

Research Methodology Note

Food Items Availability Assessment

SYR2212

Syria

October 2022

Version 1

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

1. Executive Summary

Country of intervention	Syria				
Type of Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural disaster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Type of Crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sudden onset	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slow onset	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protracted
Mandating Body/ Agency	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance				
IMPACT Project Code	16AXF				
Research Timeframe	1. Pilot/ training: 19 & 20/10/2022		6. Preliminary presentation: 05/12/2022		
Add planned deadlines (for first cycle if more than 1)	2. Start collect data: 23/10/2022		7. Outputs sent for validation: 15/12/2022		
	3. Data collected: 02/11/2022		8. Outputs published: 29/12/2022		
	4. Data analysed: 17/11/2022		9. Final presentation: 05/01/2023		
	5. Data sent for validation: 17/11/2022				
Humanitarian milestones Specify what will the assessment inform and when e.g. The shelter cluster will use this data to draft its Revised Flash Appeal;	Milestone		Deadline		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Donor plan/strategy	NA		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inter-cluster plan/strategy	_/_/_/----		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cluster plan/strategy	01/02/2022		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NGO platform plan/strategy	_/_/_/----		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify):	_/_/_/----		
Audience Type & Dissemination Specify who will the assessment inform and how you will disseminate to inform the audience	Audience type		Dissemination		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic		<input type="checkbox"/> General Product Mailing (e.g. mail to NGO consortium; HCT participants; Donors)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programmatic		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cluster Mailing (Education, Shelter and WASH) and presentation of findings at next cluster meeting		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Operational		<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of findings (e.g. at HCT meeting; Cluster meeting)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify]		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Website Dissemination (Relief Web & REACH Resource Centre)		
			<input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify]		
Detailed dissemination plan required	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	
General Objective	To inform humanitarian procurement approaches in Northwest Syria (NWS) through mapping of food items, assess the functionality of the markets, and identify gaps in local production.				

Specific Objective(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify retailers that want to work with NGOs and to identify their reported eligibility to participate in Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) programs? 2. To identify the availability and consumer prices for key food items in the assessed markets in NWS? 3. To identify the origin of key food items and the responsiveness and vulnerability of retail shops to the supply chain? 4. To identify the challenges faced by retailers when procuring food items? 5. To identify whether items are being re-sold in the assessed markets by beneficiaries of in-kind assistance? 																				
Research Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which vendors want to work with NGOs and are eligible to participate in CVA programmes? 2. What are the retail prices, origin, and supplier location for the assessed commodities in the targeted markets across NWS? 3. Which retail shops meet the minimum quality checks for food safety? 4. How responsive and vulnerable are retail shops in regards to their supply chain, and what challenges did they face when procuring their items? 5. Which in-kind assistance items are being re-sold by beneficiaries in the assessed markets in NWS? 																				
Geographic Coverage	C3871 ¹ Idleb, C4121 Sarmada, C4126 Dana, C4140 Salqin, C3947 Ma'arrat Tamasrin																				
Secondary data sources	Market Functionality Index – Technical Guidance by WFP Cash Working Group (CWG) REACH Syria JMMI Syria – Supply Chain Analysis BHA Partner Operational Market Assessment Tools																				
Population(s) <i>Select all that apply</i>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IDPs in camp</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IDPs in informal sites</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IDPs in host communities</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IDPs [Other, Specify]</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Refugees in camp</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Refugees in informal sites</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Refugees in host communities</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Refugees [Other, Specify]</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Host communities</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Retail Shop Owners selling food items in out of camp markets</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in informal sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs in host communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	IDPs [Other, Specify]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in informal sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees in host communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugees [Other, Specify]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Host communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Retail Shop Owners selling food items in out of camp markets
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Structured data collection tool # 1 <i>Select sampling and data collection method and specify target # interviews</i>																					
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¹ These codes (CXXXX) represent the P-codes for the admin level 4 (communities) in the OCHA list of locations in Syria.

² The enumerators will try to reach out to as many retail shop owners selling food items as possible in the targeted locations. It is expected that these markets have the following number of shops based on a rough count exercise: C3871 Idleb (800 shops selling dry food items, 200 selling fresh food items), C4126 Dana (200 shops selling dry foods, 100 shops selling fresh foods), C4121 Sarmada (100 shops selling dry foods, 80 shops selling fresh foods), C3947 Ma'arrat Tamasrin (100 shops selling dry foods, 50 shops selling fresh foods). **However, based on enumerator capacity the targeted #shops will be (40 in Sarmada, 50 in Dana, 60 in Ma'arrat Tamasrin, 60 in Salqin, and 60 in Idleb)**

	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation (Preliminary findings) #: 01	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation (Final) #: 02	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Factsheet #: 01
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interactive dashboard #: _	<input type="checkbox"/>	Webmap #: _ _	<input type="checkbox"/>	Map #: _ _
	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other, Specify] #: _ _				
Access	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public (available on REACH resource center and other humanitarian platforms)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted (bilateral dissemination only upon agreed dissemination list, no publication on REACH or other platforms)				
Visibility <i>Specify which logos should be on outputs</i>	REACH					
	Donor: TBD					
	Coordination Framework: TBD					
	Partners: TBD					

2. Rationale

2.1 Background

The pre-existing market structures in Syria have been damaged by the ongoing conflict. This caused a decrease in productivity, employment collapse, lack of income-generating opportunities, rising inflation, and depreciation of the Syrian pound. In this framework, some humanitarian organizations have been transitioning away from emergency programming and towards recovery approaches that utilise market systems, including localisation of activities (e.g. procurement) to support local market functionality, and the use of CVA programming.

In 2021, the Procurement Working Group (PWG) conducted an assessment for NGO's procurement capacity. The study concluded, inter alia, that Food security assistance represented the largest volume of cross border in-kind assistance in 2020³. This dependency on imported humanitarian assistance continues to present a significant risk to the overall response should cross border in-kind assistance be disrupted by the expiration of the UN Cross Border Resolution. If the borders close, this will likely result in supply chain issues, increasing prices, and reduced product availability⁴. The NWS local markets are functional, yet the humanitarian actors started to shift from emergency to preparedness planning, and one of the suggested approaches is to increase the scale-up of CVA to reduce in-kind assistance given the uncertainty around the future cross border voting⁵.

This assessment aims to inform humanitarian actors procurement approaches in NWS through a mapping of food items availability. This study will be conducted in 5 communities in 4 sub-districts in NWS. These communities were identified through the Market Network Analysis (MNA) exercise⁶ by REACH as sources for dry and fresh food items.

2.2 Intended impact

While the Cash Working Group REACH Syria Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (CWG REACH SYRIA JMMI) exercise supports the growing tendency towards local procurement of food items. This assessment would provide more information to address the gap in information around food safety, while also provide information on food items origin and suppliers to address the gap in information around the localization of the procurement process for food items.

This assessment would feed into the planning phases of CVA programming implemented by humanitarian actors and partners of FSL and CWG, and also identify the challenges that vendors face in procuring food items.

Methodology

3.1 Methodology overview

³ Humanitarian Supply Chain Working Group (HSC WG) Strategy 2022

⁴ [Northwest Syria Cash and Voucher Assistance Risk and Mitigation Matrix](#)

⁵ [Cash Feasibility Assessment 2020, Northwest Syria](#)

⁶ [Market Network Analysis](#)

The required information will be collected through individual interviews with shop owners of retail shops selling food items. The question route to be used will be structured and quantitative in nature. Data will be collected by REACH enumerators. The geographic area of interest consists of 5 communities in 4 sub-districts in NWS, namely, Dana, Ma'arrat Tamasrin, Salqin, and Idelb sub-districts. Data collection will take place between October 23 and November 2 of 2022.

3.2 Population of interest

The population of interest will be individual shop owners of retail shops selling some of the food items monitored in this assessment. The geographic area is selected based on enumerator capacity, availability, and preliminary feedback from NWS FSL. More so, to identify the markets that act as a source for food items, the coverage for JMMI and MNA were cross-checked for September 2022, starting by identifying the communities that were covered for data collected for JMMI in the targeted sub-districts. Then, these communities were cross-checked with the coverage and data of MNA to identify those that were reported by the KIs as a source for bulk or fresh foods. The communities of interest for this assessment would be C3871 Idelb, C4121 Sarmada, C4126 Dana, C4140 Salqin, and C3947 Ma'arrat Tamasrin.

Table 1: #times reported a community was reported as source for bulk or fresh food based on MNA Sept 2022 data.

admin3Name_en	q_town	admin4Name_en	#times reported as bulk food source	#times reported as fresh food source
Idleb	C3871	Idleb	16	4
Idleb	C3875	Arshani	1	1
Dana	C4121	Sarmada	4	1
Dana	C4125	Termanin	1	1
Dana	C4126	Dana	4	2
Dana	C4131	Qah	1	1
Salqin	C4140	Salqin	8	11
Salqin	C4141	Big Hir Jamus	6	4
Salqin	C4142	Allani	1	1
Salqin	C4143	Azmarin	3	6
Maaret Tamsrin	C3947	Ma'arrat Tamasrin	17	5

As for the number of surveys, this assessment is a purposive one and enumerators will be asked to first:

1. Roughly identify the number of shops that sell food items
 - a. This will be done through a one-day exercise before data collection takes place. In this exercise, two enumerators per community will walk through the market streets⁷ and roughly count the number of shops that sell food items.
2. During data collection, enumerators will try to reach out to as many retailers as possible from the ones identified in step 1.
 - a. Enumerators will walk through the identified markets and reach out to as many shopkeepers from the total identified shops as possible.

As for the selection of the markets, this assessment will adopt the JMMI methodology, where the market needs to be out of camp, and composed of permanent buildings. Whereas for criteria for selecting the retail shop:

⁷ Streets of permanent markets, where the market is composed of permanent shops.

1. The shop needs to be a retail shop, and the vendor needs to be the owner/decision maker.
2. The retail shop needs to be a permanent shop (i.e in concrete building).
3. The shop needs to be selling at least 6 items of the dry⁸ or fresh⁹ foods monitored in this assessment
4. The shop needs to have a storage space to stock items.

3.3 Secondary data review

In the preparation of the questionnaire for this assessment, the JMMI TOR and questionnaire were consulted. More so, the market and vender selection tools provided by an international organization were consulted to identify the indicators used to assess vendor eligibility for participating in Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) programs. And lastly, the Market Functionality Index by WFP was consulted to identify the indicators used for monitoring quality of food items in shops.

As for the items monitored in this assessment, the [FSS Strategic Objective 1](#) for 2022/2023 response packages were consulted as well as the items monitored by the international organization that shared its food items monitoring tools with REACH. Based on both, the list of the items was compiled.

3.4 Primary Data Collection

Data collection is planned for the duration between October 16 and 26. In each market, REACH enumerators first roughly identified the number of shops selling dry and fresh food items through a one-day exercise utilizing 2 enumerators per location prior to data collection. During data collection, the enumerators will walk through the streets and reach out to as many retail shop owners as possible from the previously identified shops. The enumerators will target markets and shops that adhere to the selection criteria mentioned in section 3.2. If the enumerators are not able to interview the shop owner, they will end the survey and continue to the next shop. The enumerators will use a structured tool and conduct the surveys with the retailers using Kobocollect in a face-to-face manner. At the end of the survey with the retailer, the enumerators will have to answer another section on food safety. In order to do so, they will walk through the shop and fill out this section based on their own direct observation and perspective., the enumerators will utilise direct observation to answer questions. These indicators will rely on the personal judgement of the enumerators in identifying some quality checks around food hygiene, cleanliness, and separation from other materials. Lastly, follow-ups after data collection ends will be conducted between assessment staff and field teams to avoid outliers, data errors, and ensure data quality.

3.5 Data Processing & Analysis

Data collection and entry will be accomplished using KoBo Collect. Forms will be updated by REACH and on a central KoBo server. Data processing and cleaning will be conducted by assessment and data officers using R scripts built off of the Minimum Standard Data Cleaning Checklist developed by IMPACT HQ¹⁰. Numerical variables will take the median

⁸ Dry food items: White Rice, Yellow Bulgur, Yellow Pasta, Dried beige chickpeas, Brown lentils, Dried red lentils, Dried white beans, Tomato paste, Olive oil, Vegetable oil, Iodized salt, White sugar, Canned tuna fish, Canned chickpeas (Hummus), Canned chicken (Mortadella), Canned vegetables, Dried thyme (Zaatar), Dates, Yoghurt, Loose leaf tea, Eggs, Cheese.

⁹ Fresh food items: Banana, Apples, Red tomatoes, Raw carrots, Raw Lemon, Cucumber, Cauliflower, Spinach, Potatoes, Cabbage, Zucchini, Raw Sweet Green Peppers, Eggplants (Aubergine), Onion, Garlic, Parsley

¹⁰ [IMPACT Initiatives Data Cleaning Minimum Standard Checklist](#)

in order to account for extreme outliers. Categorical variables will take the number and/or percentage of vendors that answered a given answer option.

Data cleaning will be conducted through a generation of R script by the senior data officer. The script will translate all other and text responses from Arabic to English and the translation will be checked and validated by the assessment officer. The cleaning script will, among all audit checks, also check for soft duplicates, exclude any sensitive data columns from the cleaned data sets, and will deal with the outliers as NAs.

Findings will be indicative to the community level in NWS and the results will be summarized in a factsheet.

3. Key ethical considerations and related risks

The proposed research design meets / does not meet the following criteria:

<i>The proposed research design...</i>	<i>Yes/ No</i>	<i>Details if no (including mitigation)</i>
... Has been coordinated with relevant stakeholders to avoid unnecessary duplication of data collection efforts?	Yes	
... Respects respondents, their rights and dignity (<i>specifically by: seeking informed consent, designing length of survey/ discussion while being considerate of participants' time, ensuring accurate reporting of information provided</i>)?	Yes	
... Does not expose data collectors to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection?	Yes	
... Does not expose respondents / their communities to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection?	Yes	
... Does not involve collecting information on specific topics which may be stressful and/ or re-traumatising for research participants (both respondents and data collectors)?	Yes	
... Does not involve data collection with minors i.e. anyone less than 18 years old?	Yes	
... Does not involve data collection with other vulnerable groups e.g. persons with disabilities, victims/ survivors of protection incidents, etc.?	Yes	
... Follows IMPACT SOPs for management of personally identifiable information ?	Yes	

4. Roles and responsibilities

Table 2: Description of roles and responsibilities

<i>Task Description</i>	<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Accountable</i>	<i>Consulted</i>	<i>Informed</i>
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Research design	Assessment Officer	Research Manager	Global Cash and Markets Specialist,	NWS FSL, Country Coordinator
Supervising data collection	Assessment Officer, Field Manager	Research Manager	Field Manager	Country Coordinator, Data officer
Data processing (checking, cleaning)	Data officer	Assessment officer	Research Manager, Senior Data Officer, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country Coordinator
Data analysis	Data officer, Assessment Officer	Research Manager	Senior Data officer, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country Coordinator, BHA, NWS FSL
Output production	Assessment Officer	Research Manager	Senior Data officer, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country Coordinator, BHA, NWS FSL
Dissemination	Assessment officer	Research Manager	NWS FSL, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country coordinator
Monitoring & Evaluation	Assessment officer	PD Officer	NWS FSL, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country Coordinator
Lessons learned	Assessment Officer, Field Manager, Data officer	Research Manager	PD Officer, NWS FSL, Senior Data officer, IMPACT HQ RDDU	Country Coordinator

Responsible: the person(s) who executes the task

Accountable: the person who validates the completion of the task and is accountable of the final output or milestone

Consulted: the person(s) who must be consulted when the task is implemented

Informed: the person(s) who need to be informed when the task is completed

NB: Only one person can be Accountable; the only scenario when the same person is listed twice for a task is when the same person is both Responsible and Accountable.

5. Data Analysis Plan

Please follow this [link](#) should you wish to review the DAP.