

Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

December 2016

Cash-Based Responses
Technical Working Group

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in northern 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. 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.

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. 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 12 and 18 December 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. 10 partners (ACTED, CARE/Shafak, Concern, GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH, Solidarites International and Violet) contributed data from 34 subdistricts across Lattakia, Idleb, Aleppo, ar-Raqqa and al-Hasakeh governorates.

Nine 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

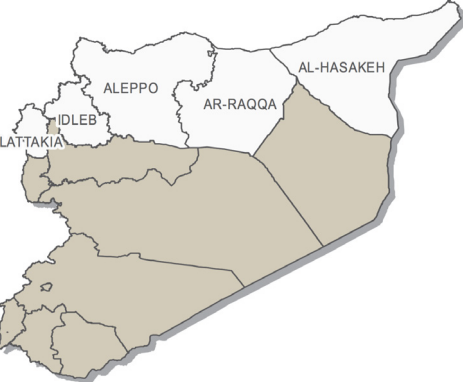
structures and had to sell certain items to be eligible for inclusion.

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, 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 addition, REACH calculated and mapped the average cost of an SMEB in each subdistrict.

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 case in the divided cities of al-Hasakeh and Qamishli, where only markets on one side of the frontline could be surveyed. Moreover, in December, three partners had to scale back coverage due to operational or security constraints, including in the cities of Deir-ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa and Aleppo.

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
	Tomato paste	6 kg
Non-Food Items	Individual soap	12 pcs
	Laundry/dish soap	2 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
	Toothpaste	2 pcs
Fuel	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.

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. 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.

CBR-TWG partners closely monitor the security context in the subdistricts where they plan to

DECEMBER 2016: NORTHERN SYRIA CONTEXT

The humanitarian situation in the besieged eastern part of Aleppo city deteriorated sharply in early December as clashes in the area intensified. Civilians faced unprecedented challenges, with food stocks having run out, healthcare often inaccessible, and a high risk of loss of life. A truce agreement in mid-December brought an end to months of siege and enabled people to leave eastern Aleppo. Many moved west from Aleppo towards Idlib governorate and to areas near the Turkish border, such as Dana and A'zaz subdistricts, over the course of the month, putting pressure on markets in these areas.

Intense fighting continued in other parts of northern Syria, particularly in the town of Al-Bab and in northern and western parts of Ar-Raqqa governorate. Intermittent clashes and shelling also occurred in parts of Idlib governorate and in Deir-ez-Zor city during December.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

Exchange rates for the Syrian pound decreased noticeably from November to December. The median informal US dollar sell rate fell by 4.3% from 530 SYP/USD to 507 SYP/USD, the first decrease of more than 2% since June. The range of sell rates was far smaller in December than in November, with just 15 SYP separating the highest rate of 515 SYP/USD in Daret Azza and Latakia city and the lowest rate of 500 SYP/USD, which was reported in Suran. The median sell rate for the Turkish lira fell from 160 SYP/TRY in November to 145 SYP/TRY in December. This marked the third consecutive monthly decrease in the Turkish lira median sell rate from 183 SYP/TRY in September. Local exchange rates ranged from 158 SYP/TRY in Badama to 141 SYP/TRY in Idlib city.

**MEDIAN EXCHANGE RATES
DECEMBER 2016**
507 SYP/USD
145 SYP/TRY

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

EGGS, TOMATO PASTE, BREAD, NATURAL GAS, GoS DIESEL

Median food prices in December continued the trend towards greater stability seen since October, although overall USD prices have generally risen slightly due to the shift in the SYP/USD exchange rate. 9 out of 17 assessed food items experienced no price changes between November and December, compared to 6 unchanged prices in October and November. The prices of 3 of those 9 items - vegetable oil, bulgur and flour - have not changed since August; the other items with unchanged median prices between November and December were red lentils, sugar, cucumbers, onions, salt and tea.

In contrast, the median prices of eggs and tomato paste increased substantially between November and December, by 20% and 17% respectively. For eggs, the price increase from 1250 to 1500 SYP (2.36 to 2.96 USD) reflected increases across all assessed governorates, with governorate medians all increasing by similar proportions. For tomato paste, the median price change from 512 to 600 SYP (0.97 to 1.18 USD) was instead due to increased coverage in Aleppo governorate, where prices were higher, while governorate medians in other assessed areas remained unchanged. The median bread price experienced its third consecutive monthly increase in December and was now 150 SYP (0.30 USD) for a pack of 8 slices, 47% higher than its median price of 102 SYP in September (0.19 USD at September exchange rates).

Sanitation and hygiene item prices experienced either minor or no price changes between November and December, continuing patterns of increasing price stability seen since September. The median price of a pack of 10 sanitary pads has not changed since July, and that of 100g of toothpaste since October. The median price of laundry powder increased slightly, while dishwashing liquid and bathing soap saw minor median price changes.

MAIN SHORTAGES

BREAD, GoS DIESEL, MANUALLY REFINED PETROL, NATURAL GAS

Median fuel prices were slightly more stable in December than in November, with three assessed fuels experiencing only minor price decreases and three undergoing large price increases. The median prices of manually refined diesel and both GoS (Government of Syria) and manually refined petrol all decreased by 5% or less in December. The 25% increase in the median natural gas price from 320 to 400 SYP (0.60 to 0.79 USD) in December reflected median price increases in all assessed governorates except Al-Hasakeh, where gas is subsidised. However, the median price increases of manually refined kerosene and GoS diesel, by 17% and 94% respectively, were caused by a slight increase in coverage in Idlib governorate, where fuel prices are higher. In the case of GoS diesel, this small coverage shift caused such a large price increase due to the large difference between subsidised and unsubsidised gas prices.

The median rate for private water trucking services rose from 0.48 SYP per litre of water in November to 0.57 SYP in December. Prices ranged from a minimum of 0.30 SYP per litre in Heish to a maximum of 1.56 SYP per litre in Badama.

ISSUES OF AVAILABILITY

The cities of Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, which reported the most SMEB item shortages in November, were not assessed in December. No assessed subdistrict in December was missing more than one SMEB item, other than Ain Al Arab which was missing bread and kerosene.

Bread was by far the SMEB item most commonly missing from assessed markets in December, with the nine subdistricts reporting shortages representing a large increase from three subdistricts in November. Kerosene shortages, meanwhile, became less common in December than in November, with the number of subdistricts missing the item decreasing from six to two. The

only other SMEB item shortage in December was that of eggs in Salqin.

For non-SMEB fuels, manually refined diesel and GoS petrol became substantially easier to obtain in December, with only Ain Al Arab and Menbij subdistricts missing GoS petrol, and no subdistrict short of manually refined diesel. Subdistricts reporting shortages of natural gas increased from one to four between November and December, while the corresponding figure for manually refined petrol remained unchanged at seven. GoS diesel remained the most commonly unavailable fuel, reportedly missing from 11 subdistricts.

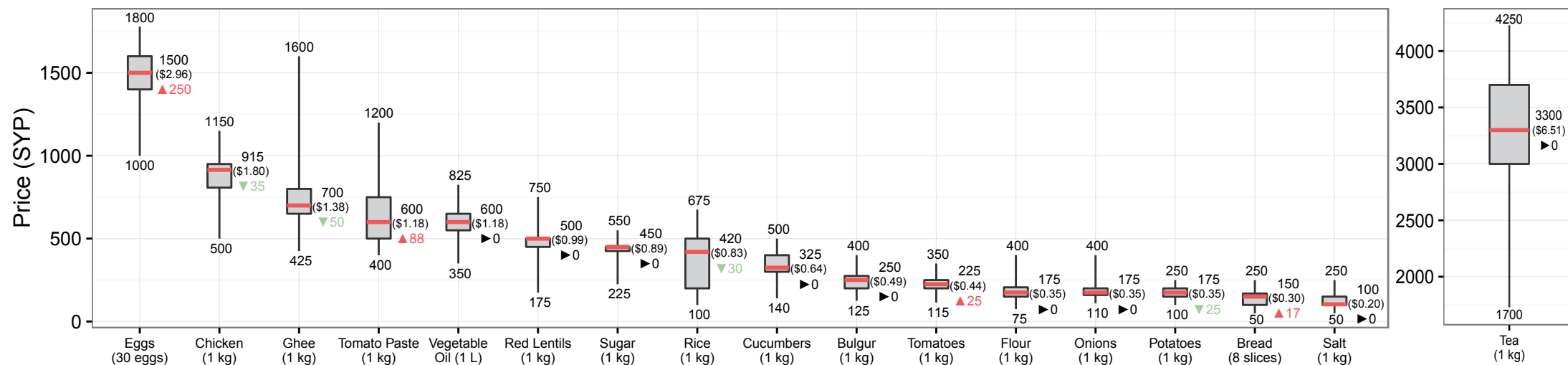
SMEB VALUES

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. In December, it was possible to assemble complete SMEBs for 23 out of 34 assessed subdistricts, a slightly lower rate than in November. Of these, the five cheapest complete SMEBs were all reported from Al-Hasakeh governorate, with the least expensive SMEB available in Jawadiyah subdistrict at 52,773 SYP (96.46 USD), followed by that in Qahtaniyyeh (53,464 SYP, 105.45 USD), which experienced a decrease of 10%.

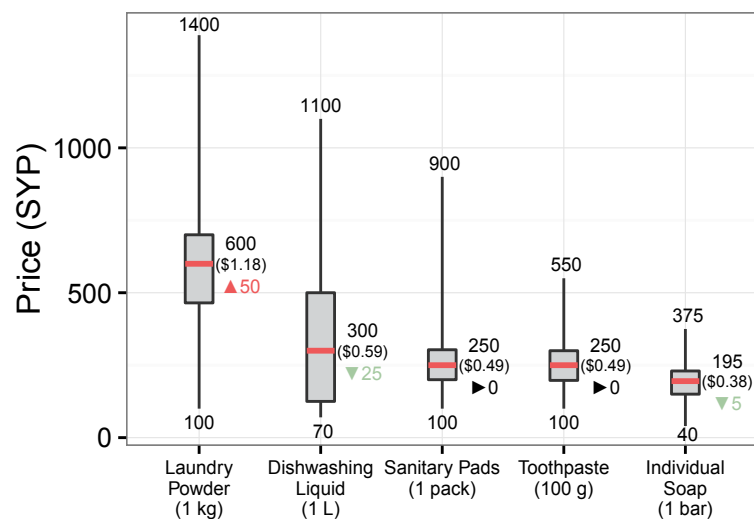
The most expensive complete SMEB, meanwhile, was observed in Tamanaah (85,652 SYP, 168.94 USD), followed by the basket in neighbouring Ma'arrat An Nu'man at 81,550 SYP (160.85 USD), an increase of 35% from November. After Ma'arrat An Nu'man, the largest price increase from November of a complete SMEB, 18%, was seen in Idlib city. In previous months, the highest SMEB prices were often reported from Ar-Raqqa or Deir-ez-Zor cities, which were not covered in December.

The values of all baskets can be compared using the SMEB map, though caution should be taken to compare only baskets that are missing the same commodities.

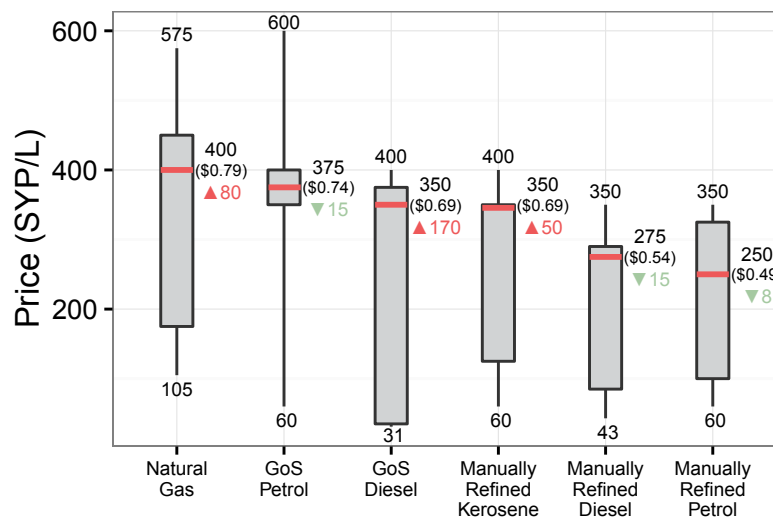
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

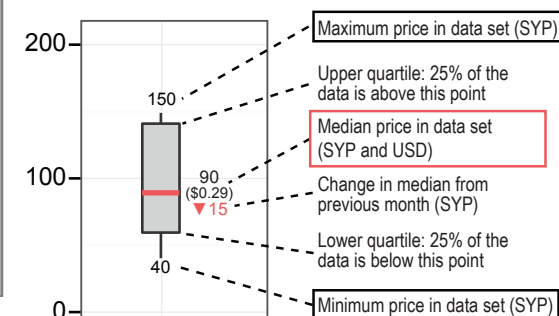


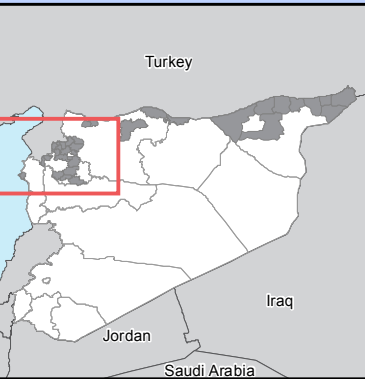
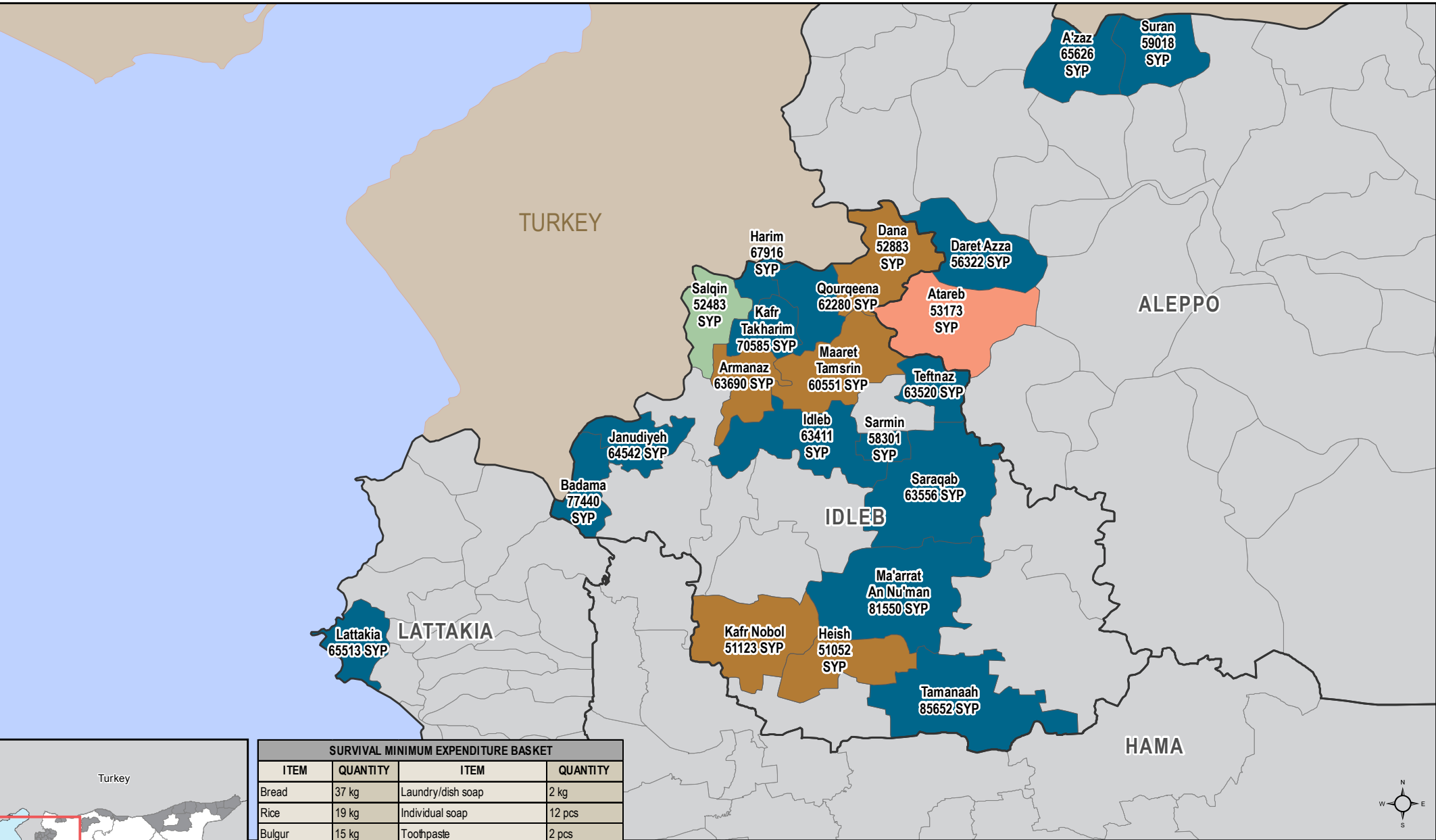
FUEL



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.





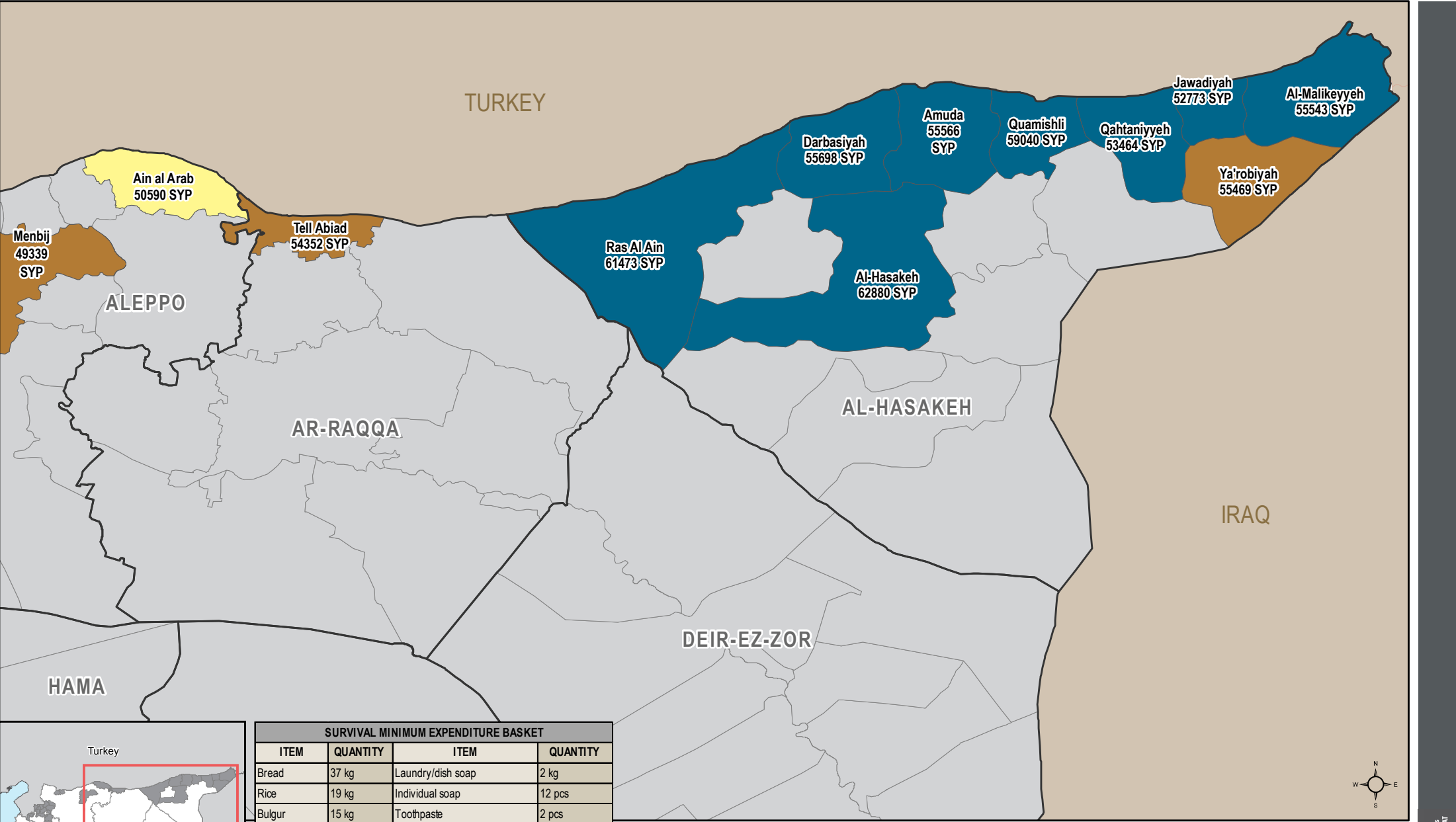
SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET			
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Eggs	6 kg	Water	2790 L
Salt	1 kg	6% float*	6% total value

* not included in SMEB calculations

- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without kerosene
- SMEB without eggs
- SMEB without bread and kerosene

Data sources:
Boundaries - UN OCHA COD
Market monitoring data - REACH, CBR-TWG
Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
File:
REACH_SYR_SMEB_Dec2016_NW_A4_V1
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.



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