

Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

June 2016

Cash-Based Responses
Technical Working Group

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in northern Syria and how markets cope with challenges created by the conflict, the Cash-Based Responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) and REACH conduct monthly monitoring of key markets. In each assessed market, field teams record the prices and stock levels of selected food and non-food items (NFIs) sold by local traders and retailers. 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 outlines the minimum culturally adjusted group of items required to support a six-person household over a one-month period.

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 expenses and currency exchange rates. In order to illustrate variation in prices and availability, REACH has used the collected data to map the price of an SMEB in each subdistrict. The cleaned data sets are available on the REACH Resource Centre and are distributed to CBR-TWG partners, as well as to the clusters.

WHAT IS THE CASH-BASED RESPONSES TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP?

The Cash-Based Responses Technical Working Group (CBR-TWG) was established in March 2014 to analyse the impact of the ongoing conflict on markets in Syria and guide the implementation of humanitarian cash and voucher programmes within those markets.

METHODOLOGY

Between 13 and 20 June 2016, a network of enumerators affiliated with CBR-TWG members collected detailed information about the availability and prices of key food items, non-food items and fuel in northern Syria. Eight partners (CARE/Shafak, Concern, GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH and Solidarités International) contributed data from 28 subdistricts across Idlib, Lattakia, Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor and al-Hasakeh governorates.

Ten survey forms were deployed on KoBo to capture price and stock information from different types of establishments, including grocery stores, fuel traders, currency exchange shops and water trucking services, among others. In most cases, enumerators used the KoBoCollect Android app to upload data.

In order to be included in the Market Monitoring Exercise, markets had to be permanent in nature, large enough to support at least two wholesalers, and diverse enough to provide a sufficient variety of goods and commodities. The shops surveyed within each market had to be housed in permanent structures and had to sell certain items to be eligible for inclusion.

Enumerators were trained on methodology and tools by REACH and CBR-TWG members. Each enumerator assessed three to five shops of each type in the main market in their assigned subdistrict, using surveys to collect information about prices, current product inventory and the time needed to replace current stocks. In subdistricts where direct surveying by enumerators was not possible, such as Lattakia, ar-Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor, data collection was conducted directly through key informants such as shop owners, suppliers, and consumers.

Following data collection, REACH compiled and cleaned all partners' data, normalising prices and

cross-checking outliers. The cleaned data was then analysed by commodity and by subdistrict. Prices were divided into quartiles and boxplots were created to help CBR-TWG members understand the distribution of prices. In addition, REACH calculated and mapped the average cost of an SMEB in each subdistrict.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

CBR-TWG partners closely monitor the security context in the subdistricts where they have committed 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.

In this round, operational capacity challenges resulted in the loss of coverage for the Al Mayadin subdistrict, which was assessed for the first time in May 2016. For methodological reasons, restocking data from al-Hasakeh governorate could not be analysed alongside data from other governorates and had to be excluded.

Coordinating a cross-border price monitoring exercise via remote management is inherently challenging, as issues of enumerator training, consistent communication and verification of results are harder to resolve from afar. CBR-TWG members have sought to overcome these issues by harmonising procedures and data collection tools to ensure that the data uploaded are as accurate as possible.

ASSESSED GOVERNORATES



SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (SMEB) CONTENTS

	Item	Quantity
Food Items	Bread	37 kg
	Bulgur	15 kg
	Chicken	4 kg
	Dried pulses	19 kg
	Eggs	6 kg
	Fresh vegetables	6 kg
	Ghee	7 kg
	Rice	19 kg
	Salt	1 kg
	Sugar	5 kg
Non-Food Items	Tomato paste	6 kg
	Individual soap	12 pcs
	Laundry/dish soap	2 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Fuel	Toothpaste	2 pcs
	Kerosene (manually refined)	25 L
Water	Water	2790 L
Other	6% float*	6% total value

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

JUNE 2016: NORTHERN SYRIA CONTEXT

TFor the month of June, the humanitarian situation in northern Syria was impacted by the uptick in violence as the partial ceasefire first instituted in February broke down over the subsequent months. In particular, regular airstrikes across Aleppo governorate between June 18 and 28 contributed to a deteriorated security environment, and limited airstrikes in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor in this same timeframe were also reported. Further, reports of airstrikes on markets in Idleb, Jisr Al Shoghour and Ariha also impacted access, availability, and prices.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

The median informal US dollar sell rate was 491 SYP/USD, down from 635 SYP/USD in May. This represented a 23% fall since May, suggesting that inflation rates this year may have reached peak levels in the preceding month with an initial sign of deflation in June. As for the Turkish lira, the median sell rate in June was 168 SYP/TRY, signalling a 20% drop since last month and a 7% drop since April.

Whereas in May, where nearly all food items saw a rise in cost from the preceding month, the majority of food items between the May and June rounds dropped in price—although not quite to April levels. In particular, the median price of cucumbers dropped by 29% since May, down from 175 SYP to 125 SYP (.28 to .25 USD) and dropping by 44% since April. The price of tomato paste also saw a significant 20% drop between May and June, down from 750 SYP (1.18 USD) to 600 SYP (1.22 USD), after seeing a sharp 36% rise in price between the April and May rounds. Compared to the month of

MEDIAN EXCHANGE RATES

491 SYP/USD
168 SYP/TRY

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

**LAUNDRY SOAP, TOMATOES,
POTATOES, FUEL**

May, which saw significant increases in the price of eggs and chicken due to localized shortages, the prices of these two food items dropped during June: the median price of chicken dropped by 2% from 1025 to 1000 SYP, although in some local markets prices continued to be reported as high as 1,700 SYP. Egg prices dropped by 18% from 1225 to 1000 SYP. SMEB staples such as red lentils, onions, and bread saw no change in price between the May and June rounds, remaining at 600, 150, and 100 SYP respectively.

Three food items experienced price increases between May and June. Median prices of fresh vegetables such as tomatoes and potatoes rose sharply, with tomatoes increasing by 36% from 175 to 238 SYP (.28 to .48 USD) and the median price of potatoes rising by 30% from 150 to 195 SYP (.24 to .40 USD). Additionally, the price of salt rose by 12% since May, from 134 to 150 SYP (.21 to .31 USD).

With respect to non-food items, the median prices of sanitary pads and toothpaste remained unchanged between May and June, remaining at 250 and 200 SYP respectively. Laundry soap, however, saw an 11% price increase from 450 to 500 SYP (.71 to 1.02 USD). Individual soap dropped by 25% between the May and June rounds, from 100 SYP to 75 SYP (.16 to .15 USD).

After rising in May, prices dropped again in June for most types of fuel, in some cases quite significantly. The median price of manually refined diesel fell by 69% since last month from 175 to 55 SYP/L (.28 to .11 USD/L). Government diesel and manually refined petrol prices dropped by 48% and 47%, respectively, from 250 to 130 SYP/L (.39 to .26 USD/L) and 188 to 100 SYP/L (.28 to .20

MAIN SHORTAGES

**KEROSENE, WATER,
CHICKEN**

USD/L). The median price of kerosene dropped by 34% from 200 to 132 SYP/L (.31 to .27 USD/L). Government petrol saw a 7% rise in prices, from 375 SYP/L in May (.59 USD/L) to 400 SYP/L in June (.81 USD/L).

The median price to deliver 1 litre of water via private trucking services in June was .54 SYP, dropping by 17% from May (.65 SYP). These services saw a substantial increase during the months of March and April, where private water trucking prices were .34 and .38 SYP per litre, respectively. In June 2016, the median price of a 150 x 200cm winter blanket with a minimum thickness of 5 mm reached its lowest price in recent months, reported at 3,200 SYP and down from 3,750 SYP in May, 4,500 SYP in April, and 4,000 SYP in March

AVAILABILITY

Availability of certain SMEB commodities improved during June, while geographically widespread shortages of other items persisted, with several shortages concentrated in or bordering Aleppo governorate. While sugar was not available in assessed markets in nine subdistricts in May, availability increased in June with only two subdistricts in Aleppo—Tell Abiad and Suluk—reporting shortages. Conversely, although the availability of chicken improved in May, with only three subdistricts in Aleppo and al-Hasakeh reporting shortages, chicken was reportedly unavailable in six subdistricts in June (Ain al Arab, Lower Shyookh, Sarin, Suluk, Al-Hasakeh, and Ras al-Ain). Availability of eggs remained consistent between May and June, with three subdistricts (Ain al Arab, Tell Abiad, and Sarin) reporting shortages.

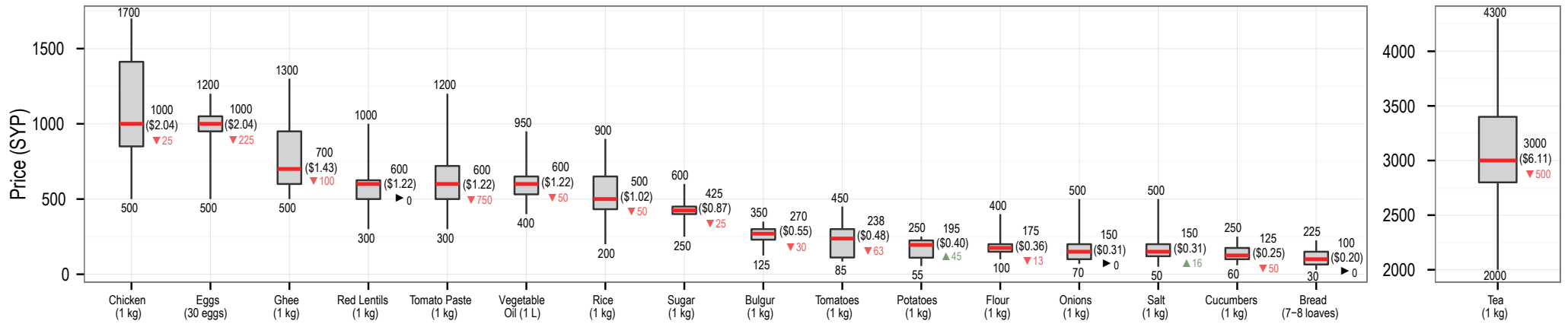
Kerosene was widely unavailable in the month of June, with assessed markets in six subdistricts

reporting a lack of availability. Five of these six subdistricts are located in Aleppo. Private water trucking services were reported to be unavailable in four subdistricts, including Tell Abiad and Suluk in Ar-Raqqa, Lattakia city, and Tefnaz in Idleb governorate.

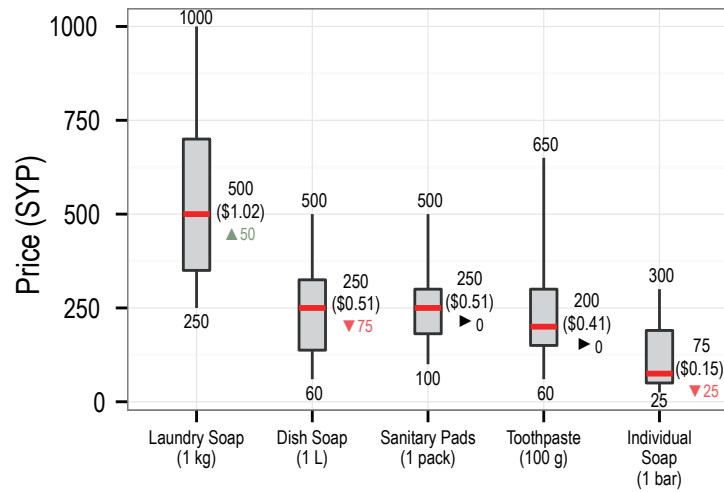
SMEBs

The value of a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is calculated for each assessed subdistrict by calculating the median prices of all SMEB commodities in that subdistrict and multiplying these medians by the number of units that an average northern Syrian household must purchase in a month. Ten subdistricts had complete SMEBs in June, indicating a significant increase from May when only five subdistricts reported availability of complete SMEBs. Of these 10 subdistricts, six are located in Idleb governorate (Harim, Kafr Takharim, Armanaz, Darkosh, Idleb city, and Saraqab), three are located in Al Hasakeh (Quamishli, Qahtaniyyeh, and Al Malikeyyeh), and one is located in Aleppo (A'zaz). The least expensive complete SMEB was in Saraqab in Idleb governorate, which reported 55,322 SYP or 113 USD, indicating that the price of the least expensive complete SMEB rose by 2% since last month. The most expensive complete SMEB was in Darkosh, also in Idleb governorate, which reported 67,244 SYP (137 USD). Conversely, the price of the most expensive complete SMEB experienced a dramatic drop of 23% since May. The values of incomplete baskets can be compared using the SMEB map, though caution should be taken to compare only baskets that are missing exactly the same commodities.

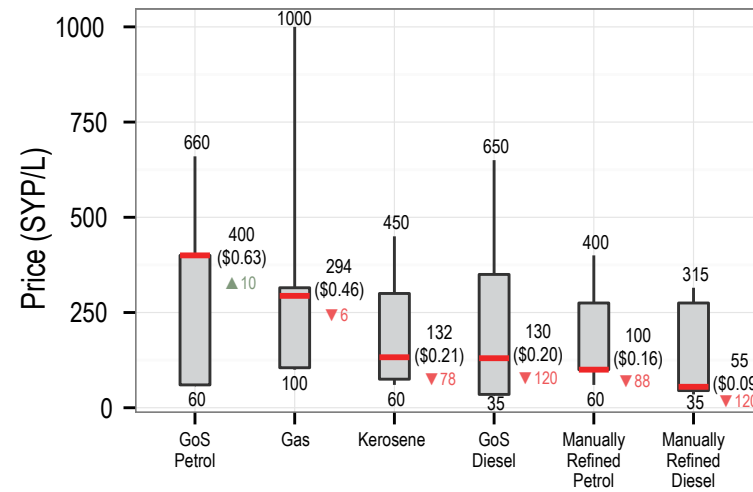
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

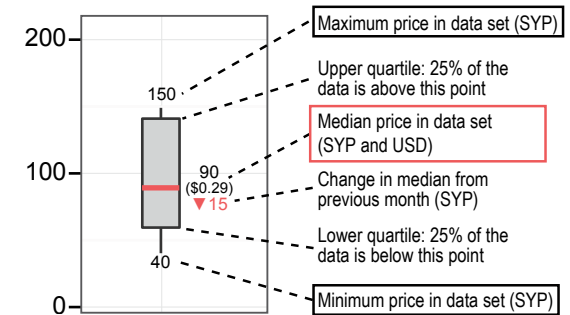


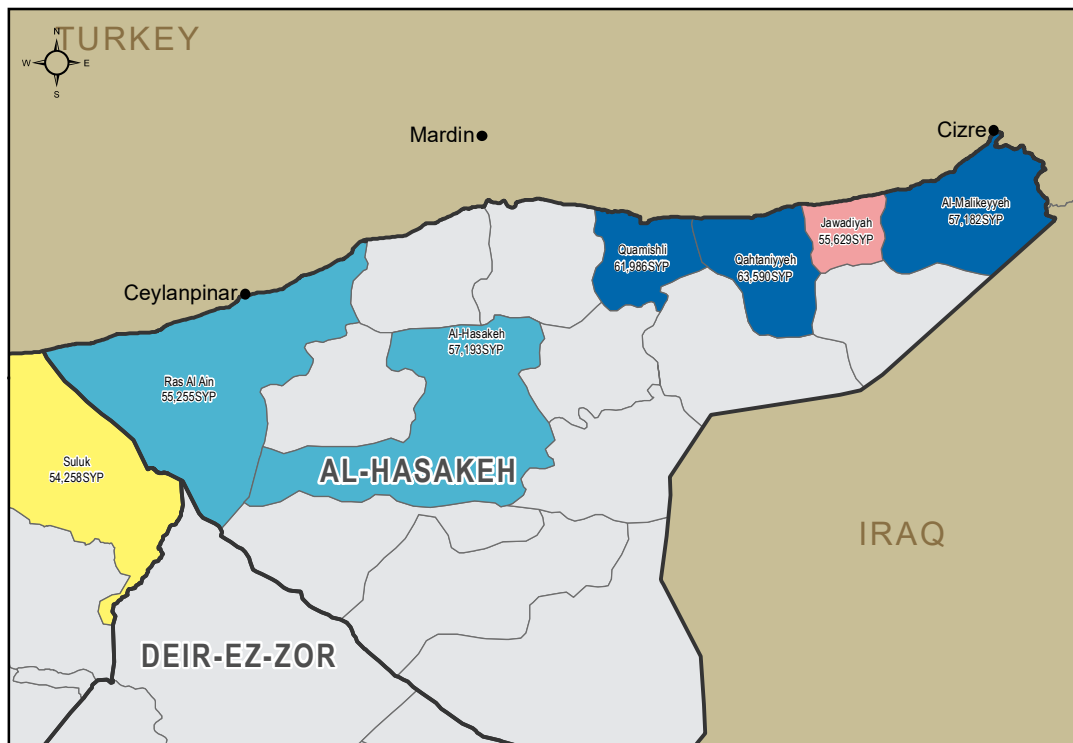
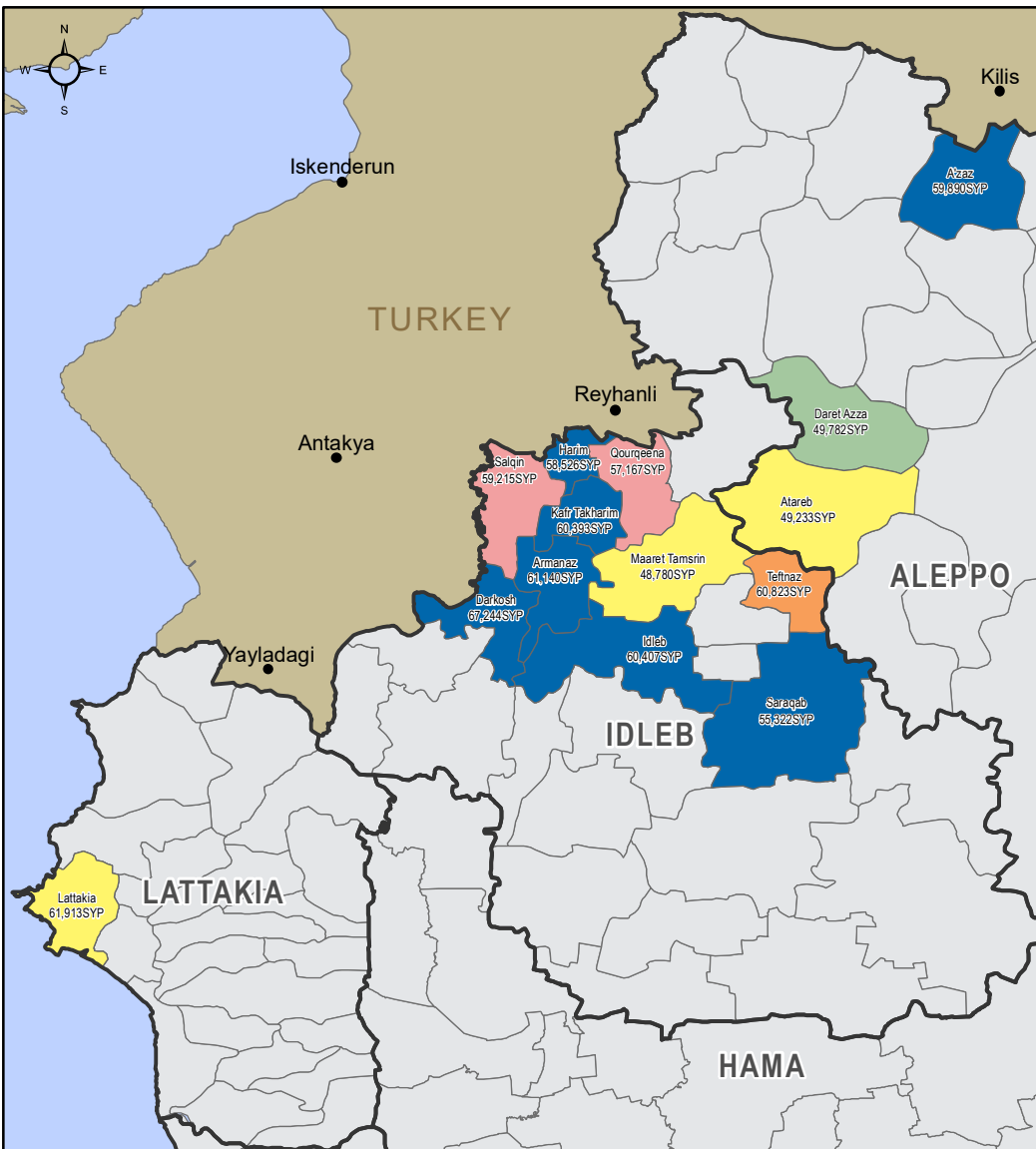
FUEL



How to read a box plot

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





SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET			
ITEM	QUANTITY	ITEM	QUANTITY
Bread	37 Kg	Laundry/dish soap	2 Kg
Rice	19 Kg	Individual soap	12 Pcs
Bulgur	15 Kg	Toothpaste	2 Pcs
Ghee	7 Kg	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Sugar	5 Kg	Dried Pulses	19 Kg
Tomato paste	6 Kg	Fresh vegetables	6 Kg
Chicken	4 Kg	Kerosene (manually refined)	25 L
Eggs	6 Kg	Water	2790 L
Salt	1 Kg	6% float*	6% total value

- SMEB Complete
- SMEB Incomplete
- SMEB Excluding Bread
- SMEB Excluding Kerosene
- SMEB Excluding Water
- SMEB Excluding chicken

Data sources:
 Boundaries - OCHA COD, USDS HIU
 Market monitoring data - REACH, CBR-TWG
 Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
 File: 20160713_REACH_SYR_SMEB_A4
 Contact: reach.mapping@impact-initiatives.org

Note: Data, designations and boundaries contained on this map are not warranted to be error-free and do not imply acceptance by the REACH partners, associates or donors mentioned on this map.