

Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

October 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 17 and 23 October 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 32 subdistricts across Lattakia, Idlib, 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 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.

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

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, Qamishli and Deir ez-Zor, where only markets on one side of the frontline could be surveyed. In addition, the security context in the city of Aleppo made it impossible for CBR-TWG partners to operate or collect prices there.

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.

OCTOBER 2016: NORTHERN SYRIA CONTEXT

During October, the humanitarian situation in Aleppo continued to worsen as a result of clashes in both the eastern and western parts of the city. No aid deliveries were able to reach eastern Aleppo during the month as stocks dwindled, and already strained commodity prices in the city have skyrocketed.

Clashes have continued in other parts of the country, including in the divided city of Deir-ez-Zor, which witnessed multiple incidents of shelling in October. There has also been violence in parts of northern Aleppo governorate, as armed groups contest the area between Dabiq and al-Bab, causing more civilians to flee towards areas closer to the Turkish border.

Meanwhile, an upsurge in fighting around the Iraqi city of Mosul in October has led to an inflow of refugees into northeastern Syria, particularly al-Hasakeh governorate, putting additional stress on markets in the area.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

Exchange rates for the Syrian pound remained largely stable between September and October, with the median informal US dollar sell rate showing a miniscule shift from 540 SYP/USD to 539 SYP/USD. The highest and lowest sell rates were separated by 18 SYP, 10 fewer than last month, spanning from a low of 527 SYP/USD in Ras al-Ain subdistrict to highs of 545 SYP/USD in ar-Raqqa, Deir ez Zor and Mayadin subdistricts. Meanwhile, the median sell rate for the Turkish lira fell from 183 SYP/TRY last month to 175 SYP/TRY,

**MEDIAN EXCHANGE RATES
OCTOBER 2016**
539 SYP/USD
175 SYP/TRY

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

**EGGS, CHICKEN, CUCUMBERS, BREAD,
GoS AND MANUALLY REFINED PETROL**

largely reflecting shifts in value of the Turkish lira, with rates ranging from 170 SYP/TRY to 188 SYP/TRY.

On the whole, food prices were more volatile than in September. In contrast with the price increases of the previous three months, the median price of eggs fell back from 1400 SYP in September to the price of 1200 SYP seen in August. Chicken also saw a significant fall in median price, dropping by 19% to 850 SYP from 1050 SYP the previous month. On the other hand, vegetable prices, other than those of potatoes, increased in October. Since September, tomato prices have risen by 10%, and onions and cucumbers by over 30%. As a result, median onion and cucumber prices in October were both double what they had been in August. This change is likely due to the fact that harvest season has recently ended. The median price of bread also increased sharply, rising from 65 to 115 SYP from September to October.

Yet other food items showed more stability. The median prices of four commodities (vegetable oil, bulgur, tea, and flour) have stayed the same since August, while those of two others (sugar and potatoes) were unchanged from September.

NFI prices were more stable than they had been during the summer. The median price of dishwashing liquid has stayed the same as that observed in September, while the median price of a pack of 10 sanitary pads has not changed since July. The median laundry powder price showed a small drop this month and that of toothpaste rose slightly. The median price of bathing soap continued its recent trend of oscillating between 100 and 150 SYP, falling from the latter to the former in October. It is worth noting, however, that these median NFI

MAIN SHORTAGES

**BREAD,
ALL TYPES OF FUEL**

prices reflected huge ranges in prices, sometimes more than 1000 SYP, between subdistricts.

Overall, fuel prices were more stable than in September, and only petrol showed significant price changes. The median price of Government of Syria (GoS) petrol fell from 650 to 500 SYP, while that of manually refined petrol more than doubled, surging from 125 to 300 SYP. This latter change seems to be driven primarily by the inclusion of more non-subsidised prices in the October data than in September. All other fuels showed only minor changes in median price.

In contrast with the previous three months, the cost of water delivery via private water trucking services did not rise between September and October, with the median price of delivering 1 litre of water remaining steady at 0.61 SYP. Prices ranged from a minimum of 0.34 SYP in Dana to 2.50 SYP in Idleb city (the three highest reported prices - 1.50, 2.00 and 2.50 SYP per litre - were all reported in Idleb city). Meanwhile, the median price of a 150x200 cm winter blanket with a minimum thickness of 5 mm stood at 3,675 SYP (6.82 USD) in October.

ISSUES OF AVAILABILITY

While the assessed subdistricts in September appeared to face remarkably few shortages in SMEB items, many more appeared in October. The majority of these shortages were of either kerosene or bread, with seven subdistricts missing the former and five short of the latter. Kerosene shortages tended to be clustered in al-Hasakeh and Aleppo governorates, while many of the bread shortages were in subdistricts in Idleb governorate.

For non-SMEB fuels, GoS-produced fuels became harder to obtain while manually refined fuels

became easier as compared to September. GoS petrol and diesel were missing from 8 and 14 of the 32 assessed subdistricts respectively, with the latter continuing to be the monitored commodity with the most widespread shortages. Manually refined petrol was missing only in Daret Azza (which had access to GoS petrol) and no shortages of manually refined diesel were reported.

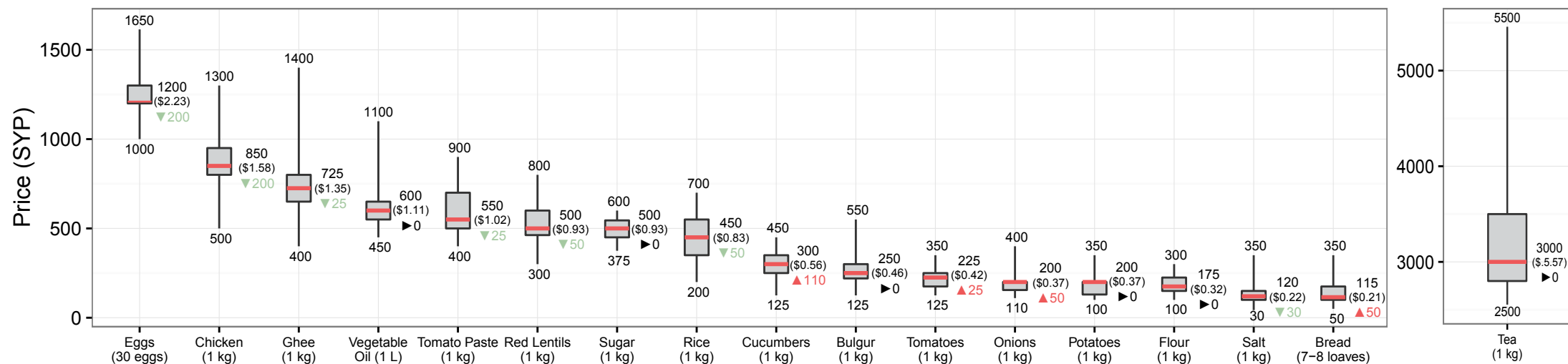
SMEB VALUES

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 October, growing shortages of bread and kerosene meant that it was possible to assemble complete SMEBs for 14 out of 32 assessed subdistricts. Of these, the least expensive complete SMEB, at 52,925 SYP (98.19 USD), was available in Ya'robiyah subdistrict, followed by that in Daret Azza (53,708 SYP, 99.64 USD). These two districts saw the price of a complete SMEB fall by 7.4% and 4.8% respectively.

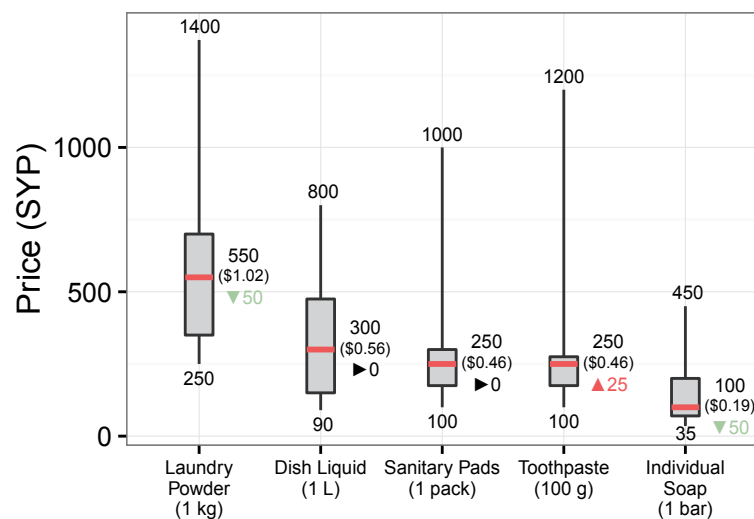
By far the most expensive complete SMEB, meanwhile, was observed in Deir ez Zor city (88,875 SYP, 164.89 USD), with the basket in Lattakia city a distant second at 65,685 SYP (121.86 USD). The incomplete SMEBs in al-Raqqa city and Mayadin subdistricts were also expensive, at 77,410 SYP (143.62 USD) without eggs and 81,025 SYP (150.32 USD) without salt, respectively. The price of a SMEB in Idleb city, which had been the second most expensive in September, fell by 20.4% in October to 57,118 SYP (105.97 USD).

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.

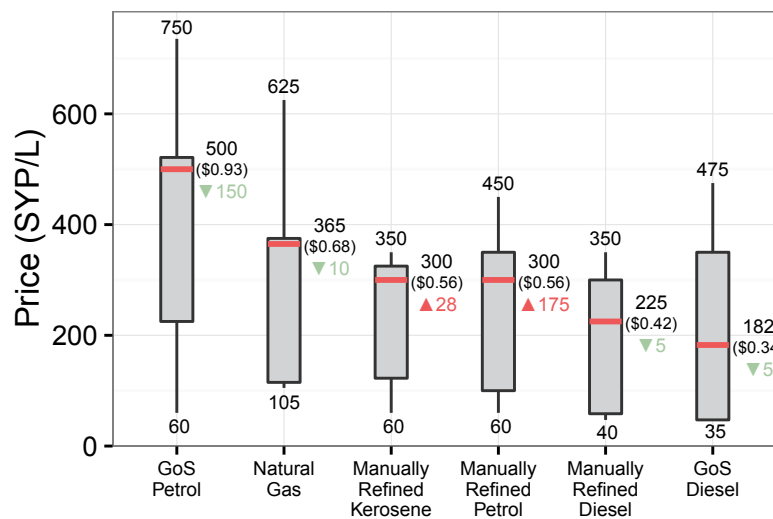
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

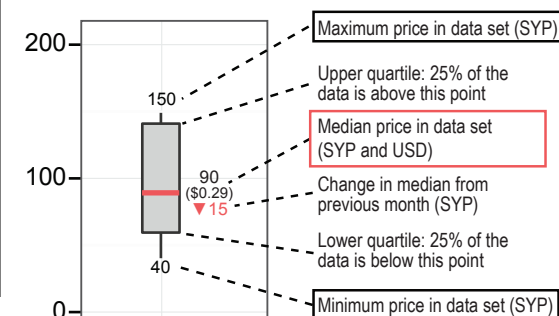


FUEL

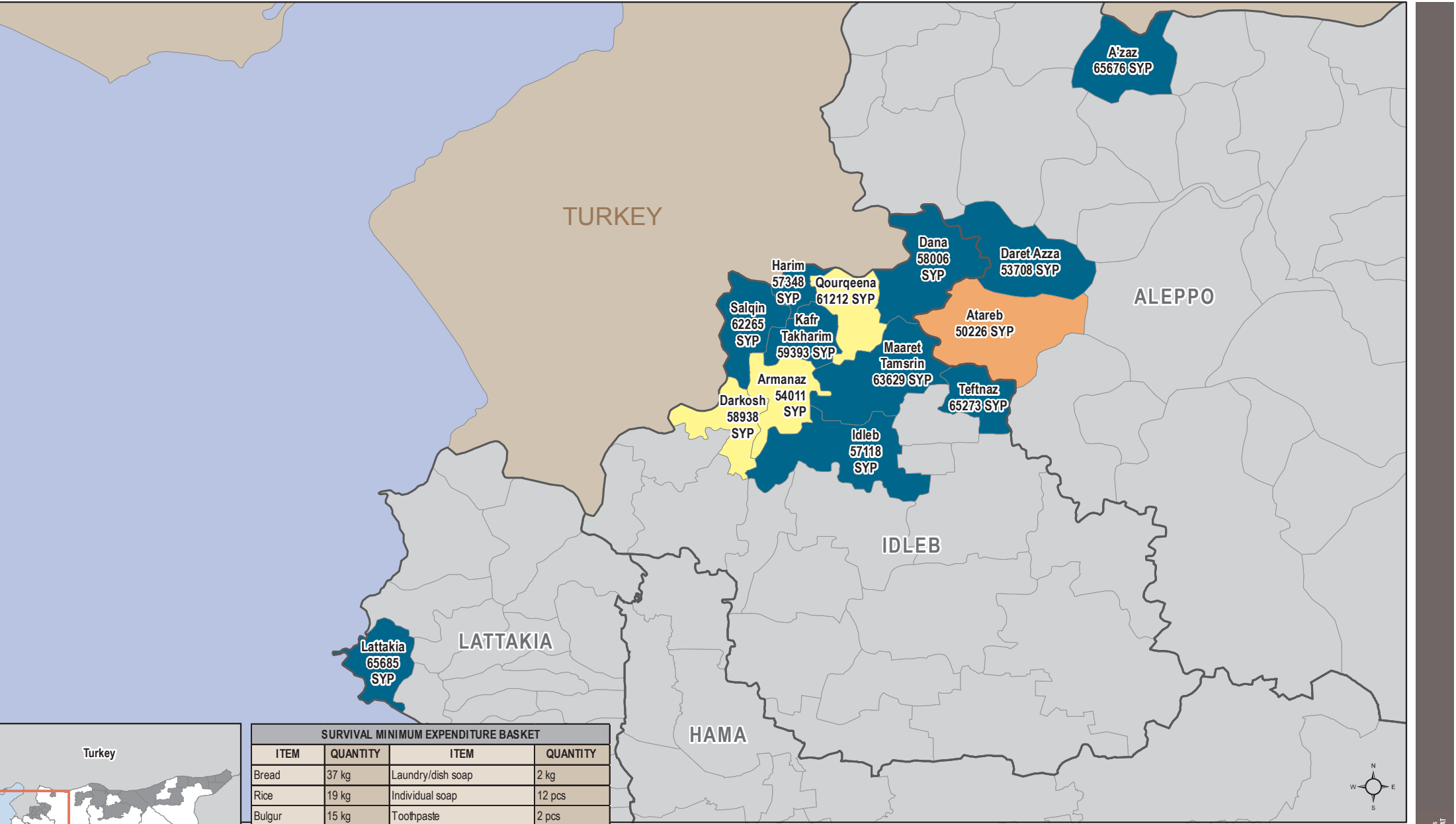


How to read a box plot

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



SYRIA - Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise
SMEB Prices in Northwestern Governorates - October 2016



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
* not included in SMEB calculations			

- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without kerosene
- SMEB without multiple items

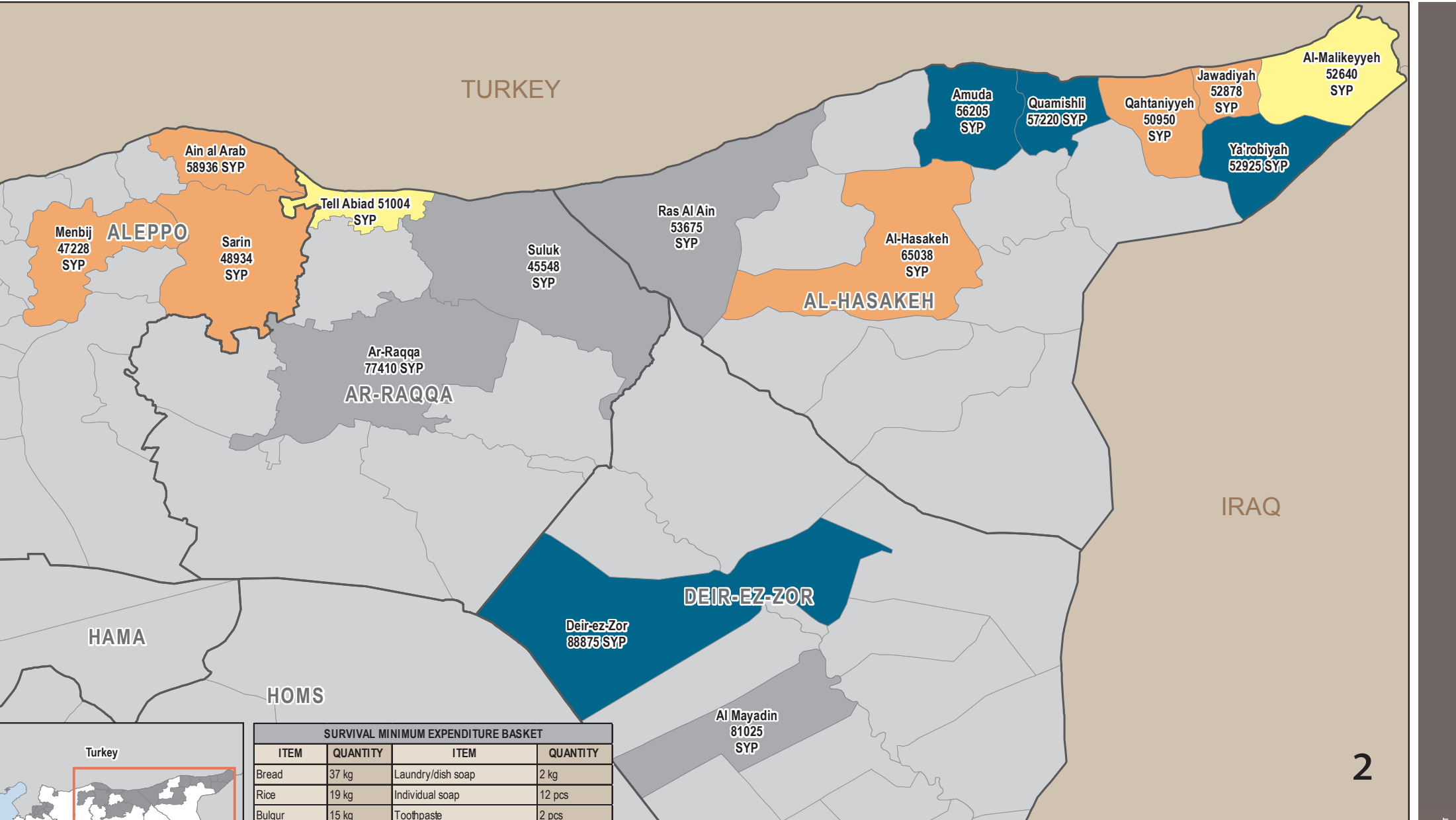
Data sources:
Boundaries - UN OCHA COD
Market monitoring data - REACH, CBR-TWG

Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
File: REACH_SYR_SMEB_Oct2016_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.

SYRIA - Northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

SMEB Prices in Northeastern Governorates - October 2016



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