

Northwest Syria | Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

1-8 February 2024

MARKET OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

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

Among these, 18 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.

- 12 Participating agencies
- 3 Assessed governorates
- 38 Assessed sub-districts
- 107 Assessed communities
- 5817 Shops surveyed

KEY INDICATORS

Cost of SMEB

4,459 TRY ▼-1%
145 USD ▼-4%

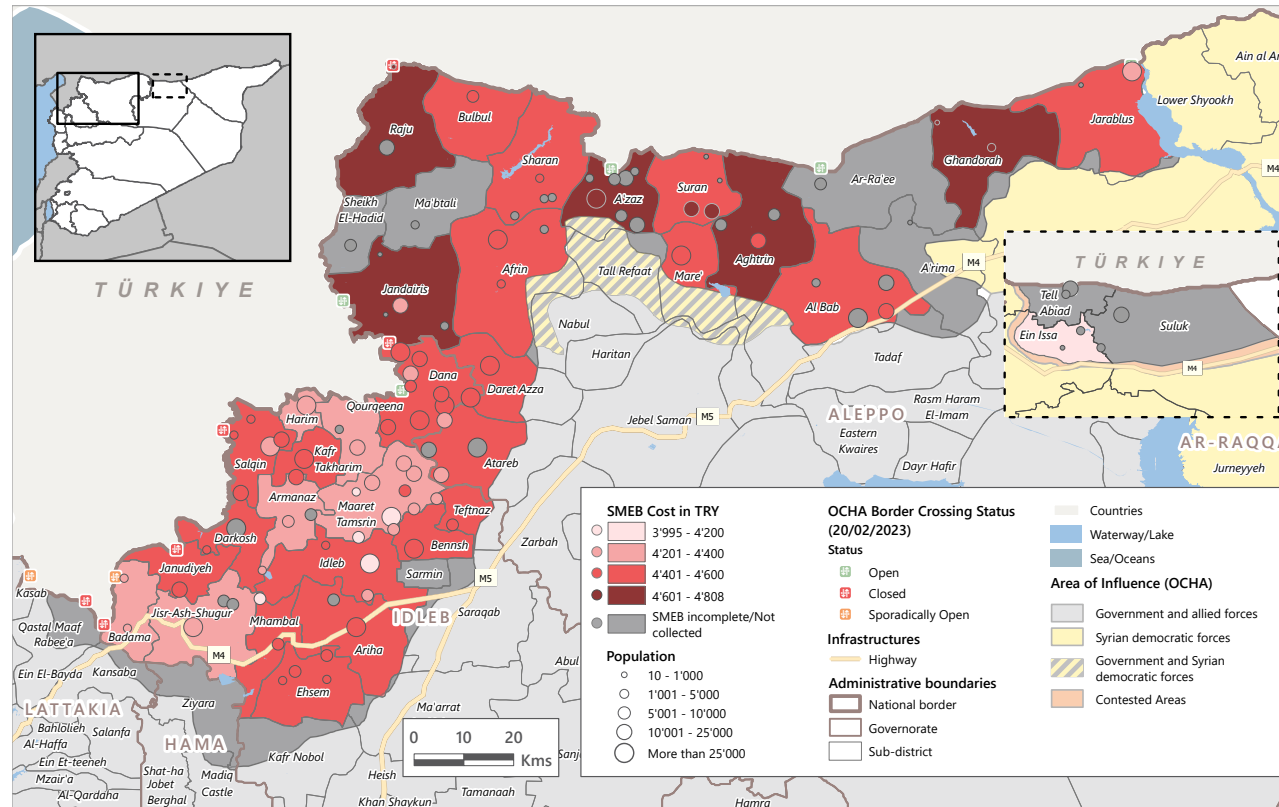
Cost of SMEB Food

3,251 TRY ▲ +3%
106 USD ▼-4%

USD/TRY

informal exchange rate
31 TRY ▲ +2%

Cost of the SMEB, Sub-districts in Northwest Syria, TRY



KEY FINDINGS

- Slowing currency depreciation has broadly had a positive impact on the price of basic monitored commodities.
- The value of the SMEB remains high across NWS having increased by 59% in the past year. At the same time, unemployment is high¹ and household income for low and middle income households has remained the same.²
- The prices of the SMEB food component generally decreased across NWS between January and February 2024, almost uniformly across Idlib governorate and in most assessed areas in Northern Aleppo.
- Recent months of price data suggest water trucking is becoming more expensive in Idlib governorate, despite demand generally being lower in the winter months.

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 the financial burdens facing households in different locations.

Exchange rate trends

- While the TRY on the informal exchange market continued to depreciate against the USD (2% depreciation between January and February 2024), the rate of depreciation in the past months has reduced following a period of greater volatility mid-2023.
- Slowing currency depreciation has broadly had a positive impact on the price of basic monitored commodities. The regional value of the SMEB composite price decreased slightly by 1% between January and February 2024.
- The calculated USD SMEB price, converted using median exchange rates, declined for the second month in a row as a result of the more stable exchange rate.
- The value of the SMEB remains high across NWS having increased by 59% in the past year while unemployment is high¹ and household income for low and middle income households has remained the same.²

62%

The value of the TRY has depreciated by 62% in the past year.

59%

The cost of the SMEB in TRY has increased by 59% in the past year.

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 |

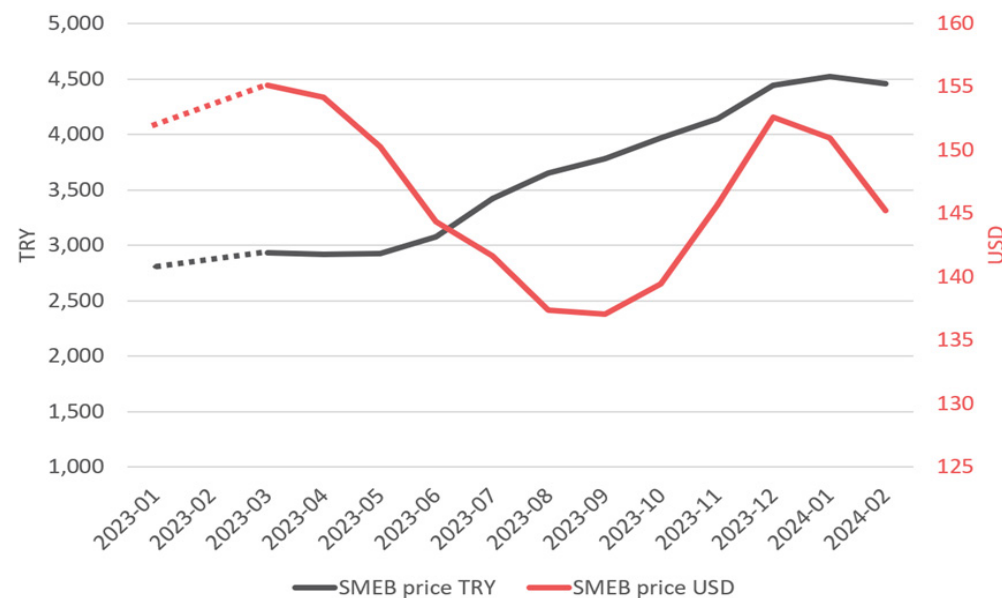
Hygiene (NFI)

| | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Bathing soap | 12 bars |
| Laundry / dish soap | 3 kg |
| Toothpaste | 200 kg |
| Sanitary pads | 4 packs of 10 |

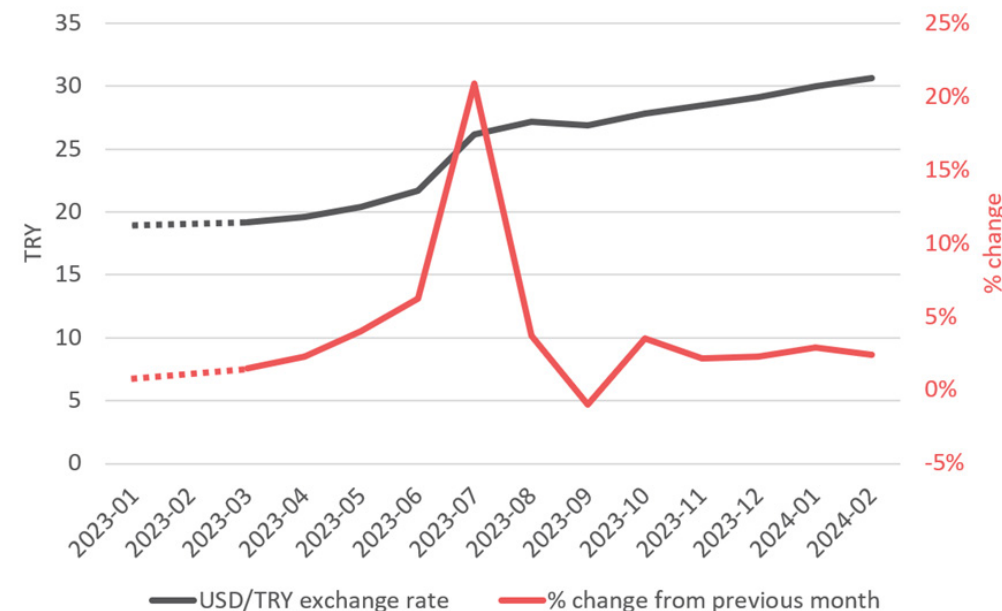
Other items

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Cooking fuel | 15 L |
| Water trucking | 4500 L |
| Phone data | 1 GB |
| Float (other costs) | 7.5 % of total |

Regional median SMEB prices, TRY and USD*

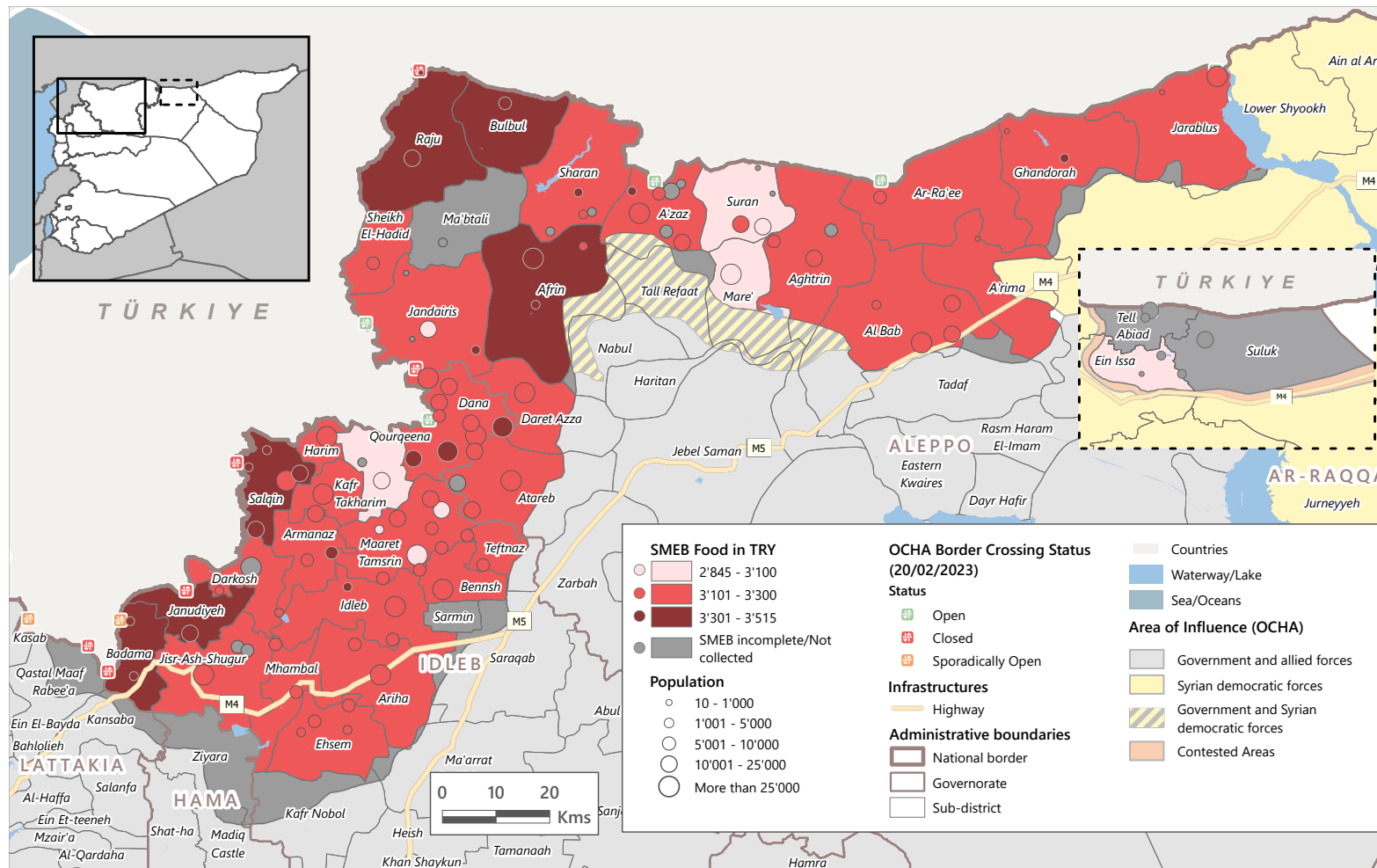


Regional median USD/TRY informal exchange rate trends*



* No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes. The % change represented in the graph between January and March 2023 is therefore over a 2-month period.

SMEB food prices, TRY



Price of SMEB Food, sub-district, TRY

| Location | Median Price TRY | Change since Jan 2024 |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Aleppo governorate | | |
| Afrin | 3,332 | ▼-2% |
| Aghtrin | 3,257 | ▼-3% |
| Al Bab | 3,192 | ▼-2% |
| A'rima | 3,297 | ▲8% |
| Ar-Ra'ee | 3,192 | ▼-6% |
| Atareb | 3,268 | 0% |
| A'zaz | 3,267 | ▼-2% |
| Bulbul | 3,430 | ▲6% |
| Daret Azza | 3,239 | ▼-3% |
| Ghandorah | 3,293 | ▲2% |
| Jandariss | 3,206 | ▼-1% |
| Jarablus | 3,240 | 0% |
| Mare' | 3,030 | 0% |
| Raju | 3,515 | ▲6% |
| Sharan | 3,251 | ▼-1% |
| Sheikh El-Hadid | 3,278 | na |
| Suran | 3,067 | ▼-5% |
| Idleb governorate | | |
| Ariha | 3,269 | ▼-1% |
| Armanaz | 3,153 | ▼-5% |
| Badama | 3,391 | ▼-1% |
| Bennsh | 3,293 | ▲1% |
| Dana | 3,263 | ▼-1% |
| Darkosh | 3,231 | ▼-3% |
| Ehsem | 3,234 | ▼-2% |
| Harim | 3,249 | ▼-4% |
| Idleb | 3,251 | ▼-1% |
| Janudiyeh | 3,308 | ▼-2% |
| Jisr-Ash-Shugur | 3,248 | ▼-3% |
| Kafr Takharim | 3,279 | ▼-3% |
| Maaret Tamsrin | 3,221 | 0% |
| Mhambal | 3,291 | 0% |
| Qourqeena | 3,098 | ▼-2% |
| Salqin | 3,310 | ▼-2% |
| Teftnaz | 3,241 | ▼-2% |



90%

of assessed communities where KI reported that households experienced barriers to accessing sufficient food³

62%

Unaffordability was the most commonly reported barrier reported by KI in 62% of HSOS assessed communities in February³

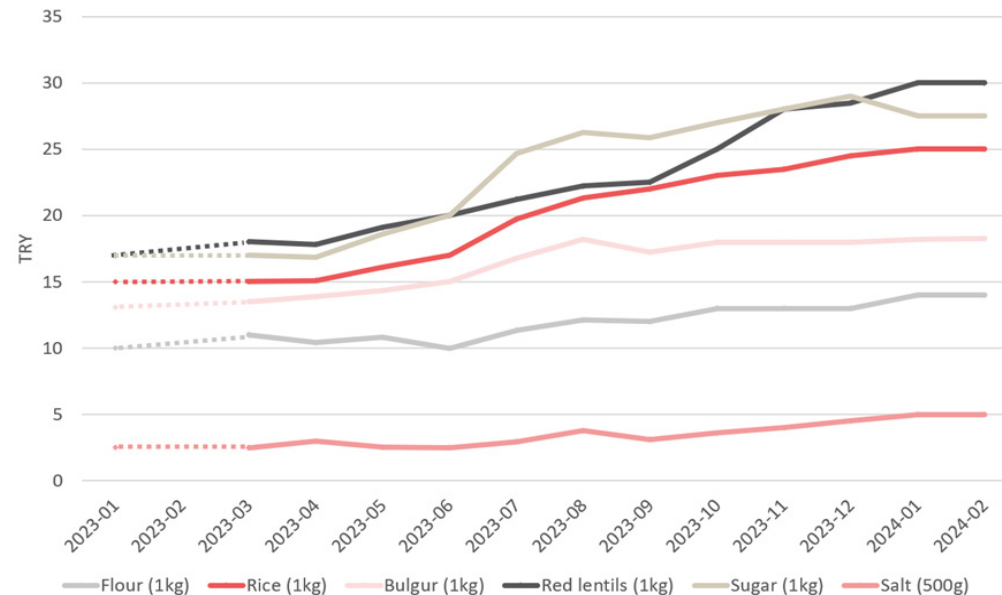
Food price trends

The prices of the SMEB food component generally decreased across NWS between January and February 2024, almost uniformly across Idlib governorate and in most assessed areas in Northern Aleppo. While the price of monitored food items was higher in some assessed sub-districts such as Ragu and Bulbub that saw more notable increases between January and February 2024, prices elsewhere were more uniform. This suggests that overall structural socio-economic factors such as currency depreciation, limited local production, and low purchasing power are broadly impacting prices as opposed to localised supply chain dynamics.

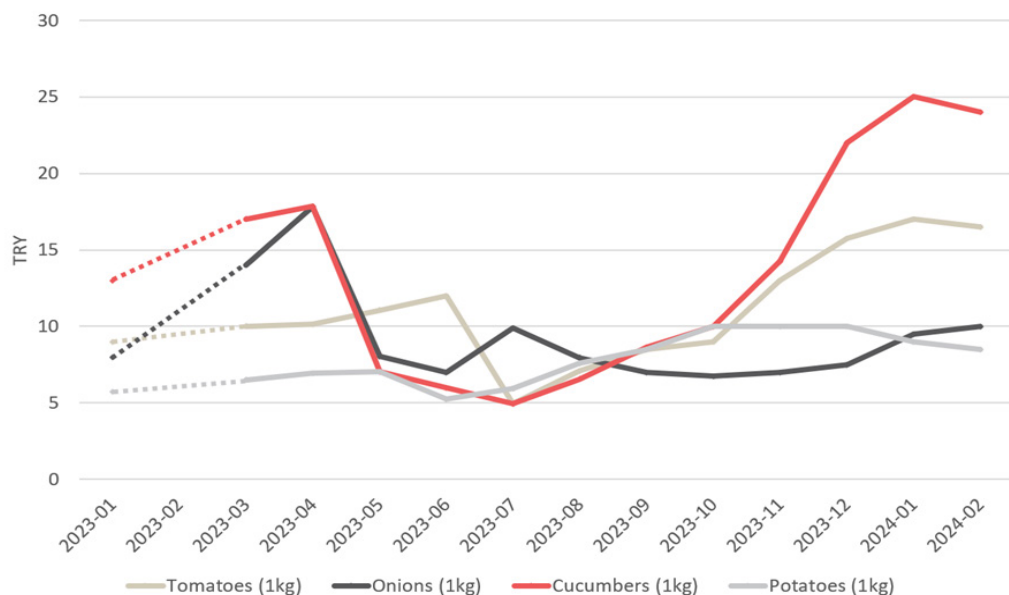
The regional median price of bulk food items remained stable between January and February 2024. This trend was relatively consistent across assessed areas. Among monitored bulk food items the price of red lentils, an important source of protein, has increased more notably in the past 6 months by 35%.

The regional median price of most monitored fresh vegetables decreased slightly between January and February 2024. Cucumbers however remain extremely expensive, costing a household almost 3 times what they would have paid 6 months ago. 6% of surveyed vendors in February reported that cucumbers were unavailable in the communities where they work. The price of tomatoes also has more than doubled in the last 6 months. While seasonal increases for fresh vegetables are expected, increases of this scale have serious implications for households' access to fresh foods.

Regional median price of bulk food items, TRY*



Regional median price of vegetables, TRY*



Food price changes

| Item | Unit | Median Price TRY | 1-month change (TRY) | 6-month change (TRY) | Median Price USD** |
|------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Bulk food items | SMEB | 1,615 | ▲1% | ▲16% | 53 |
| Bulgur | 1kg | 18 | 0% | 0% | 0.59 |
| Red lentils | 1kg | 30 | 0% | ▲35% | 0.98 |
| Rice | 1kg | 25 | 0% | ▲17% | 0.81 |
| Salt | 500g | 5 | 0% | ▲32% | 0.16 |
| Sugar | 1kg | 28 | 0% | ▲5% | 0.90 |
| Tomato Paste | 1kg | 45 | ▲1% | ▲11% | 1.47 |
| Vegetables | SMEB | 176 | 0% | ▲103% | 6 |
| Tomatoes | 1kg | 17 | ▼-3% | ▲133% | 0.54 |
| Potatoes | 1kg | 9 | ▼-6% | ▲12% | 0.28 |
| Cucumbers | 1kg | 24 | ▼-4% | ▲266% | 0.78 |
| Onions | 1kg | 10 | ▲5% | ▲26% | 0.33 |

*No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes. This period is represented by a dotted line on the graph.

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

Food price trends

The price of vegetable oil between September 2023 and February 2024 stabilised somewhat as currency depreciation has reduced. Vegetable oil is imported into NWS and is therefore sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations as shown in the graph to the right.

The large peak in vegetable oil prices at the start of 2022 coincided with the start of the war in Ukraine when the supply of this commodity was highly disrupted.⁴ While supply chains since then have resumed with periods of uncertainty and volatility, the price of vegetable oil in NWS has not returned to pre-conflict prices. This is potentially linked to the accelerated depreciation of the TRY throughout 2023, as well as an overall reduction in trade volumes and higher insurance costs applied to trade through the Black Sea.⁵



66%

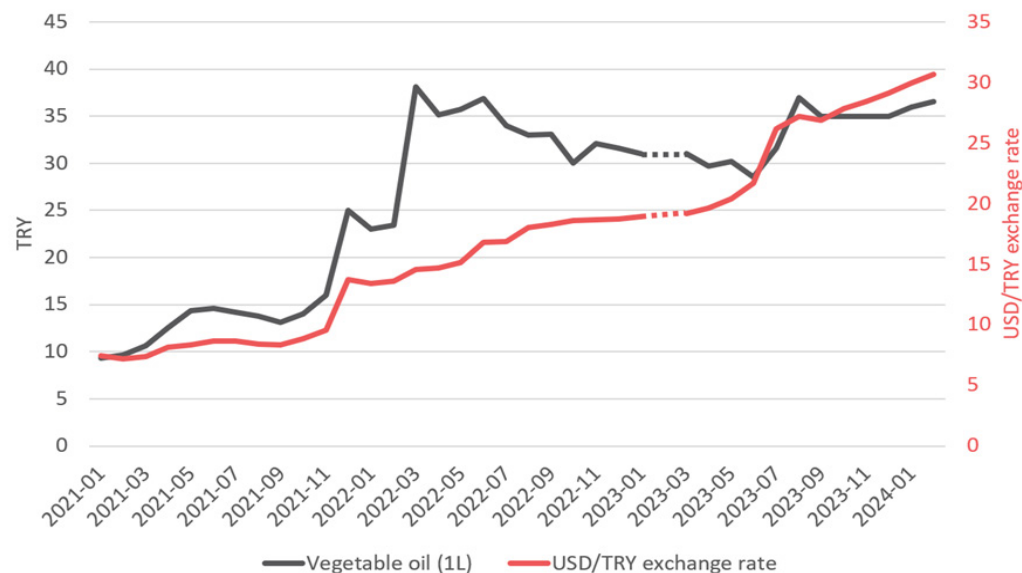
of surveyed vendors in February reported subsidised bread was not available in their community



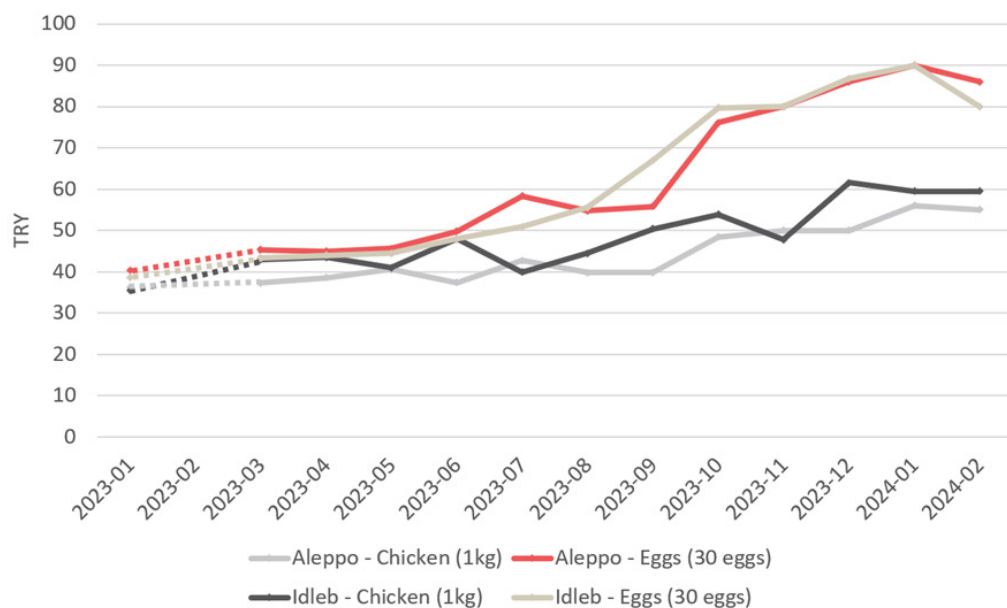
12%

of surveyed vendors in February reported unsubsidised bread was not available in their community

Regional median price of vegetable oil, TRY - 3 year trend*



Governorate level median price of poultry items, TRY*



Food price changes

| Item | Unit | Median Price TRY | 1-month change (TRY) | 6-month change (TRY) | Median Price USD** |
|---------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Cooking oils | | | | | |
| Ghee | SMEB | 280 | ▲1% | ▲8% | 9 |
| Vegetable oil | 1kg | 44 | ▲3% | NA | 1.39 |
| | 1L | 37 | ▲1% | ▼-1% | 1.17 |
| Poultry | | | | | |
| Chicken | 1kg | 58 | 0% | ▲35% | 1.89 |
| Eggs | 1kg | 82 | ▼-9% | ▲48% | 3 |
| Bread | | | | | |
| Unsubsidised bread | 8pc | 10 | 0% | NA | 0.33 |
| Subsidised bread | 8pc | 7 | 0% | NA | 0.23 |

Food price trends

The price of eggs decreased between January and February 2024 after a period of substantial increases. JMMI data shows that the price of eggs tends to fluctuate seasonally, increasing in winter. This is likely linked to reduced supply in the winter months when egg production is lower due to reduced daylight. Poultry farmers managing lower supply thus increase the price of their produce on markets. While this seasonality is expected, as was the case with other seasonal produce like fresh vegetables, price increases this winter were substantially higher than previous years. Many of the inputs that poultry farms require for their production are imported so currency depreciation has likely impacted their overall operating costs.

*No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes. This period is represented by a dotted line on the graph.

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

Non food items

Over the past few years of JMMI data collection, the price of water trucking has been higher in Northern Aleppo where, according to a REACH water trucking assessment conducting in 2023, the number and functionality of water sources also tend to be much lower compared to other areas in Idleb governorate.⁶ Between January and February 2024 the median price of water trucking in Idleb increased above the median price in Aleppo governorate. This should be monitored in the coming months to understand whether potentially fuel shortages in Northeast Syria as a result of the attacks on oil facilities since October are affecting the supply of cheaper manually refined fuels from NES, through Aleppo into Idleb.

The regional median prices of monitored hygiene items overall decreased between January and February 2024. The price of these commodities are broadly sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations and thus have stabilised somewhat with the reduced rate of depreciation.



62%

of surveyed vendors in February reported manually refined petrol (produced in Northeast Syria) was not available in their community



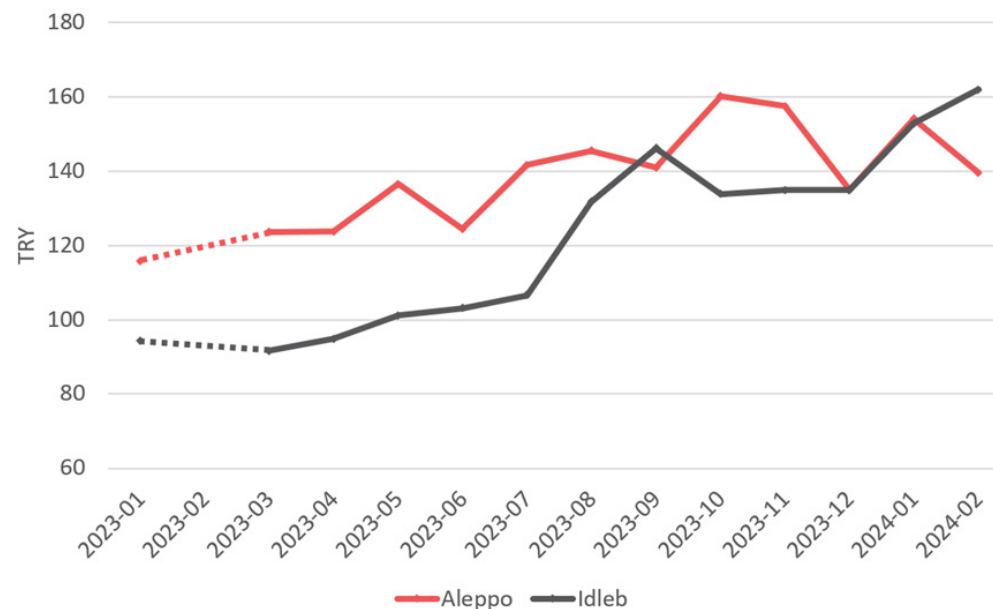
79%

of surveyed vendors in February reported kerosene for cooking fuel was not available in their community

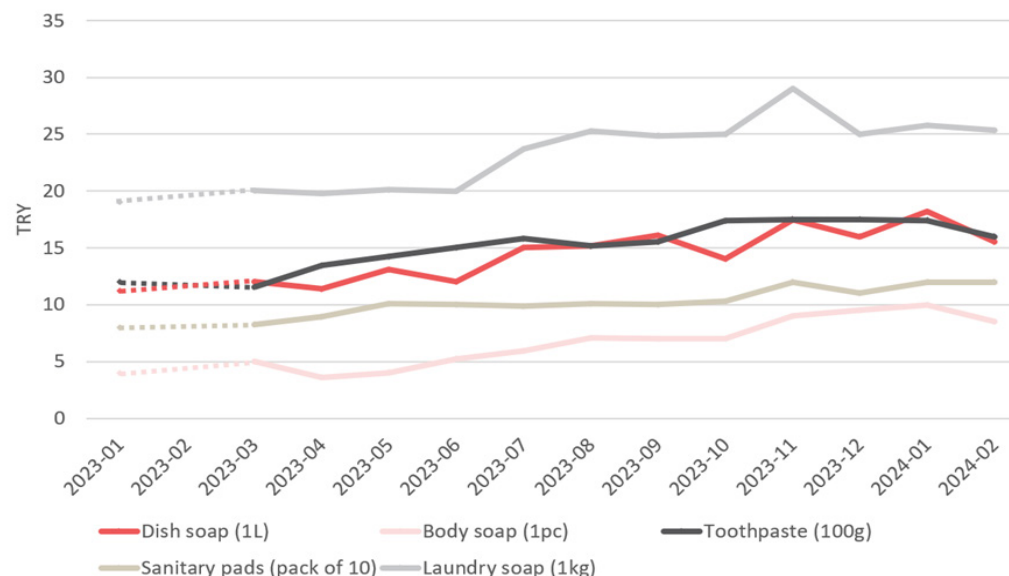
Price changes of monitored non-food items

| Item | Unit | Median Price TRY | 1-month change (TRY) | 6-month change (TRY) | Median Price USD** |
|-----------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Non-food items | SMEB | 248 | ▼-2% | ▲5% | 107 |
| Bathing soap | 1pc | 9 | ▼-15% | ▲20% | 0.61 |
| Sanitary pads | 10pc | 12 | 0% | ▲19% | 0.97 |
| Toothpaste | 100g | 16 | ▼-8% | ▲6% | 0.81 |
| Laundry powder | 5kg | 25 | ▼-2% | 0% | 0.16 |
| Dish soap | 1L | 16 | ▼-15% | ▲2% | 0.89 |
| Cooking fuels | SMEB | 400 | ▲3% | ▲13% | 13 |
| Kerosene | 1L | 25 | ▲16% | ▲24% | 0.81 |
| LPG gas | 1L | 20 | ▲3% | ▲13% | 0.65 |
| Water trucking | SMEB | 158 | ▲3% | ▲10% | 5.13 |
| Water trucking | 1L | 0.04 | ▲3% | ▲10% | 0.001 |
| Internet | | | | | |
| Mobile data | 1gb | 100 | ▼-2% | na | 3 |
| Transportation fuels | | | | | |
| Imported diesel | 1L | 37 | ▲2% | ▲15% | 1.23 |
| Imported petrol | 1L | 31 | ▲2% | ▲17% | 1.03 |
| Manually refined diesel | 1L | 18 | ▼-4% | na | 0.77 |
| Manually refined petrol | 1L | 23 | ▼-1% | na | 0.61 |

Regional median SMEB water trucking prices, TRY*



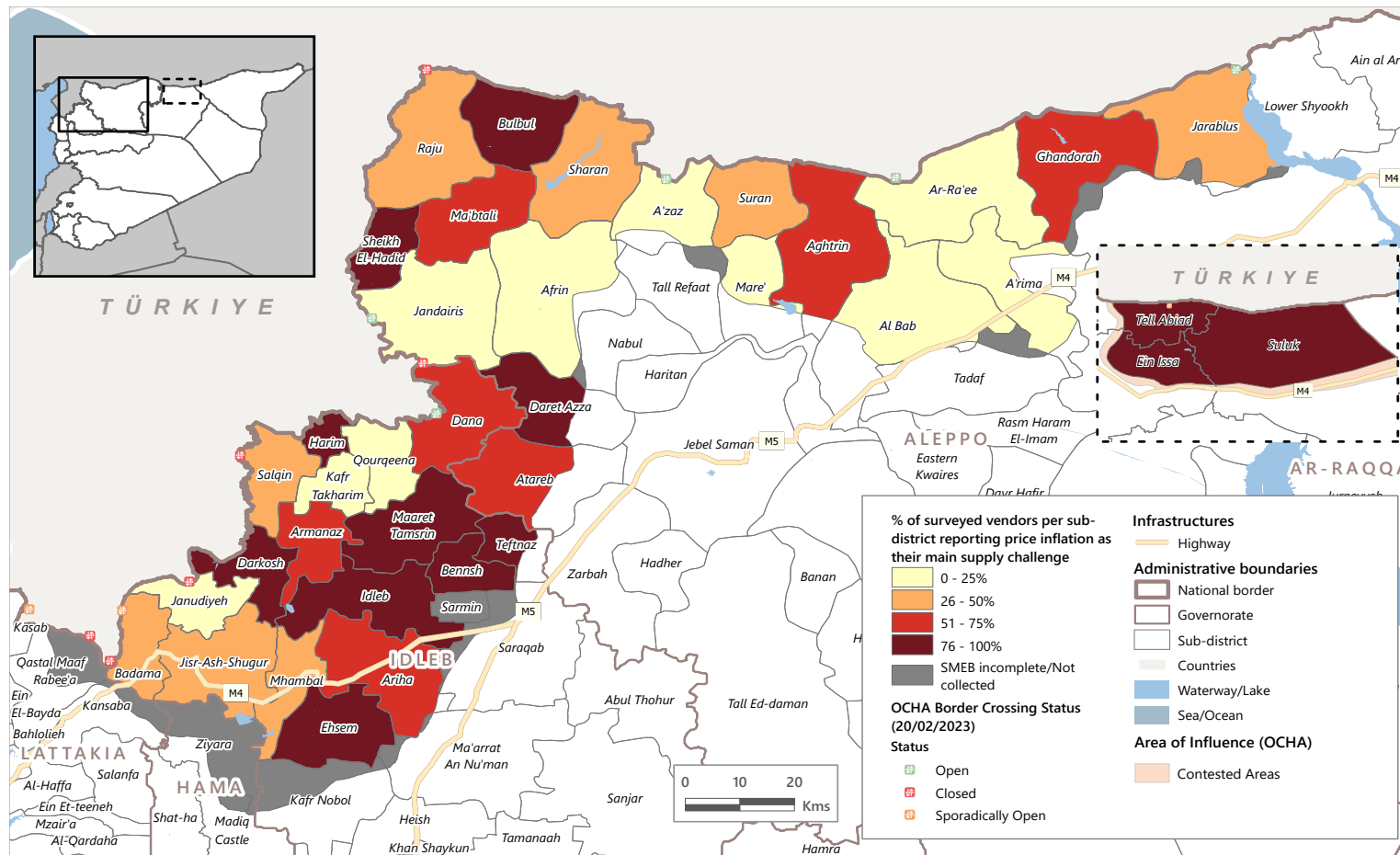
Regional median price of hygiene items, TRY*



*No data was collected in February 2023 due to the earthquakes. This period is represented by a dotted line on the graph.

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

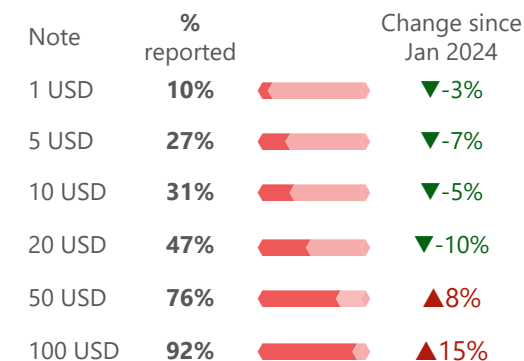
% of surveyed vendors reporting price inflation impacts their capacity to secure stocks



Supply challenges, % of surveyed vendors



% of vendors reporting limited USD denominations



Supply challenges

The proportion of vendors who reported facing shortages of smaller USD bank notes decreased slightly between January and February 2024. Reporting on shortages of smaller denominations was more common in Aleppo governorate. Shortages of certain denominations in high demand impact the operational of NGOs delivering cash assistance, at times forcing them to distribute part of the assistance in Turkish lira which

is less preferred by beneficiaries due to its volatility.⁷ In addition, liquidity issues can impact households ability to receive remittances in USD and vendors ability to pay for imported goods.

Price inflation remained the most commonly reported factor impacting vendors capacity to secure stocks. Other factors such as border closures and supply bottlenecks were not commonly reported. This indicates that the

purchasing power of vendors themselves in the context of high-inflation and stagnant wages is the main pressure on businesses selling basic commodities, which are then passed on to consumers. February HSOS data collection showed that in areas where KIs reported markets are not functioning, the most common reported reason was because people lack the financial means to open and run a shop.⁸

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 on page 2.

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 is only indicative for the time frame within which it was collected. Prices may vary between data collection rounds.
- 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.

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).

Endnotes

- 1 REACH, [MSNA 2023 Key Findings](#), February 2024
- 2 The assessment interviewed a representative sample of 639 households across the districts of Al Bab, Afrin, Harim, and Idleb in NWS. REACH, [Income and Expenditure Assessment](#), NWS, 2023
- 3 REACH, [Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria](#), NWS, February round, 2024
- 4 International Food Policy Research Institute, [Impact of the Ukraine crisis on the global vegetable oil market](#), May 2022
- 5 Reuters, [Ukraine's Black Sea gain export success tested by Red Sea crisis](#), January 2025
- 6 REACH, [Water Trucking in NWS](#), dataset, 2024
- 7 REACH-NWS Cash Working Group, [NWS Post-Distribution Monitoring Assessment](#), January 2024
- 8 REACH, [Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria](#), NWS, February round, 2024

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 group coordinator at cbr.twg@gmail.com.

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. All activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

More details on the methodology can be found in the JMMI [terms of reference \(ToR\)](#). For more information about REACH, please contact the REACH JMMI focal point, Adna Maiteh, at adna.maiteh@reach-initiative.org or visit the REACH Syria Resource Centre.

Participating organisations

Each month, around 20 different organisations work together to collect market data. Participating organisations train their enumerators on the JMMI methodology and data collection tools using standard training materials developed by REACH, who is then responsible for processing the data.

