

Syria Market Monitoring Exercise

March 2017

Cash-Based Responses
Technical Working Group

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

INTRODUCTION

To understand market functionality in 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 throughout the country. 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. The SMEB was created in 2014 and updated in February 2017 to reflect changing household consumption patterns.

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. 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 broader humanitarian community.

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 20 and 27 March 2017, 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 Syria, as well as monitoring the prices of private water trucking and smartphone data. Twelve partners (ACTED, CARE/Shafak, Concern, DanChurchAid, GOAL, Ihsan, IRC, Mercy Corps, People in Need, REACH, Solidarités International and Violet) contributed data from 101 markets across 66 subdistricts in 10 governorates (Lattakia, Idleb, Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Quneitra and Dar'a).

Five 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, water trucking services and mobile phone shops, among others. Most enumerators used the KoBoCollect Android app to upload data directly.

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

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

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.

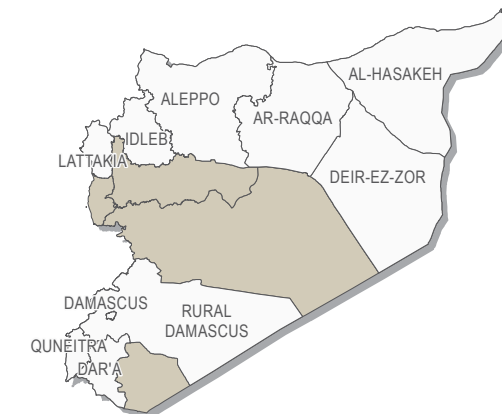
Enumerators were trained on methodology and tools by REACH and CBR-TWG members. Each enumerator assessed three to five shops of each type in the main market in their assigned subdistrict, using surveys to collect information about prices, current product inventory and the time needed to replace current stocks. Where direct visits by enumerators were not possible, 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 different regions of Syria. In addition, REACH calculated and mapped the average cost of an SMEB in each subdistrict based on the composition at right.

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, data collection had to be halted in ar-Raqqa and Jisr-ash-Shugur cities due to insecurity.

In northwestern Syria, new restrictions on mobile data collection meant that several partners were unable to collect data in the field using KoBoCollect. With this in mind, all participating partners were invited to use paper versions of the forms to collect data if needed; the partners then uploaded all collected data to KoBo afterwards.

ASSESSED GOVERNORATES



SURVIVAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (SMEB) CONTENTS

	Item	Quantity
Food Items	Bread	37 kg
	Bulgur	15 kg
	Chicken	6 kg
	Eggs	6 kg
	Fresh vegetables	12 kg
	Ghee/vegetable oil	7 kg
	Red lentils	15 kg
	Rice	19 kg
	Salt	1 kg
	Sugar	5 kg
	Tomato paste	6 kg
Non-Food Items	Bathing soap	12 bars
	Laundry/dish soap	3 kg
	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
	Toothpaste	25 pieces
Fuel	Cooking fuel*	25 L
Water	Water	4500 L
Telecom	Smartphone data	1 GB
Other	Float (other costs)**	7.5% total value

* Kerosene in northern Syria; LPG in southern Syria.

** Float was excluded from SMEB calculations due to the commonality of incomplete baskets.

COMMODITY PRICE CHANGES

Currency

The median informal US dollar exchange rate across all assessed communities was 545 SYP/USD in March, a 3.6% increase from February. The range of sell rates varied by 68 SYP, with the lowest rate in Saqba at 510 SYP/USD and the highest rate in Bennsh at 578 SYP/USD. In general, the **lowest rates** were reported in **Rural Damascus**, with the **highest rates** reported in **Idleb governorate** (Bennsh, Jisr-ash-Shugur, Sanjar) and **Deir-ez-Zor**.

The median sell rate for the Turkish lira increased from 144 SYP/TRY in February to 152 SYP/TRY in March, increasing for the second consecutive month after a four-month decline. Local exchange rates varied by 18 SYP across all assessed markets. The median sell rate for the Jordanian dinar was 750 SYP/JOD, with a 55 SYP variation in assessed market rates.

Food

In March, partners observed several significant food price swings, defined as at least a 20% change in value from the previous month. The median reported price of a kilo of **tomatoes** rose by 40% (100 SYP) in the **northeast**; that of **potatoes** rose by 25% (25 SYP). The median price of a kilo of **cucumbers** rose by 36% (125 SYP) in **Dar'a and Quneitra**, though the median price of **bread** in these governorates fell by 20% (50 SYP). The median reported price of **eggs** declined by 23% (300 SYP) in the **northwest**. The median prices of ghee, vegetable oil, sugar, tea and flour did not change significantly in any region (no more than 5% from February). The remaining food prices were subject to regional price dynamics which caused fluctuations of under 20%.

EXCHANGE RATES

545
SYP/USD

152
SYP/TRY

750
SYP/JOD

MAIN PRICE VARIATIONS

FRESH VEGETABLES, EGGS, FUEL, BATHING SOAP

Fuel

Notable changes in median reported fuel prices were largely in the northeast, where the price of a litre of government-produced petrol dropped by 40% (50 SYP), that of manually refined kerosene increased by 23% (25 SYP), and that of manually refined diesel fell by 23% (17 SYP). The median reported price of **LPG** remained mostly the same across all regions, with a 6% (21 SYP) **increase in the northwest**. In **Quneitra and Dar'a**, the median reported price of **GoS petrol, GoS diesel and manually refined diesel** all decreased between 10-20% in March when compared to February.

NFIs

Changes in median reported hygiene prices from February were in general more dynamic than fuel or food prices. The median reported price of a kilo of **laundry powder changed the least**, with only minor changes in the northwest, Dar'a and Quneitra, and an 8% (50 SYP) increase in the northeast. **Median reported price changes were largest in Dar'a and Quneitra**, with increases of at least 20% reported for toothpaste, sanitary pads and dishwashing liquid. Furthermore, the median price of one bar of bathing soap dropped by 50% (100 SYP) in Dar'a and Quneitra. The median reported price of 100g of **toothpaste** increased by 25% (50 SYP) in the **northwest**, and a 20% decrease (62 SYP) in the median price of a bar of **bathing soap** was noted in the **northeast**.

Water

Water trucking price data was collected among 49 of the 66 assessed subdistricts across Syria. No water data was collected in al-Hasakeh, Lattakia or Deir-ez-Zor governorates. Additionally, no water data was collected in Sarin, Tefnaz, Salqin or Tell

MAIN SHORTAGES

CUCUMBERS, CHICKEN, SALT, SANITARY PADS

Abiad subdistricts.

In both the **northwest** and the **northeast** (eastern Aleppo and northern ar-Raqqa governorates), the median reported water trucking rate was 0.53 SYP/litre, nearly the same rate observed in February. In **Quneitra and Dar'a**, the median reported water trucking price in March was 0.44 SYP/litre, compared to the median reported February rate of 0.45 SYP/litre. In the assessed **non-besieged areas of Rural Damascus**, the March median water trucking rate was reported as 0.70 SYP/litre.

Data

Prices for internet data were collected in 58 of 66 assessed subdistricts in March. No internet price data was collected in Tefnaz, Ras al-Ain or Deir-ez-Zor subdistricts, nor in six of the 11 assessed subdistricts in al-Hasakeh. The median reported price for a gigabyte of internet data in the **northeast** was 2,500 SYP; in the **northwest**, 600 SYP; in **Dar'a and Quneitra**, 3,072 SYP; and in the **non-besieged areas of Rural Damascus**, 4,000 SYP.

ISSUES OF AVAILABILITY

Cucumbers were reported unavailable in Menbij, Salqin and Quneitra subdistricts, with all assessed shops reporting the good as either unavailable in the shop or in the community as a whole. These localised shortages are connected with an observed 36% increase in the reported median price of cucumbers in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates, as well as with shortages and price increases noted in previous months elsewhere in Syria.

Red lentils were reported as unavailable in **Da'el** subdistrict. Similarly, in **Lower Shyookh** subdistrict, **sanitary pads, chicken and salt** were reported to be unavailable. In **Ya'robiyah and Tal Hmis**, no

bread prices were reported, and no **sanitary pad** price data was received from Tal Hmis.

Some price data was collected in **besieged neighbourhoods of Deir-ez-Zor**, where significant price shortages were reported for the majority of assessed SMEB goods. **Only 10 of 23 SMEB goods were reported available**.

Apart from the aforementioned, the remaining subdistricts with incomplete fuel or communications data in March were due to gaps in coverage; these gaps did not necessarily indicate issues of availability.

SMEB VALUES

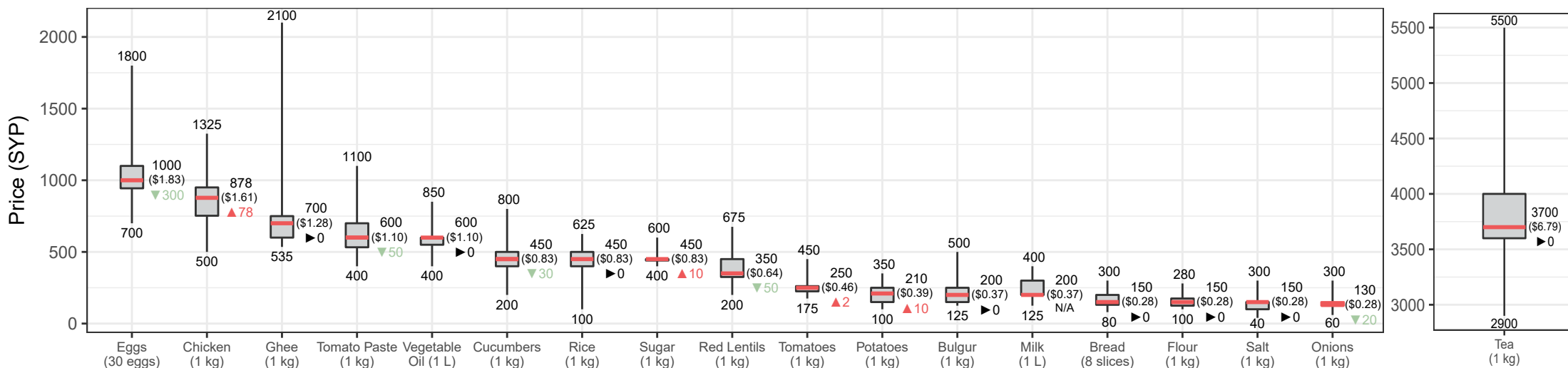
The value of a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is calculated for each assessed subdistrict by calculating the median prices of all SMEB commodities in that subdistrict and multiplying these medians by the number of units that an average northern Syrian household must purchase in a month.

In March, complete SMEBs could be assembled for 51 out of 66 assessed subdistricts, compared to 36 out of 53 in February. The median cost of a complete SMEB was 68,100 SYP (124.95 USD). Of the 51 complete SMEBs, **the most expensive were from the besieged communities of Eastern Ghouta** (Arbin subdistrict, 144,726 SYP, 265.55 USD, and Kafr Batna subdistrict, 143,886 SYP, 264.01 USD). Yet these prices were eclipsed by those observed in **western Deir-ez-Zor city**; though only 10 of 23 SMEB commodities were available on markets there, **a partial basket cost an unprecedented 352,500 SYP** (646.79 USD).

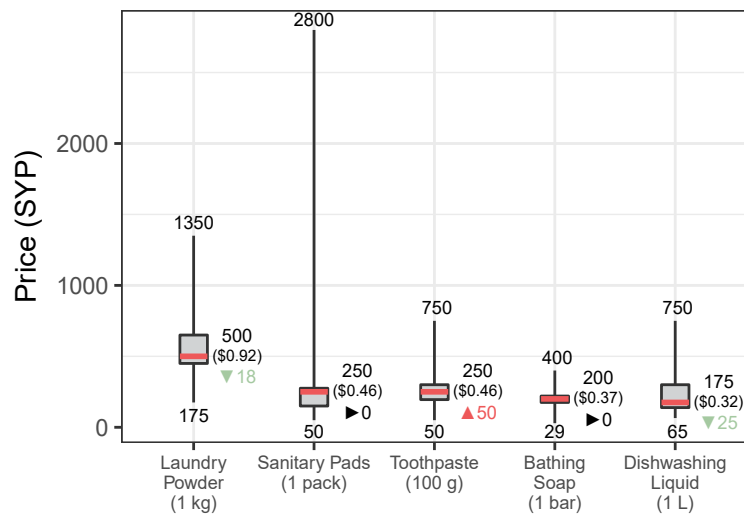
Seven of the 10 **least costly** came from **Idleb governorate**, with Ariha (47,763 SYP, 87.64 USD) reporting the most inexpensive prices of all. By contrast, the costliest SMEBs observed in non-besieged areas came from Jizeh (90,771 SYP, 166.55 USD) and Lattakia (89,956 SYP, 165.06 USD). Eighteen of the 20 **most expensive complete SMEBs** were observed in **southern governorates**.

Distribution of Commodity Prices: Northwestern Syria

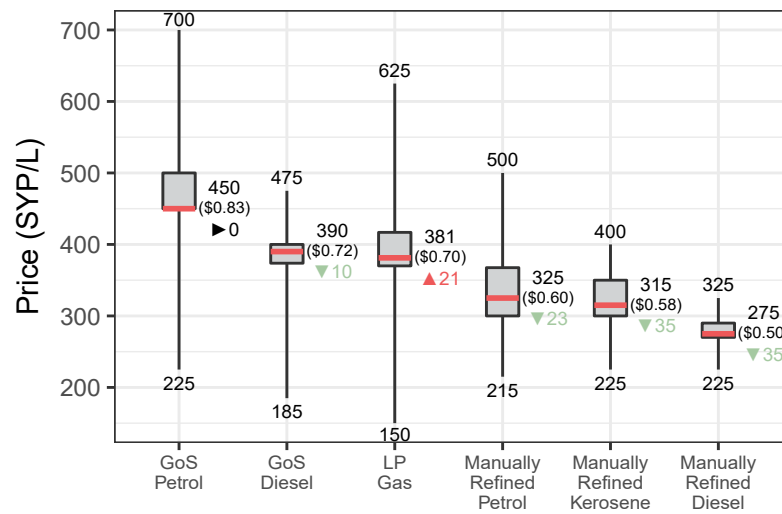
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

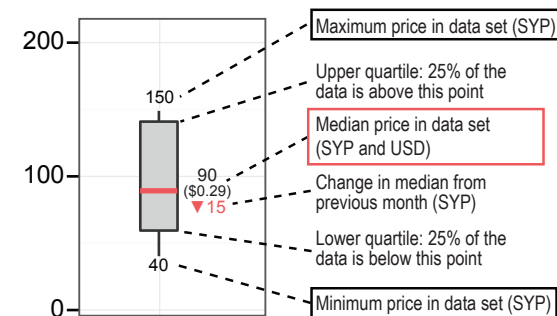


FUEL



How to read a box plot

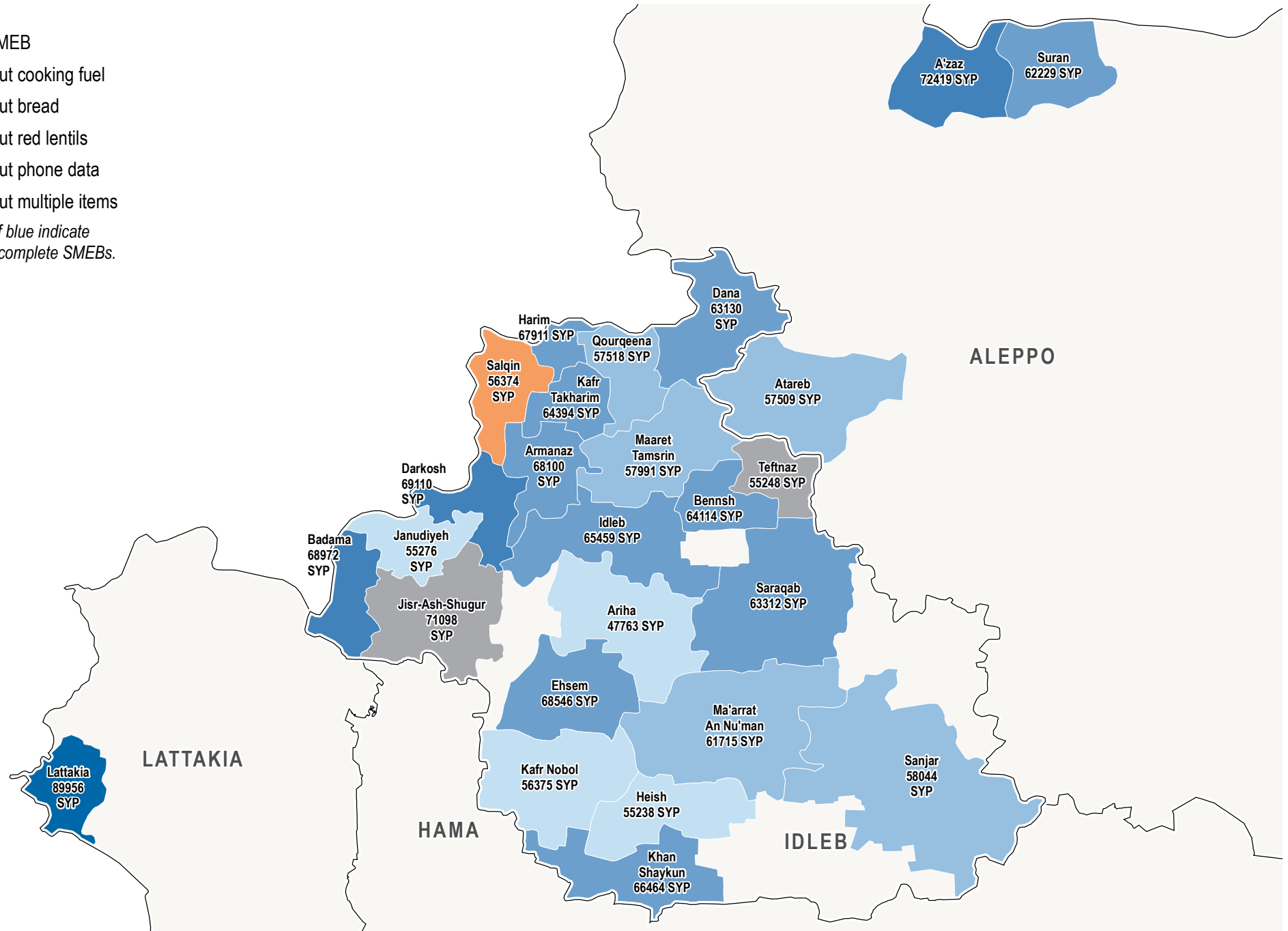
Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.



SMEB Prices: Northwestern Syria

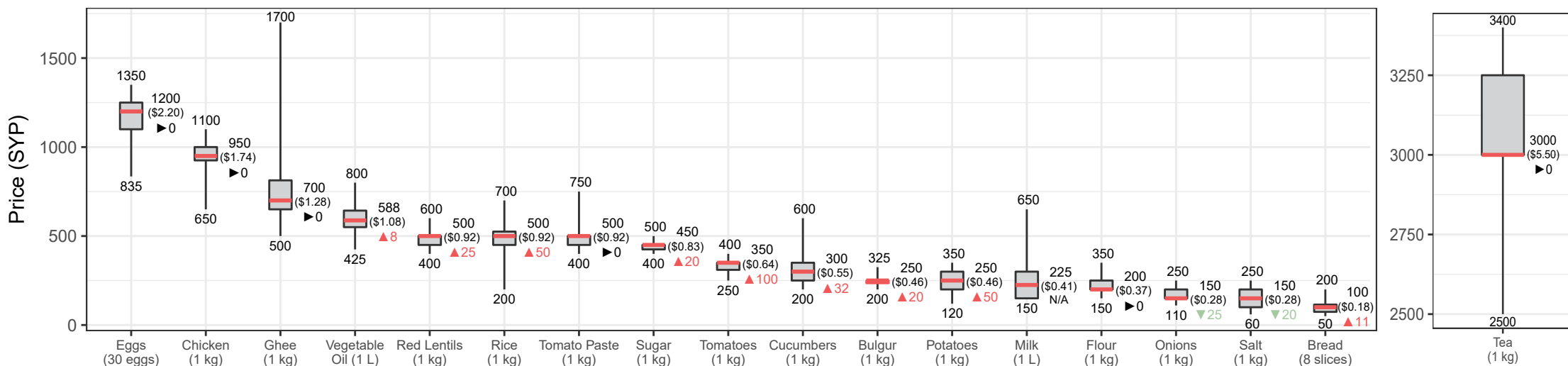
- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without cooking fuel
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without red lentils
- SMEB without phone data
- SMEB without multiple items

Darker shades of blue indicate more expensive complete SMEBs.

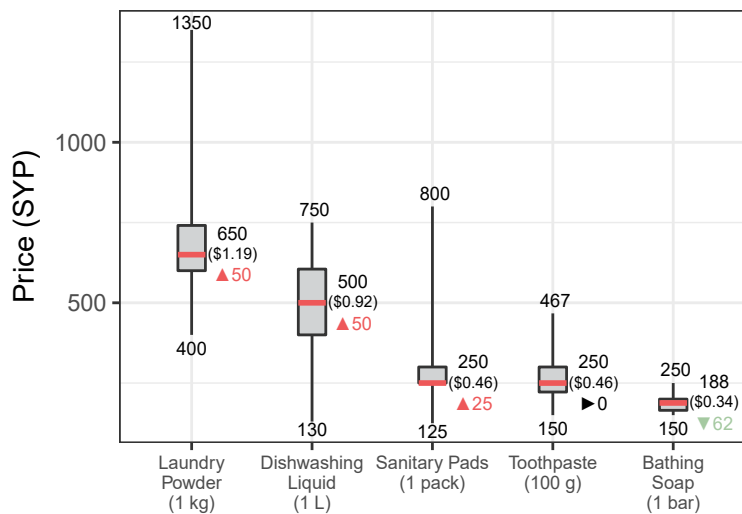


Distribution of Commodity Prices: Northeastern Syria

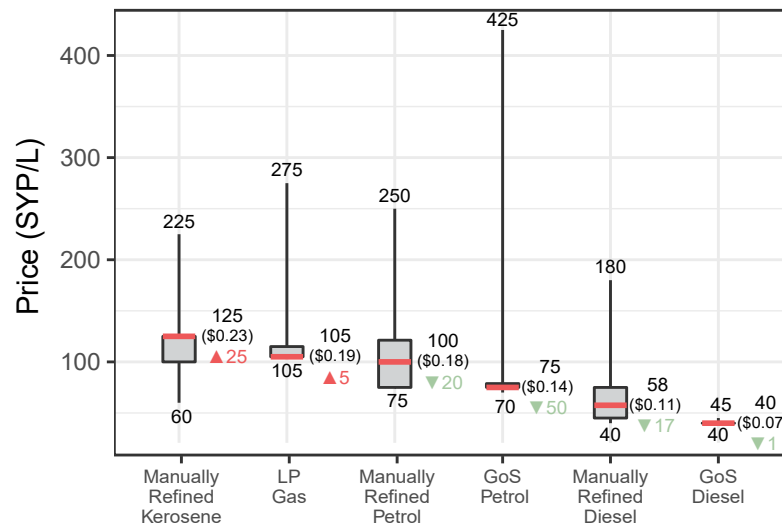
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

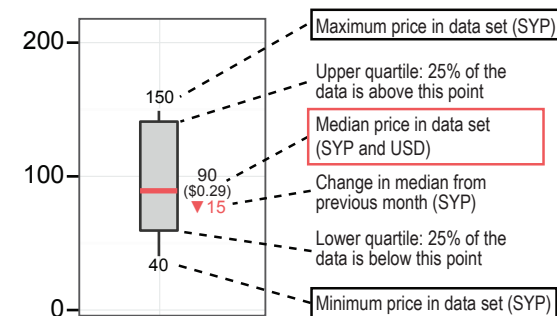


FUEL



How to read a box plot

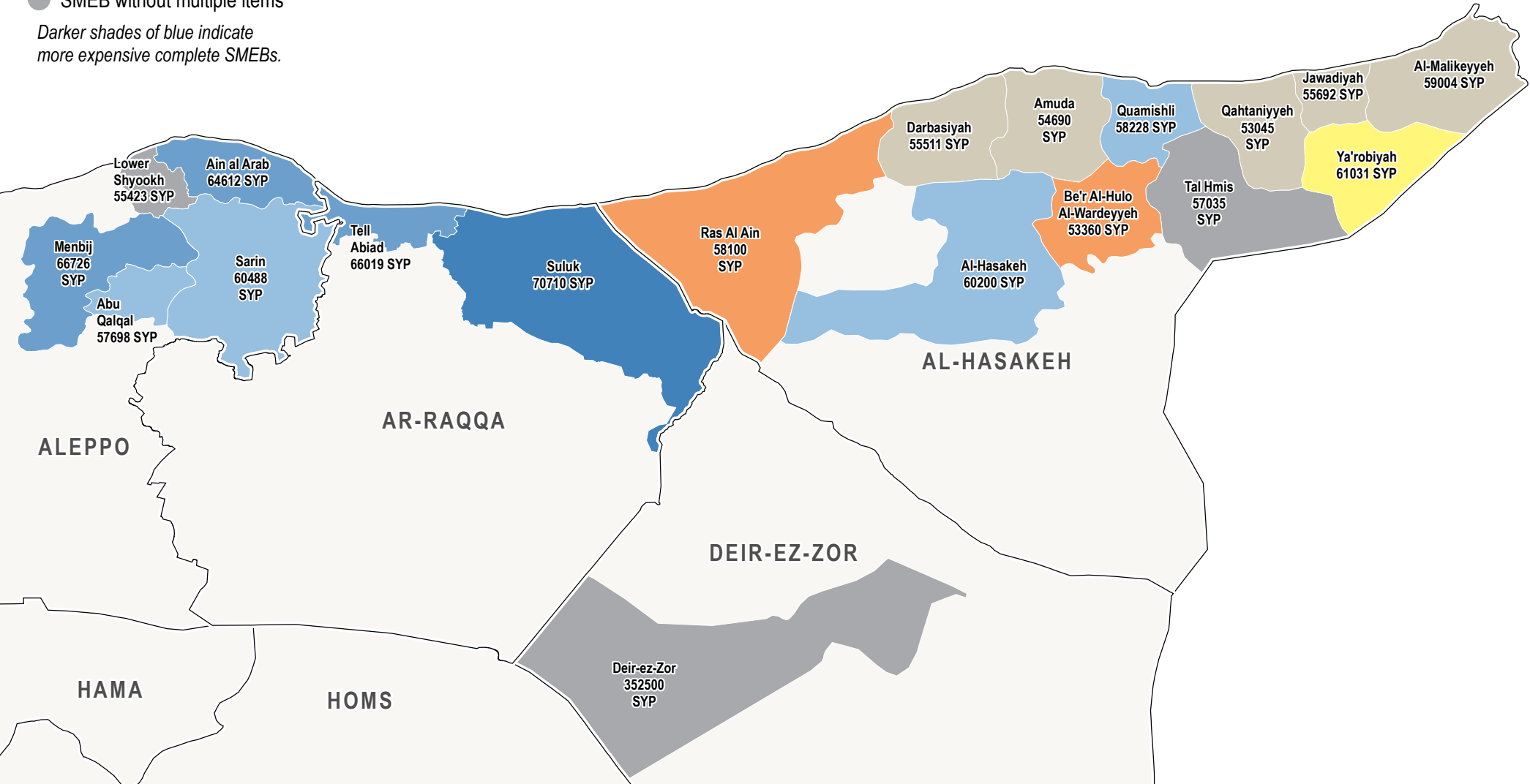
Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.



SMEB Prices: Northeastern Syria

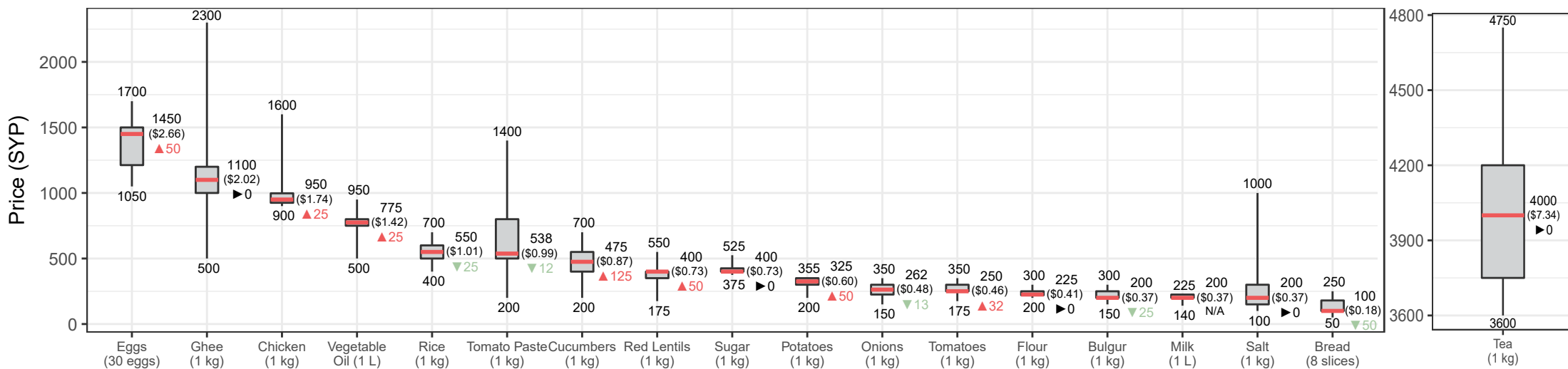
- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without cooking fuel
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without red lentils
- SMEB without phone data
- SMEB without multiple items

Darker shades of blue indicate more expensive complete SMEBs.

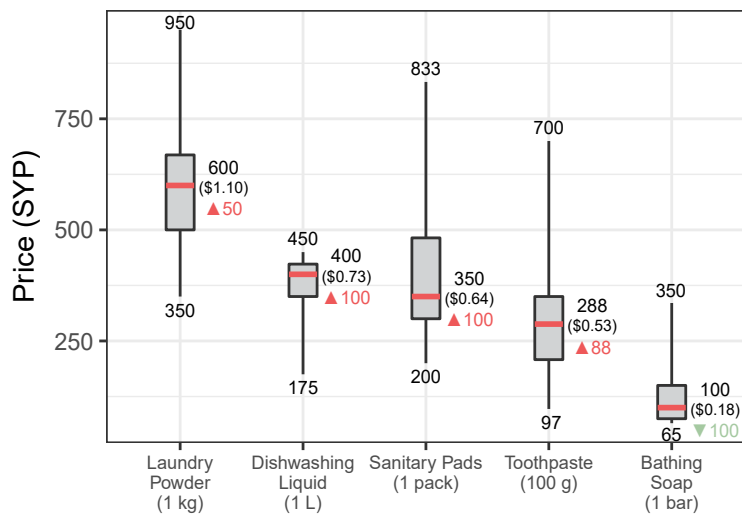


Distribution of Commodity Prices: Southern Syria

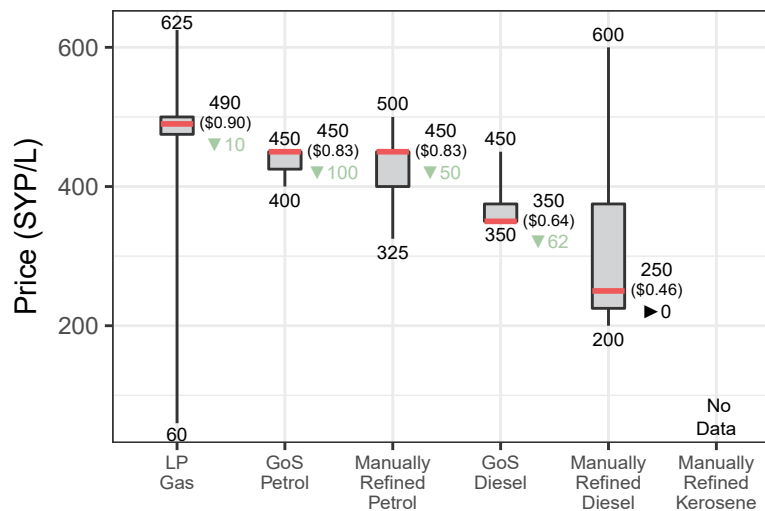
FOOD ITEMS



NON-FOOD ITEMS

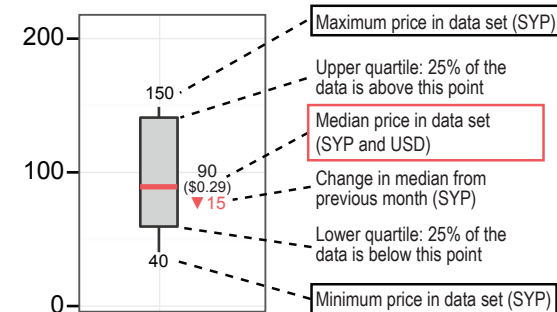


FUEL



How to read a box plot

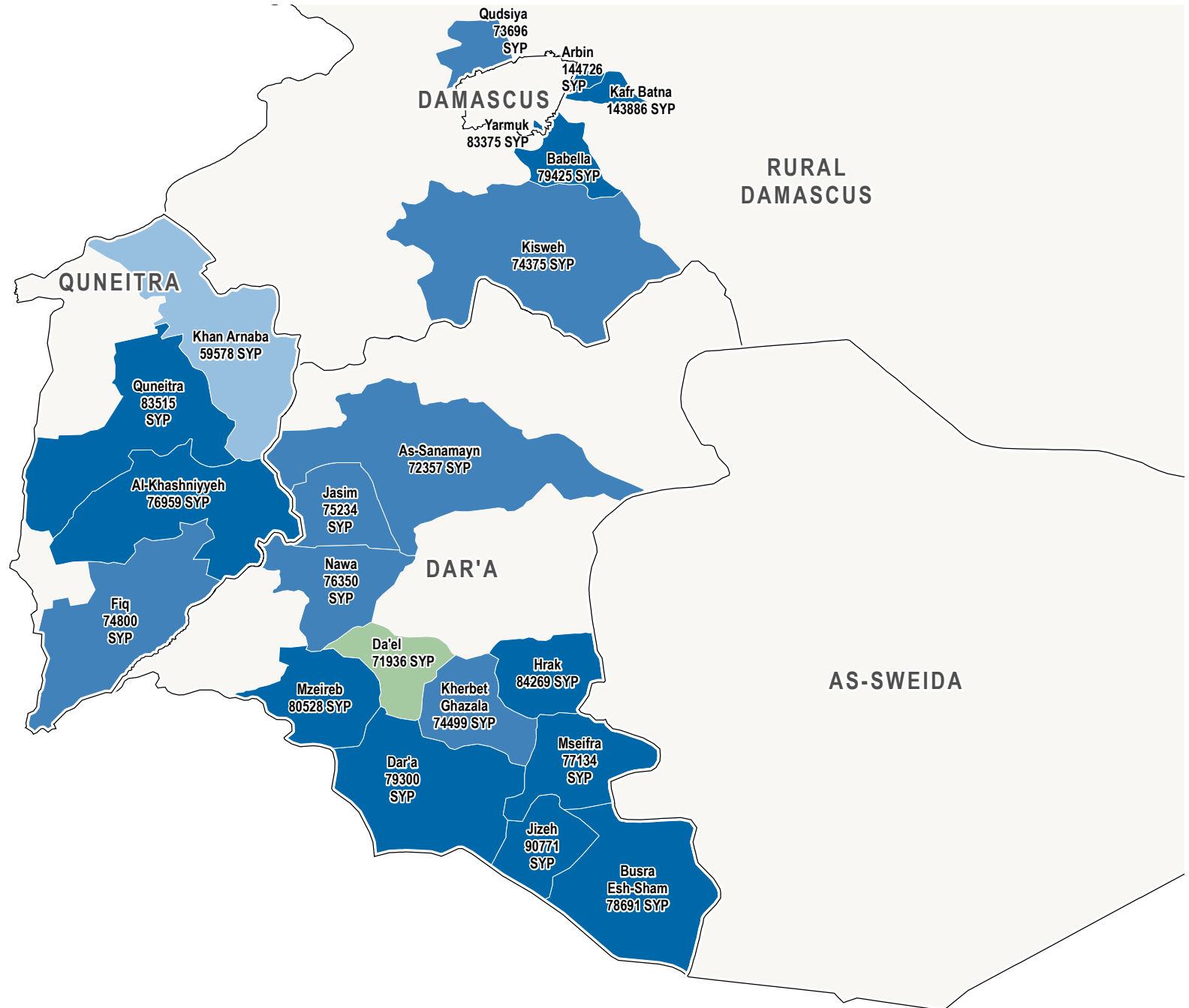
Box plots provide a variety of data to aid in understanding the distribution of the data set. Prices are in SYP unless otherwise marked.



SMEB Prices: Southern Syria

- Complete SMEB
- SMEB without cooking fuel
- SMEB without bread
- SMEB without red lentils
- SMEB without phone data
- SMEB without multiple items

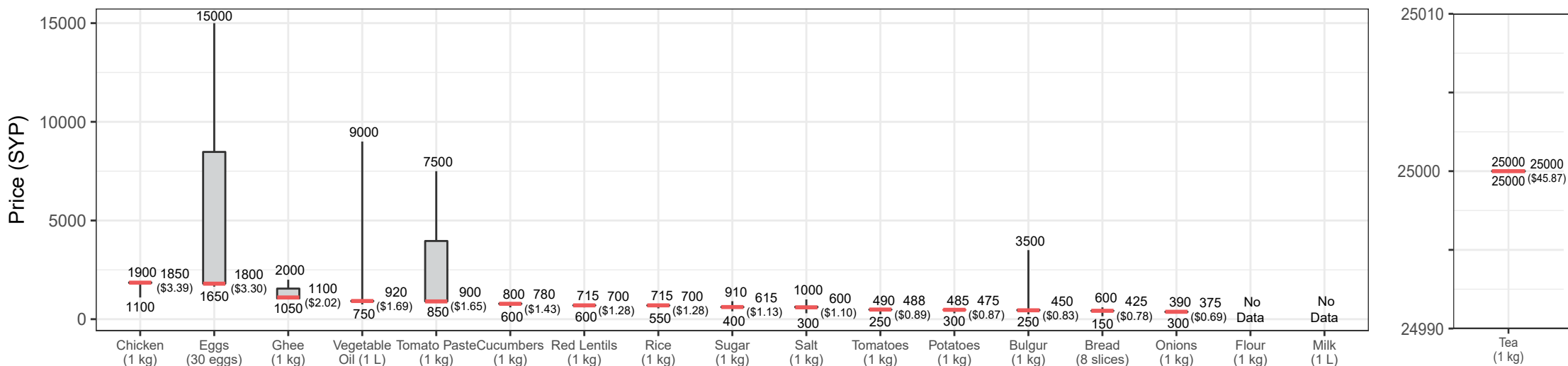
Darker shades of blue indicate more expensive complete SMEBs.



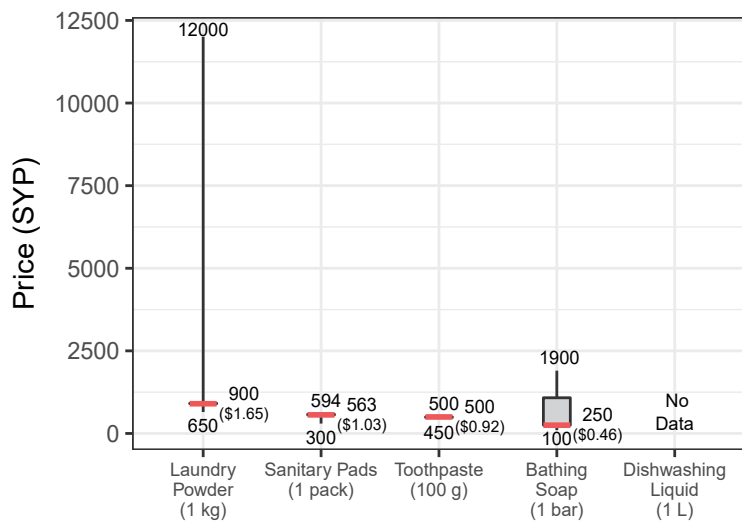
Distribution of Commodity Prices: Besieged Communities*

* Eastern Ghouta, Yarmuk, Deir-ez-Zor

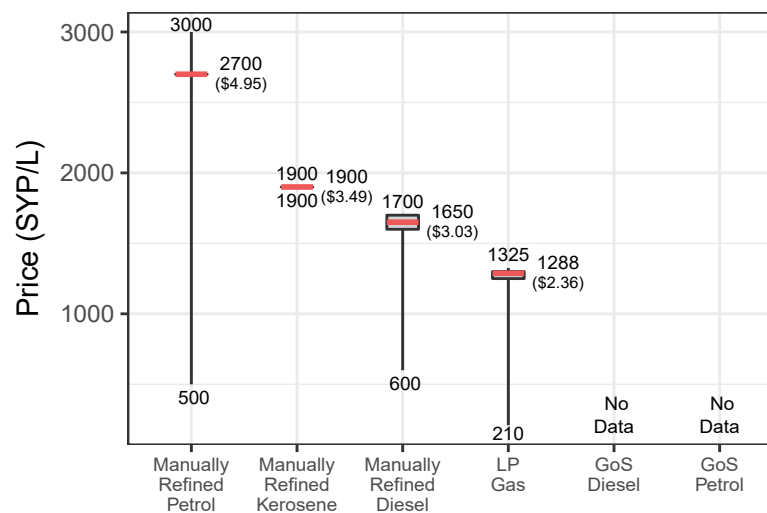
FOOD ITEMS



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.

