NORTHEAST SYRIA JOINT MARKET MONITORING INITIATIVE (JMMI)

7 – 14 MARCH 2022

INTRODUCTION

To inform humanitarian cash programming, the northeast (NES) and northwest (NWS) Syria Cash Working Group (CWG) conducts a monthly Joint Market Monitoring Initiative in northern Syria. The exercise assesses the availability and prices of 36 basic commodities that are typically sold in markets and consumed by average Syrian households, including food and non-food items, water, fuel, and cell phone data.

Of these, 18 items comprise the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB; see fg. 8-9; and 11) which represents the minimum, culturally adjusted items required to support a 6-person household for a month. For further information, please see our methodology.

ON-LINE DASHBOARD

To facilitate the interaction with the JMMI, an interactive dashboard is available on-line. The dashboard is designed to allow users to navigate more easily and draw geographical and temporal comparisons across different currencies. To use the on-line interactive dashboard, click here.

7	supporting partners
4	governorates
11	district
29	subdistricts
56	communities
1,970	shops (vendor key informants)

COST OF NES SMEB[1]

536,989 SYP ▲ 12%

138 USD ▲ 6%

COST OF NES FOOD BASKET[1]

414,633 SYP ▲ 9%

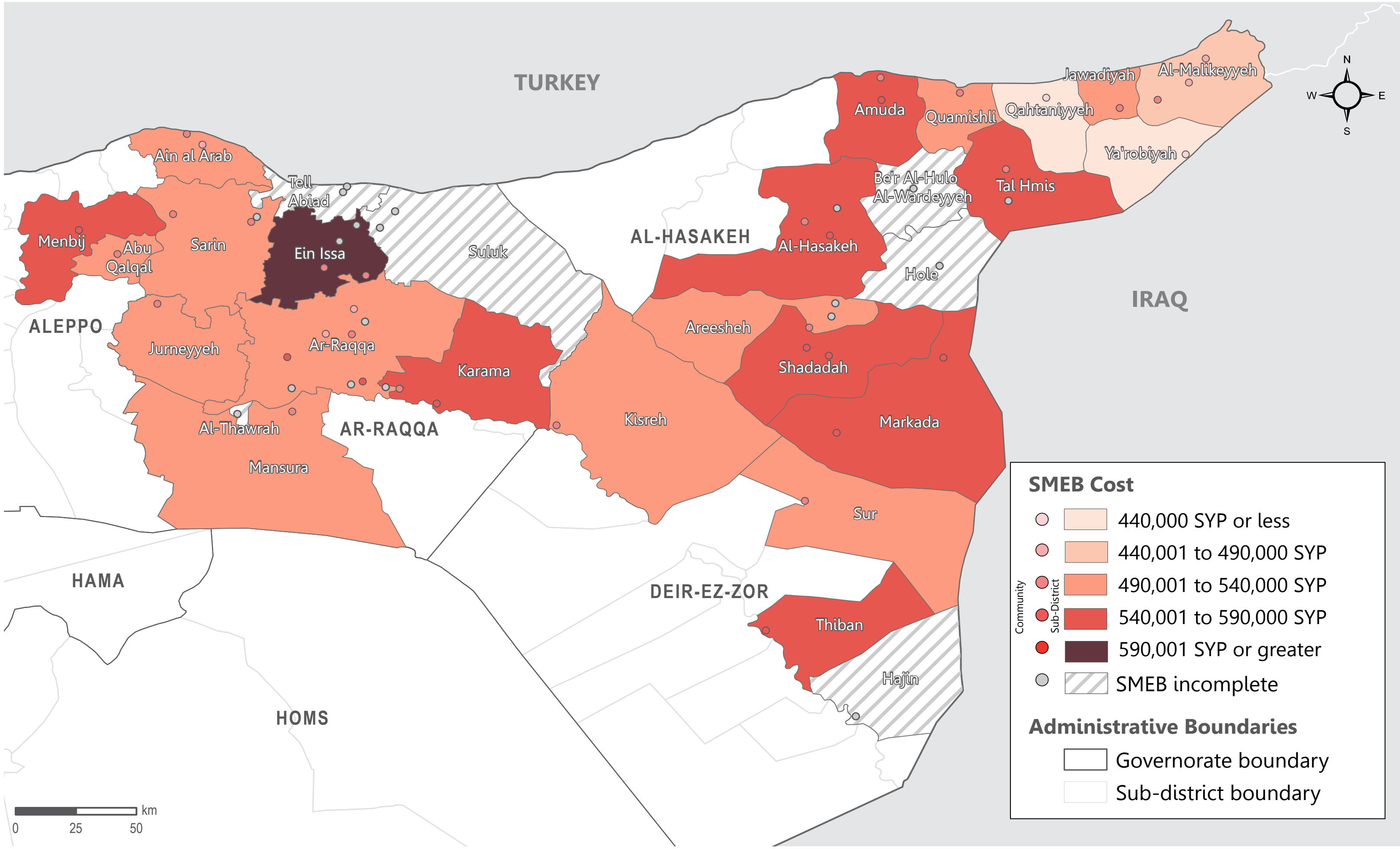
107 USD ▲ 3%

NES EXCHANGE RATE[1]

USD/SYP

3,873 SYP ▲ 6%

MEDIAN SMEB PRICE PER SUB-DISTRICT (SYP) - FG. 1



#1 For price and change % calculations, only the communities within a sub-district with consistent coverage across months are included. This also applies to the following tables.

The accompanying data is disseminated monthly and is distributed through partners across the humanitarian community. See here for the March 2022 dataset.

IN THIS FACTSHEET

As the JMMI generates a large amount of data, this factsheet is limited to a high level analysis. For more detailed data, consult the dataset and online dashboard.

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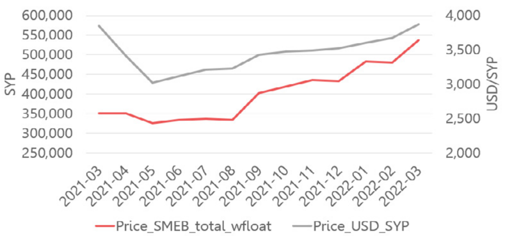
NORTHEAST SYRIA SMEB PRICE TRENDS VS USD TO SYP INFORMAL EXCHANGE RATES - FG. 2



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In NES the price of the SMEB in SYP for March surpassed the 500,000 SYP mark. The NES SMEB price in both SYP and USD is now the highest recorded SMEB in the six years of the JMMI, and the NES SMEB food component alone is expected to exceed 500,000 SYP by the end of the year in 2022.

There were rising costs for fresh vegetables, bulk foods, cooking oils, cooking fuels, non-food items (NFI), and water trucking. After many months of gradual increases, cooking oils jumped by another 35% in price in March. Transport fuel prices also increased, and high-quality fuels remained widely unavailable across NES, although slightly less so than reported in February, and the USD/SYP informal exchange rate also worsened. The average cost of transport fuels and changes in the exchange rate both typically contribute to a rise in key item prices in the region. The USD/TRY increased again to 15 TRY to the dollar since February, which is more than double the exchange rate compared to this time last year, which had been stable at 7 TRY. The SYP continues to depreciate against the USD, although at a much slower, albeit continuous rate.

Market functionality indicators in NES showed somewhat positive trends. All key food items remained available in over 94% of reporting communities. All transport fuels and cooking fuels improved slightly in availability, due mostly to a drop in demand after the winter.

There was a small increase in vendors reporting that supply cannot meet demand and that their supplier had limited supply. These minor changes in market fluctuations suggest supply chains are still managing to function in NES. However, the effects of additional challenges including transport fuel pressures, currency woes and price inflation are expected to have long term impacts well into 2022. See page 5 for further market functionality data.

SMEB PRICE PER SUB-DISTRICT - FG. 3

	SMEB SYP	1 month change	6 month change	SMEB USD[2]
Northeast Syria SMEB [3]	**536,989**	**12%**	**34%**	**138**
NE Aleppo Governorate Median	516,965	12%	33%	126
Abu Qalqal	530,255	12%	36%	136
Ain al Arab	491,819	9%	41%	127
Menbij	548,443	NA	32%	NA
Sarin	503,675	NA	NA	NA
Al-Hasakeh Governorate Median	549,756	12%	34%	134
Al-Hasakeh	560,331	9%	32%	144
Al-Malikeyyeh*	475,676	8%	26%	123
Amuda*	559,560	19%	48%	144
Areesheh	536,989	10%	31%	138
Be'r Al-Hulo Al-Wardeyyeh	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hole	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jawadiyah*	493,067	9%	39%	127
Markada	549,756	5%	37%	141
Qahtaniyyeh*	395,364	7%	29%	102
Quamishli	499,270	10%	26%	130
Shadadah	575,510	NA	NA	NA
Tal Hmis*	542,503	14%	37%	144
Ya'robiyah*	417,054	2%	26%	111
Ar-Raqqa Governorate Median	572,532	14%	42%	137
Al-Thawrah	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ar-Raqqa	532,323	6%	31%	138
Ein Issa	607,029	11%	51%	157
Jurneyyeh*	530,056	5%	49%	NA
Karama	572,532	15%	NA	148
Mansura*	510,132	NA	NA	NA
Suluk	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tell Abiad	NA	NA	NA	NA
Deir-ez-Zor Governorate Median	528,900	20%	37%	121
Hajin	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kisreh	524,184	19%	28%	135
Sur	528,900	20%	54%	136
Thiban	541,048	13%	46%	139

#2 USD values are calculated as per the informal exchange rate recorded in the same geographical area. Please see this month's JMMI dataset for informal exchange rates by area.

#3 *For these sub-districts, water trucking prices were not available and is not included in the SMEB price.

SMEB FOOD ITEMS

Overall, key food items continued to increase in price, and the highest food basket price was recorded in Karama subdistrict in Ar-Raqqa governorate (fg. 10). In March, this was predominantly driven by a large increase in vegetable prices, especially for onions. JMMI field team reported that the increase in vegetable prices is due to being out of season, as the winter season requires more vegetables to be either planted in greenhouses – requiring higher production costs and transportation fees – or imported.

Most key food items and non-food items (NFIs) prices continued to increase in March. There is already speculation that these March price increases in Northern Syria were attributed to global price increases following the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine. As Oxfam reported in mid-March, "Syria relies heavily on Russia for imports of wheat. The crisis in Ukraine has seen the Syrian government starting to ration food reserves, including wheat, sugar, oil, and rice amid fears of shortages and price surges, and this could be just the beginning". This is in line with Action Against Hunger reports that "[m]ore than a decade since the conflict in Syria began, the number of Syrians at risk of hunger has reached record high levels. The average cost of food in the country has, for months, been the highest since monitoring began". Furthermore, WFP reported "[t]his year, 90 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line and more than 80 percent are food insecure. Families say they are eating less, cutting meals, and going into debt to meet their basic needs."

These price impacts are further compounded by climate and resource issues. According to the Precipitation Analysis shared by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) "[i]nsufficient and poorly distributed rainfall in the 2020/21 agricultural season, together with several heatwaves, the high cost of inputs, limited availability of irrigation water and high cost of fuel for pumping, resulted in a contraction of the harvestable cereal area. The harvested wheat area is estimated at 787,000 hectares, slightly over half of the area harvested in 2019." Furthermore, IRC reported that "2021 saw the worst drought in Syria in more than 70 years,[a]ffecting access to drinking water, electricity generation and irrigation water for millions. The water crisis decimated the country's wheat harvest, with production down from 2.8 million tonnes in 2020 to just 1.05 million tonnes in 2021". For a broader, national overview of the market context in Syria, please view the WFP Syria mVAM Bulletin for February 2022. For insights on food security across Syria, please see the WFP Hunger Map or the WFP Syria Emergency Dashboard for January 2022.

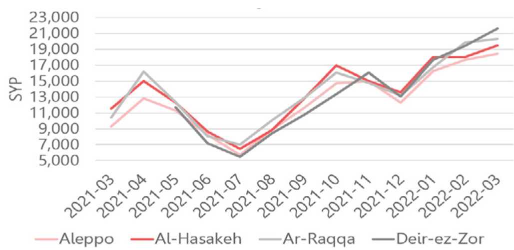
In general, all bulk food items saw price increases in March. The highest price was recorded at 243,200 SYP in Ein Issa subdistrict in Ar-Raqqa governorate. According to JMMI field teams, bulk food items are typically imported, and their prices increased due to the depreciation of the SYP and Turkish Lira (TRY) against the USD, and monopolization of some commodities.

Bread prices increased noticeably in March, although bread was one of the only key food items to decrease in price in February. The fluctuation of bread prices is attributed to both the depreciation of the SYP and general subsidies by the authorities As such, prices for bread vary largely between governorates. The highest price for bread was recorded at 2,000 SYP per 8-piece bundle in Quamishli community in Al-Hasakeh governorate. Furthermore, SOHR reported bread bakeries in Al-Hasakeh were operating with limited service due to a "shortage of fuel and subsidised flour allocated to bread bakeries."

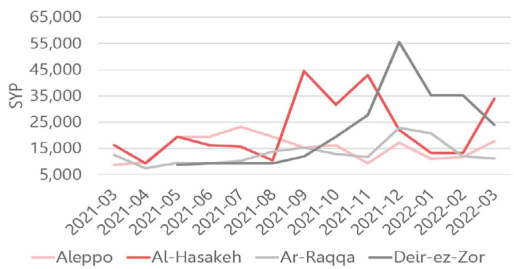
Flour continued to increase in price attributed to the worsening exchange rate of the SYP and its limited availability as reported, for example, by SOHR in Al-Hasakah. For a deeper analysis of the agricultural context in Syria, please see the FAO Agriculture Input and Commodity Bulletin for March 2022. For further understanding of how agricultural inputs and food price fluctuations in Syria affect a household's overall food security and livelihood restoration, please see the iMMAP Quarter 3 Bulletin which incorporates both REACH and WFP market data.

Water prices increased in Ar-Raqqa governorate but remained stable for other areas of NES in March (fg. 7). SOHR reported that "[t]he water level of Euphrates has reached very low levels that Syria has not seen since 1953, which has adversely affected the plant and livestock wealth". This is expected to worsen in the coming months due to the long-term water crisis in the region.

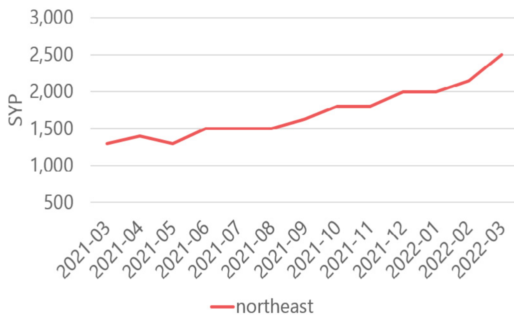
SMEB VEGETABLE PRICES IN NES - FG. 4



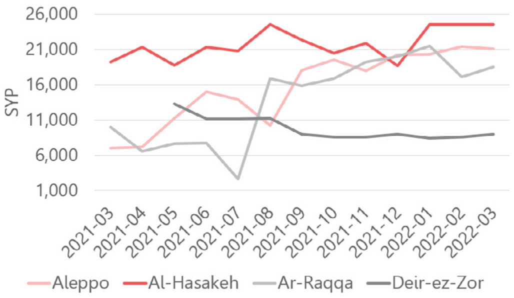
SMEB BREAD PRICES IN NES - FG. 5



FLOUR (KILO) PRICES IN NES FG. 6



SMEB WATER TRUCKING PRICES IN NES - FG. 7



SMEB COMPOSITION[4] FOR NORTHEAST SYRIA - FG. 8

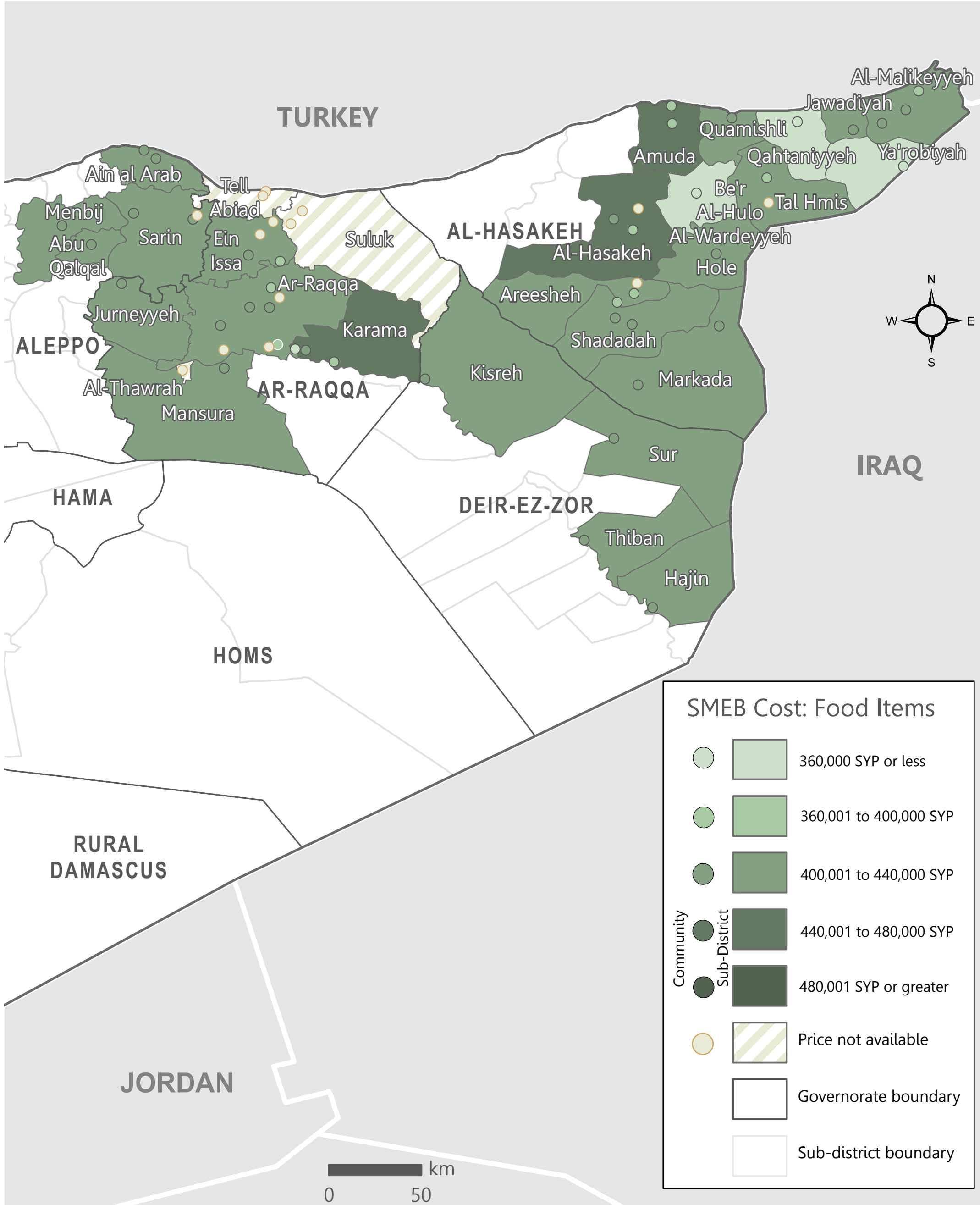
SMEB CONTENTS - FG. 9

Food			
Bread	37 kg	Rice	19 kg
Bulgur	15 kg	Salt	1 kg
Chicken	6 kg	Sugar	5 kg
Eggs	6 kg	Tomato paste	6 kg
Ghee/veg. oil	7 kg/L	Vegetables (fresh)	12 kg
Red lentils	15 kg		
Hygiene (NFI)			
Bathing soap	12 bars	Toothpaste	200 g
Laundry/dish soap	3 kg	Sanitary pads	4 packs of 10
Other			
Cooking fuel	25 L	Phone data	1 GB
Water trucking	4500 L	"Float"/other costs	7.5% of total

The SMEB Total is the median cost of the minimum, culturally adjusted items required to support a 6-person household for a month.

#4 Due to rounding figures may not total 100%

SMEB FOOD COMPONENT COST ACROSS NES, BY SUBDISTRICTS AND COMMUNITIES - FG. 10



PRICE OF ALL SMEB ITEMS - FG. 11

Item	Unit[5]	Price SYP	1 month change	6 month change	Price USD[2]
Northeast food Syria SMEB		**414,633**	**9%**	**34%**	**107**
SMEB bulk component	SMEB	214,500	12%	53%	55.39
Bulgur	1 kg	3,000	18%	76%	0.77
Red lentils	1 kg	4,500	7%	61%	1.16
Rice	1 kg	3,000	7%	36%	0.77
Salt	500 g	550	10%	10%	0.14
Sugar	1 kg	3,025	1%	38%	0.78
Tomato paste	1 kg	5,000	11%	43%	1.29
SMEB vegetables component	SMEB	19,800	7%	57%	5.11
Tomatoes	1 kg	2,200	5%	110%	0.57
Potatoes	1 kg	1,350	4%	35%	0.35
Cucumbers	1 kg	2,000	0%	33%	0.52
Onions	1 kg	850	6%	42%	0.22
Cooking oils	SMEB	61,250	35%	67%	15.82
Ghee	1 kg	8,000	23%	60%	2.07
Vegetable oil	1 L	10,000	59%	82%	2.58
SMEB non-veg perishables					
Bread	8 pc	400	12%	-18%	0.10
Chicken	1 kg	6,550	1%	11%	1.69
Eggs	30 pc	9,500	0%	12%	2.45
Non-food items component	SMEB	35,245	9%	25%	9.10
Bathing soap	1 pc	1,000	0%	25%	0.26
Sanitary pads	10 pc	2,000	33%	33%	0.52
Toothpaste	100 g	2,203	-3%	13%	0.57
Laundry powder	1 kg	4,000	0%	2%	1.03
Dish soap	1 L	3,611	16%	35%	0.93
Cooking fuels component	SMEB	15,000	4%	20%	3.87
Kerosene (manually refined)	1 L	725	-12%	45%	0.19
LP gas	1 L	175	0%	0%	0.05
Water trucking component	SMEB	18,000	3%	16%	4.65
Water trucking (1000 L)	1 m3	4,000	3%	16%	1.03
Other					
Phone data	1 gb	2,600	4%	4%	0.67

#5 The SMEB unit refers to the current SMEB allocation of the item, as outlined in fg. 9

MARKET FUNCTIONALITY

In March, 84% of surveyed vendors reported facing supply challenges in NES (fg. 12), which is a slight decrease compared with the previous month.The most reported supply challenge was price inflation at 76% (fg. 12 and 13), which was no change from the previous month.

Across shop types, surveyed **water trucking vendors (95%), butchers (86%) and vegetable vendors (81%)**, most commonly reported that they would run out of stock in less than 3 days if unable to restock. These types of vendors are typically only able to keep small stores of stock at any one time due to the perishable nature of their produce.

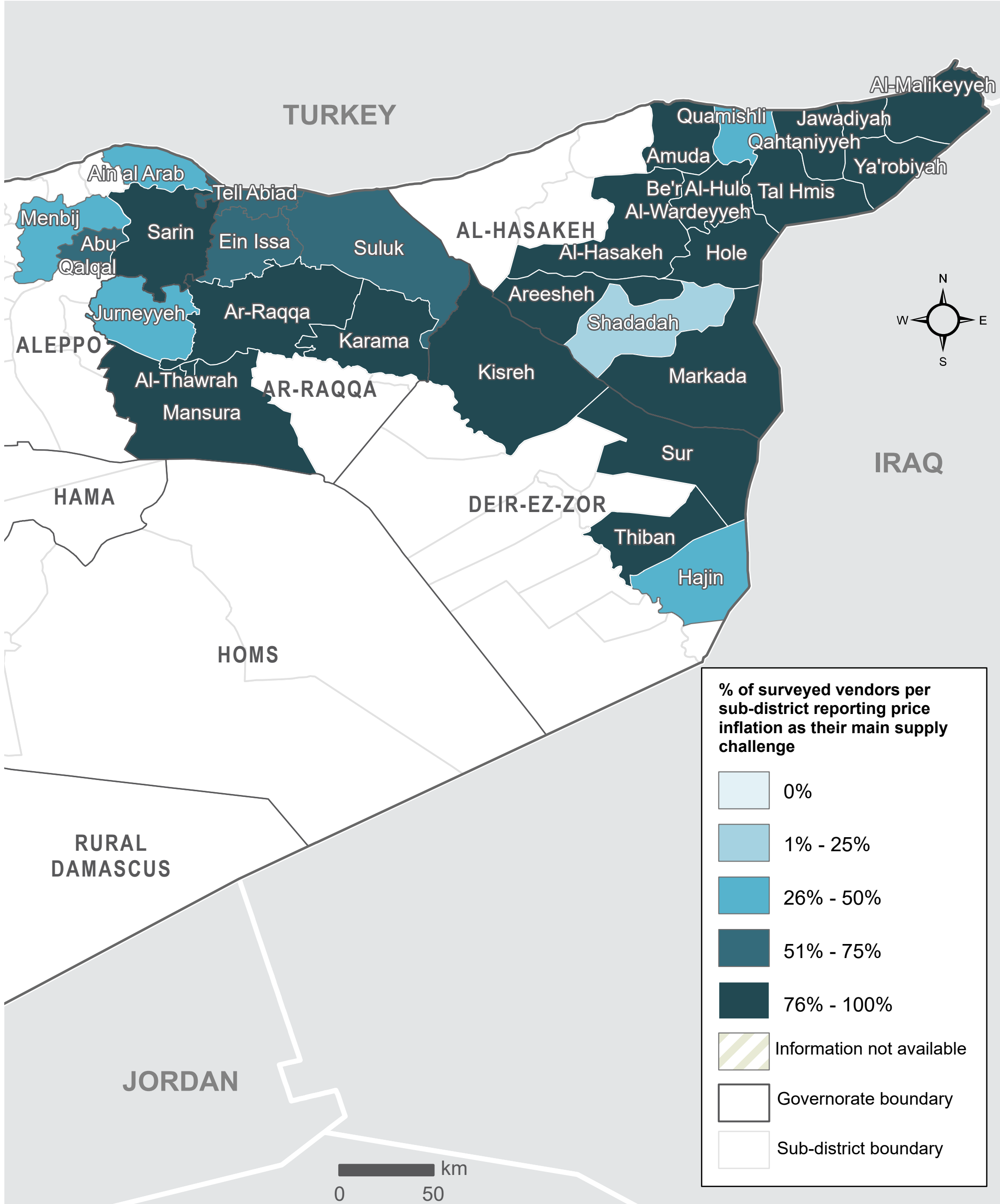
Notably, **100% of water** trucking vendors in Deir-Ez-Zor, Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa, and 90% in Al-Hasakeh, reported that they would **run out of supply in less than 3 days** if supply lines were cut. Furthermore, **100% of vegetable vendors and butchers** in Deir-Ez-Zor reported the same.

98% of informal currency exchange vendors reported having **limited stock of one or more USD denominations.** However, **more than half** of these vendors appeared to have an **adequate supply of the 1 USD or 5 USD** denominations.

SUPPLY CHALLENGES REPORTED[6] BY SURVEYED VENDORS - FG. 12

	AREA	REPORTED %
PRICE INFLATION	**NES**	**76%**
	NE Aleppo	59%
	Al-Hasakeh	84%
	Ar-Raqqa	77%
	Deir-Ez-Zor	74%
SUPPLY CANT MEET DEMAND	**NES**	**23%**
	NE Aleppo	8%
	Al-Hasakeh	41%
	Ar-Raqqa	10%
	Deir-Ez-Zor	29%
SUPPLIER LIMITED SUPPLY	**NES**	**16%**
	NE Aleppo	10%
	Al-Hasakeh	32%
	Ar-Raqqa	5%
	Deir-Ez-Zor	4%
NO ISSUES	**NES**	**16%**
	NE Aleppo	34%
	Al-Hasakeh	5%
	Ar-Raqqa	18%
	Deir-Ez-Zor	20%

VENDORS REPORTING PRICE INFLATION AS THEIR MAIN SUPPLY CHALLENGE ACROSS NES - FG. 13



#6 multiple choice, responses not expected to total 100%. Please see this month's JMMI dataset for all supply challenges reported by vendors.

ABOUT

To inform humanitarian cash programming, the northeast (NES) and northwest (NWS) Syria Cash Working Group (CWG) - in partnership with local and international NGOs - conducts a monthly JMMI in northern Syria. The exercise assesses the availability and prices of 36 basic commodities that are typically sold in markets and consumed by average Syrian households, including food and non-food items, water, fuel, and cell phone data.

METHODOLOGY

In order to be included in the JMMI, markets must be permanent in nature, large enough to support at least two wholesalers, and diverse enough to provide a sufficient variety of goods and commodities. Additionally, the shops surveyed within each market must be housed in permanent structures and must sell certain items to be eligible for inclusion.

Prices are calculated by taking the median of the next level of aggregation: community prices draw their medians from different vendors, sub-districts from communities, districts from sub-districts, and regional figures are calculated by taking the medians of the minimum reported prices of a region's districts.

For more details about the methodology, access the online JMMI dashboard.

In light of the fluctuation of the Syrian Pound (SYP)'s value and resulting market disruption, prices should be seen as representative only of the markets and dates where and when information was collected (7th - 14th March 2022).

LIMITATIONS

All JMMI data is only indicative for the specific timeframe within which it was collected, and trend lines in graphs may not be continuous where data is missing. Usually, data is collected during the first Monday-to-Monday of each month. The JMMI data collection tool requires enumerators to record the cheapest available price for each item, but does not require a specific brand, as brand availability may vary. Therefore, price comparisons across regions may be based on slight variants of the same product. Non-food items (NFIs) are particularly challenging to standardize as they vary significantly in terms of types, brands, and specifications. The JMMI methodology aims to balance consistency and comparability considerations with geographical variations in availability.

Due to issues of access, security and partner capacity, the markets included in the JMMI may vary on a monthly basis. As such, the reported changes in the more aggregate levels (governorate, district) may be driven by shifts in coverage rather than actual changes. For this reason, we recommend all users to consider local markets and lower levels of aggregation (sub-district, community) when using JMMI data for more specific trend analyses.

It is important to keep in mind that some vendors might feel more or less inclined to share their actual experiences (fearing that the information shared might be used by competitors or in some way against their business), while others might adjust their answers based on the expected effect that they will have on humanitarian programming. Similarly, even though all enumerators received the same training, some might have more previous experience and might therefore be better able to produce higher quality data.

Part of the data collection takes place remotely using vendor contact information collected in advance by the JMMI partners, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Market monitoring can be challenging, especially through remote interviews. At the same time, the JMMI has over seven years of accumulated experience, strong internal coordination and external relation with vendors, and vast longitudinal data, which supports the accuracy of findings.

JMMI AND THE CASH WORKING GROUP

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. In northeast Syria (NES), the CWG was established in 2018, to fulfil a similar purpose in that region.

For more information about the CWG in NES, please contact the cash working group coordinator at cashcoordnes@gmail.com

PARTNERS

Each month, around 20 different organizations 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 and producing outputs.

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.

For more information about REACH, please contact the REACH JMMI focal point, Gemma Bennett, at gemma.bennett@reach-initiative.org or visit the REACH Syria Resource Centre.