78
Manually refined petrol	1L	35	-5% ▼	0.95

Regional median SMEB water trucking price, TRY



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

Overview of the share of vendors per sub-district reporting price inflation as a supply chain challenge, alongside sub-districts reporting only other challenges or no supply chain challenges



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Market functionality

Overall, market physical access indicators pointed to generally good access across NWS, while financial accessibility indicators highlighted more critical challenges, with the majority of vendors reporting that customers faced financial barriers.

Customers' physical access to markets was widely reported as unhindered across the assessed areas. None of the assessed vendors identified security-related barriers or discriminatory practices preventing market access. Additionally, 98% of surveyed vendors, with no major variations across governorates, reported no physical access difficulties, although a few mentioned the lack of public transportation as a constraint.

Financial access to markets remains a key constraint for customers. Despite the overall positive reports on physical accessibility, financial barriers were more pronounced: half (51%) of surveyed vendors indicated that customers struggled to afford the items available.

Vendors across NWS reported varying levels of disruption in supply chain functionality. While half (52%) of overall surveyed vendors across NWS reported difficulties in keeping their shops operational and well-stocked during the seven days preceding data collection, stark geographical differences emerged. Whereas 100% of surveyed vendors in Aleppo reported experiencing operational difficulties, in Idleb and Raqqa governorates, 34% and 23% of vendors reported operational difficulties, respectively. These figures indicate a deterioration in operational conditions at the governorate level compared to January 2025 in Aleppo (previously 47%) and Raqqa (previously 11%), while showing an improvement in Idleb (previously 43%).

Available payment modalities in NWS markets remain limited. None of the surveyed vendors reported accepting electronic payments; all relied on upfront cash payments, with a small minority (16%) offering also delayed cash payments. While the TRY and USD continue to dominate transactions, data suggests a growing use of the SYP among assessed vendors.

Liquidity shortages remain a challenge for vendors in NWS, with 82% of surveyed vendors offering currency exchange services reporting a shortage of at least one USD banknote denomination during the seven days preceding data collection.

Top 3 reported financial challenges faced by customers, % of surveyed vendors who reported such barriers

	NWS overall
Many customers cannot afford the items available	51%
Many customers cannot pay for their items in a way that is accepted in this shop (ex. not enough cash, no mobile money account, etc.)	3%
Public transportation is too expensive for many customers	2%

Top 3 reported supply chain challenges, % of surveyed vendors who reported facing difficulties

	NWS overall
Price increases & high prices from suppliers impacts ability to buy stock stocks	46%
Increases/high cost of customs fees	12%
Lack of funds	3%

% of surveyed vendors accepting different currencies, by governorate and region

	Aleppo (N=41)	Ar-Raqqa[6] (N=39)	Idleb (N=450)	NWS overall
Turkish Lira (TRY)	95%	100%	98%	98%
United states Dollar (USD)	46%	46%	38%	43%
Syrian Pound (SYP)	5%	23%	5%	11%

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 to the right.

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 reflects only the specific timeframe in which it was collected. Variations in coverage may occur between data collection rounds, and any comparisons should be regarded as indicative.
- 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.

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 understanding the financial burdens that households face 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
Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Toothpaste	200 kg
Other items	
Cooking fuel	
Water trucking	15 L
Phone data	4500 L
Float (other costs)	1 GB

Endnotes

1 Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies (February 2025), "Syria's New Customs Tariff and the Potential Economic Fallout".

2 Enab Baladi (December 2024), " Idlib turns into popular destination for Syrians from other provinces".

3 Levant 24 (January 2025), "Syrian Transitional Government Implements New Customs Tariffs".

4 Enab Baladi (February 2025), "Chicken meat prices rise by 25% in Idlib: What are the reasons?".

5 Enab Baladi (December 2024), "Goods prices drop in Aleppo markets".

6 The figures on currency acceptance for Raqqa refer specifically to areas of Ar-Raqqa governorate under the control of the Syrian Interim Government. It is assumed that in SDF-controlled areas of Raqqa, most vendors continue to accept the Syrian Pound (SYP).

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).

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 Wroup Coordinator at cbr.twg@gmail.com.