SAVING LIVES
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THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF **THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

(April – June 2020)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This World Food Programme (WFP) study constitutes a technical analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria). The study investigates food supply chains, traders and transporters' business models as well as food security and food price trends. This effort would not have been possible without the collaboration of several units of the WFP Syria Country Office, including the Supply Chain, Retail, Programme and Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) units. This study covers the period when the COVID-19 outbreak first appeared in Syria and when mitigation measures were put in place to limit the virus' spread (April – June 2020). The study is part of a wider United Nations in-depth report of the impact of COVID-19 on Syria, known as "Syria COVID-19 Inter-Agency Socio-Economic Impact Assessment".

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDI – Baltic Dry Index
CBT – Cash Based Transfer
COVID-19 – Coronavirus disease 2019
FB – Food Basket
FCS – Food Consumption Score
FSA – Food Security Assessment (covers Government of Syria-held areas of the country)
FSLA – Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment (covers opposition-held areas of Syria)
GECPT – General Establishment for Cereal Processing and Trade
GFA – General Food Assistance
GoS – Government of Syria
HNO – Humanitarian Needs Overview
IDPs – Internally Displaced People
Kg - Kilograms
KSA – Kurdish Self Administration
Lt – Litres
MAAR – Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
MoITCP – Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection
M-o-M – Month-on-month
MT – Metric tonnes
mVAM – Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
NES – North-East Syria
NFI – Non-food item
PPE – Personal Protective Equipment
rCSI – Reduced Coping Strategy Index
SFT – Syria For Trade
SMART - Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions survey
SYP – Syrian Pound
ToT – Terms of Trade
USD – United States Dollar
VAM – WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP – World Food Programme
XB – Cross border
Y-o-Y – Year-on-year

Cover Photo: WFP ready-to-eat (RTE) rations distribution to 1500 affected and displaced families by the fires from 6 small villages surrounding Mashta El Helou town in Latakia governorate.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The food security situation in Syria has deteriorated significantly over the past two years and especially since the start of the Lebanese financial crisis, in October 2019. In September 2019, WFP and the Food Security Sector estimated that some **7.9 million Syrians** were food insecure, 39 percent of the total population (HNO 2020[1]). Of these, approximately **500,000 people** were estimated to be severely food insecure. However, in April 2020, a review of food security data adjusting for the dramatic food price increases seen since late 2019 projected that the total number of people food insecure in Syria had increased by **1.4 million**, to a new total of **9.3 million people**, the highest number ever recorded, and close to half the total population of the country. At the same time, the number of people categorized as severely food insecure had doubled, reaching more than one million people.

The global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, is one of many concurrent and interlocking factors that has spurred the deteriorating food security trends that have been observed in Syria since late 2019. Since October 2019, Syria has witnessed multiple shocks, including extensive military operations in north-eastern Syria, a dramatic escalation of hostilities and massive population displacement in north-western Syria, the Lebanese financial crisis, intensification of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) targeting the Syrian government and third party businesses dealing with the Syrian government, in addition to the global spread of COVID-19.

This study outlines that while the food security situation was worsening in Syria before COVID-19, the deterioration has since accelerated due to the global, regional and local impacts of the pandemic and associated mitigation measures. A WFP rapid food security assessment[2] had already reported that by February 2020, the deteriorating Syrian pound (SYP)/USD informal exchange rate had already led to widespread inflation across all sectors of the Syrian economy, food included. The price of food continued to rise during the government-imposed COVID-19 related lockdown period in Syria (which severely restricted population movement as well as commercial, industrial and agricultural activities) due to panic buying, hoarding, and lack of controls on prices, highlighting how COVID-19 exacerbated the already dire situation. However, since the lockdown period ended (late May 2020), prices have continued to increase, and food insecurity indicators have continued to worsen. June 2020 saw the highest national average price of the WFP standard reference food basket[3] since the start of the crisis in 2011 as well as a serious deterioration of key household food security indicators and a dramatic decline in the purchasing power of Syrian households.

It is worth noting that the current economic hardships faced by the Syrian population is not primarily driven by the COVID-19 outbreak itself, but is the result of multiple concurrent factors that even individually would have been disruptive in their own right. The pre-existing and underlying fragility of the Syrian economy and the multiple shocks that occurred in between mid-2019 and 2020 have greatly weakened the Syrian economy. As such, the restrictions applied during the initial phase of the pandemic have had a disproportional effect on the wellbeing on the Syrian population, heavily impacting employment opportunities across the country, pushing up prices, further eroding household coping mechanisms and worsening already dire socio-economic indicators.

Through an in-depth review of Syria's food supply chains, trader purchasing patterns, food price trends and household food security levels, this study aims to shed light on the current situation in key food-related sectors of the Syrian economy. These sectors require support to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and help pave the way for the development of more resilient household livelihoods that can build resilience to future shocks. A difficult winter season lies ahead in 2020-21, as households are already facing deteriorating purchasing power due to the recent dramatic increase in the price of goods and inputs, with no change in their income levels.

[1]Humanitarian Needs Overview: 2020 https://hno-syria.org/#sector-needs

[2]WFP Syria: Impact of Rising Food Prices https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000113454/download/ July 2020

[3]The WFP reference food basket is a group of essential food commodities which in Syria includes 37 kilogrammes (kgs) of bread, 19 kgs of rice, 19 kgs of lentils, 5 kgs of sugar, and 7 litres of vegetable oil; providing 2,030 kilocalories per day for a family of five for one month.

This report adds to the 2020 Syria COVID-19 Inter-Agency Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Report by providing readers with in-depth information on how Syria's food supply chains, trader business models, commodity prices and household food security levels have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. By taking stock of the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures that were put in place between March and June 2020, this study assesses their impact on the Syrian economy and on Syrian household food security, outlining which sectors have been worst affected as well as identifying key vulnerable groups needing assistance.

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HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 Cases[4]: As of 01 September 2020, there were 2,830 officially reported cases of COVID-19 infection in Syria, with 116 reported deaths and 646 registered recoveries. The cases have been steadily increasing at an accelerating rate since June. It is worth noting that according to the WHO, given the limited testing across Syria, it is likely that many asymptomatic and mild cases are going undetected and that the actual number of cases in Syria may far exceed the official figures.

Devaluation of Syrian Pound: The Central Bank of Syria officially devalued the Syrian pound (SYP) to SYP 1,250/USD 1 on 16 June 2020. This was the second devaluation of the Syrian pound (SYP) in eight months, increasing from SYP 434/USD 1 in November 2019. The informal SYP/USD exchange rate has been very volatile since the Lebanese financial crisis which started in October 2019. Especially in June the informal exchange rate depreciated from SYP 1,800/USD 1 on 01 June to SYP 3,200/USD by 08 June to then gradually stabilize around SYP 2,500/USD 1 by end June 2020. The informal SYP has been further strengthening since then and is trading at around SYP 2,200/USD 1 as of mid-September.

Market and Trade: Access to markets worsened during the COVID-19 lockdown, with only 70 percent of interviewed households reporting having access to food markets compared to 94 percent of respondents a year ago. Traders were heavily impacted by the high volatility in the exchange rate that caused shops to temporarily close in early June. Even though credit requests to traders had increased compared to pre-COVID-19 period, traders mentioned that they had reduced the number of people they extended credit to by half (from an average 63 percent to 31 percent in June) in an attempt to reduce their risk exposure to credit repayment defaults.

Price Trends: Food prices in Syria have increased dramatically over the past year. The price of the WFP standard national average reference food basket in June 2020 (SYP 84,095) has more than doubled in six months (increasing by 110 percent since February 2020); was up 230 percent since October 2019 (the start of the Lebanese financial crisis) and is up 244 percent year-on-year (compared to June 2019-levels). The national average food basket in June 2020 was 23.5 times higher than the pre-crises 5-year monthly average.

Purchasing Power: The national average price of the WFP standard reference food basket (SYP 84,095 in June 2020), is now higher than even the highest official monthly government salary of SYP 80,240, highlighting the serious deterioration of purchasing power in Syria since October 2019 and the increasing unaffordability of basic food items on Syrian markets. In comparison, in October 2019, WFP's national average reference food basket was SYP 25,424.

Terms of Trade (ToT): The ToT between daily unskilled wage labour and wheat flour deteriorated in 2020. In October 2019, the equivalent of a daily unskilled wage labour rate would buy 8.5 kg of wheat flour on the local market. However, this fell to 3.9 kg by June 2020, highlighting how prices are outpacing wage rates; worsening people's purchasing power. This is the second lowest recorded ToT ever recorded in Syria, second only to December 2016, when 3.7 kg of wheat flour could be purchased with the equivalent of a daily wage labourer's rate.

Food Security Levels: The food security situation in Syria has deteriorated significantly since October 2019. As of April 2020, some 9.3 million people, 46 percent of the total population of the country, were estimated to be food insecure, an increase of 1.4 million since September 2019. One million of these are estimated to be severely food insecure, a number that has doubled over the same time period.

Food Security Trends: In June 2020, around one-third (34 percent) of surveyed households reported poor or borderline food consumption; a 15 percent increase compared to June 2018 and June 2019. Large disparities in food consumption levels exists across the country.

Food Security by Vulnerable Groups: Female-headed households, internally displaced people and returnees as well as people who rent housing reported worse food security levels than less vulnerable groups in Syria. For example, up to 42 percent of interviewed female-headed households reported having either poor or borderline food consumption compared to 33 percent of male-headed households. The rate of poor food consumption more than doubled between June 2019 and June 2020 for both IDPs and IDP returnees, going from five percent to 11 percent of respondents, while poor food consumption levels increased at a somewhat slower rate for residents (from four to seven percent).

Dietary Diversity: On average in June 2020, over half (52 percent) of interviewed households reported consuming a low diversity diet; double the percentage of households reporting consuming a low diversity diet in June 2018 or June 2019.

Consumption-Based Coping Strategies: The prevalence of households engaging in one or more coping mechanisms reached 86 percent in June 2020, which is 11 percent and 19 percent higher than the prevalence levels recorded in June 2018 and June 2019, respectively. Furthermore, the share of households adopting high levels of coping in June 2020 was 35 percent, an increase from 30 percent since June 2019 and 21 percent since June 2018. This translates to more households reporting that they had engaged more frequently in skipping meals, reducing number of meals per day, limiting the consumed food portion size, depending on cheaper/less expensive food, restricting adults' consumption in order for children to eat more and borrowing food.

Imports: Following the official devaluation of the Syrian pound to SYP 1,250/USD, the Syrian Central Bank announced on 21 June 2020, that from July 2020 onwards, it would no longer include food in its priority commodities for accessing US dollars. This is likely to increase the price of imported food commodities (such as rice, wheat flour, vegetable cooking oil and sugar) that Syrians heavily depend on for their food needs.

Supply Chains: The impact of COVID-19 on the Syrian food supply chain has been significant and has exacerbated the already alarming economic situation resulting from the depreciation of the Lebanese pound since October 2019. Key impacts observed were delays of import certifications, increase in prices of key food commodities – such as rice – and delays in packaging and restocking of food items in shops due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions.

Case to support traders: WFP-contracted retailers fared better than retailers who were not at that moment contracted by WFP. WFP-contracted retailers reported to be less concerned about running out of stock and that their customers requested less credit from traders than reported by retailers who were not contracted by WFP. Furthermore, while some non-contracted retailers mentioned client liquidity and shortage of supply from wholesalers as a top constraint for their trade, this was not the case for WFP contracted retailers.

METHODOLOGY

The data analysed in this report was collected through multiple approaches. Key informant discussions were held with key wholesalers and retailers, and an online survey was conducted for transporters. Data was cleaned and further analysed through IBM SPSS Statistics (SPSS). Food price monitoring is continuously conducted by WFP in Syria on a weekly basis from 57 markets across the country. Random mobile household interviews were conducted to assess the food security situation in the country.

4Source: OCHA/WHO Syrian Arab Republic COVID-19 Humanitarian Update No. 17, 01 September 2020.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, Syria has been impacted by a series of events that have greatly reshaped the geographic and economic structure of the country. The Turkish military incursion into north-eastern Syria in October 2019 ('Operation Peace Spring') which led to the displacement of an estimated 180,000 people in less than three weeks; the ongoing Lebanese financial crisis that has further destabilized an already ailing Syrian economy reeling from nine years of conflict; a dramatic escalation of conflict in north-western Syria that started in late 2019 and continued into 2020 that displaced over one million people in the largest wave of displacement seen yet in the Syrian crisis; as well as the intensification of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) in June 2020. These developments have all heavily impacted Syria and the wellbeing of the Syrian population. COVID-19 is an important addition to this list of shocks and disruptive events. It has increased the vulnerability of Syrians by negatively impacting already fragile livelihoods as well as by disrupting supply chains and increasing commodity prices. As such, COVID-19 is a contributing factor that is further compounding the many negative developments that had been impacting an already fragile Syrian economy.

While the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Syria remains relatively low compared to other countries since the first case was confirmed on 22 March 2020, Syria has seen a rapidly accelerating growth in the number of confirmed cases over July and August. These jumped from 123 confirmed cases on 01 June to 279 cases by 30 June and 757 confirmed cases by 31 July. As of 01 September, 2,830 cases have been confirmed across the country. However, given the limited testing being conducted (only 26,572 tests have been conducted as of 01 September 2020), it is likely that many asymptomatic and mild cases are going undetected and that the actual number of COVID-19 cases far exceeds official figures. According to OCHA and WHO, the source of 89 percent of officially confirmed cases remain unknown, indicating widespread community transmission across the country. While most restrictions and mitigation measures have been lifted, caution remains, as the looming spectre of new lockdowns and curfews remains and is ever present, which as was visible during its brief implementation in March to May 2020, caused severe disruptions to the Syrian economy and to the country's general food security situation.

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TIMELINE OF COVID-19 RELATED RESTRICTIONS:

The first COVID-19 cases were reported in China in December 2019 and rapidly spread across the globe in early 2020, causing governments to impose strict lockdown measures to contain the spread of the virus. Syria commenced strict mitigation measures, including movement restrictions and a nationwide curfew to curb the spread of virus in mid-March. On 15 March 2020, the Syrian government implemented the first COVID-19 related restrictions by closing schools and universities as well as reducing public institutions' workforce capacity by 40 percent. Further COVID-19 related restrictions were then progressively introduced throughout the second half of March.

By the end of March, the Syrian government had imposed lockdown measures across Syria with all non-food related businesses being forced to shut. Only food businesses and agencies/ institutions providing essential services were allowed to operate between 06:00 and 18:00. A nationwide curfew was imposed across Syria from 18:00 to 06:00. Areas which showed an increase in COVID-19 cases were isolated and placed under a complete lockdown. For example, the neighbourhood of Sayeda Zeinab in Rural Damascus governorate, was put under lockdown from 02 April to mid-May as it had reported a spike in COVID-19 cases in late March/early April.

By mid-April however, as the economic pressure grew, with prices of commodities increasing, the Syrian government started easing some of the restrictive measures. On 13 April, the Syrian government allowed mechanics, smiths, carpenters, shops selling agriculture related inputs, jewellers, mobile phone shops and taxi services to reopen. Moreover, movement between governorates was allowed for a few select weekends between April and May with medical teams stationed at the entrance of cities to test travellers moving from one part of the country to the other. Borders remained closed, however, and anyone wanting to enter Syria needed to be tested for COVID-19 through a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

Even though food businesses were allowed to operate, this had to be done along reduced operating hours, and with reduced staff, while ensuring COVID-19 compliant measures were in place. While export bans which were introduced at the end of March for eggs, milk, cheese, legumes, javel water and chlorine remain in place as of early September, imports have not been restricted throughout the COVID-19 period. On 23 April, one day before Ramadan, all commercial services were officially approved to resume activity from 08:00 to 17:00 in an attempt to bolster the economy over the important festive period.

While most of Syria followed the above measures, some governorates put in place different restrictive regulations. For example, opposition-held Idleb governorate introduced measures which were implemented later than in the rest of the country. In early April, all non-food related businesses and shops were informed to cease operations and only food businesses were allowed to operate. Bazaars (big market spaces) were instructed to close, while restaurants and cafes were only allowed takeaway services. However, these measures were not officially enforced, and bazaars remained operational as usual, albeit with fewer customers. Restaurants and cafes operated normally, and non-food businesses also largely continued operating uninterrupted. Borders between Afrin (Aleppo governorate) and Idleb governorate were also closed in early April. However, smuggling of food-items between Afrin and Idleb continued throughout the closure and the borders officially re-opened again later in April.

The Government of Syria (GoS) controlled areas of north-east Syria (NES) followed the same COVID-19 measures as the rest of the GoS areas of Syria, while areas under the control of the Kurdish Self-Administration (KSA) in NES followed similar yet somehow slightly different measures. For example, while curfew hours for the GoS-controlled areas in NES were imposed from 18:30 to 06:00, areas under KSA control (accounting for approximately 90 percent of NES) followed a curfew from 15:00 to 06:00. KSA-controlled areas also closed non-food related businesses while exempting food and agriculture-related activities from COVID-19 movement restrictions. Large fruit and vegetable markets as well as livestock markets were also closed, which was the same practice for GoS-held areas of Syria. Borders for people entering Syria were closed in NES from neighbouring countries and all crossing-points between KSA and GoS-held areas were also closed from late March and throughout April. Three COVID-19 cases were reported in the Al-Omran neighbourhood in Al-Hasakeh city (Al-Hasakeh governorate) in early April, which led to a complete lockdown of the neighbourhood and a curfew from 15:00 to 06:00. Unlike in the rest of Syria, bread from public bakeries in NES was for the most part of the initial phase of the outbreak (March to June) not available from public bakeries but was instead sold through bread agents, pushing up the price of bread in this region.

During May, GoS decided to maintain daily curfew hours during Eid Al-Fitr from 19:30 to 06:00. All commercial and service professions were allowed to operate until 19:00 until the end of Eid Al-Fitr, including Friday 20 May. The government subsequently completely lifted the nightly curfew and the restriction of movement among provinces on 25 May. Except for some areas that were subject to localized lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreaks (such as Ras Al Ma'ara in Rural Damascus governorate and Jadidat Al-Fadl in Quneitra governorate). By early June, all initial COVID-19 related restrictions had been lifted across Syria, and all bars and restaurants were allowed to re-open, albeit at reduced capacity to maintain physical distancing.

A day-to-day progression timeline on the introduction of COVID-19 restriction measures and evolution of the COVID-19 in Syria between March and June is available in Annex 1.

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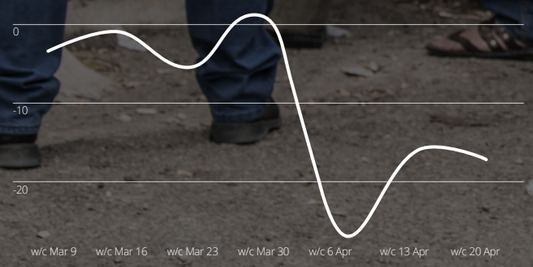
SECTION 2

MACRO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused global economic disruption and has spurred the deepest global recession since the Great Depression of 1929-1939. Global supply chain challenges were noted as early as January 2020, and the impact became most prominent during the months of February to June. According to Fortune Magazine "94 percent of the Fortune 1,000 are seeing coronavirus supply chain disruptions"[5] . The World Economic Forum reported a significant dip in the weekly global transactions against pre-lockdown levels[6], as per the following chart:

Graph 1: Average weekly global transactions – percentage increase/decrease against pre-lockdown levels



[5]https://fortune.com/2020/02/21/fortune-1000-coronavirus-china-supply-chain-impact/
[6]https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/this-is-what-global-supply-chains-will-look-like-after-covid-19/

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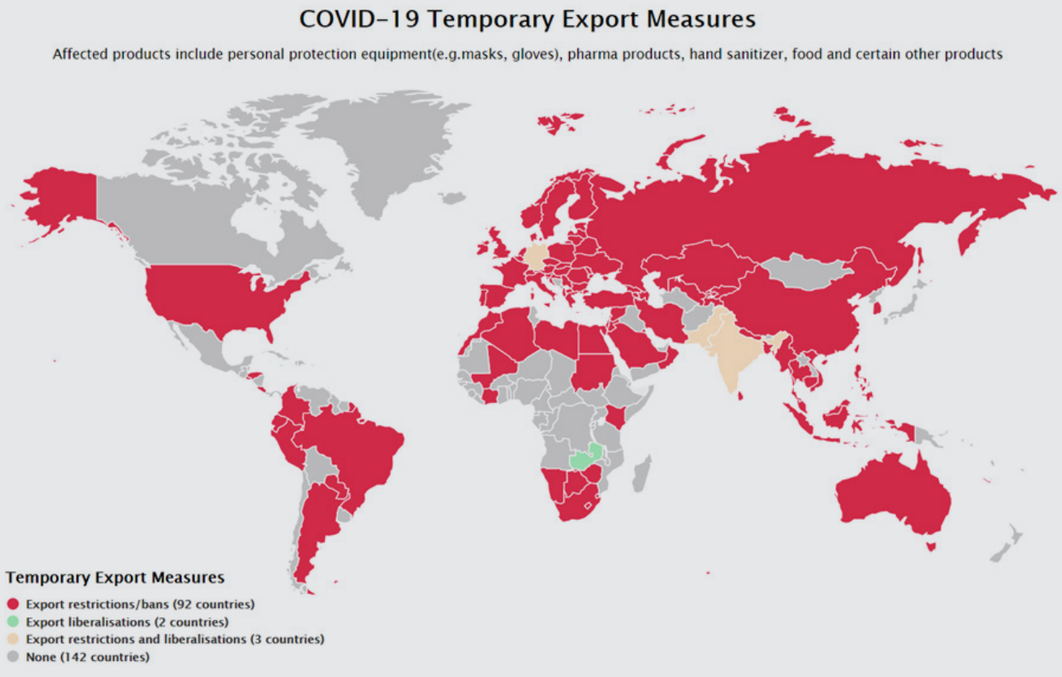
In addition, a survey conducted by the Institute of Supply Chain Management indicated that "notably, nearly 75 percent of companies report supply chain disruptions in some capacity due to coronavirus-related transportation restrictions, and more than 80 percent believe that their organization will experience some impact because of COVID-19 disruptions. Of those, one in six (16 percent) companies report adjusting revenue targets downward an average of 5.6 percent due to the coronavirus[7]". Finally, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPR) data also clearly indicates a correlation between the increase in export restrictions and the number of COVID-19 cases[8], outlining the extent to which the pandemic is affecting global supply chains.

Map 1: COVID-19 Temporary Export Measures



Source: Macmap, as of 12th May 2020[9]

The impact of COVID-19 on the Syrian food supply chain has been significant and has exacerbated the already dire economic situation in the country following the depreciation of the Lebanese pound seen since October 2019. The Syrian and Lebanese economies are closely intertwined, and as such, the 2019-2020 Lebanese financial crisis has had significant ripple effects on the Syrian economy. The effects of COVID-19 has further depressed both the Syrian and Lebanese economies. However, in neither country has the central bank been able to take expansionary measures to protect their economies due to dwindling foreign reserves.

Syria was no exception to supply chain challenges and disruptions. Even though globally, restrictions on food exports were less prominent compared to medical supplies, WFP's humanitarian operations in Syria were significantly impacted by price increases of internationally sourced and imported staples, such as rice and pulses. As COVID-19 spread across the globe, countries started to impose export restrictions on food as well as health and hygiene items at different intervals from late March to early April 2020, most of which were removed by June 2020[10].

[7]https://www.instituteforsupplymanagement.org/news/NewsRoomDetail.cfm?ItemNumber=31171&SSO=1
[8]https://public.tableau.com/profile/laborde6680#!/vizhome/ExportRestrictionsTracker/FoodExportRestrictionsTracker
[9]https://www.tradeeconomics.com/legal-and-policy-implications-of-covid-19-related-export-restrictions/
See IFPRI's export restriction tracker:
[10]https://public.tableau.com/profile/laborde6680#!/vizhome/ExportRestrictionsTracker/FoodExportRestrictionsTracker

The biggest impact felt by WFP in Syria was in the price of white rice, which peaked in the month of April. To sustain its food pipeline, WFP Syria was forced to procure rice from Thailand, resulting in a 12 percent price increase in price compared to the average import prices seen prior to the outbreak. Reuters reported that globally the price of rice had reached a seven-year high at the end of March[11]. An official quote from the Thai Rice Exporters Association for a five percent white rice (grade RI-THWHT5-A) also reported a seven-year high in the last week of March at USD 564 per tonne, up more than 12 percent from USD 502 from the previous week[12].

Especially for rice, for which WFP Syria relies entirely on imports, the international quoted price increased by up to 36 percent between the beginning and the end of April. The price gradually declined as April progressed, and by May, the price had returned to within the normal market fluctuation range.

In terms of export restrictions, those which had impacted WFP's operation in Syria are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: COVID-19 global export restrictions that impacted WFP operations in Syria (as on 21 April 2020)

Commodity	Country	Export Restrictions (21 April 2020)	Impact on WFP Syria	Impact on Syria
Rice	Vietnam	Replaces its export ban on rice with and export quota. (11/04/2020)	Higher price	Higher price
Rice	Cambodia	Suspends exports of rice and some fish products. (05 April 2020)		
Rice	India	Indian rice traders have suspended signing new export contracts amid the nationwide lockdown. However, there is no move by the government to ban exports.		
Rice	USA	No restriction		
Rice	Spain & Italy	No restriction		
Wheat	Russia	From 01 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 the quota for export of wheat, meslin, barley, rye and corn to the non-EAEU countries is set to the total volume of 7 million tonnes. Certain grains are excluded, please refer to official document.	Wheat supply chain affected (Turkey, Local, Int.)	Higher price, scarcity.
Wheat	Ukraine	The Ministry of Economy to control wheat export shipments, sell flour in the domestic market and agree with traders a maximum volume of wheat for export.		
General	Jordan	The Jordanian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply decided to stop granting export and re-export licenses for food products	3,000MT affected. Pending Jordan MOFA approval.	
Sugar	Morocco	None	Not affected	
Pulses	Egypt	Minister of Industry and Trade introduced an export ban on certain type of vegetables.	Pending Egypt MOFA approval.	
Cereals, Sugar	Romania	Suspends exports of cereals, flour, sugar and certain other products. (10 April 2020)		
Chickpeas	Australia	Not affected		
Lentils	Canada	Not affected		
Lentils and Chickpeas	Kyrgyzstan	Documentation delays expected for legalization due to travel restrictions. Kyrgyzstan also imposed temporary ban on export of some food products and essential goods. According to the Cabinet of Ministers, the list includes wheat, flour, vegetable oil, sugar, chicken eggs, rice, pasta, disinfectants and bactericides, napkins, as well as mixed fodder and bran. (till September 2020)	Documentation legalization delays. (Not affecting exportation yet but TBC.)	
Yeast	Algeria	There are lists of products temporary suspended from exports.		
Yeast	Turkey	List of products temporary suspended from exports.	Delays - request for exemption?	China is the biggest exporter and Turkey is the largest in MEA.
Yeast	Egypt	Not affected		
PPE	Lebanon, Jordan, most countries	Lebanon suspends export of certain personal protective and medical goods.	High on certain commodities	High on certain commodities

Source: https://www.macmap.org/en/covid19

[11]https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/world-trade-despite-a-sudden-interruption-global-value-chains-still-have-a-bright-future-2/
[12]https://www.reuters.com/article/thailand-rice/thai-rice-prices-hit-7-year-high-on-anticipated-sales-as-coronavirus-troubles-rivals-exporters-idUSL4N2BQ2F8

In terms of shipping, the impact was felt earlier. In February 2020, Dry Cargo International reported that "the Baltic Dry Index has now reached lows last seen in early 2016, when the shipping sector was suffering a supply and demand imbalance in the wake of the 2008-09 global economic crisis"[13]. As containment measures were imposed by governments, such as lockdowns, restrictions of movement and stricter quarantine measures, shipping also slowed down.

The Baltic Dry Index (BDI) is often used as a reflection of shipping health/status. It acts as a 'blood-line' for the global market, allowing goods – such as rice and wheat to move in bulk on the 'most representative' routes. The BDI indicated that the price of rice reached a small peak on 29 April, before doubling in June. In contrast, the increase in price for wheat was gradual and less pronounced, despite Russian export restrictions, which were expected to increase world wheat prices as Russia is one of the largest exporters of wheat in the world.

Specific to the context in Syria was a notable delay in the legalization of documents. Suppliers were unable to reach certain Syrian consulates due to international and internal borders closing for the movement of individuals. As these legalization documents are required to be handled in person and not through third party courier services, suppliers were unable to receive the approvals required to travel or cross Syrian international borders.

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IMPORT DISRUPTIONS FOR SYRIA

Despite the mitigation measures imposed by the Government of Syria (GoS), all borders remained open for the movement of commercial cargo. Both Tartous and Lattakia ports remained operational throughout, as well as the overland border crossings from Lebanon at Jdeideh and Arida. The border with Jordan remained open for commercial cargo transit, though with export restrictions put in place by Jordanian authorities, specific approvals were necessary for the import of wheat flour to Syria. There were also some positive developments on facilitation of importation and granting of import license, including a decree issued on 29 March 2020 that allowed traders to import wheat, which had previously been restricted only to GoS.

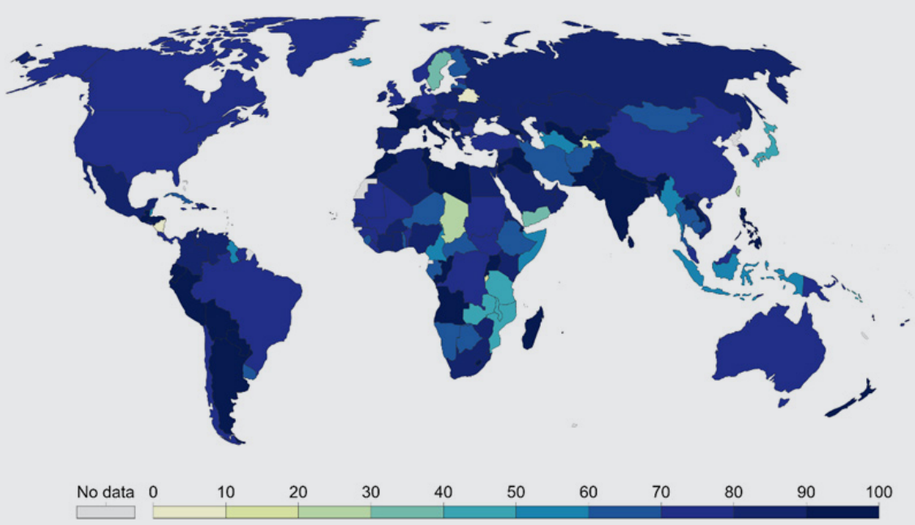
It is worth noting that problems encountered with the importation of wheat over the past year have been linked primarily to the issue of accessing foreign currency, rather than to COVID-19 or related mitigation measures. It has been reported that the General Establishment for Cereal Processing and Trade (GECPT) in Syria – responsible for the purchasing and public marketing of cereals, including wheat – made offers to import 200,000 tonnes of wheat from Russia, but failed to complete the purchase due to problems accessing US dollars 'stuck' in the Lebanese financial system[14].

Importers and wholesalers explained that they had experienced delays in importation or arrival of shipments during March 2020, when the main food producing countries started introducing lockdowns[15]. Data from Oxford University's Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (Map 2 below) clearly indicates that as of 31 March, the strict measures put in place globally corresponded to the challenges faced in the delays in importation of food items into Syria during March and April, as they prepared for the surge in demand during the month of Ramadan (23 April – 23 May 2020).

[13]https://www.drycargomag.com/global-shipping-hit-by-coronavirus
[14]https://syriadirect.org/news/damascus-struggles-to-secure-wheat-supply-amidst-coronavirus-crisis/
[15]https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker

Map 2: COVID-19: Government Response Stringency Index – March 31, 2020

The Government Response Stringency Index is a composite measure based on nine response indicators including school closures, workplace closures, and travel bans, rescaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100 = strictest response).



Source: Hale, Webster, Petherick, Phillips, and Kira (2020). Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker – Last Updated 3rd July.
Note: This index simply records the number and strictness of government policies, and should not be interpreted as 'scoring' the appropriateness or effectiveness of a country's response.
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

While it was clear from the circular that the "centres of selling items" were excluded from such restrictions, imposition of the curfew and limitations on movement de-facto affected the production capacity of importers and wholesalers. For example, some WFP workers were unable to access the workplace, thus reducing WFP's regular packaging capacity. Some of the wholesalers mentioned that movement restrictions impacted their packaging capacity, especially when compared to the demand for food items, which was high due to preparation for stricter lockdown measures, as well as partly in preparation for Ramadan festivities.

Wholesalers advised that typically during Ramadan they tend to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week with three different shifts for workers to ensure supply meets demand. This year, due to COVID-19 curfew restrictions, they could only work eight hours a day during the working week, and further reduced hours during the weekend. This meant that food items were coming off the shelf faster than they could be replenished, leading to shortages and increases in the price of many food items.

This issue was largely addressed by early-April when packaging firms were deemed 'critical jobs' by the Syrian Government and could circumvent curfew movement restrictions. In fact, an increase in prices for food items was noted in the first couple of weeks from the moment of curfew implementation, followed by a slight levelling of prices in-line with the loosening of restrictions in April and early May. This period of relative price stabilization also coincided with the second part of Ramadan, when the demand for goods typically falls.

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SECTION 3

IMPACT ON SYRIAN FOOD MARKETS

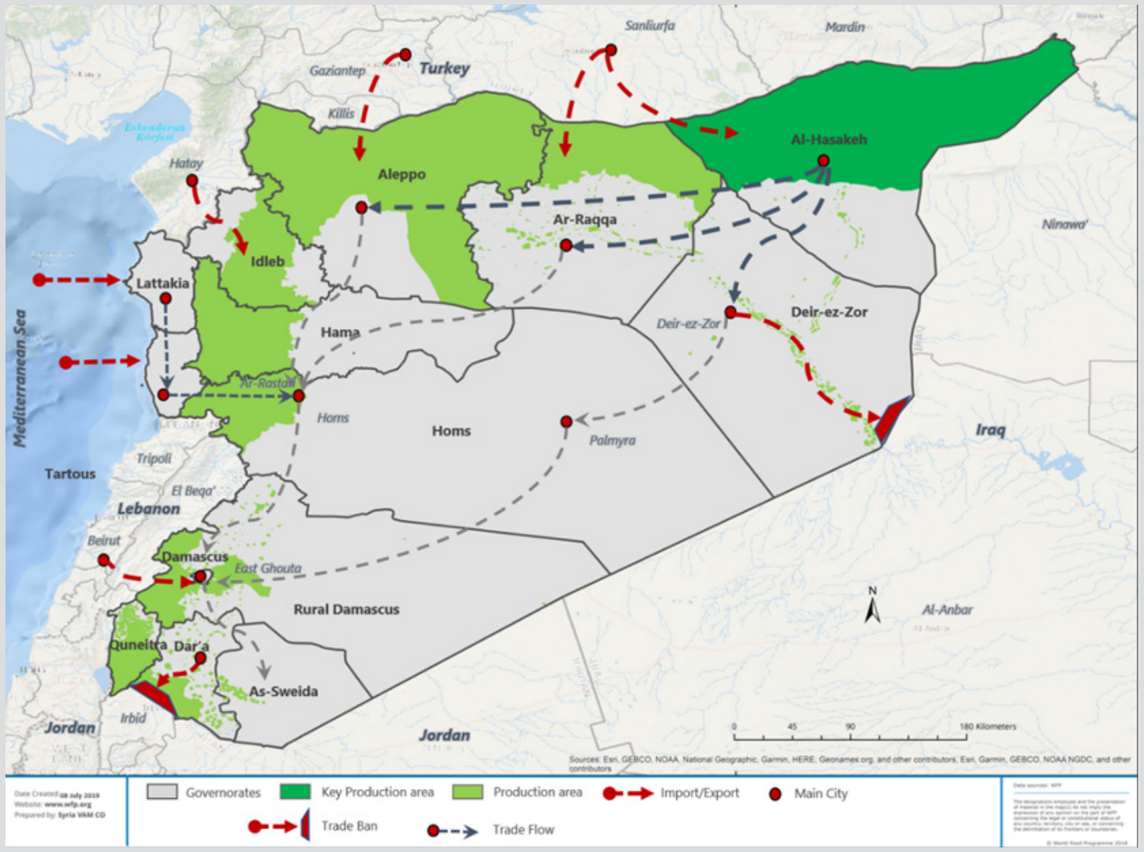
LOCAL FOOD MARKET CONDITIONS

Syria has historically been a strong agrarian economy. Much of the country's cropland lies in the north-east, north and central parts of the country, including notably the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Rural Damascus. Agriculture in the western governorates of Lattakia, Tartous and Idleb is known to largely centre on citrus fruits, apples, olives and vegetable cultivation. While the Badia region, a stretch of semi-arid land in central Syria covering around 55 percent of the country, is primarily used for livestock grazing.

While Syria cultivates a number of crops; namely barley, cotton, tobacco, sugar beet, lentils, chickpeas, fava beans, peas, vegetables, citrus fruits, olives and herbs, its main staple is wheat. Up to 40 percent of wheat grain is cultivated in Al-Hasakeh governorate, with Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, Hama and Homs governorates contributing much of the remaining 60 percent. Some wheat is also cultivated in Rural Damascus governorate and in the southern governorates of Dar'a and Quneitra and in the irrigated land of Deir-ez-Zor governorate. As a result, much of the wheat trade flow goes from north-east and northern parts of the country towards western and southern Syria (Map 3).

©WFP/Tarek Jacob

Map 3: Syria – Main wheat production areas and flows



Syria is currently a wheat deficit country, meaning it does not produce enough wheat annually to meet its own needs. In 2019, wheat production was 2.2 million tonnes, below the estimated total utilization requirement of 4.5 million tonnes (of which 3.5 million tonnes is for food use) and below the 4.1 million tonnes pre-crisis (2002-11) national average production level. In 2020, it is estimated that wheat production in Syria will be around 2.8 million tonnes with only around 0.8 million tonnes produced in GoS controlled areas[16].

Syria heavily depends on markets for its food security. Already in 2010 over 50 percent of Syrians were reported to be living in urban areas, making markets essential in providing Syrians with their food needs. The crisis, international sanctions, and the more frequent erratic weather patterns experienced by Syria over the last 50 years has meant that ever more Syrians are depending on markets to meet their food needs. National food security assessments conducted in 2019 by WFP and the Central Bureau of Statistics as well as with the Food Security Cluster (the 2019 Food Security Assessment/Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment (FSA/FSLA)) found that 89 percent of Syrians reported markets as their main source of food.

Even though historically being an agricultural country, years of crisis and resulting mass displacement of people from their land, as well as heavy infrastructural damage and looting, has meant that Syrians now more than ever depend on imports for their food security, economic production and access to key non-food items. Some key imported commodities are: rice, wheat flour, vegetable oil, sugar, tea, fertilizer, petrol, sanitary products, medicine, vaccines and replacement items for machines. However, more than nine years of crisis has crippled the financial ability of many traders to purchase goods and has limited the purchasing power and liquidity of consumers. This has resulted in traders not finding adequate buyer markets for their commodities, as well as forcing traders to buy and store fewer goods as a risk-mitigation measure to avoid losses.

[16]Al-Jazeera: "Syria faces severe bread shortages as US sanctions worsen economy" https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/syria-faces-severe-bread-shortages-sanctions-worsen-economy-200709191733440.html

Increases in fuel prices and the depreciation of the Syrian pound meant that food prices in Syria had already been on the rise since late 2018. However, food price increases accelerated significantly in 2019, especially after the start of the Lebanese financial crisis in October 2019. The financial crisis caused banks in Lebanon to restrict release of funds to bank account holders. Many Syrians have a bank account in Lebanon and as such are no longer able to access their savings[17], which are estimated to amount to around 45 billion US dollars[18]. The inaccessibility of US dollar accounts in Lebanon has heavily impacted Syrian traders who used Lebanese banks to facilitate their trade on the international market. With reduced availability of US dollars on the Lebanese market, demand on US dollars grew in Syria and the Syrian currency started depreciating ever faster vis-à-vis the US dollar, which in turn pushed-up commodity prices.

COVID-19 has added a further layer of complexity to the context, forcing all non-food businesses and non-essential services to temporarily shut while food businesses had to restructure their operations to ensure they complied with the required COVID-19 mitigation measures. While most COVID-19 movement restriction measures have since been lifted, the combined effect of business closures as well as Ramadan festivities led to panic-buying and as a result, to an increase in the price of commodities. The increase in prices had already been affecting Syria before COVID-19[19] and has continued since the main COVID-19 related restrictions were removed, outlining the much deeper underlying structural economic issues instigating the rise in prices of goods in Syria. Nevertheless, COVID-19 containment measures are further impacting prices in Syria, and a similar trend can be expected if movement restriction measures are re-imposed in the coming months.

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[17]Reuters: "Lebanon crisis wreaks havoc on Syria's war-torn economy" – 29 November 2019;

[18]Asharq: "Damascus Estimates Syrian Deposits in Lebanese Banks Worth $45 Billion" https://english.aawsat.com//home/article/20755317/damascus-estimates-syrian-deposits-lebanese-banks-worth-45-billion - 10 January 2020;

[19]WFP Syria "Impact of rising food prices" https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000113454/download/

IMPACT ON TRADERS

The high degree of disruption to traders' business caused by the worsening economic situation in Lebanon and Syria, which has been further deepened by the temporary COVID-19 movement restrictions and business closures in Syria, is evident. Every day, numerous articles speak of the effects of deep rooted structural economic problems in the country, without failing to report on the most recent increases in the price of goods, and the latest disruptions to the economic and agricultural sectors. All highlighting the increased inability of Syrians to purchase their required needs. Remittances, a key lifeline for many Syrians have also been affected. For example, the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) recently announced that more than 70 percent of chicken farmers in Syria stopped production due to the high costs of production (mainly linked to the high cost of key feed ingredients such as soybean and maize)[20], and since the article was written (25 June 2020) another seven poultry farms have been reported to have gone out of business in Quneitra[21]. Moreover, butchers are reporting that sales of lamb meat are down 80 percent compared to levels last year, due to the high price of meat and people's low purchasing power which had a heavy impact the meat industry. Key industries such as pharmaceuticals[22] and packaging factories have also been feeling the effects of the economic crisis. Increased crime rates have been reported[23], especially in urban areas and there have also been reports of people resorting to sale of organs on the informal market to make ends meet[24].

The external economic context further constricted in June 2020, when the United States' Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act (also known as the 'Caesar Act') came into force, imposing additional unilateral sanctions and financial restrictions on both Syrian and foreign individuals and organizations doing business with the government of Syria. The Caesar Act sanctions have further limited possible trade deals by Syria with foreign countries and companies[25]. A knock-on effect of the worsening macro-economic environment in Syria has been the extreme volatility of the value of the Syrian pound, which plummeted from SYP 1,775/USD 1 on 01 June to SYP 3,200/USD 1 on 08 June to then stabilise around SYP 2,500/USD 1 by mid-June. Following the high volatility on the informal exchange rate, Syria's Prime Minister was relieved of his duties on 11 June and by 16 June the Syrian Central Bank announced the devaluation of the Syrian currency from SYP 700/USD 1 to SYP 1,250/USD 1. These measures have for the time being (as of mid-September 2020) succeeded in stabilizing the informal exchange rate which by mid-September 2020 had gradually reduced to around SYP 2,200/USD.

Nevertheless, a number of protective measures were introduced by some regions in Syria in June 2020 to guard them from the impact of a possible further weakening of the Syrian pound. For example, cities in opposition-held north-western Syria such as in Afrin, Azaz, Al-Rai, Marea, Jarablus, Al-Bab and part of Idleb, announced in mid-June the adoption of the Turkish Lira due to the weakening SYP. The Turkish Lira is now a legal currency in these areas. Furthermore, the Kurdish Self Administration (KSA) issued two decisions on 06 June that effectively prohibits the sale of wheat grain by farmers to other actors in Syria in an attempt to ensure wheat grain would not be sold elsewhere. This will likely lead to reduced wheat supply for the Syrian government in the 2020-21 marketing year.

Following the official devaluation of the Syrian pound to SYP 1,250/USD, the Central Bank of Syria announced on 21 June 2020 that as a result of reduced US dollar liquidity, from July 2020 onwards, it will no longer include food in its priority commodities for accessing US dollars[26]. This announcement sent shockwaves through the country as food imports such as rice, sugar, wheat and vegetable oil, which Syrians heavily consume and traders import and sell-on, will see further price hikes and will likely no longer be imported in the future. Wholesalers are already reviewing their business models and some large Syrian wholesalers WFP interviewed in June 2020, confirmed that if there is no change on accessing foreign currency, the wholesalers will stop importing food items, as it would no longer be economically feasible for them to import the items, seeing that they would have to purchase the US dollars on the informal market (which is illegal and punishable with a three year prison sentence) at a rate which currently is around SYP 2,200/USD, while the traders would be subjected by government regulation to sell their imported items at the official exchange rate (SYP 1,250/USD), hereby making an equivalent loss of around 50 cents on the dollar.

[20]https://shamra.sy/news/article/b6aa7bd32ffde46bd52ff071bdc60073

[21]https://www.alwatanonline.com/

[22]At least 100 medications no longer found in Syria: https://www.qasioun-news.com/ar/articles/

[23]Increase in crime rates in Syria following worsening of economic situation in the country: https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2020/08/crimes-in-syria-media-coverage-increases-anxiety/

[24]Kidney selling in Damascus: Halab Today Article; Kidney selling by Syrian refugees in Turkey: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/desperate-syrian-refugees-selling-organs-to-survive/

[25]https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/31 Caesar Act impact on trade between Syria and Lebanon

[26]Removing foodstuffs from the import financing list... did the central lose the compass?" https://sp-today.com/news/578

TRADER SURVEY FINDINGS[27]

With the backdrop of these troubling economic trends, WFP in May and June 2020 conducted phone and face-to-face interviews with 230 retailers and wholesalers across Syria. WFP conducted interviews with 81 retailers and 27 wholesalers in May 2020 and 90 retailers and 32 wholesalers in June 2020. The interviews covered traders trading in dry food commodities such as grains, sugar, vegetable oil, pulses and canned food, traders trading in fresh food commodities such as fruit and vegetables as well as livestock traders. The retailer interviews covered 109 traders not currently holding a contract with WFP and 62 traders currently holding a contract with WFP to asses if having a business partnership with WFP through WFP's cash-based transfers (CBT) activities enabled traders to manage their business differently and ensured traders were able to address the impact of the economic turmoil on their business better.

Preliminary findings found that while national wholesalers continued supplying their products country-wide, it was the smaller wholesalers based outside of Damascus who primarily experienced a reduction in their geographical coverage for trade. Around 19 percent of interviewed wheat flour wholesalers reported reduced geographical coverage (no longer trading in certain governorates) in May and June compared to the pre-COVID-19 (February 2020) period, followed by a 12 percent reduction of geographical coverage by wholesalers trading in pulses, 11 percent reduction by wholesalers trading in white rice, five percent geographical reduction by wholesalers trading in fruit and vegetables. No changes in geographical market coverage were reported for sugar, vegetable oil and canned tuna. The geographical coverage reductions reported by wholesalers between May/June 2020 and February 2020 are a likely indication of changing supply chain dynamics, which may lead to trade business closures for some, and growing monopolization of segments of the market by others. This in turn would likely lead to a reduced variety of products available on local markets at increased prices.

In terms of stock levels of commodities, wholesalers mentioned that on average their stock holding volumes fell by around 42 percent between mid-March 2020 and June 2020. The commodities that reported the biggest stock reductions were sugar (50 percent), canned tuna (48 percent), vegetable oil (44 percent), wheat flour and white rice (37 percent) and pulses (32 percent). The reductions were led by supply disruptions, a weaker Syrian pound and worsening customer purchasing power affecting demand.

When questioned if they were worried of stocks running out, 26 percent of interviewed wholesalers in May mentioned that they thought they would run out within 30 days compared with 38 percent in June, highlighting how June significantly worsened wholesaler supplies. The key items wholesalers were worried they would run out of were sugar and vegetable oil (reported by 68 percent of interviewed wholesalers), followed by white rice (32 percent of interviewed wholesalers) and wheat flour, pulses and canned tuna (16 percent of interviewed wholesalers).

Table 2 below outlines the percent of interviewed retailers who believe they will run out of commodities in the coming 30 days. Oils, fats (ghee and butter) and sugar are the commodities which were least supplied compared to their demand across Syria, with the highest percent of traders reporting to likely run out of these commodities, followed by cereals, canned tuna, non-food items and meats/fish and eggs, roots and tubers, legumes, herbs and spices, fruits and vegetables, dairy and livestock. It is evident by the responses that imported commodities are the ones most at risk of running out of stock. The worsening exchange rate is very likely the cause, as these products are relatively more expensive to import now for traders and are also more expensive for consumers to buy than before.

Table 2: Percent of retailers mentioning that are worried they will be out of stock in 30 days

			Tubers	_and_Seeds	Vegetables	_Products	and_Eggs		Fats		Tuna	_and_Spices	_Items
National		38%	12%	14%	11%	11%	15%	2%	71%	62%	27%	13%	18%
Month	May	26%	8%	11%	8%	13%	18%	3%	76%	68%	26%	5%	16%
	June	48%	15%	17%	13%	9%	13%	2%	67%	57%	28%	20%	20%
Group	CBT Retailers	39%	4%	9%	4%	4%	9%	0%	96%	78%	13%	0%	4%
	Non-CBT Retailers	38%	15%	16%	13%	13%	18%	3%	62%	56%	33%	18%	23%

Source: WFP

[27]Only the key findings of the traders' interviews have been included in this section. A more in-depth review delving deeper into the interview findings will be provided in a separate report.

When looking further into detail at retailers' responses in Table 2 we can divide them into two categories: the first category includes retailers currently contracted by WFP in the framework of the cash based transfer programme (CBT retailers), through which beneficiaries are provided with an unrestricted value voucher to access food at retailer outlets; and retailers not currently contracted by WFP, which for simplicity will be called "non-CBT retailers" in this report. From Table 2 we can see that CBT retailers tend to be less worried than non-CBT retailers about running out of stock. The reason is likely the constant and predictable flow of income from WFP beneficiaries redeeming their vouchers at their shop on a monthly basis, which ensures a constant flow of income even though sales outside the CBT programme are diminishing. The only exception to this trend seems to be oil, fats and sugar which CBT retailers are more concerned to run out of than non-CBT retailers.

Increased prices and reduced purchasing power have also led to more credit to be requested to wholesalers and retailers by their customers. Up to 75 percent of wholesalers and 64 percent of retailers reported that there had been an increase in the request of credit by their customers compared to the pre-COVID (before 15 March) period. For wholesalers the average increase in number of customers requesting credit was 30 percent higher than before 15 March 2020 while for retailers an average 35 percent more customers requested credit in May-June 2020 than before 15 March 2020. However, CBT retailers reported considerably fewer percent of customers requesting credit (42 percent) compared to the pre-COVID period than non-CBT retailers (75 percent), likely because with the CBT voucher beneficiaries were less in need for credit.

Even though credit requests have been increasing, wholesalers reduced their provision of credit from an average 63 percent of customers in May to 31 percent in June, while retailers reduced provision of credit to customers from an average 52 percent in May to 40 percent in June. In terms of the difference between CBT retailers and non-CBT retailers, the former tends to give credit to fewer customers than the latter, while the average total amount of credit provided compared to the previous month's sales was the same for both CBT-retailers and non-CBT retailers (21 percent of their previous month's total sales) an amount which did not vary much between May and June. Wholesalers instead saw a reduction in the amount of previous month's sales that were on credit, which reduced from 37 percent in May to 21 percent in June, highlighting a significant reduction in provided credit which has led to reduced purchasing volumes for retailers depending on wholesalers to supply them with goods. It is also worth mentioning that the overall decrease in the credit extension has

also been led by the rapidly changing exchange rate and soaring inflation, which as a result generates greater losses for traders extending credit.

Considering reduced credit availability, traders have been reporting big reductions in their customers' purchasing patterns compared to pre-COVID times. Wholesalers reported that in June 72 percent of their customers had reduced their purchases, this was up from 67 percent in May. The main commodities retailers are buying less of from wholesalers are vegetable oil and white rice which are both down 66 percent compared to pre-15 March 2020 followed by sugar and pulses both down 61 percent, canned tuna down 44 percent, wheat flour down 22 percent and vegetables and fruit down 17 percent.

Retailers are also reporting big reductions in their customers' purchasing patterns compared to before 15 March 2020. Retailers reported in June, that 80 percent of their customers reduced their purchases, this was up from 64 percent in May. The main commodities traders reported families are buying less of are: canned tuna (down 59 percent), followed by vegetable oil and fats (down 54 percent), sugar (down 47 percent), cereals (down 38 percent) and meat and eggs (down 35 percent). A further breakdown per commodity is available in Table 3.

Table 3: Items customers are buying less of than before 15 March

		Cereals	Roots_and_Tubers	Legumes_Nuts_and_Seeds	Fruits_and_Vegetables	Milk_and_Dairy_Products	Meat_Fish_and_Eggs	Livestock	Oils_and_Fats	Sugar	Canned_Tuna	Herb_Condiments_and_Spices	Non_food_items
National		38%	6%	17%	18%	20%	35%	3%	54%	47%	59%	14%	30%
Month	May	37%	0%	17%	21%	21%	37%	4%	52%	54%	50%	17%	25%
	June	39%	10%	17%	15%	19%	35%	3%	56%	42%	65%	11%	33%
Group	CBT-Retailers	41%	0%	8%	5%	35%	30%	0%	59%	38%	57%	3%	24%
	Non-CBT Retailers	37%	8%	21%	23%	14%	38%	5%	52%	51%	60%	18%	32%

Interviewed traders reported that on average, families purchased 70 percent less livestock in May-June 2020 compared to pre-15 March 2020, followed by 62 percent reduction in quantity of canned tuna, 54 percent reduction in non-food items, and 51 percent reduction in meat, fish and eggs. Highlighting, the degree to which rising food prices and limited household purchasing power is affecting households' livelihoods, food security and nutrition. A further breakdown per commodity is available in Table 4.

Table 4: Average percent decrease in customer purchases by item in May-June 2020 compared to pre-15 March

	Average percent decrease of customer purchases by item											
	Cereals	Roots_and_Tubers	Legumes_Nuts_and_Seeds	Fruits_and_Vegetables	Milk_and_Dairy_Products	Meat_Fish_and_Eggs	Livestock	Oils_and_Fats	Sugar	Canned_Tuna	Herb_Condiments_and_Spices	Non_food_items
National	43%	31%	36%	39%	43%	51%	70%	42%	38%	62%	40%	54%

With a worsening economic situation, traders were asked to outline what have been their top constraints to trade since 15 March 2020. Charts 1 and 2 below outline the top constraints for wholesalers and retailers (includes both CBT and non-CBT retailers), respectively. While both wholesalers and retailers noted the unstable exchange rate and high prices to be their top constraints since 15 March, the unstable exchange rate affected wholesalers more as they are more engaged with imports than retailers, while retailers reported having greater trouble with the high prices as they likely have limited capital compared to wholesalers and therefore are less able to face the increased procurement costs as well as the reduced income from customers spending less. A lack of own capital and client liquidity were issues reported by both wholesalers and retailers alike. COVID-19-related constraints (movement restrictions and reduced operating hours) were also mentioned as a key constraint for both wholesalers and retailers even though rates were much lower than for the unstable exchange rate and high prices.

Chart 1: Wholesalers' top constraints to trader since 15 March 2020

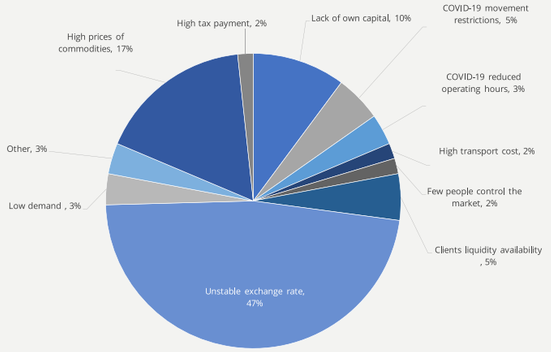
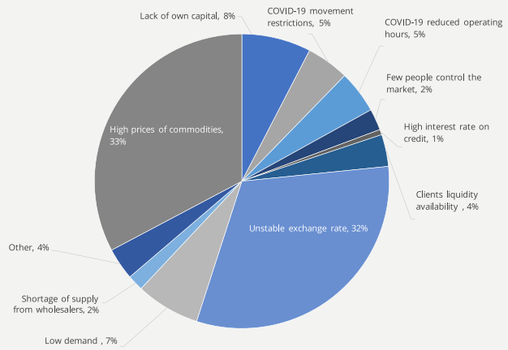


Chart 2: Retailers' top constraints to trader since 15 March 2020



When comparing retailers' answers on top constraints to trade by their service extension to CBT, more CBT retailers rate high prices as a top constraint than non-CBT retailers while more non-CBT retailers reported the unstable exchange rate as a top constraint than CBT retailers. Although more CBT retailers reported to have difficulty with the COVID-19 movement restrictions than non-CBT traders, an equal percent of interviewed traders mentioned reduced operating hours (due to COVID-19) as a top constraint. Furthermore, of interest is that while some non-CBT retailers mentioned client liquidity and shortage of supply from wholesalers as a top constraint, this was not the case for CBT-retailers. Highlighting that CBT-retailers are not as affected by client liquidity since WFP beneficiaries receive vouchers to spend in CBT retailer shops. Furthermore, CBT retailers are not as affected by shortage of supply from wholesalers, likely because wholesalers know that WFP will be paying the retailers and therefore there is less risk for the CBT retailer defaulting on paying back wholesaler supplies.

Chart 3: CBT retailers' top constraints to trader since 15 March 2020

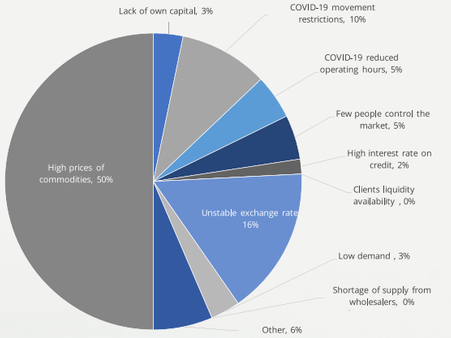
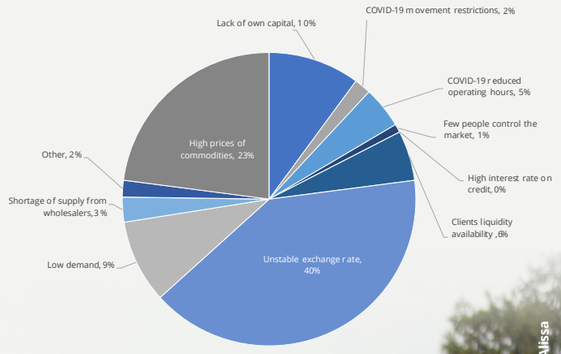


Chart 4: Non-CBT retailers' top constraints to trader since 15 March 2020



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SECTION 4

MARKET PRICE TRENDS

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PRICE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

WFP monitors the price of commodities on a weekly basis from 57 markets across Syria (Map 4). In total the prices of 47 commodities are monitored, and of these, 36 commodities are food items. The price of each commodity is monitored from at least three different traders per market and averaged by market to address possible outliers in price data collection. All governorates in Syria are covered by WFP's food price monitoring system which covers both urban and rural markets in each governorate. Food price data has been collected in Syria since May 2013 allowing for trend analysis, and all food price data is made freely accessible at:

https://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/economic_explorer/prices

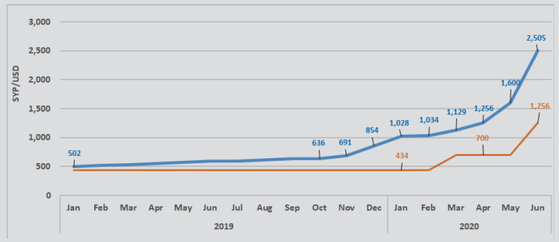
A full breakdown of prices of key food and non-food items between October 2019 and June 2020 can be found in Annex 2 at the end of this report.

Map 4: WFP Syria Food Price Data Collection

SYP/USD EXCHANGE RATE

In early October 2019, the official SYP/USD exchange rate was SYP 434/USD 1, where it had been pegged since December 2017. The informal exchange rate stood at SYP 636/USD 1, unchanged month-on-month (m-o-m) and up 28 percent in year-on-year (y-o-y) comparisons. Since the onset of the Lebanese financial crisis in October 2019, the value of the Syrian pound has weakened dramatically. By March 2020 the monthly average informal exchange rate had depreciated to SYP 1,115/USD 1 with the value of the Syrian pound weakening by 45 percent compared to October 2019. By June 2020 the monthly average informal exchange rate had plummeted further to SYP 2,505/USD, weakening the value of the Syrian pound by 64 percent compared to March 2020 and by 75 percent compared to October 2019 vis-a-vis the US dollar. Due to the financial crisis in Lebanon and its impact on trade and linked economic transactions in Syria, The Syrian Central Bank devalued the official exchange rate to SYP 700/USD 1 in November 2019 and further devalued the official exchange rate to SYP 1,256/USD 1[28] in June 2020 (Chart 5).

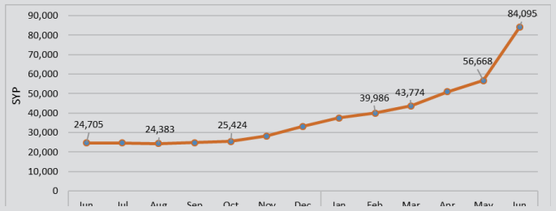
Chart 5: Official and informal SYP/USD exchange rates in Syria



SYRIA FOOD PRICE TRENDS

Across Syria, food prices have been increasing dramatically over the past year. This is evident when reviewing the trends in the nationwide average cost of WFP's standard reference food basket. In June 2019, the national average cost of the reference basket was SYP 24,705. In October 2019, the cost of the basket reached SYP 25,424 (up three percent since June 2019). By February 2020, the cost of the same basket had increased to SYP 39,986 (up 57 percent and up 61 percent since June 2019) as a result of the impact of the worsening exchange rate on the price of food in Syria. By March 2020 the cost of the basket had increased by a further 9.5 percent m-o-m as COVID-19 panic buying and movement restrictions started to impact prices, with the basket's average price reaching SYP 43,774 (up 72 percent since October 2019 and 77 percent since June 2019). In April 2020, the food basked increased by 16 percent m-o-m, reaching SYP 50,962 and in May 2020 by a further 11 percent m-o-m, reaching SYP 56,668. In June 2020, the national average food basket price increased dramatically by 48 percent reaching SYP 84,095 (up 231 percent since October 2019 and 240 percent since June 2019) mostly as a result of a heavily weakened informal exchange rate (Chart 6).

Chart 6: WFP reference food basket national average 2019-2020



While all governorates in Syria reported increases in their average reference food basket prices by over 100 percent between the third week of March 2020 and the last week June 2020, Idleb governorate consistently reported the highest average reference basket in Syria, from SYP 50,850 on the 3rd week of March to SYP 116,287 during the fourth week of June (up 129 percent). Southern Syria (covering Damascus, Rural Damascus, Quneitra, Dar'a and As-Sweida governorates) stood out as the region reporting the largest increase in average food basket prices over this period with food prices in Rural Damascus up 144 percent, in Quneitra up 143 percent, in Dar'a up 136 percent and in As-Sweida up 134 percent (Chart 7).

Chart 7: WFP average reference food basket by governorate in Syria: 2019-2020

Governorate	Price June 2020		m-o-m change	y-o-y change
Aleppo	SYP	77,149	47%	225%
Damascus	SYP	86,442	52%	280%
Dar'a	SYP	84,779	39%	220%
Deir-ez-Zor	SYP	78,549	61%	183%
Hama	SYP	76,704	43%	213%
Al-Hasakeh	SYP	88,619	41%	245%
Homs	SYP	77,212	43%	212%
Idleb	SYP	107,891	52%	353%
Lattakia	SYP	76,822	38%	202%
Ar-Raqqa	SYP	85,970	38%	229%
Rural Damascus	SYP	87,522	62%	293%
As-Sweida	SYP	79,379	48%	247%
Tartous	SYP	81,777	45%	224%
Quneitra	SYP	88,520	78%	263%
Average	SYP	84,095	48%	240%

[28]UN official exchange rate was set at SYP 1,256/USD

When looking specifically at the COVID-19 movement restriction period (from the third week of March to the first week of June), the national average food basket price increased by 36 percent, with north-east Syria (NES) as well as Idleb governorate reporting the highest percent increases in price of the reference basket: Deir-ez-Zor governorate up 48 percent, Al-Hasakeh governorate up 45 percent, Ar-Raqqa governorate up 41 percent and Idleb governorate up 41 percent; highlighting how the COVID-19 movement restrictions helped fuel food price increases.

Looking closer at the weekly evolution of the national average food basket price between the third week of March 2020 (when COVID-19 related movement restriction measures were put in place) and the end of June 2020 (Chart 8), it is possible to notice an upward trend with three distinct price shocks:

The first price shock occurred between the third and fourth weeks of March, when the national average price of the WFP reference food basket increased by 18 percent, reaching SYP 49,070. This shock was largely led by people's panic buying, spurred by the fear that shops would not be open to sell goods during Ramadan. One interviewed wholesaler mentioned that they typically pre-position three months' worth of goods for the two months covering Ramadan, which usually is enough to cover the increased demand during Ramadan. This year, however, panic buying caused the three months' equivalent of goods to be sold in less than one month.

Following the jump in prices between the third and fourth weeks of March, there was a period of relative stability between the first week of April and the first week of May, where prices increased by six percent overall. The relative price stability was induced by the general understanding that food shops in Syria would remain open throughout COVID-19 movement restrictions. This helped reduce panic buying, which in turn reduced demand pressure on goods, helping to minimize price increases. Furthermore, the rush in panic buying at the end of March also meant that most Syrians had already bought their food needs for Ramadan. In fact, the price of the reference food basket even fell by two percent during the last week of April and first week of May, possibly due to lower demand. The gradual relaxing of COVID-19 movement restrictions also helped instil ease and helped stabilize prices somewhat.

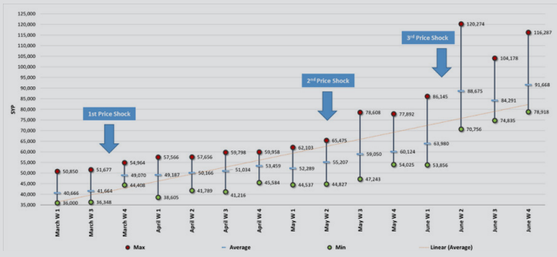
The second shock was the jump in prices between the first and the third week of May, when the national average reference food basket jumped by 13 percent, led primarily by domestic political turbulence. This fuelled uncertainty and speculation in the Syrian economy and led to a worsening of the informal exchange rate, which weakened further from SYP 1,290/USD 1 to SYP 1,800/USD 1. The worsening informal exchange rate in-turn pushed the price of commodities up.

This was followed by a couple of weeks of stable prices while markets adapted to the new price levels before the third shock, when a dramatic jump in prices took place between the first and second week of June, with the national average price of WFP national average reference food basket increasing by 39 percent. The third price shock was primarily led by speculation on the likely impact of the enactment of the so-called 'Caesar Act' on 17 June 2020 on the Syrian economy as well as continued political turbulence that continued to fuel instability of the Syrian informal exchange rate and pushed up prices. Between the second week of June and end June, prices have somewhat stabilized again even though on a gradual upward trend (up 6 percent).

In addition to the reference food basket price increases, which increased by 120 percent between the third week of March 2020 and the fourth week of June 2020 (Chart 8), the gap between the highest and lowest average reference food basket by governorate has also widened throughout the COVID-19 period, and has continued to widen further into June. In fact, the gap between the highest and lowest average food basket prices by governorate increased by 144 percent, highlighting a serious deterioration of the Syrian food supply chain while demonstrating the difficulty of implementing and enforcing price controls across the country as traders speculate freely on pricing their goods.

While future price increases are likely, it is important to note that since the official devaluation of the Syrian pound to SYP 1,256/USD on 16 March, the informal exchange has stabilised at around SYP 2,200/USD (as of mid-September), possibly outlining a longer period of relative stability on markets with gradual increases in prices.

Chart 8: Mx vs. min national average cost of food basket (SYP) over COVID-19 period (March – June 2020)

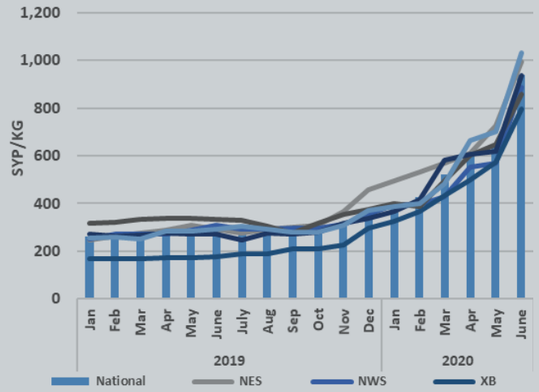


CEREAL PRICES

WHEAT FLOUR

The price of cereals (wheat flour, rice and bulgur) across Syria has been increasing since October 2019 along with the general price increases experienced across Syria since the onset of the Lebanese financial crisis. In June 2019, the price of wheat flour was SYP 285/kg and remained relatively stable until October 2019 when the national average price of wheat flour was still SYP 285/kg (but up three percent m-o-m). However, by March 2020, the price of wheat flour increased by 22 percent m-o-m, reaching SYP 523/kg, increasing by 15 percent in April (m-o-m) reaching SYP 604/kg and increasing by a further seven percent in May (m-o-m), reaching SYP 644/kg. Between the third week of March and first week of June (the COVID-19 lockdown period) the price of wheat flour increased by 34 percent while in comparison just between the first and fourth weeks of June 2020 the national average price of wheat increased by 55 percent (reaching SYP 939/kg), highlighting how deeper structural economic factors are at play in Syria and are having more significant impact on prices than the COVID-19 movement restrictions.

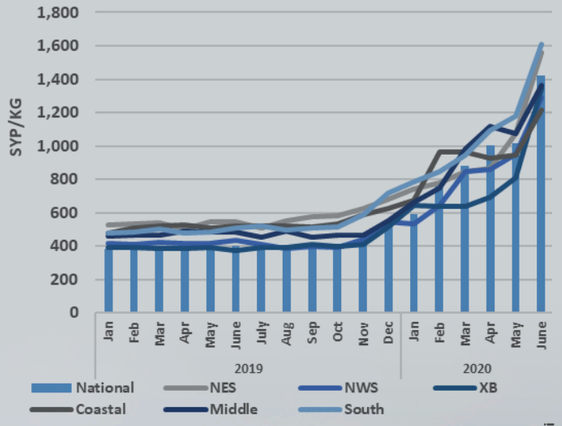
Chart 9: Retail prices of wheat flour, SYP



EGYPTIAN WHITE RICE

In June 2019, the national average price of Egyptian white rice was SYP 404/kg. In October 2019, the national average price of wheat flour was SYP 416/kg (up two percent m-o-m). By March 2020, the price increased by 14 percent (m-o-m), reaching SYP 882/kg, increased by another 14 percent in April (m-o-m) reaching SYP 1,005/kg, and by one percent in May (m-o-m) reaching SYP 1018/kg. In June 2020, the national average price of Egyptian white rice reached SYP 1,423/kg (up 40 percent m-o-m (Chart 10). Between the third week of March and first week of June (the COVID-19 lockdown period) the national average price of white rice increased by 35 percent, while in comparison just between the first and fourth weeks of June 2020 the national average price of white rice increased by 45 percent (reaching SYP 1,619/kg).

Chart 10: Retail prices of Egyptian white rice



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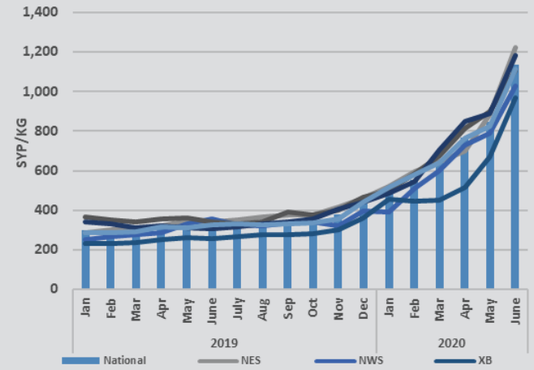
BULGUR

In June 2019, the national average price of bulgur was SYP 318/kg. In October 2019, the national average price of bulgur increased to SYP 348/kg (up two percent m-o-m). By March 2020, the price nearly doubled, reaching SYP 648/kg (up 17 percent m-o-m). It then increased by 18 percent in April (m-o-m) reaching SYP 767/kg and by a further 10 percent in May (m-o-m), reaching SYP 845/kg. By June 2020, the national average price of bulgur had reached SYP 1,135/kg (up 34 percent m-o-m and 256 percent y-o-y) – Chart 11. Between the third week of March and first week of June (the COVID-19 lockdown period) the national average price of bulgur increased by 41 percent, while in comparison; just between the first and fourth weeks of June 2020 the national average price of white rice increased by 36 percent (reaching SYP 1,214/kg).

Chart 11: Retail prices of bulgur, SYP



BREAD PRICES

Prior to the Syrian conflict, a bundle of public (government subsidised) bread was sold at SYP 15/bundle (1.5 kg) in 2011. By July 2014, the subsidized bread price increased from SYP 15/bundle to SYP 25/bundle and then to SYP 35/bundle in early 2015. By late 2015, the price of a bread bundle was set at SYP 50 and by 2017, the weight of a bundle of bread was reduced by the government from 1.5 kg to 1.3 kg[29]. Ever since 2017 a public bread bundle has been consistently sold around SYP 50/1.3 kg bundle. Even with the worsening economic situation in late 2019 (including the onset of the financial crisis), the Syrian government managed to provide public bread at SYP 50/bundle.

However, with the arrival of COVID-19, the subsequent curfew, movement restrictions and the need for social distancing, it became increasingly difficult to enforce social distancing requirements in and around bakeries. To address the issue, Syrian authorities between late March and late May proceeded to set up mobile bread distribution points where government-approved agents were allowed to sell bread at SYP 75/1.3 kg bundle. Furthermore, public bread was also allowed to be resold in shops at SYP 90/1.3 kg bundle.[30]

The newly introduced measures did ensure bakeries were less crowded and did improve access to bread during a difficult period when COVID-19-related restrictions were at their peak. Yet public bread supply in bakeries was frequently reported to be below demand and the price ceilings set for the sale of public bread bundles via agents or resold via shops was difficult to enforce.

In April 2020, the national average price of subsidized bread increased by seven percent compared to March 2020 reaching SYP 61/bundle. In many governorates across Syria, it was repeatedly reported that the bread agents were selling the bread bundles at higher prices than the official price. For example, in Deir-ez-Zor governorate, public bread reached SYP 106/bundle (up 49 percent m-o-m) and in May 2020, the national average price of subsidized bread was SYP 63/bundle, up three percent m-o-m. In June 2020, the national average price of subsidized bread fell to SYP 60/bundle (down five percent m-o-m) as the mobile agent-system was stopped across Syria due to the lifting of COVID-19 movement restrictions, causing the price of public bread to decrease (Chart 12).

While minimal increases were observed in the price of public bread due to it being subsidised by default, the price of commercially sold bread (resold public bread in shops), showed a very different trend. Between the third and fourth weeks of March 2020, the price of commercial bread increased by a staggering 101 percent, reaching SYP 339/bundle. Government measures, which reduced bakery operating hours in different governorates combined with the selling of public bread through agents and mobile bread distribution points, forced many households to resort to commercial bread, causing the price of commercial bread to soar. However, prices fell quickly after the initial

[29]Enabbaladi, https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2018/10/syrian-bread-a-loaf-with-the-smell-of-war/ - 13 October 2018

[30]The price of public bread bundles sold via agents has been included in the price of public bread since March 2020 and the resold bread from shops was already monitored by WFP for some years back, labelled as 'commercial bread'.

increase, as panic buying subsided when bakeries remained open and more bread selling points were made available. Throughout April, the price of commercial bread continued to fall, reaching SYP 179/bundle; six percent above the prices seen before the COVID-19-related sudden price spike in the third week of March. However, throughout May the national average price of commercial bread started to increase once again due to a consistent deterioration of the informal exchange rate which pushed up the price of all goods across the country. The price of a commercial bread bundle increased to SYP 294/bundle by the second week of June and has slightly levelled off since, as the informal SYP/USD exchange has stabilised somewhat (Chart 12).

Prior to June 2020, commercial bread bakeries in north-east Syria (NES) were supported by the Kurdish-Self Administration (KSA) through providing wheat flour at the subsidized price of SYP 11,000/50 kg bag. However, due to the deteriorating exchange rate, by early June, commercial bakeries in NES closed their bakeries on 06 June and re-opened on Wednesday 10 June after setting a new price for a commercial bread bundle (700 grams), increasing the price from SYP 200/bundle to SYP 300/bundle.

Due to further pressure spurred by the deteriorating exchange rate by the first week of July, KSA stopped supporting commercial bread bakeries altogether. The commercial bakeries closed for two days (11 and 12 July) and re-opened with new prices (SYP 600/bundle and SYP 1,100/two bundles) as commercial bakeries in NES now bought their wheat flour from the market at SYP 33,000/50 kg bag. As result, the demand on GoS subsidized bread in GoS controlled areas of NES, increased significantly.

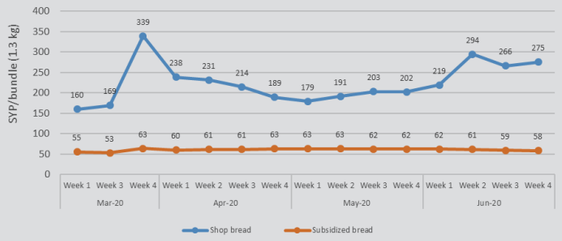
Prior to the onset of the Syrian crisis, Syria would on average produce 4.1 million tonnes of wheat each year. As such, the county was self-sufficient in wheat, and would sell around 1.5 million tonnes for export. However, over the course of the crisis (2010-2019), Syria has only managed to produce an average of 2.3 million tonnes annually. This year, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that Syria will only be able to produce 2.8 million tonnes of wheat, up from 2.2 million tonnes last year and 1.2 million tonnes in 2018.[31] Combined with the devaluation of the Syrian pound and the intensification of sanctions, this will likely result in Syria facing significant shortages of wheat in the 2020-21 marketing season.

The Government of Syria has already this year announced that it has reduced its farmer wheat quality acceptance rate further, after already having reduced the acceptance standards in 2019 in an attempt to increase the volume of wheat gathered from farmers. Furthermore, the KSA on 30 May 2020 increased the price of wheat to farmers from SYP 225,000/tonne to 315,000/tonne. The following day the GoS raised its wheat bid to SYP 400,000/tonne in an attempt to outbid the KSA. The KSA, which controls most of Al Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates, and where around 70 percent of the country's wheat is typically produced, on 06 June 2020 issued two decisions that effectively prohibit the sale of grain to rival territorial actors, GoS included. KSA announced the following day that if the Syrian pound were to depreciate further, KSA would peg the price it will give famers for wheat at 0.17 US dollars per kilogram to ensure that farmers will not be affected by further depreciations of the Syrian pound[32].

Beyond these efforts, the KSA is closely reviewing the implications of the 'Caesar Act' sanctions and if they would face sanctions were they to sell wheat to the GoS. As a result, the KSA has informed the Syrian government that only once the KSA have ensured sufficient wheat reserves to last at least 18 months will they be in a position consider selling wheat to the GoS.[33]

The above explains the deep concern across Syria regarding the availability of wheat in-country in 2020-21, which may lead to an increase in the price of subsidised bread from public bakeries as well as the price of 'commercial bread' from non-subsidised bakeries.

Chart 12: Public and commercial bread prices (SYP) over COVID-19 period



[31]Al-Jazeera: "Syria faces severe bread shortages as US sanctions worsen economy" https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/syria-faces-severe-bread-shortages-sanctions-worsen-economy-200709191733440.html

[32]COAR: "Syria Update" https://coar-global.org/2020/06/08/self-administration-bids-to-corner-grain-market-as-syp-collapses/ - 8 June 2020

[33]Al-Jazeera: "Syria faces severe bread shortages as US sanctions worsen economy" https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/syria-faces-severe-bread-shortages-sanctions-worsen-economy-200709191733440.html - 10 July 2020

PRICE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

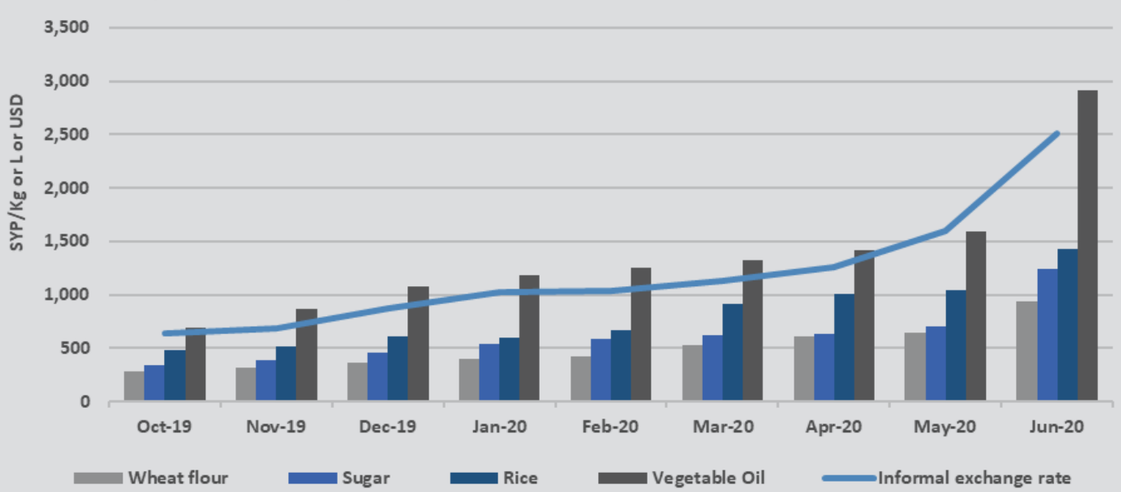
The price of fruits and vegetables in Syria is largely dependent on the season, as prices are heavily influenced by local production levels. While the price of some locally grown vegetables such as tomatoes, onions and potatoes started falling over the harvest period (declining by 16 percent, 30 percent and 39 percent, respectively from May to June 2020), vegetable prices have increased overall due to the depreciating informal exchange rate, as most vegetables have not reached their main harvest period, (during the summer months). The price of fruits and vegetables have also been affected by the increasing transportation costs (caused by the increased cost of fuel) as well as by insecurity on the roads between surplus and deficit areas, especially in north-east Syria, where traders have reported attacks on private trucks carrying food.

Prices of some fruits and vegetables such as lemons, oranges, garlic and onions skyrocketed in Syria during the COVID-19 lockdown period due to popular beliefs related to their alleged ability to boost the immune system and therefore protect against coronavirus. For example, the national average price of onions soared by 104 percent during the last two weeks of March 2020 and the price of garlic increased by 100-200 percent over the same period. The price of lemons and oranges also increased by around 70-80 percent across Syria over the last two weeks of March.

In June, some fruits and vegetables were reported to be scarce or unavailable on local markets either due to seasonality or due to price increases resulting from heavy depreciation and the volatility of the informal exchange rate. Imported fruits were particularly affected as their prices heavily increased. For example, bananas reached SYP 2,732/kg in June 2020, increasing by 83 percent m-o-m and up 239 percent y-o-y. A specific variety of bananas from Somalia reportedly reached between SYP 8,000 and SYP 11,000 per kg.

Chart 12 and Table 5 below outlines the progressive price increase in key food items and food groups over the past 8 months, with a peak seen in June 2020 due to the volatility of the informal SYP/USD exchange rate. Since October 2019 the price

Chart 12: M-o-M price evolution of key items & the informal SYP/USD



Food group	October 2019 national average SYP/Kg or Lt	March 2020 national average SYP/Kg or Lt	May 2020 national average SYP/Kg or Lt	June 2020 national average SYP/Kg or Lt	% change Oct '19 and Mar '20	% change Mar and May '20	% change May and Jun '20	% change Oct '19 and Jun '20
Cereals	1,183	2,140	2,628	3,666	81%	23%	39%	210%
Tubers	260	555	455	381	113%	-18%	-16%	47%
Vegetable Oil	691	1,320	1,598	2,911	91%	21%	82%	321%
Pulses	1,609	2,816	3,652	4,986	75%	30%	37%	210%
Sugar	343	627	704	1,245	83%	12%	77%	263%
Fruits & Vegetables	1,916	3,093	4,230	5,813	61%	37%	37%	203%
Animal Protein	6,732	11,170	12,357	15,098	66%	11%	22%	124%
Dairy	1,973	2,478	2,820	3,110	26%	14%	10%	58%
Informal SYP/USD exchange rate	636	1,155	1,600	2,505	81%	39%	57%	384%

PRICE OF FUEL

Even though the price of fuel (the informal price of diesel and butane gas) in Syria tends to increase in the winter months due to increased demand from heating and cooking, and to subsequently decrease in summer months, this year, the price of fuel increased by 21 percent for diesel and by 33 percent for butane gas (25,000 litre cylinder refill) – throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period. The comparatively lower rate of price increase compared to other commodities is likely also influenced by the reduced demand on petrol during COVID-19's movement restrictions. Furthermore, with reduced purchasing power, households are cooking less and are optimising their butane gas usage, spurring lower demand. Prices of fuel have therefore increased mainly in line with the deteriorating exchange rate.

The national average informal price of diesel in June 2020 (which reached SYP 468/litre) continued to remain well above the official (government-subsidised) price of 174/litre[34], representing a difference of 169 percent between the informal and official rate of diesel. The national average price of one standard butane gas cylinder refill in June 2020 (SYP 12,670/refill) also remained 337 percent above the official government-subsidised price (SYP 2,899/ refill). The existence of an informal market for diesel and butane gas demonstrates that there is not enough supply of these commodities to meet demand at the official subsidized price. For butane gas, the issue is particularly related to a lack of butane gas cylinders on the official market at the subsidized price, and even though every registered family is entitled to one butane gas cylinder refill every 23 days, many reported waiting for more than one month to receive their cylinders, causing prices on the informal market to increase.

LIVESTOCK PRICES

The livestock sector is a strong contributor to the Syrian economy. Prior to 2011, it contributed over 30 percent to the agricultural production and employed 11 percent of the country's labour force. In the early years of the conflict, livestock numbers fell sharply but have since 2016 been on the rise[35].

The average price of a two-year old male alive sheep is used as a proxy indicator to monitor livestock prices. This price has increased since October 2019 in line with the price increases seen for other commodities. Herders require animal feed and fodder to raise livestock, and key ingredients in animal fodder are imported. As such, with the increase in prices of imported commodities, the price of livestock has as a result increased in tandem. Furthermore, the increase in the price of other commodities on the local market has an indirect effect on the price of livestock, as herders are forced to ask a higher price for their livestock to ensure they have enough money to buy their needed commodities. Smuggling of sheep across the border to northern Iraq, where traders get a better price (and get paid in US dollars) for their sheep, has also significantly contributed to the observed increase in livestock prices.

The national average price of a two-year old alive male sheep increased from SYP 134,493 in October 2019 to SYP 233,905/sheep in March 2020, up 74 percent. By May 2020 the national average price of a two-year old alive male sheep had increased to SYP 278,260/sheep, up 33 percent since March 2020 and by June the price had reached SYP 348,649/sheep, up 25 percent m-o-m and 206 percent y-o-y.

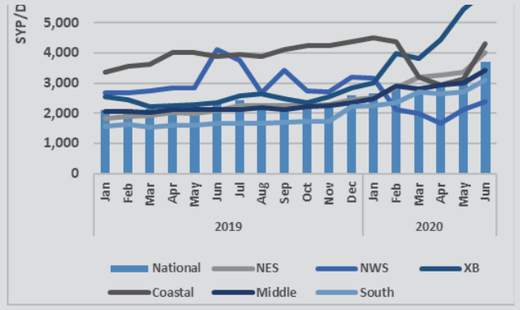
WAGES

While general wages have been relatively static across Syria, non-skilled labourers, who tend to be paid on a daily basis, have seen their wages fluctuate considerably with the rapid increase in the informal exchange rate. The national average non-skilled labour wage, which includes construction, off-loading and agricultural labour, saw a considerable slowdown in its rate of increase between March and April 2020 due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and forced business closures. Three regions reported unskilled labour daily wage rate decreases during this period: North-west Syria (GoS controlled areas) down 16 percent, coastal Syria down eight percent and southern Syria down two percent). In comparison, Idleb governorate, which did not implement as strict movement and business closure controls saw its average non-skilled daily wage rate increase by 16 percent m-o-m. However, by June 2020, the national average non-skilled daily wage rates had begun to increase again, reaching SYP 3,702/day, up 16 percent m-o-m and 60 percent y-o-y, as a result of the informal exchange rate increases (Chart 13). This increase in daily income levels has however been more than offset by the depreciation of the Syrian pound, resulting in an actual decline in the purchasing power of daily wage labourers.

[34]The diesel formal price recorded is the average of subsidized diesel prices provided by the Government of Syria and the Kurdish Self-Administration (KSA).

[35]The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2019. Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic. Rome.

Chart 13: Daily wage for unskilled labourer (SYP)



Fixed salaries have remained static in Syria. For example, government salaries have not changed since November 2019, when the Syrian government increased the rates by around SYP 25,000 (USD 57 at the then official rate of SYP 434/USD). However, since then, no further adjustments have been made, while prices of many commodities have more than doubled in price, resulting in a dramatic drop in purchasing power. The lowest official government salary is SYP 47,670/month (USD 19 at SYP 2,505/USD informal exchange rate), the mid-range salary is SYP 63,955/month (USD 25.5) and the highest official monthly salary is SYP 80,240 (USD 32, see Table 6). Accordingly, the nationwide average price of the WFP standard reference food basket (SYP 84,095 in June 2020), has reached levels above even the highest paid official government monthly salary; highlighting the serious deterioration of purchasing power in Syria over the last 8 months and the increasing unaffordability of even basic food items on Syrian markets. In comparison in October 2019, WFP's national average reference food basket was SYP 25,424

Table 6: Syria official public salary scales: 2020

	Govt. Monthly Salaries in 2020 (SYP)	
Employment Grades	**Basic salaries**	**Ceiling salaries**
PhD holders	53,715	80,240
Master Holders	53,715	80,240
Diploma Holder	53,715	80,240
Bsc	53,715	80,240
2 years after high school	51,550	70,780
General high school	50,940	70,780
Commercial and industrial high schools	48,899	67,480
Employment Grade Three	47,670	62,530
Employment Grade Four	47,670	62,530
Employment Grade Five	47,670	62,530

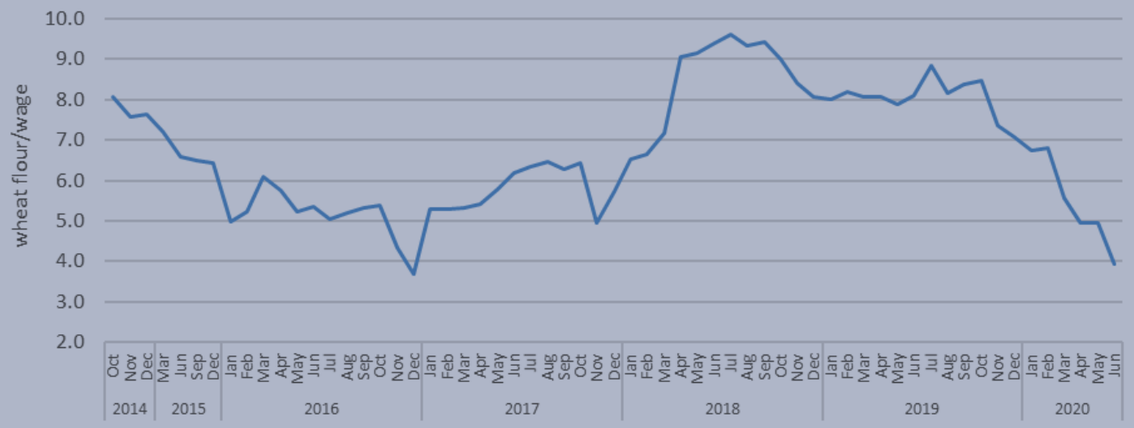
TERMS OF TRADE (TOT)

In the early stages of the Syrian crisis the increase in food prices was outpacing the increase in the daily unskilled wage rate, and as a result the purchasing power of casual labourers, measured in ToT, was decreasing.[36] This negative trend is clearly visible when looking at Chart 14: In October 2014, the national average daily wage of a casual labourer could purchase 7.9 kg of wheat flour; however, by December 2016 the average wage rate could only purchase 3.7 kg. Between December 2016 and July 2018 the continued increase in casual labour wage rates and the general reduction in wheat flour prices translated into a progressive improvement in the casual labourer's purchasing power vis-à-vis wheat flour. So much so that by July 2018, a casual labourer's average daily wage would buy 9.6kg of wheat flour, representing a 160 percent increase compared to December 2016. However, since July 2018, the wheat price growth rate has again been outpacing the increase in labour wages. In October 2019, the daily unskilled labour wage could buy 8.5 kg of wheat flour. Since then, however, the increase in wheat prices vis-à-vis daily unskilled labour became more significant, and by June 2020, the national average daily unskilled labour wage could only purchase 3.9 kg of wheat flour, representing a fall of 54 percent in purchasing power since October 2019 and by 52 percent y-o-y. This is the second lowest ToT recorded to date, second only to December 2016 (the peak of the Syrian crisis).

It is important to note however that, the purchasing power decline varies significantly by geographic area. In June 2020, the lowest ToT was recorded in north-west Syria at 2.7 kg wheat flour/daily unskilled labour wage, followed by southern Syria at 3 kg, central Syria at 3.7 kg, north-east Syria at 4 kg, coastal Syria at 5 kg and by Idleb at 7.6 kg.

[36]Terms-of-Trade (ToT) are proxy indicators of the purchasing power of households that rely on livestock and/or casual labour as their main source of income for the purchase of cereals from local markets.

Chart 14: National average terms of trade (ToT) between wheat flour and unskilled labour (2014-2020)



NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFIS)

In early April 2020, WFP started price monitoring of six COVID-19 related non-food items (NFIs) on a weekly basis: single-use surgical masks, plastic gloves, alcohol spray, bleach bottles, antiseptic hand gel and a bar of soap. Table 7 below shows the price of each monitored item as well as the percentage change between April (when WFP started monitoring these items) and February (one month prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Syria). The table also shows the percentage change between May and April and between June and May.

While prices for these items did jump, especially in the initial panic buying-phase of the crisis (March 2020), with prices increasing by 42 percent for bleach up to 346 percent for surgical masks compared to February, the price of these items stabilized throughout April and May, increasing only by between one percent for masks to 14 percent for gloves. By June 2020, however, their prices increased again largely led by the volatility of the informal exchange rate. By June, prices of these items had increased by between 140 percent for bleach to a maximum of 388 percent for surgical masks as compared with their prices in February 2020.

Table 7: COVID-19 non-food items prices and percentage changes

Commodity	Feb-20	Apr-20	% Change (Feb, Apr)	May-20	% Change (May, Apr)	Jun-20	% Change (May, Jun)	% Change (Feb, Jun)
Surgeon mask	79	353	346%	355	1%	386	9%	388%
Gloves (pair)	67	163	143%	185	14%	230	24%	243%
Alcohol spray (200 ml)	418	980	135%	1,023	4%	1,249	22%	199%
Bleach bottle (L)	416	591	42%	664	12%	997	50%	140%
Hand gel (50 ml)	241	581	141%	585	1%	769	31%	219%
Soap bar	149	258	73%	276	7%	387	40%	159%

SUBSIDIES

The Government of Syria has an extended list of subsidies and subsidised products which it provides at a cheaper rate to support the basic needs of the population. In addition to subsidised bread, one of the main ways the government ensures access to subsidised products for its citizens is through a smart card-system. By 2017, the Syrian government had introduced two types of smart cards for public use. The first card was introduced in 2016 and aimed at being used for private vehicles, while the second card was issued in 2017 for the distribution of heating oil to households. The government in August 2019 extended the private vehicle system to include a gasoline card option that allows registered citizens to purchase a maximum of 100 litres of diesel per car per month at a discounted price. The heating oil card allows a family to have access to a maximum of 400 litres of heating diesel per month as well as one cylinder of butane gas per family every 23 days[37]. As the economic situation worsened in Syria, The Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, in February 2020, began distributing sugar, white rice and tea at discounted prices through the heating oil smart card system across the country, accessible throughout Syria through government-run 'Syria for Trade' (SfT) shops.

All families who have registered for a smart card, from February 2020 onwards, will be eligible to receive one kg of sugar per person (with a maximum of four kg per family); one kg of white rice (with a maximum of three kg per family); and 200 grams of tea (with a maximum of 1.2 kg per family of up to six members, or 1.4 kg per family of seven or more members) on the same card used for heating oil. At SfT shops, one kg of sugar in February 2020 was SYP 350; 38 percent cheaper than the price of non-subsidised sugar sold from local retailers (SYP 563/kg). By June 2020 the national average price of one kg of non-subsidised sugar from local retailers increased to SYP 1,325 (279 percent higher than the subsidised price). One kg of subsidised white rice in February 2020 was SYP 400; 40 percent cheaper than the non-subsidized price of SYP 663. By June the national average price of one kg of non-subsidised white rice increased to SYP 1,423 (256 percent higher than the subsidised price). At the start of March 2020, sunflower oil was added to the smart card system at SYP 800/litre (with a maximum of four litres per family per month); 68 percent lower than the non-subsidised price on local markets. By June 2020 the national average price of non-subsidised vegetable oil had increased to SYP 2,911/litre, 264 percent higher than the subsidised price.

However, due to the rapidly depreciating exchange rate, the availability of subsidized items in SfT shops was limited, especially for vegetable oil and tea, and long queues were witnessed at SfT shops. The four main items provided by SfT through the smart card system (tea, oil, rice and sugar) were not always available, and people were asked to come back at different times throughout the month.

In an attempt to address the crowding issue, especially considering the need to maintain social distancing, the Syrian government in May 2020 set up a new distribution mechanism whereby eligible families were able to buy their rice and sugar entitlements for two months at a time instead of one. For vegetable oil and tea, households were able to buy their entitlements for only one month, based on availability.

As wheat is becoming scarce in Syria, the Syrian government is now looking into setting-up a smart card system for providing access to bread bundles, hoping to optimize use of wheat flour and bread bundles and to minimize waste[38]. Furthermore, as a result of the devaluation of the official SYP/USD exchange to SYP 1,250/USD, the Syrian government in June 2020 announced that it would increase the price of subsidised sugar and white rice in SfT shops. As of July 2020, the price of subsidised sugar has gone up from SYP 350/kg to SYP 800/kg and the price of subsidised white rice has increased from SYP 400/kg to SYP 900/kg.

[37] "Cards for fuel in Syria." Enabbaladi, 21 Feb. 2019

[38] Possible implementation of a smart card system for accessing public bread in Syria https://b2b-sy.com/news/1033349591/

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SECTION 5

FOOD SECURITY TRENDS

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WFP in coordination with the GoS and the Food Security Sector, conducts annual national food security assessments known as the Food Security Assessment/Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment (FSA/FSLA). Since the 2019 FSA/FSLA was completed in September 2019, a number of shocks affected Syria which have led to a significant deterioration of the food security situation. These include: the Turkish military incursion in north-east Syria in October 2019; the dramatic escalation of hostilities in Idleb in December 2019 which led to the largest wave of displacement so far in the Syria crisis; the Lebanese financial crisis (which started in earnest in October 2019), the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 in early 2020, as well as the intensification of international coercive measures on Syria with the entry into force of the United States Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act (the 'Caesar Act') in June 2020. Out of these events, the Lebanese financial crisis is believed to have had the most significant impact on the food security situation in Syria, as its ripple effects have been felt by families across the country, especially impacting the poorest and most vulnerable.

Initial reports from WFP-led rapid food security assessments across Syria[39] already highlighted an increase in the reliance on negative coping mechanisms among households in early 2020 as a result of the increasing prices of commodities following the Lebanese financial crisis. The most commonly reported coping mechanisms were removing children from school, reducing household medical health care expenses and limiting the amount and type of consumed food. An increasing number of households also reported that they could not afford cooked meals, with many interviewed households indicating eating just one meal per day and that their other meals tended to be based solely on vegetables, bread and yogurt.

The 2019 FSA/FSLA, in September 2019, estimated that 7.9 million, or 39 percent of the Syrian population, was food insecure. Of these, approximately 500,000 were categorized as being severely food insecure. Seven months later, a desk review of the FSA/FSLA 2019 data using price increases to estimate the impact on food security, found that an additional 1.4 million people had likely become food insecure since the 2019 FSA/FSLA as a result of the deteriorating purchasing power of Syrian families. This brought the total number of people estimated to be food insecure in Syria to 9.3 million (46 percent of the Syrian population), the highest number ever recorded. Of these, more than one million people are estimated to be severely food insecure; more than twice as many as just seven months earlier. The number of people at risk of becoming food insecure had also increased from 1.9 million to an estimated 2.2 million people. Chart 15 below outlines the changes in the food security situation in Syria observed from 2019 to 2020[40].

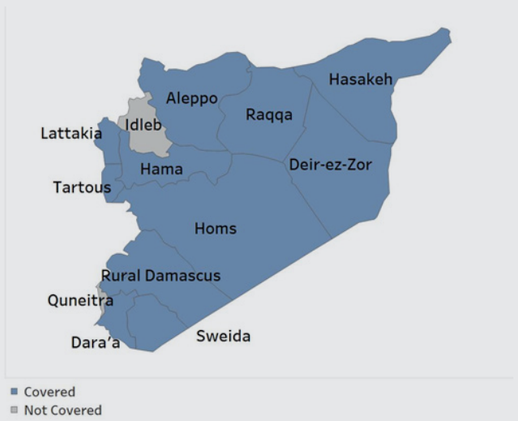
Chart 15: FSA-FSLA 2019 projected mid-year review food insecure breakdown

[39] March 2020 Rapid Assessment on the "Review on the Impact of Rising Food Prices" in Syria https://vam.wfp.org/CountryPage_assessments.aspx?iso3=SYR

[40] To note the HNO and the 'in-camp' population figures have remained unaltered in the mid-year review as these areas were not part of the FSA-FSLA 2019 household assessment and the food security levels were estimated using secondary data.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

Map 5 – Syrian Arab Republic - mVAM coverage in 2020 (governorates)[41]



mVAM food security variables:

FCS: Represents household food intake with a seven day recall period and is based on 8 weighted food groups. Households can be categorised as either having poor FCS (a score of less than 28 in Syria), borderline FCS (a score between 28.5 and 42) and acceptable FCS (a score above 42). Food insecure households in Syria are understood to have an FCS score of 42 or below.

Dietary Diversity: A measure that calculates the number of different food categories consumed by a household over the past seven days. The lower the score the worse the dietary diversity of the household.

Food coping strategies index: The food CSI measures behaviour; the things that people do when they cannot access enough food. For example eating smaller portions or less preferred foods. Each strategy is weighted by its severity. The higher the score the less resilient a household is to face a future shock/s.

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION AND TRENDS

The overall food security situation has deteriorated in many parts of Syria over the past year. WFP mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM)[42] food security monitoring shows an overall worsening trend in food security indicators across Syria during 2020, reaching unprecedented levels in June 2020. Based on mVAM data[43], the percent of highly vulnerable and vulnerable households is estimated to have increased significantly since 2018 and 2019.

To capture the impact of COVD-19, the analysis looked at the monthly trend of key food security indicators from mVAM data in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The data showed a deterioration of food consumption at a national level since December 2019, with slight improvements seen during the COVID-19 movement restriction period that coincided with Ramadan, followed by a further deterioration in national average food consumption rates in June 2020 (Chart 16). June 2020 recorded the highest mVAM FCS levels in Syria since January 2017.

In June 2020, a third of surveyed households (34 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption levels. This represents a 15 percentage-point increase compared to the national average level for June in 2018 and 2019. When factoring-in the overlap with Ramadan and Eid festivities, national average inadequate food consumption in Syria in June 2020 still remains approximately ten percent higher than levels recorded in previous years, highlighting an unfolding deterioration of the food security situation across Syria.

[40] No representative data is available for Quneitra and Idleb.

[41] The trend analysis presented in this section is based on mVAM data. mVAM data is collected via live telephone interviews over the length of 12 months from households in locations across Syria. Data is collected from a sample of around 2,000 respondents per month across 12 governorates. As per standard survey procedures, respondents' consent was obtained prior to the interviews. For security and safety measures, all respondents were identified with an anonymous ID. From April 2020 onwards additional COVID-19 related questions were added to the survey.

[42] For 2018, 2019 and 2020, the analysis is based on mVAM data from 12 governorates: Hasakeh, Aleppo, Sweida, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, Rural Damascus, Tartous, Raqqa, and Deir-ez-zor. Quneitra and Idleb have been excluded for all annual trend analysis to allow comparability over time.

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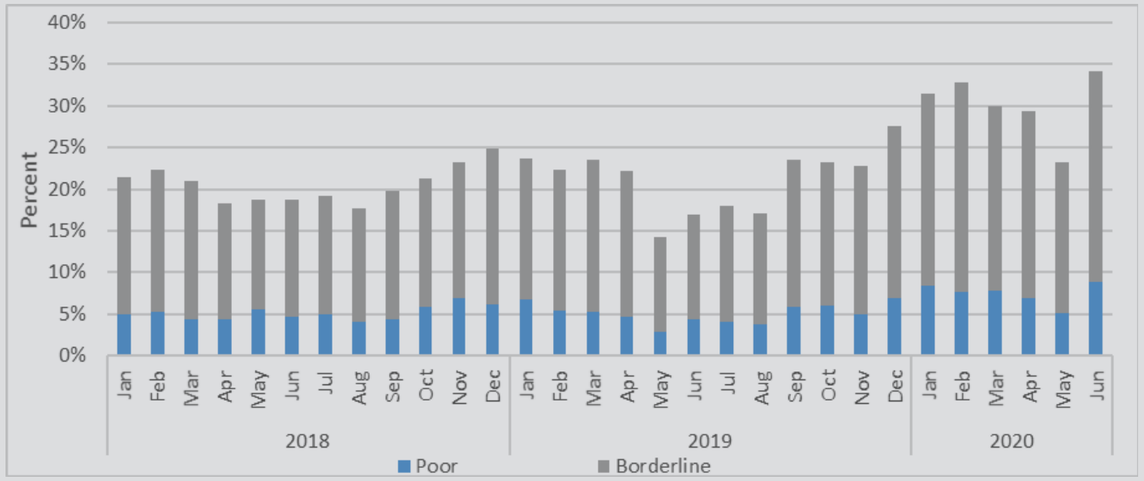
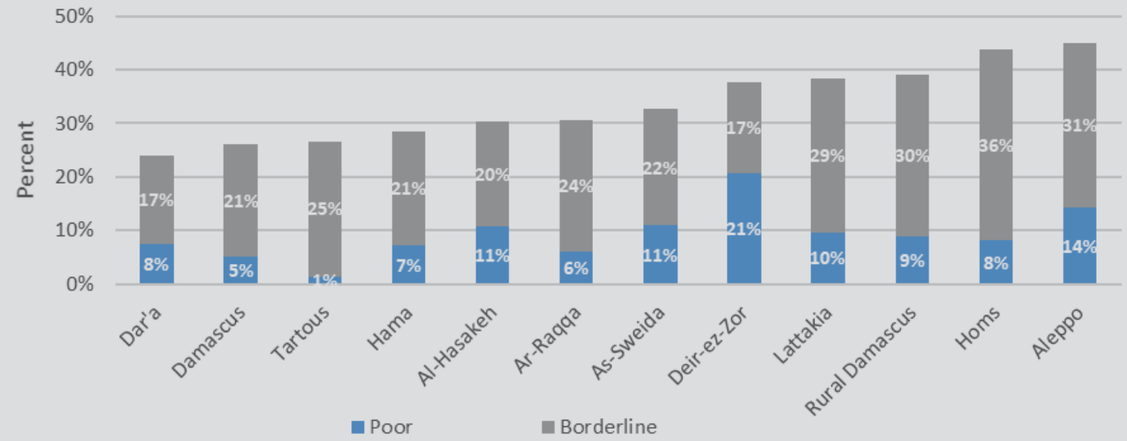
Chart 16: Share of households with poor/borderline food consumption at national level: January 2018 – June 2020



The month of June is typically a period of food excess in Syria, falling at the start of the country's post-harvest period. However, in 2020, the national average inadequate food consumption rates recorded in June were higher than rates typically recorded during peak periods of the lean season (December – March/April) when people's food security is generally at its worst. The cause linked to the deterioration in household food consumption levels is due to an overall increase in the cost of living in Syria over the past eight months: Average household purchasing power has been significantly reduced as wages have remained static while prices of all items have increased dramatically.

When broken down by governorate, large disparities in food consumption levels become apparent across Syria (Chart 17). In June 2020 there was a 20 percentage-point difference in the percent of households reporting inadequate food consumption; from 25 percent in Dar'a to 45 percent in Aleppo. Poor food consumption levels highlight a worsening level of food consumption with likely much worse diet diversity and nutrient intake. Outlining more serious food intake deprivation on both quantity and quality of food consumed. Deir-ez-Zor, Aleppo and Al-Hasakeh governorates reported the highest average levels of poor food consumption.

Chart 17: Share of households with poor/borderline food consumption by governorate: June 2020



FOOD CONSUMPTION BY VULNERABLE GROUPS

The impact of the worsening economic situation in Syria since October 2019, including the COVID-19 related movement restriction measures, has been felt more severely by the most vulnerable groups of the Syrian population, including female-headed households, internally displaced people (IDPs) and IDP returnees, as well as people who rent housing (as opposed to owning their own home). Charts 18, 19 and 20 help outline the extent of the impact of the worsening economic situation on the food security of these highly vulnerable groups. Chart 18, for example, shows how even though both male and female-headed households registered a big increase in their average inadequate food consumption levels in June 2020 compared to June 2019 and June 2018, up to 42 percent of interviewed female-headed households reported either poor or borderline food consumption compared to households headed by men (33 percent). Furthermore, the percentage of female-headed households with poor food consumption tripled in June 2020 as compared to June 2019; the proportion of male-headed households with poor food consumption doubled over the same time period. Borderline food consumption levels increased by roughly the same amount among both male and female-headed households.

Chart 18: Share of households with poor/borderline food consumption by gender of the head of the household: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

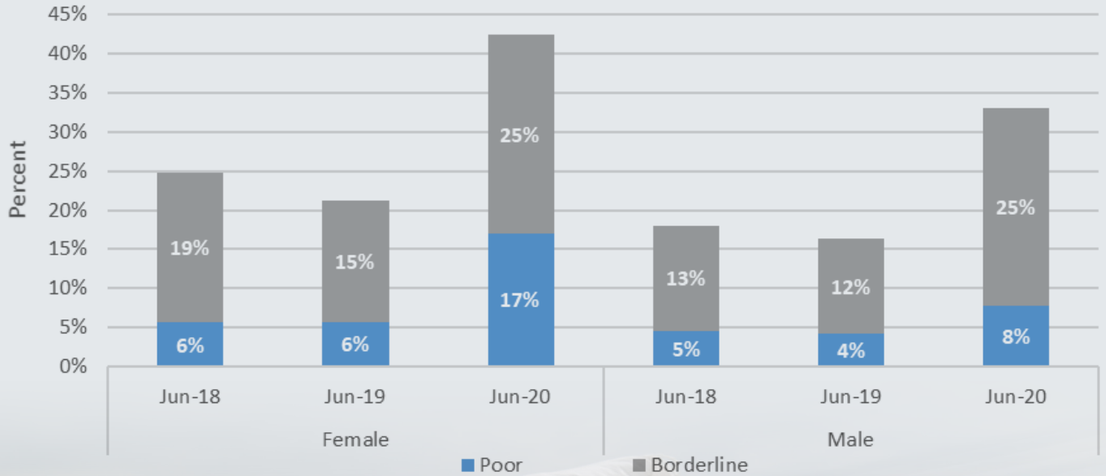


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Chart 19 looks at poor and borderline food consumption by residence status: internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees (people who have recently – in the last 6 months – returned to their location of original in Syria), and residents (people who are currently residing in their location of origin and have done so for at least six months). IDPs and IDP returnees are typically the most vulnerable groups out of the three. This is evident by looking at June 2018 and June 2019 food consumption levels.

While all three groups saw a worsening in their food consumption levels, IDPs and returnees reported a greater deterioration in their food consumption levels than residents. Poor food consumption levels between June 2019 and June 2020 more than doubled for both IDPs and returnees, going from five percent to 11 percent of respondents, while it increased by less than double for residents (up from four to seven percent for residents).

Chart 19: Share of households with poor/borderline food consumption by residence status: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

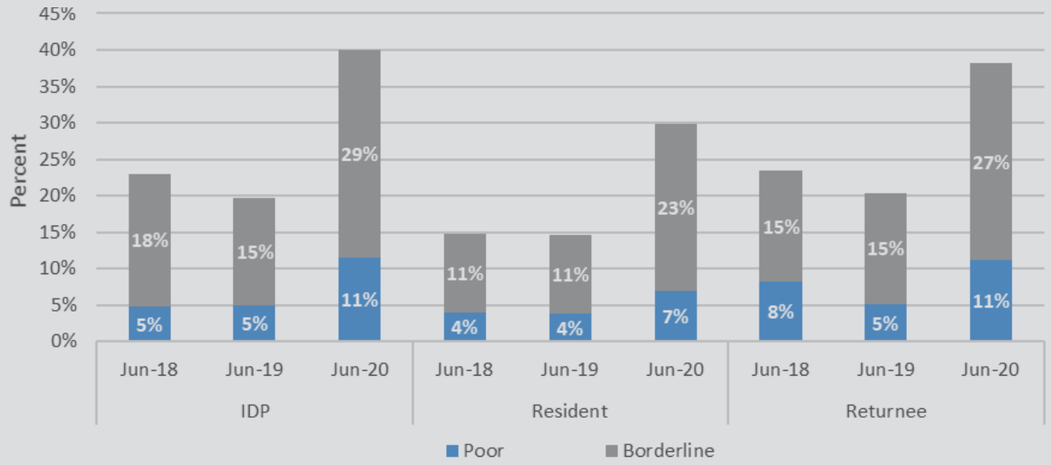
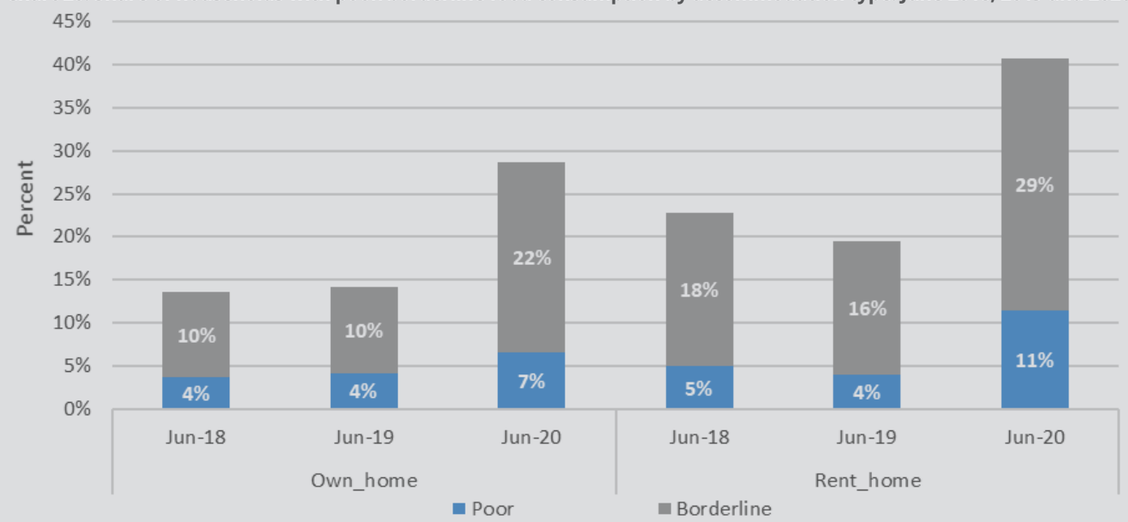


Chart 20 shows food consumption levels by household accommodation type; renting or owning. Again, both groups registered a stark decrease in their food consumption rates in June 2020 compared to June 2018 and June 2019. However, households who rent are found to have considerably worse food intake than households who own their home. While the increase in poor food consumption nearly doubled for households who own their home between June 2019 and June 2020, the rate nearly tripled for households who rent. Furthermore, even though households who own their home saw a more than doubling in borderline rates of food consumption between June 2019 and June 2020, this was still lower than rates reported by renting households. This highlights how already vulnerable groups remain more vulnerable and susceptible to food insecurity and are also less resilient to food-related shocks.

Chart 20: Share of households with poor/borderline food consumption by accommodation type: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

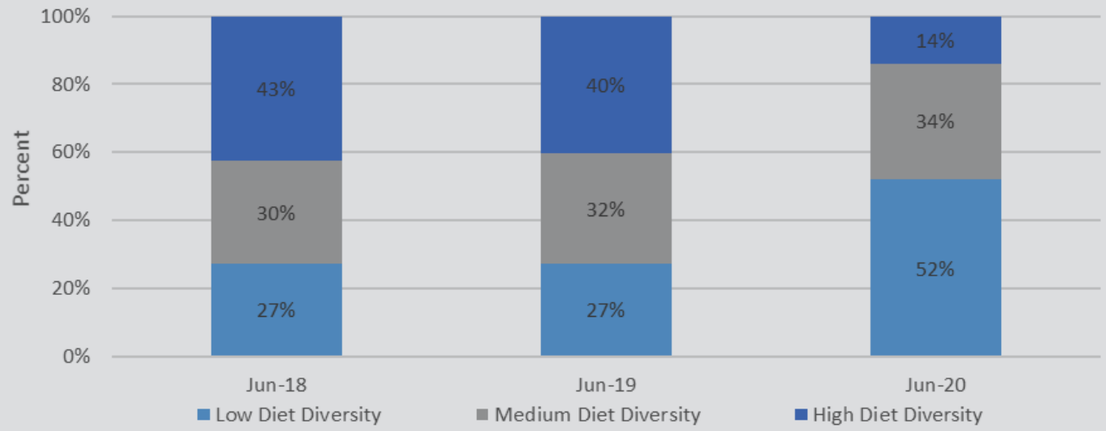


DIET DIVERSITY

Increased food prices, the devaluation of the Syrian pound as well as a lack of income sources have pushed many Syrian households to change their food consumption patterns. WFP data shows that a greater number of households are replacing dairy, fruits and animal protein with commodities that are more affordable, including cheap staples such as bread, noodles and potato beside seasonal local vegetables. Some households also reported consuming vegetables over other commodities since they can be consumed raw and therefore require less cooking fuel, thus helping to reduce expenses.

Dietary diversity has been notably impacted by the worsening economic situation in Syria. Chart 21 shows how nationally, on average in June 2020, over half (52 percent) of interviewed households reported consuming a diet low in diversity, i.e. a diet of only four food groups or less out of a possible eight. This was double the percentage of households reporting consuming a low-diversity diet in June 2018 or June 2019. The percentage of households reporting consuming a medium diverse diet (between five and six different food groups consumed over the past seven days) remained relatively unchanged (34 percent) compared to June 2018 or June 2019. However, there was a dramatic reduction of 75 percent in the percentage of households that in June 2020 reported consuming a diet high in diversity (a diet of more than six different food groups) compared to June 2018 and June 2019.

Chart 21: Characteristics of households' diet diversity at national level: June 2018, 2019 and 2020



When comparing the dietary diversity of vulnerable groups, all groups at national average level registered a doubling of the number of households reporting consuming a low diversity diet in June 2020 as compared to June 2018 and 2019. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of female-headed households reported consuming a poorly diversified diet than male headed households. Moreover, the percentage of households with low dietary diversity doubled in June 2020 compared to previous years regardless of their residency status. However, the share of IDPs and IDP returnee households with a poorly diversified diet was found to be higher than resident households. A similar trend was also observed when analysing households by accommodation status. Both groups (renting and owning) experienced a doubling in the percent of households reporting to consume a diet low in diversity in June 2020 compared to previous years. Yet, households who were renting had a higher percentage of households in this category than households who owned their own home (Charts 22, 23 and 24).

Chart 22: Characteristics of households' diet diversity by gender of the head of the household: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

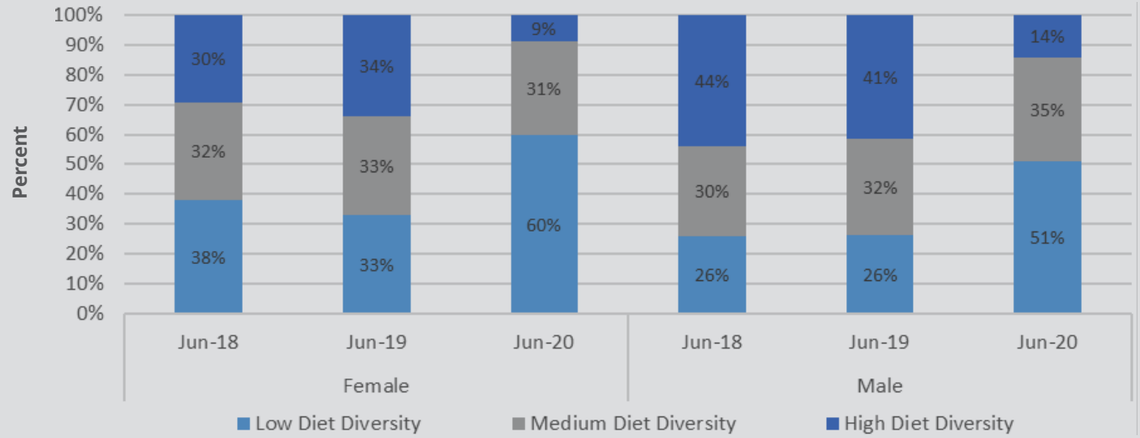


Chart 23: Characteristics of households' diet diversity by residence status: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

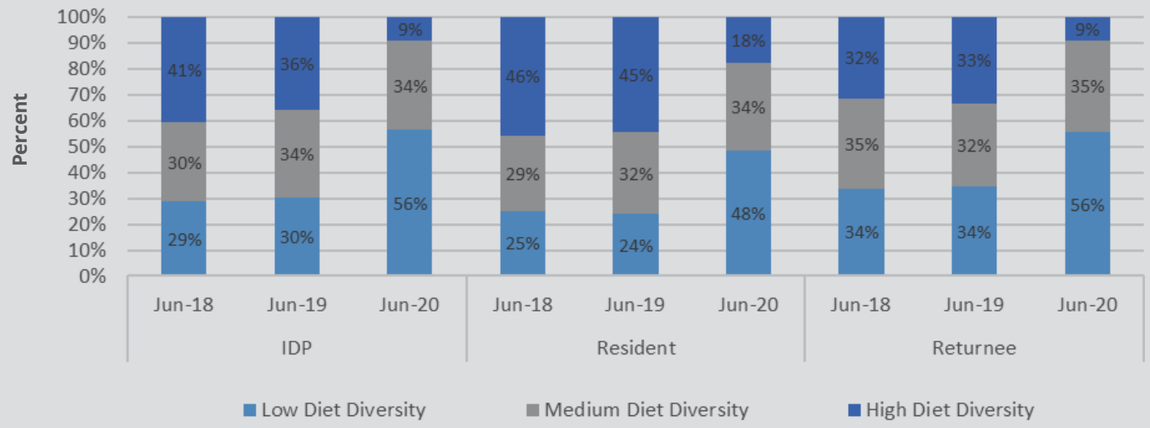
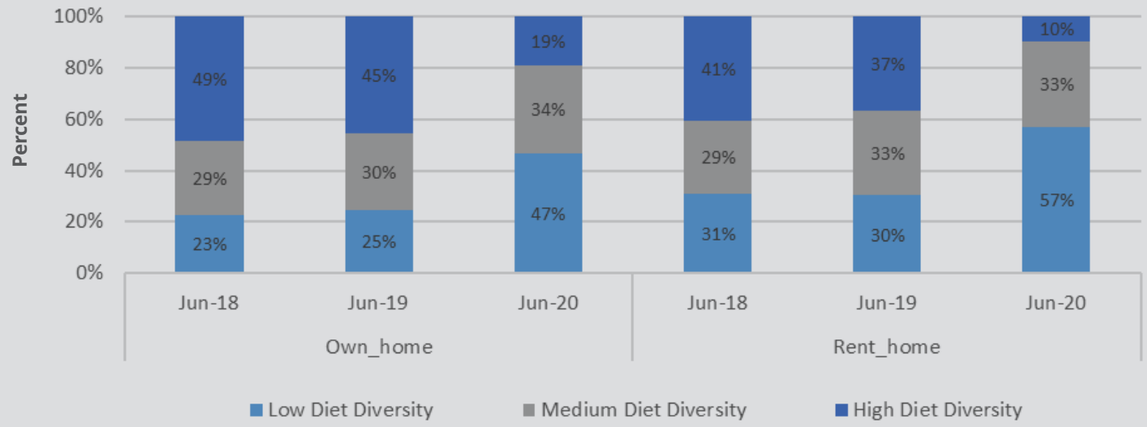


Chart 24: Characteristics of households' diet diversity accommodation type: June 2018, 2019 and 2020



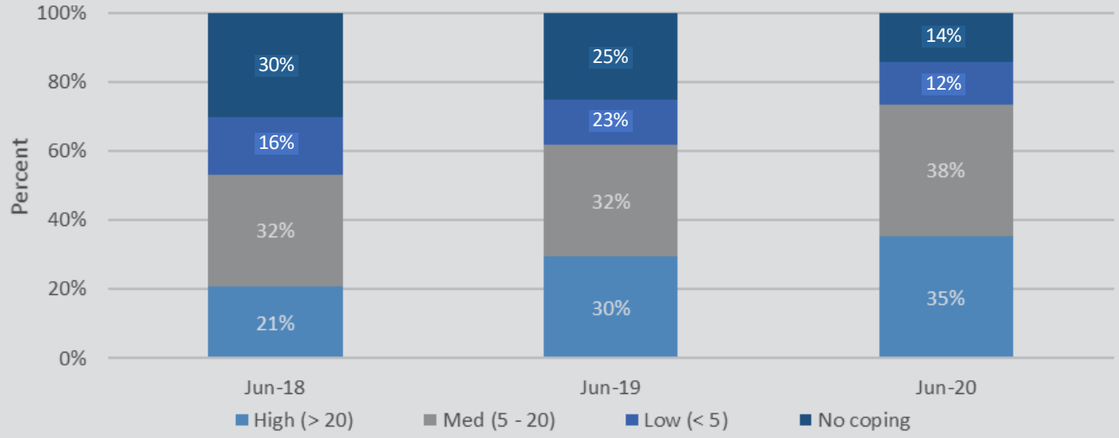
COPING STRATEGIES

Similar to poor food consumption and negative dietary diversity trends, the adoption of negative coping strategies peaked in June 2020. Like the above-mentioned factors, the deterioration of the food coping strategy index (also known as rCSI[44]), was driven primarily by the worsening economic situation in Syria.

Since April 2020, more than 80 percent of interviewed households reported to engage in one or more negative consumption-based coping strategies. The percentage remained almost the same during Ramadan and Eid this year, despite the expected slight improvement during the festive period. The prevalence of households engaging in one or more coping mechanisms reached 86 percent in June 2020; 11 and 19 percent higher than the levels recorded in June 2018, 2019, respectively (Chart 25). The share of households implementing high coping in June 2020 was 35 percent, an increase from 30 percent in June 2019 and 21 percent in June 2018. The findings translates to more households reporting that they engage more frequently in skipping meals, reducing the number of meals consumed per day, limiting the size of the consumed portion size, depending on cheaper food, restricting the consumption of adult family members so children could eat more and/or borrowing food.

Buying less expensive food was reported as the most used food-based coping strategy across Syria in June 2020, adopting by around two-thirds of respondents. This was followed by borrowing food and limiting portion sizes, which almost half of the interviewed households reported adopting at least one out of seven days in June 2020.

Chart 25: Share of households using food coping strategies at national level: June 2018, 2019 and 2020



In line with the deterioration in food consumption patterns and dietary diversity, the adoption of consumption-based coping strategies among vulnerable groups worsened in 2020. All identified vulnerable groups reported an increase in the percent of households engaging in coping strategies, highlighting worrying signs of food-related distress.

Although all groups are being affected by the worsening economic situation, more vulnerable groups continued to report adopting coping strategies at higher levels as compared to less vulnerable groups: A higher proportion of female-headed households reported engaging in consumption-based coping strategies than their male counterparts (Chart 26). With respect to residence status, a wider share of IDP and IDP returnee households reported engaging in food based coping strategies than residents. Even though all groups showed increases in the percentage of households engaging in coping strategies in June 2020 compared to previous years, IDPs and IDP returnees continued to report a higher percent of households engaging in consumption-based coping strategies than residents (Chart 27). A similar trend was also observed when analysing households by accommodation status. Both groups (renting and owning) experienced increases in the percent of households engaging in consumption-based coping strategies in June 2020 compared to previous years, and households who were renting continued to have a higher percentage of households engaging in consumption-based coping strategies compared to households who own their own home (Chart 28).

[44]The reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) measures the stress level a household is facing when exposed to food shortage. The higher the stress, the higher is the index. It is comprised of five standard food coping strategies: 1) relying on less preferred and less expensive food, 2) borrowing food or relying on help from relatives or friends, 3) limiting portion size at meals, 4) restricting consumption by adults in order for small children to eat, and 5) reducing number of meals eaten in a day.

Chart 26: Share of households using food coping strategies by household gender: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

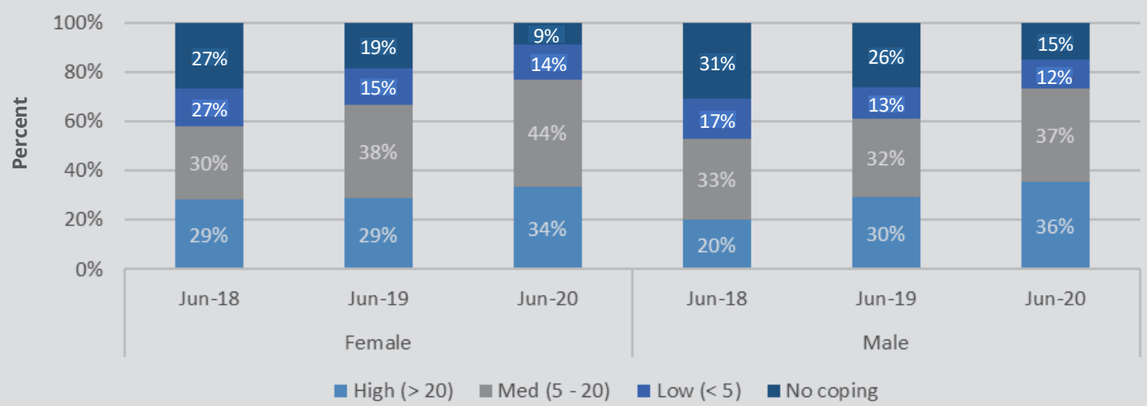


Chart 27: Share of households using food coping strategies by household residence status: June 2018, 2019 and 2020

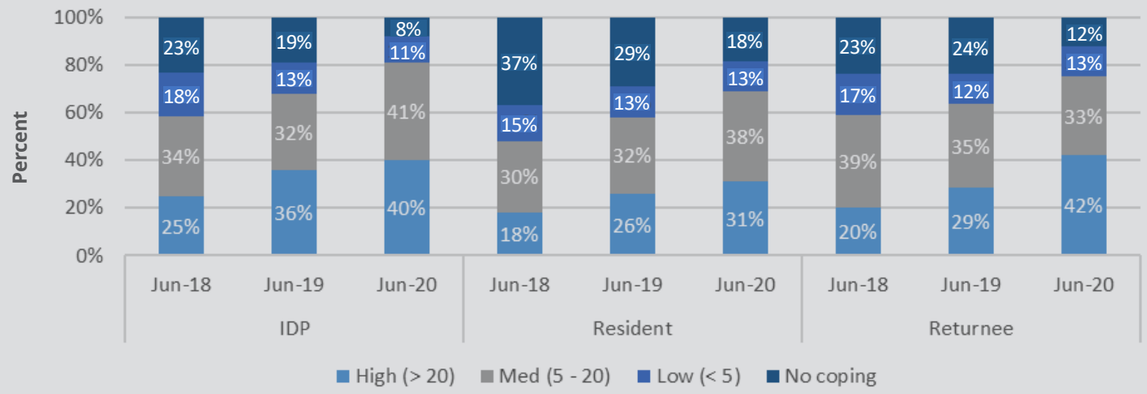
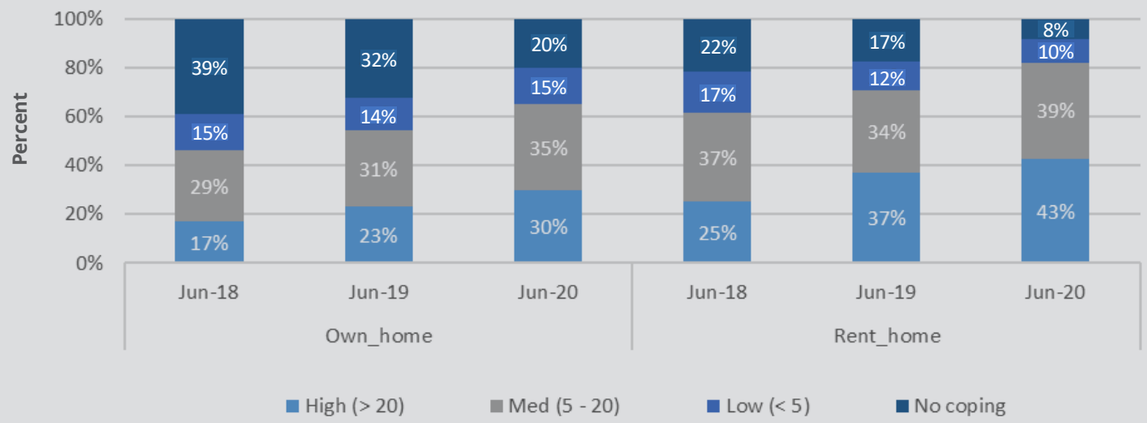


Chart 28: Share of households using food coping strategies by accommodation type: June 2018, 2019 and 2020



IMPACT ON INCOME AND LIVELIHOODS:

As a result of the forced closure of many employment activities and workplaces over the COVID-19 lockdown period, around two-thirds of interviewed households in June 2020 reported that they had lost one or more sources of income. Half of these households reported having lost between three-quarters and 100 percent of their total household income. This highlights the extreme hardship many households in Syria are faced with as a result of the worsening economic situation. The data also outlines the importance of well-targeted social safety net structures as well as support mechanisms that develop employment opportunities and that can help facilitate the re-employment of people who have lost their livelihoods and sources of income as a result of the wider economic downturn compounded by COVID-19.

Chart 29a: Percent distribution of households receiving less income after the onset of COVID-19 by gender of the household head: April 2020

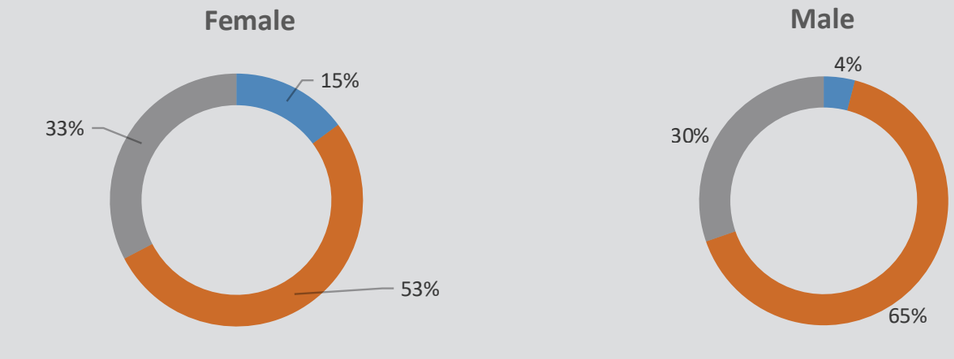
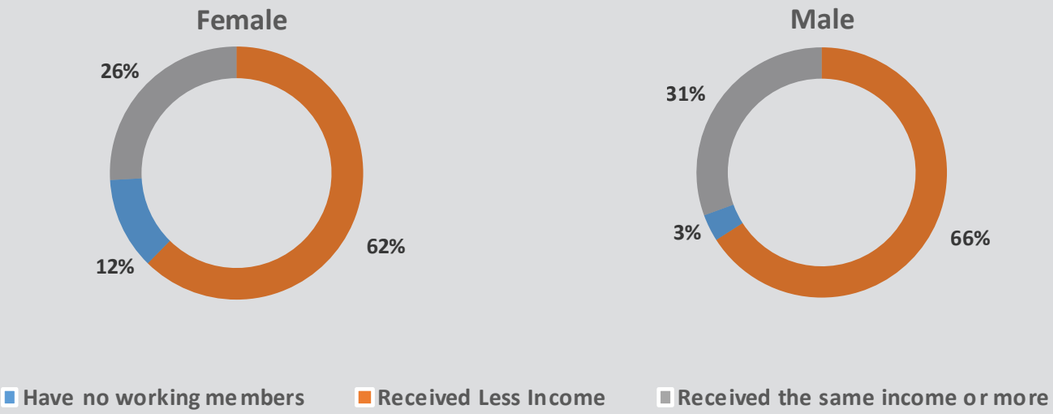


Chart 29b: Percent distribution of households receiving less income after the onset of COVID-19 by gender of the household head: June 2020



Income loss due to measures implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 have been reported by most households, regardless of the gender of the household head (reported by 66 percent of male-headed and 62 percent of female-headed households, respectively). However, the percent of households reporting loss of income has increased among female-headed households compared to their male counterparts (up 17 percent and up 1.5 percent, respectively) between April and June 2020 (Charts 29a and 29b).

Beyond income loss, household access to markets also worsened throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period due to the movement restrictions imposed by authorities. While 94 percent of households across Syria reported that they could access markets in 2018 (according to the 2018 FSA/FSLA), in April 2020 the proportion of households who reported that they were able to access markets had fallen to 71 percent. Despite the general easing of COVID-19-related measures, June 2020 saw only a slight improvement, as movement restrictions remained in place in some areas (such as in KSA-controlled areas of north-eastern Syria and in areas under localized COVID-19-related lockdown in GoS-controlled areas (Charts 30a and 30b).

Chart 30a: Access to markets at national level: April 2020

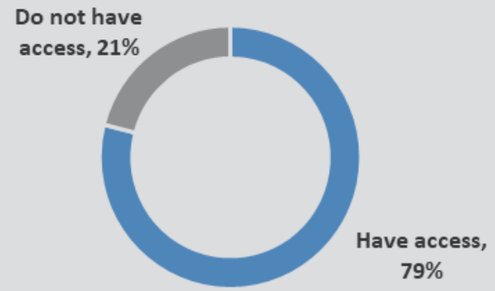
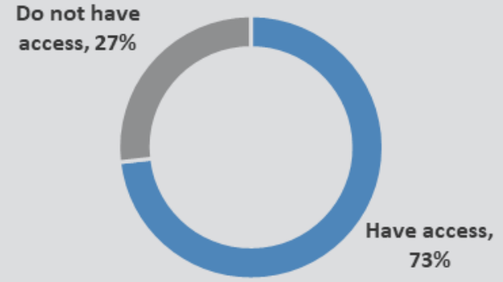


Chart 30b: Access to markets at national level: June 2020



The April and July 2020, mVAM did not show any significant differences in the specific challenges met by households in accessing markets. In both surveys, movement restrictions were the main reason reported by households (16 percent in April, 11 percent in June), followed by closures of nearby markets and localized outbreaks of COVID-19 in their areas (Charts 31a and 31b).

Chart 31a: Reasons why accessing market was challenging: national level, April 2020

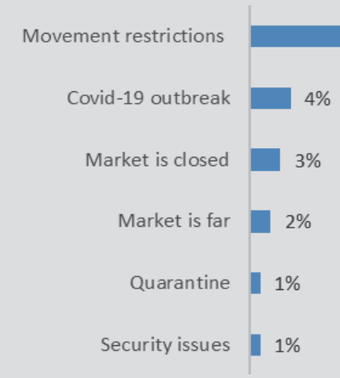
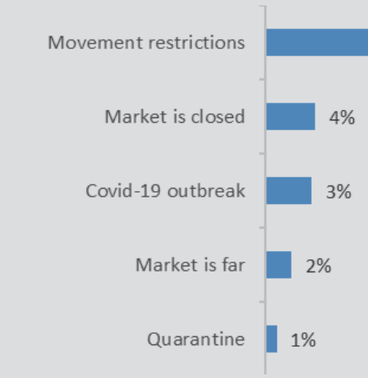


Chart 31b: Reasons why accessing market was challenging: national level, June 2020



NUTRITION

The last Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) nutrition survey conducted in Syria during the summer of 2019 outlined that the average global acute malnutrition rate for children aged 6-59 months across Syria was low, at 1.7 percent. Nevertheless, localized geographic variation was found, with significantly higher rates of acute malnutrition reported in some sub-districts, demonstrating the need for close monitoring of nutrition at sub-district level. The national prevalence of chronic malnutrition among children was 12.6 percent, with Deir-ez-Zor, Idleb, Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh and Quneitra governorates either having reached or were found to be near the WHO 'High' level of stunting classification.

Overall, 4.6 million pregnant and lactating women and children are presently in need of nutrition assistance across Syria, of which 3.7 million are in acute need. If not properly addressed, rising malnutrition could have devastating, long-term and intergenerational impacts. In January 2020, the estimated number of children under five with wasting is 56,500 (1.7 percent). However, this number is already estimated to likely increase to 84,800 (2.6 per cent) by January 2021, and will likely worsen further as access to food deteriorates due to rising costs of living and steep reductions in household purchasing power.

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SECTION 6: CASE
FOOD SECURITY IMPACT OF A LOCALIZED COVID-19 ‘LOCKDOWN’

As community transmission of COVID-19 is ongoing in Syria, Syrian authorities have embarked on a strategy of geographically targeted and localized lockdowns when and where an outbreak is detected in lieu of the more widespread and disruptive nationwide mitigation measures imposed earlier in the pandemic (previously referred to in this study as the ‘COVID-19 lockdown period’). Such localized lockdowns can be imposed on a specific neighbourhood of a town or city, an entire town or village, or an entire sub-district. Since the start of the outbreak, four such localized lockdowns have been in implemented, with strict curfews and movement restrictions imposed until the outbreak has been contained (normally a period lasting 20-40 days). During the lockdown, movement restrictions are put in place, but people are normally allowed to access local markets for food as well as some food delivery services.

One such location put under localized lockdown was the town of Ras Al-Ma’ara, located in the Yabroud sub-district of Rural Damascus governorate, which was under lockdown from 07 June 2020 until 23 July 2020. The town is home to some 4,100 families (20,500 people), and of these, 500 families are categorized as female-headed. The town is deemed to be at high risk of food insecurity, and according to the 2019 FSA/FSLA, 84 percent of the population was deemed to be food insecure.

In mid-July 2020, WFP conducted a rapid needs assessment to assess and verify the impact of the lockdown on the food security situation in the town. As part of the assessment, WFP interviewed a random selection of 60 households. The assessment found that bread, oil and sugar were the most consumed foods by households in the area before and after the lockdown was in place. However, since the lockdown began, consumption of these commodities decreased significantly as families reported not being able to afford the required quantities of food as household income for most families had either decreased significantly or stopped entirely. At the same time, the prices of goods on the market continued to increase. Before the lockdown, the main source of food in Ras Al-Ma’ara was from shops or markets. After the lockdown came into effect, the main sources of food shifted to own household production and borrowing, despite the continuing availability of food items on the market, signalling that economic access to food had been significantly affected.

According to interviewed families, prices of all items except fuel had increased by around 80 percent as the lockdown came into effect, while most sources of income disappeared, as movement restrictions prevented daily workers and employees from accessing their places of work. While food items remained available in the market, medical and cleaning supplies (especially disinfectants) were not readily available compared to the pre-lockdown period. Around 60 percent of the interviewed families reported buying most items (not just food) on credit, up from 25 percent before the lockdown. Furthermore, the percentage of monthly food expenditure bought on credit increased dramatically from 20 percent to 70 percent as the lockdown continued.

According to interviewed families, their food security was adversely affected as they could no longer access food in the manner they used to before the lockdown. Even the few families (around five percent) in Ras Al-Ma’ara that used to receive monthly remittances from abroad were no longer able to receive them because of the lockdown, depriving them of a key source of income. Due to the deteriorating food security situation, families reported engaging more frequently in more severe food and livelihoods-based coping strategies. The most common consumption-based coping mechanisms, employed by three quarters of the families, was relying on less preferred or less expensive food, purchasing food on credit, and limiting portion sizes. Half of interviewed households reported reducing the number of meals eaten in a day from three to two and restricting consumption by adults in order for children to eat. Households also reported engaging in livelihood-based coping strategies to meet their food needs, with the most common strategy (as reported by half the families) being searching for alternative jobs. Around a quarter of families reported selling household items and productive assets and their last female animals, a coping strategy with potentially long-term negative consequences for household livelihoods and resilience. It is important to note that while schools remained suspended over the lockdown period, half of the families reported that they would most likely not be able to send their children back to school once school opened if the situation did not improve, as they would need their children to help generate income to support the household.

When asked about their prioritized needs as a community, families in Ras Al-Ma’ara reported food assistance as their number one need. Another priority need reported was non-food items such as medicine, diapers and hygiene items – key items as 70 percent of households in Ras Al-Ma’ara have at least one member with a disability.

The rapid needs assessment in Ras Al-Ma’ara revealed that the food security situation, which was already concerning pre-lockdown, deteriorated rapidly under lockdown, rendering emergency food assistance interventions necessary. The situation in Ras Al-Ma’ara is likely similar to other areas under localized lockdown. Rapid needs assessments should therefore be conducted in other areas placed under lockdown to verify the needs and assess whether emergency food assistance is required.

SECTION 7

IMPACT ON THE SYRIAN TRANSPORTER MARKET

A survey conducted among transporters and cost and freight agents clearly indicates concerns over economic developments beyond, but compounded by, COVID-19. Up to 67 percent of the survey respondents listed the dramatic exchange rate fluctuations and the devaluation of the Syrian pound as their main concern, followed by lack of credit and lack of US dollars. Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, transporters confirmed a general increase in the demand for transport across Syria, accompanied by an increase in the cost of transport, averaging at 30 percent - in line with the overall inflation rate.

In terms of transport availability, transporters reported no shortages of trucks and of transport services on the market during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The survey confirmed that there was no shortage of trucks, even though the increase in price of transport services may have hindered other activities. In terms of operations, restrictions on movement imposed over the COVID-19 lockdown period hindered production capacity as public transport was not available and working hours were reduced. However, the situation normalized overall once restrictions were lifted.

While the imposed movement restrictions did not apply to cargo transport, the cost of transport increased by 28 percent from April to May, in-line with the overall inflation rate.

An important point to note on the current socio-economic condition, is a concern over the future availability of fuel. Up to 75 percent of the transporters who participated in the survey noted being concerned that the supply of fuel may run low or that prices will increase due to the tightening of sanctions. One respondent also raised a concern that the Syrian government could potentially stop or significantly reduce the provision of subsidized fuel for industries. If fuel subsidies are removed, this will not only impact the transport market but the whole transport industry in Syria. A close review of the fuel supply chain is needed as this area will have a significant impact on the price of commodities being made available, on the availability of commodities on markets, and in ensuring the delivery of much-needed humanitarian cargo.

Looking at the current transport market in Syria, up to 50 percent of the respondents reported that trucks are on average 10-15 years old, and the survey confirmed that over 50 percent of these trucks require regular maintenance once or twice a month. While the average age of trucks in Syria are roughly in line with the European average (at 12.4 years old)[45]. The sanctions imposed on Syria might impact the ability of transporters to import new trucks or to acquire spare parts needed to service the current fleet. This is supported by the survey findings in that there has been very little recent capital investment in the transport sector in Syria, with respondents reporting that no trucks newer than five years old have been purchased. The survey also confirmed that the price of spare parts, especially for tires and lubricants, have increased by over 100 percent since March 2020, and that the labour cost has increased by 50 percent, which has significantly increased the cost of truck maintenance. The survey participants confirmed a significant drop in their sales and their profits by between 20 to 70 percent over the COVID-19 lockdown period, and it is expected that these trends will drive transport prices even higher in the coming months.

A detailed overview of the WFP Syria supply chain response to the observed COVID-19-related logistical and procurement issues can be found in Annex 3.

[45] https://www.automotiveworld.com/news-releases/report-vehicles-in-use-europe-2019/

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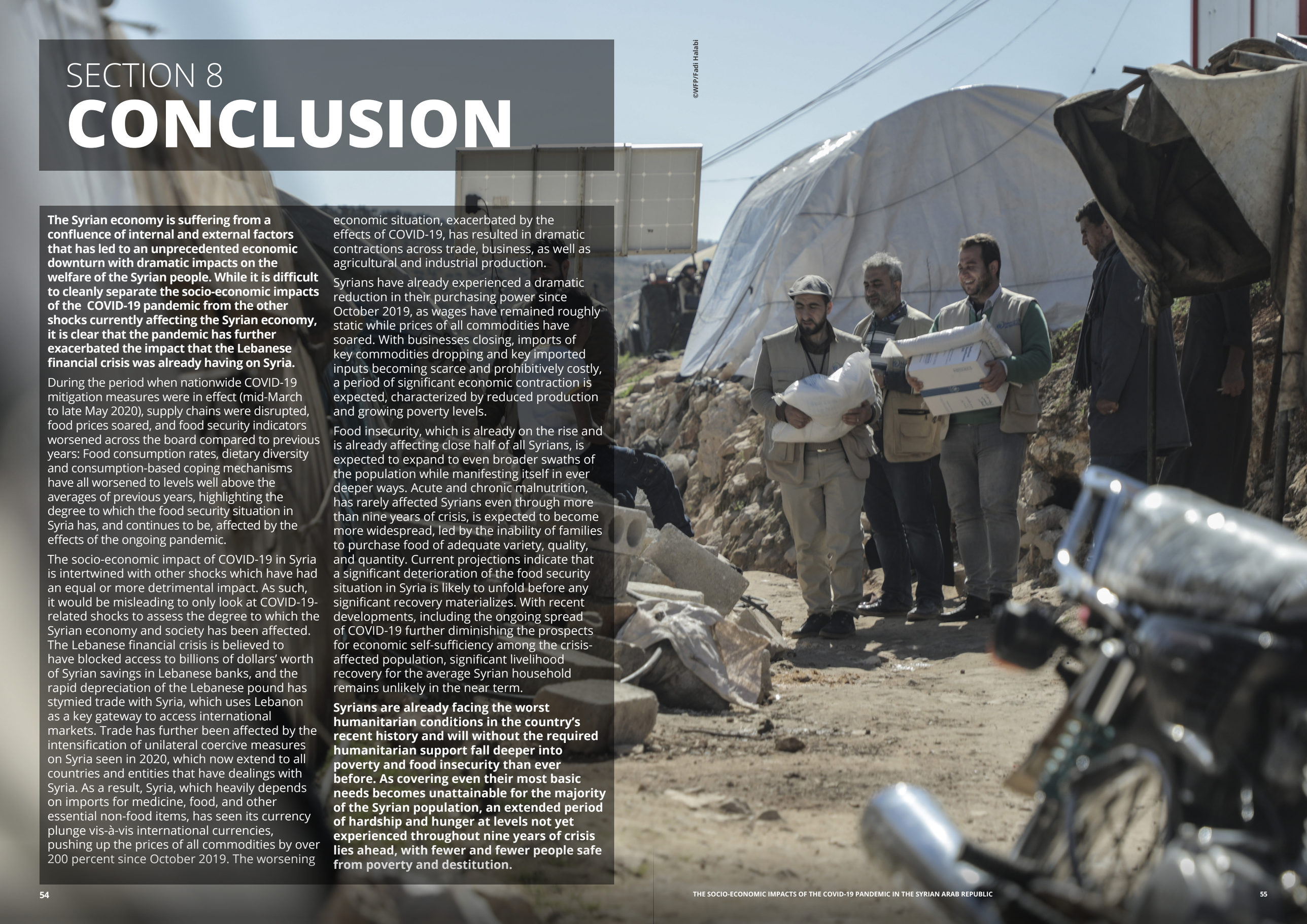
SECTION 8

CONCLUSION



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The Syrian economy is suffering from a confluence of internal and external factors that has led to an unprecedented economic downturn with dramatic impacts on the welfare of the Syrian people. While it is difficult to cleanly separate the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from the other shocks currently affecting the Syrian economy, it is clear that the pandemic has further exacerbated the impact that the Lebanese financial crisis was already having on Syria.

During the period when nationwide COVID-19 mitigation measures were in effect (mid-March to late May 2020), supply chains were disrupted, food prices soared, and food security indicators worsened across the board compared to previous years: Food consumption rates, dietary diversity and consumption-based coping mechanisms have all worsened to levels well above the averages of previous years, highlighting the degree to which the food security situation in Syria has, and continues to be, affected by the effects of the ongoing pandemic.

The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Syria is intertwined with other shocks which have had an equal or more detrimental impact. As such, it would be misleading to only look at COVID-19-related shocks to assess the degree to which the Syrian economy and society has been affected. The Lebanese financial crisis is believed to have blocked access to billions of dollars' worth of Syrian savings in Lebanese banks, and the rapid depreciation of the Lebanese pound has stymied trade with Syria, which uses Lebanon as a key gateway to access international markets. Trade has further been affected by the intensification of unilateral coercive measures on Syria seen in 2020, which now extend to all countries and entities that have dealings with Syria. As a result, Syria, which heavily depends on imports for medicine, food, and other essential non-food items, has seen its currency plunge vis-à-vis international currencies, pushing up the prices of all commodities by over 200 percent since October 2019. The worsening economic situation, exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19, has resulted in dramatic contractions across trade, business, as well as agricultural and industrial production.

Syrians have already experienced a dramatic reduction in their purchasing power since October 2019, as wages have remained roughly static while prices of all commodities have soared. With businesses closing, imports of key commodities dropping and key imported inputs becoming scarce and prohibitively costly, a period of significant economic contraction is expected, characterized by reduced production and growing poverty levels.

Food insecurity, which is already on the rise and is already affecting close half of all Syrians, is expected to expand to even broader swaths of the population while manifesting itself in ever deeper ways. Acute and chronic malnutrition, has rarely affected Syrians even through more than nine years of crisis, is expected to become more widespread, led by the inability of families to purchase food of adequate variety, quality, and quantity. Current projections indicate that a significant deterioration of the food security situation in Syria is likely to unfold before any significant recovery materializes. With recent developments, including the ongoing spread of COVID-19 further diminishing the prospects for economic self-sufficiency among the crisis-affected population, significant livelihood recovery for the average Syrian household remains unlikely in the near term.

Syrians are already facing the worst humanitarian conditions in the country's recent history and will without the required humanitarian support fall deeper into poverty and food insecurity than ever before. As covering even their most basic needs becomes unattainable for the majority of the Syrian population, an extended period of hardship and hunger at levels not yet experienced throughout nine years of crisis lies ahead, with fewer and fewer people safe from poverty and destitution.

SECTION 9

RECOMMENDATIONS

URGENT

The provision of multiple simultaneous food security interventions for improved sustainability of the impact of assistance. In particular:

- Design multiple food security interventions to address immediate food needs, providing support in a way that reduces dependency on humanitarian assistance and increases food availability and food access.
- Build on partnerships with local institutions and actors that can provide value-added activities and expertise to food security interventions.
- Identify clear entry and exit points for the delivery of food assistance based on the assessed severity of food insecurity while designing interventions suited to different population groups.
- Conduct a rapid food security assessment in areas under localized COVID-19-related lockdown within one week from the start of the lockdown. Once vulnerability is verified and food needs identified, emergency food assistance should be provided to cover short-term immediate food needs as long as the lockdown persists to avoid a deeper deterioration of the food security situation amongst the affected population.
- Prioritize those who are cut off from their normal food and income sources for short-term food assistance to meet their immediate needs, while simultaneously identifying households whose livelihood asset base can be strengthened through specific livelihoods-support.
- Support should also be directed at vulnerable residents not in lockdown who face financial access issues to cover their basic food needs.
- Conduct vulnerability assessments of assisted and non-assisted populations to ensure available resources are efficiently channelled towards the most vulnerable and affected groups.
- Specific attention should be given to households with children under five; female-headed households; families with persons with disability or elderly households – identify FCS for households with large dependency ratios and nutritionally vulnerable groups and carry out a more in-depth profile of their characteristics that makes it easier to identify and target them for food interventions.
- Effective and timely monitoring of food security levels across the country. The collection of regular key food security and nutrition indicators at sub-district/district and governorate level allows for continuous monitoring of the food security situation and needs on the ground. This warrants:
  - A country-wide monthly data collection and analysis system should be established to regularly monitor both household food security and nutrition levels.
  - National representative food security assessments should be conducted on an annual basis to assess progress made in addressing food needs and assess where greater efforts need to be focused.
  - A national representative nutrition survey is needed to assess the likely impact of the deteriorating economic situation on household nutrition levels.
  - A study/review of the fuel supply chain is needed to assess the possible impact the removal of the fuel subsidy would have on WFP operations.

MID-TERM:

- Identify more food security-sensitive approaches to target newly displaced households with additional or alternative assistance depending on their food and income situation. Ensure complementary sector support is provided.
- Identify interventions that strengthen food availability and food stability of resident households who are able to invest in longer-term planning because of relative stability, who could potentially create job opportunities, especially for unskilled labourers.
- Apply a working-poor lens to household-level food insecurity to identify households whose incomes are so low or so unstable that they allocate over 75 percent of their available income to food and have limited food sources.
- Assess the possibility of expanding to market based interventions (i.e. cash and/or vouchers).
- Where feasible, transition from in-kind food assistance to market-based interventions (cash or voucher-based assistance) to enhance consumer purchasing power. This could help address some of the issues related to localized produce surplus in parts of the country, while improving the dietary diversity of the assisted population.
- After nine years of conflict, many Syrian households have exhausted many of their typical coping mechanisms. There is a need to reassess and update the list of employed food-based coping mechanisms to ensure the list is updated to reflect the most commonly used coping mechanisms.

LONG TERM:

- Better identification of interventions for those at risk of food insecurity for which food assistance could be part of a larger package of support that meets livelihoods needs and prevents the use of negative livelihood-based coping strategies that could lead to food insecurity.
- Consider introducing seasonal food assistance, if appropriate, in place of long intervals between monthly assistance which are difficult for measurement of food security outcomes.
- Conduct a study on the cost and impact of unilateral coercive measures (sanctions) on food security in Syria.
- Ensure food stability needs are considered for the targeting of food security interventions that protect and support livelihoods. This means:
  - Strengthening the agricultural sector and the capacity of households engaged in food production in a way that promotes household-level food security and in-country food availability.
  - Strengthening the economic empowerment of women, especially in rural areas.
  - Strengthening livelihoods opportunities for people at risk of food insecurity through interventions appropriate to context, including through a stronger focus on community-level productive asset interventions.
  - Identifying non-food production market-based livelihoods that contribute to food security in Syria and help integrate markets across the country.
  - Working with actors along the main food-production value chains for more efficient economies of scale and market-based interventions for better profit margins.
  - Capacity building and skills development for youth and women related to the main livelihood opportunities that are available to them in their area.

SECTION 10

ANNEXES

Annex 1: COVID-19 evolution in Syria (include UNDP overview)

Date	Event	Source of Information
11 July 2020	The government team decided to amend the entry requirements to allow Syrian citizens stranded abroad to enter through the legitimate border crossing points with Lebanon.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1182646
10 July 2020	Ministry of Health: 22 new coronavirus cases registered in Syria; two patients passed away.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196852
07 July 2020	Ministry of Health: 14 new coronavirus cases registered; one patient passes away	SANA
06 July 2020	Moscow to continue supporting Syria in combating Coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196545
06 July 2020	Ministry of Health: 14 new coronavirus cases registered; one patient passes away	SANA
06 July 2020	The director of the Yabroud National Hospital dies with Coronavirus	Damascus Voice
05 July 2020	Ministry of Health: 10 cases of Coronavirus infections were recorded in contact with people, raising the total number of recorded infections to 338	Al Watan
05 July 2020	10 new infections. Ibn Rushd Hospital is a center for medical isolation	Al Baath
03 July 2020	Second batch of Syrian students in India arrive in Damascus and a medicine shipment to confront corona	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196289
03 July 2020	Health Ministry: 19 new Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases registered and 3 previous cases recovered	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196252
02 July 2020	Head of pharmacists' syndicate in Hama was put in isolation after he was diagnosed with Corona.	Syria News
01 July 2020	Health Ministry said on Wednesday that 14 coronavirus cases were registered in Syria for persons who were in close contact with other infected persons to raise the total number to 293.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196207
30 June 2020	Syria: no longer allows the entry of anyone who does not have the negative PCR test.	

30 June 2020	Health Ministry: 10 new Coronavirus cases registered; 3 patients recovered	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=196095
28 June 2020	Syrian students coming from India: This is our first experience in al-Horjelah quarantine center.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=195871
27 June 2020	Governmental team: Strictness in applying health requirements and social distancing	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195803
27 June 2020	Ministry of Health: All university hospitals continue work and receive patients	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195787
27 June 2020	Health Ministry: 1 new Coronavirus case registered; 1 death case in Aleppo (total cases 256, recovered 102, death 9)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195773
26 June 2020	Health Ministry: 13 new Coronavirus cases registered; 6 patients recovered (total cases 255, recovered 102, death 8)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195755
25 June 2020	Health Ministry: 11 new Coronavirus cases registered; 2 patients recovered (total cases 242, recovered 96, death 7)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195581
25 June 2020	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour release the second list of 18731 disrupted workers of COVID-19 combating measures who will receive financial support.	https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=849897515532155&id=177760009412579
24 June 2020	Syria receives new batch of Chinese medical aid for tackling coronavirus	https://sana.sy/en/?cat=12
23 June 2020	Health Ministry: 12 new Coronavirus cases registered; 3 patients recovered (total cases 231)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195404
23 June 2020	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour release the second list of 3285 disrupted workers of COVID-19 combating measures who will receive financial support.	https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=848794555642451&id=177760009412579
22 June 2020	Prayers suspended in Jdeidet al-Fadel, Jdeidet al-Balad mosques over Covid-19 fears	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194946
22 June 2020	Education Ministry establishes new exam centers for students in areas under lockdown	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195337
22 June 2020	Health Ministry: 15 new coronavirus cases registered; (total cases 219)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195287
21 June 2020	Health Ministry: Imposing a lockdown on Jdeidet al-Fadil town	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195091
21 June 2020	Update-Health Ministry: six new coronavirus cases registered in Jdeidet al-Fadil town, three of them from the health cadres	https://sana.sy/en/?p=195140
18 June 2020	Health Ministry: Nine new coronavirus cases registered in Jdaidet Al-Fadel in Rural Damascus Governorate	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194827
18 June 2020	Health Ministry: Coronavirus tests are ongoing to detect any infection in Jdeidet al-Fadel and Ras al-M'ara towns	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194876
18 June 2020	Health Ministry announced the death of a seventy-year-old woman who was rushed to al- Mouwasat Hospital as she was suffering from respiratory problems, and she was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU).	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194827
18 June 2020	the Health Ministry indicated that the total of the registered cases in Syria has reached 187 till today, of which78 have recovered and 7 cases have passed away.	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194827

18 June 2020	Health Ministry: One coronavirus patient passed away in Syria	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194746
18 June 2020	The Health Ministry called on citizens to adhere to precautionary measures and not to neglect them in order to preserve their health and the public safety.	https://sana.sy/en/?p=194827
17 June 2020	With all measures taken to confront Coronavirus, the Ministry of Education ends its preparations for the success of final exams	https://www.sana.sy/en/?paged=2
15 June 2020	Four coronavirus cases recover, raising the total number to 78	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=194525
11 June 2020	Higher Education Ministry: No coronavirus infections registered among students	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=193866
10 June 2020	Health Ministry: Non-adherence to precautionary measures will lead to re-imposition of tight measures	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=193789
04 June 2020	Health Minister: No lack in any medicine product, government assumes burden for financing the imports	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=193294
02 June 2020	Health Ministry: Government takes a set of measures to support pharmaceutical industry	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=193036
02 June 2020	Providing medical care continued despite difficulties due to coercive measures	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192951
01 June 2020	After a suspension of two and a half months, resumption of work in universities and institutes to complete the second semester	http://syriatimes.sy/index.php
26 May 2020	Curfew and restriction of movement among provinces lifted as of Tuesday May 26th	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
26 May 2020	Health Ministry: 15 new Coronavirus cases in Syria, all of them are arrivals from abroad (total # cases is 121)	https://sana.sy/?p=1155264
25 May 2020	Health Ministry: 20 new Coronavirus cases in Syria, all of them are arrivals from abroad (total # cases is 106)	https://sana.sy/?p=1155264
25 May 2020	Social occasions such as weddings and funerals are still not permitted, and public parks, gyms, swimming pools, cultural centers, theatres, and private institutes are to remain closed, as well as tourist facilities such as cafes and restaurants pending another review of the situation during the next week.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
25 May 2020	After evaluating the process of returning the Syrians stranded abroad, Prime Minister office (the cabinet) decided to suspend the efforts to return them until further notice.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
25 May 2020	Prime Minister office (the cabinet) noted that there is still a possibility of a full curfew in the future depending on developments related to the pandemic.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
25 May 2020	Prime Minister office (the cabinet) decided to lift the restriction of movement among provinces and allow public transportation among them, as well as extending the period during which shops can open to be from 8 AM to 7 PM.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
25 May 2020	The government team in charge of confronting Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic decided to lift the nightly curfew completely as of the evening of Tuesday 26 May 2020.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192471
24 May 2020	Health Ministry: 16 new Coronavirus cases in Syria, all of them are arrivals from abroad (total # cases is 86)	
24 May 2020	Health Ministry: Lab analysis of coronavirus suspected case for Russian person at Tartous port is negative	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192373
24 May 2020	Syrians perform Eid al-Fitr prayer at homes as Eid takbeers broadcast in mosques	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192313

24 May 2020	Health Minister: Tests of people who interacted with suspected Coronavirus case in Tartous are negative	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192298
23 May 2020	Health Ministry: 11 new Coronavirus cases in Syria, all of them are arrivals from Kuwait (total # cases is 70)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1154292
22 May 2020	Health Ministry: One new Coronavirus cases in Syria, one case passed away, (total # cases is 59)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1154502
21 May 2020	Education Ministry issues Health emergency plan during the duration of exams for academic year of 2019-2020	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192140
21 May 2020	Global Research: US sanctions deprive Syrian people from medicine	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192118
21 May 2020	Cultural activities on social media as alternative solution to face Coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192109
20 May 2020	Health Ministry: Difficulty in securing COVID 19 test kits due to unilateral coercive measures	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192080
18 May 2020	Minister of Health: We respond to coronavirus epidemic under exceptional conditions	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191984
17 May 2020	Health Ministry: Seven new coronavirus cases registered in Syria for arrivals coming from Kuwait to raise the total infection cases to 58	https://www.sana.sy/en/
17 May 2020	Ministry of Health decides to lift the lockdown on al-Sayyeda Zainab area in Damascus Countryside	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191888
16 May 2020	Ministry of Health: the last 6 Coronavirus cases were among arrivals from abroad	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191807
16 May 2020	The total number of Coronavirus cases registered in Syria reached 51 persons, of which 36 people having recovered while 3 passed away.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191813
15 May 2020	Syrian Eng. designs auto sanitizing gate to confront Coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191753
15 May 2020	For the 2nd consecutive week, mosques open their doors for Friday Prayer	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191730
14 May 2020	Government lift curfew between governorates as of next Tuesday 19 May until Saturday 30 May 2020.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191693
14 May 2020	Government decided to continue the night curfew during the holiday of Eid al-Fitr from 6.30 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191693
14 May 2020	Ministry of Health: 4224 out of 6781 quarantined people discharged so far	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191687
13 May 2020	Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes explanation on return of Syrian citizens stranded abroad	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191677
13 May 2020	Airplane transporting 250 Syrians from UAE arrives to Damascus International Airport	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191555
12 May 2020	National Fund for Social Aid decides to start paying compensations for daily paid workers.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191524
11 May 2020	Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister Fayssal Mikdad received the WHO representative and emphasized on the importance of not politicizing humanitarian work	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191477
10 May 2020	Prime Minister office (the cabinet) approves controlled opening of all activities, conditional on commitment to public safety measures.	http://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/
10 May 2020	Airplane carrying 245 Syrians stranded abroad arrives to Damascus Int'l Airport from Russia	https://sana.sy/?p=1148552

10 May 2020	Prime Minister office (the Cabinet) approves national plan for economic and services executive programs and procedures in response to covid-19 mitigation measures	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191425
10 May 2020	Prayers and Sunday mass performed in churches again after suspension due to coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191406
10 May 2020	After 2-month stoppage, resumption of collective transport in all Governorates	https://sana.sy/en/?p=191375
09 May 2020	Airplane carrying Syrians stranded abroad arrives to Damascus Int'l Airport from Oman and Sudan	http://syriatimes.sy
08 May 2020	Health Ministry: Two new Coronavirus cases in Syria, two existing cases recovered , (total # cases is 47)	https://sana.sy/en/?p=191262
08 May 2020	Friday Prayer performed in mosques again, after being suspended due Coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191207
07 May 2020	Airplane carrying Syrians stranded abroad arrives to Damascus Int'l Airport from Egypt	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191165
06 May 2020	Starting Sunday 10 May, work at government institution	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1146379
06 May 2020	Government sets May 31st as date for reopening universities and 10th of May for resuming public transportation	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191107
05 May 2020	Plane carrying Syrians stranded abroad arrives at Damascus Int'l Airport from UAE	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191051
04 May 2020	President al-Assad holds meeting with government team for confronting Coronavirus to discuss latest developments	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191017
04 May 2020	Health Ministry: 2554 out of 3325 quarantined people discharged so far	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190990
03 May 2020	the cabinet decided to restore public and private economic and development activities in all provinces, and complete government projects with of a 90 % implementation rate and priority projects which have already been initiated to put them into implementation as soon as possible.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190952
03 May 2020	Syrian Airlines to run flight on Monday to evacuate Syrian citizens from UAE	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190971
01 May 2020	Health Ministry: recovery of 6 coronavirus cases and detecting a new infection	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190861
30 April 2020	Syria consulates resume its operation abroad starting Sunday 03/05/2020	https://sana.sy/?p=1143525
29 April 2020	Government allows all professions, shops, industries, etc. to operate again with a condition of their commitment with infection prevention measures.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1143129
29 April 2020	Over 300,000 people registered under MoSAL social protection program	https://sana.sy/?p=1143163
28 April 2020	The Government sets decided to allow citizens to move among provinces on next Thursday, Friday and Saturday for one time to facilitate travelling among the Syrian provinces	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190712
28 April 2020	The government allowed clinics of dentists to resume work every day from the morning until 5.00 p.m.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190712
28 April 2020	Health Ministry launches service showing distribution of Coronavirus cases in Syria	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190703

28 April 2020	Quarantine centers throughout country ready to receive returnees from abroad	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190670
26 April 2020	Cabinet: Students of non-certificate school grades to pass automatically to next grade	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190572
24 April 2020	Lifting the lockdown on AlTal and Sayeda Zeinab	https://shamra.sy/news/article/a3c91268931f3380ab165eacacf3df2e
24 April 2020	Allow all exchange institutions to operate during Saturdays every week	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1141195
23 April 2020	Government decides to change curfew time on Friday and Saturday during Ramadan to become from 7.30 p.m. to 6.00 a.m	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190414
19 April 2020	Some 253 industrial facilities in Hassieh Industrial City increase their production	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190221
18 April 2020	Curfew duration altered in Ramadan, some of the commercial and services professions to resume operations	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190177
16 April 2020	Government sets Monday and Tuesday to allow citizens to move among provinces	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=190089
15 April 2020	Interior Ministry extended on Wednesday the curfew among provinces until May 2nd, 2020 in light of the governmental preventive measures	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189969
15 April 2020	Council of Ministers decides to allow some trades and professions to continue and operate.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1136698
14 April 2020	MoSAL requested all Social Affairs directorate (DOSAs) not to accept any registration of any resignation of workers from the private sector "during the current period".	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1135808
14 April 2020	MoSAL launches the National Campaign for Emergency Social Response by opening digital portal http://www.ncsr.sy for registering the most vulnerable groups and disrupted workers who are affected by the measures taken to confront the Coronavirus.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189807
13 April 2020	MoSAL requested all Social Affairs directorate (DOSAs) not to accept any registration of any resignation of workers from the private sector "during the current period".	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1135808
13 April 2020	MoSAL launches the National Campaign for Emergency Social Response by opening digital portal http://www.ncsr.sy for registering the most vulnerable groups and disrupted workers who are affected by the measures taken to confront the Coronavirus.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189807
11 April 2020	Suspension of schools and universities extended until May 2nd	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189742
11 April 2020	Health Ministry announce six new Coronavirus cases in Syria, one patient recovers	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189735
11 April 2020	Ministry of Health announce the third recovery case of CoronaVirus (total recovered persons is 5)	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189735
10 April 2020	MoSAL ask all National NGOs to share the details about their volunteers on the following link https://bit.ly/3e28Vwh to be part of the national response campaign to combat coronavirus spread.	Informal source of Data
08 April 2020	Ministry of Health announce the third recovery case of CoronaVirus (total recovered persons is 4)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1134162

07 April 2020	Central bank asked all private and public banks to permit a freeze on the repayment of bank loans individuals for three months.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1133361
07 April 2020	Ministry of Economy and international trade suspend exporting some medicines (Azithromycin, chloroquine, cetamol and paracetamol)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1133352
07 April 2020	Ministry of Health announce the third recovery case of CoronaVirus (recovered persons is 3)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1133560
05 April 2020	Prime Minister office (the Cabinet) adopts the national protocol of treatment for coronavirus at the public and private hospitals and the military hospitals.	https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189363
05 April 2020	Prime Minister office (the Cabinet) approves the social protection plan is support to the most vulnerable people and disrupted workers. The plan to be implemented by MoSAL which will be responsible of setting up eligibility criteria and fund raising.	http://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/16018/
04 April 2020	The governorate of Damascus allows the following industrial zones (Ibn Asaker, AL-Kadam, Hosh Blas and Al-Zabltani) to operate between 09:00 AL and 04:00 PM for the following professions (Food processing, plastic industries, turning metals, maintenance of vehicles, printing houses, and textiles)	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131856
04 April 2020	Three new Coronavirus cases confirmed in Rural Damascus	https://sana.sy/?p=1132448
04 April 2020	MOSAL refuse laying off labours during COVID-19 Pandemic	https://www.alwatanonline.com/
02 April 2020	Ministry of interior affairs suspend visits to prisons until 16 April 2020	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131332
02 April 2020	Curfew during Friday and Saturday is active from 06:00 AM till 12:00 midday.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131473
02 April 2020	Stop exporting four locally produced items (Eggs, Dairy products, legumes, and chlorines) for one month.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131473
02 April 2020	The Syrian town of Saida Zainab southern Damascus has been put under quarantine	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131503
02 April 2020	Ministry of communication keep the phones and internet lines connected in case of delay in paying due bills and extend the time of payments for an extra month without penalties.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131430
01 April 2020	The Syrian town of Tal Mneen northeast Damascus has been put under quarantine after the death of 73-year-old woman who died after being rushed to hospital for emergency treatment was found to have been infected by coronavirus	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1131092
30 March 2020	Extend the judicial holiday until 16 April 2020	https://sana.sy/?p=1130248
29 March 2020	Restrict movements between governorates until 16 April 2020	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1129881
28 March 2020	Ministry of interior trade send trucks of vegetable and fruits from wholesale foods markets into rural areas	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1129580
28 March 2020	Extend the closure of schools and universities until 16 April 2020.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1129436
28 March 2020	Delegate MoSAL to prepare list of all affected business/workers during corona crisis in collaboration with workers unions and syndicates.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1129580
27 March 2020	Government restricts movements between cities and rural areas and vice versa, starting 29 March 31, 2020	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1129370

27 March 2020	Prime minister ask all chambers of commerce and industries to impose the law # 7 for year 2010 which impose on private sector to maintain the rights of all employees in case on crises.	http://www.pministry.gov.sy
26 March 2020	MoH allocate 21 centers in 12 governorates to be used for quarantining suspicions cases of infections	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1128693
26 March 2020	Prime Minister office set up the structure of Social Protection response under the leadership of MoSAL	المخطط التدفقي كورونا.pdf فريق الحماية الاجتماعيةpdf
26 March 2020	MoSAL share its plan and needs in response to CORONA disease outbreak and share it will all NGOs C:\Users\Tammam.Yahia\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\Tracking Corona\تعميم لمديريات الشؤون يخصوص الاحتياجات من المنظمات 26-3-2020 تع.pdf	تعميم لمديريات منظمات 26-3-2020 تع
26 March 2020	All Syrian who crossed the Syrian boarders with Lebanon illegally will go to quarantine for 14 days after general health check by the related authorities.	https://sana.sy/?p=1129025
25 March 2020	CPR publish its first report in assessing the capacity of health facilities in Syria in response to CORONA outbreak	CRP_covid_19_in_Syria_policy_memo_publ
24 March 2020	The government announce a curfew starting 25 March starting 06:00 PM and finishing at 06:00 AM on daily basis.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1127969 ..\Tracking Corona\CRP_covid_19_in_Syria_policy_memo_published.pdf
23 March 2020	PM office issue new decision to stop all public and private transportation between governorates and inside governorates after 08:00PM Public sectors, unions and private sectors should provide transportation to the vital sectors which has activities not included in the curfew.	http://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/15982/-مجلس-الوزراء-ايقاف-وسائل-النقل-الجماعي-العام-والخاص-داخل-المحافظات-وبينها-في-إطار-التصدي-لكورونا
22 March 2020	MoH announce first coronavirus case	https://sana.sy/?p=1127164
22 March 2020	Central bank allows banks to close part of their branches in all governorates conditional on keeping a minimum number of two branches per governorate.	http://www.syriandays.com/index.php?page=show_det&id=61615

		Central Bank_Syria.pdf
22 March 2020	The president issued a legislative decree granting general amnesty for crimes committed before Sunday in an effort to combat the Corona virus	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1126865
21 March 2020	Boarders closure with neighboring countries (except for transit and imported/exported goods) starting 23 March.	http://www.sana.sy/?p=1127182
21 March 2020	Suspending all activities in ministries and government institutions which stopping its activities will not affect the response to Coronavirus outbreak.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1126464
17 March 2020	Restaurants, Gyms, cinemas, clubs, public events halls, parks, etc. are closed.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1126464
15 March 2020	Closing schools, universities and teaching institutes.	https://syria.news/0650f0b9-13032012.html
15 March 2020	Reduce the capacity administrative governmental institutions to 40% and working over shifts for staff.	https://syria.news/0650f0b9-13032012.html
15 March 2020	Central bank reduces working hours in all banks and all branches to become from 09:00 am till 02:00 pm.	https://www.alalamtv.net/news/4796836/
15 March 2020	Starting 17 March, all courts and judicial departments are closed until 02 April 2020.	https://sana.sy/?p=1123185
15 March 2020	All visits to all prisons and its branches are suspended for one month.	https://www.sana.sy/?p=1123865

Annex 2: Key food items' price evolution June 2019 to June 2020

Commodity	Region	Jun 2019 price	Oct 2019 price	Price change (4M %)	Mar 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	Apr 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	May 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	Jun 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	Price change (1Y %)
Apples (kg)	National	286	340	19%	763	125%	902	18%	1,179	31%	1,830	55%	539%
	NES	336	418	24%	744	78%	761	2%	1,177	55%	1,904	62%	466%
	NWS	300	329	10%	792	141%	1,004	27%	1,342	34%	1,967	47%	556%
	XB	265	305	15%	563	85%	591	5%	741	25%	1,391	88%	426%
	Coastal	350	463	32%	841	82%	1,081	29%	1,388	28%	1,778	28%	408%
	Middle	287	320	11%	825	157%	963	17%	1,243	29%	1,930	55%	571%
	South	229	311	36%	702	126%	925	32%	1,150	24%	1,785	55%	678%
Bananas (kg)	National	805	975	21%	908	-7%	1,164	28%	1,496	29%	2,732	83%	239%
	NES	717	851	19%	1,124	32%	1,311	17%	1,614	23%	2,288	42%	219%
	NWS	800	1,042	30%	933	-10%	1,177	26%	1,522	29%	1,979	30%	147%
	XB	478	593	24%	764	29%	831	9%	1,344	62%	2,202	64%	361%
	Coastal	663	819	24%	925	13%	1,294	40%	1,759	36%	3,231	84%	388%
	Middle	916	944	3%	875	-7%	1,162	33%	1,446	24%	2,873	99%	214%
	South	938	1,303	39%	875	-33%	1,199	37%	1,503	25%	2,934	95%	213%
White beans (kg)	National	691	759	10%	1,523	101%	1,667	9%	1,850	11%	2,369	28%	243%
	NES	663	871	32%	1,560	79%	1,665	7%	1,923	15%	2,375	24%	258%
	NWS	813	692	-15%	1,728	150%	1,730	0%	1,899	10%	2,408	27%	196%
	XB	295	373	26%	644	73%	845	31%	1,170	38%	1,426	22%	384%
	Coastal	800	925	16%	1,600	73%	1,731	8%	1,838	6%	2,497	36%	212%
	Middle	842	788	-6%	1,621	106%	1,847	14%	2,035	10%	2,651	30%	215%
	South	665	766	15%	1,503	96%	1,680	12%	1,748	4%	2,187	25%	229%
White cheese (kg)	National	1,161	1,399	21%	1,716	23%	1,838	7%	2,002	9%	2,562	28%	121%
	NES	1,153	1,610	40%	2,058	28%	1,881	-9%	2,021	7%	2,500	24%	117%
	NWS	1,363	1,667	22%	1,645	-1%	1,891	15%	2,299	22%	2,952	28%	117%
	XB	1,145	1,407	23%	1,738	24%	1,768	2%	1,910	8%	2,458	29%	115%
	Coastal	1,319	1,675	27%	2,125	27%	2,731	29%	2,931	7%	3,538	21%	168%
	Middle	1,232	1,381	12%	1,591	15%	1,763	11%	1,892	7%	2,379	26%	93%
	South	981	1,134	16%	1,615	42%	1,680	4%	1,848	10%	2,561	39%	161%
Whole cleaned chicken (kg)	National	1,132	1,062	-6%	2,033	91%	1,935	-5%	1,915	-1%	2,342	22%	107%
	NES	1,179	1,388	18%	2,117	52%	1,768	-16%	1,854	5%	2,778	50%	136%
	NWS	1,138	917	-19%	2,045	123%	1,661	-19%	1,500	-10%	1,835	22%	61%
	XB	854	861	1%	1,816	111%	1,481	-18%	1,697	15%	2,401	41%	181%
	Coastal	1,013	1,238	22%	2,219	79%	1,963	-12%	1,744	-11%	2,072	19%	105%
	Middle	1,270	1,051	-17%	2,107	100%	2,203	5%	2,202	0%	2,338	6%	84%
	South	1,121	951	-15%	1,856	95%	1,805	-3%	1,680	-7%	2,324	38%	107%
Chickpeas (kg)	National	524	472	-10%	629	33%	726	15%	789	9%	1,360	72%	160%
	NES	514	552	7%	708	28%	771	9%	953	24%	1,421	49%	177%
	NWS	513	433	-15%	921	113%	888	-4%	566	-36%	900	59%	76%
	XB	411	416	1%	444	7%	476	7%	583	22%	745	28%	81%
	Coastal	444	459	4%	647	41%	788	22%	1,069	36%	1,291	21%	191%
	Middle	659	498	-24%	669	34%	780	17%	827	6%	1,721	108%	161%
	South	476	409	-14%	464	13%	613	32%	639	4%	987	54%	107%
Tomatoes (kg)	National	274	170	-38%	478	182%	696	46%	686	-1%	415	-40%	51%
	NES	264	214	-19%	586	173%	722	23%	750	4%	464	-38%	75%
	NWS	169	133	-21%	384	190%	633	65%	553	-13%	254	-54%	50%
	XB	357	212	-41%	499	136%	607	22%	687	13%	717	4%	101%
	Coastal	269	256	-5%	466	82%	775	66%	660	-15%	375	-43%	40%
	Middle	279	163	-42%	442	171%	701	59%	731	4%	400	-45%	44%
	South	264	112	-57%	502	348%	709	41%	612	-14%	332	-46%	26%
Bulgur (kg)	National	318	348	9%	648	86%	767	18%	845	10%	1,135	34%	256%
	NES	340	376	11%	645	71%	702	9%	883	26%	1,223	39%	259%
	NWS	356	341	-4%	600	76%	728	21%	789	8%	1,028	30%	189%
	XB	255	282	11%	450	59%	517	15%	672	30%	967	44%	279%
	Coastal	341	378	11%	675	79%	816	21%	902	10%	1,106	23%	225%
	Middle	307	355	16%	703	98%	848	21%	888	5%	1,183	33%	285%
	South	326	337	3%	641	90%	763	19%	823	8%	1,115	36%	242%
Vegetable Oil (L)	National	624	691	11%	1,345	94%	1,417	5%	1,598	13%	2,911	82%	366%
	NES	593	612	3%	1,194	95%	1,280	7%	1,676	31%	2,623	56%	342%
	NWS	613	683	12%	1,272	86%	1,472	16%	1,679	14%	3,098	85%	406%
	XB	488	578	18%	1,038	80%	1,131	9%	1,370	21%	2,185	59%	348%
	Coastal	650	691	6%	1,400	103%	1,485	6%	1,666	12%	2,811	69%	332%
	Middle	642	706	10%	1,306	85%	1,459	12%	1,583	9%	3,053	93%	375%
	South	678	757	12%	1,563	106%	1,515	-3%	1,646	9%	3,130	90%	361%
Sugar (kg)	National	294	343	16%	627	83%	636	1%	704	11%	1,325	88%	350%
	NES	338	397	18%	704	77%	762	8%	926	21%	1,585	71%	370%
	NWS	281	319	13%	602	89%	580	-4%	616	6%	1,194	94%	324%
	XB	297	362	22%	667	84%	721	8%	867	20%	1,479	71%	398%
	Coastal	289	331	15%	594	79%	593	0%	638	8%	1,263	98%	337%
	Middle	268	336	25%	590	75%	613	4%	650	6%	1,264	95%	371%
	South	300	325	9%	578	78%	598	3%	648	8%	1,278	97%	326%
Red split lentils (kg)	National	395	378	-4%	665	76%	911	37%	1,019	12%	1,258	24%	219%
	NES	458	418	-9%	637	52%	809	27%	1,032	28%	1,373	33%	199%
	NWS	338	333	-1%	651	95%	818	26%	917	12%	1,090	19%	223%
	XB	365	363	0%	603	66%	904	50%	1,168	29%	1,454	24%	299%
	Coastal	425	488	15%	691	42%	997	44%	1,100	10%	1,353	23%	218%
	Middle	383	372	-3%	715	92%	1,016	42%	1,034	2%	1,213	17%	216%
	South	386	359	-7%	603	68%	763	27%	973	27%	1,168	20%	202%

Commodity	Region	Jun 2019 price	Oct 2019 price	Price change (4M %)	Mar 2020 price	Price change (5M %)	Apr 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	May 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	Jun 2020 price	Price change (1M %)	Price change (1Y %)
Dates (kg)	National	947	1,008	6%	1,690	68%	1,897	12%	2,243	18%	2,936	31%	210%
	NES	861	894	4%	1,251	40%	1,411	13%	2,213	57%	2,618	18%	204%
	NWS	925	908	-2%	1,639	80%	2,024	23%	2,294	13%	2,908	27%	214%
	XB	848	907	7%	1,115	23%	1,519	36%	1,927	27%	2,704	40%	219%
	Coastal	1,000	1,025	3%	2,156	110%	2,556	19%	2,819	10%	4,200	49%	320%
	Middle	993	1,045	5%	1,796	72%	1,932	8%	2,209	14%	2,764	25%	179%
	South	977	1,071	10%	1,872	75%	2,036	9%	2,279	12%	3,170	39%	225%
Beef (kg)	National	4,327	4,527	5%	7,160	58%	7,432	4%	8,357	12%	10,358	24%	139%
	NES	3,808	4,273	12%	6,587	54%	6,947	5%	7,667	10%	9,037	18%	137%
	NWS	5,225	5,300	1%	7,521	42%	8,500	13%	9,389	10%	12,188	30%	133%
	XB	2,967	3,763	27%	5,483	46%	6,004	9%	7,576	26%	10,935	44%	269%
	Coastal	5,000	4,975	-1%	8,313	67%	8,656	4%	9,484	10%	11,563	22%	131%
	Middle	4,758	4,583	-4%	7,447	62%	7,625	2%	8,432	11%	10,001	19%	110%
	South	4,400	4,680	6%	7,059	51%	7,486	6%	8,606	15%	11,176	30%	154%
Yogurt (kg)	National	281	320	14%	427	33%	421	-1%	442	5%	548	24%	96%
	NES	307	399	30%	477	20%	451	-5%	471	5%	545	16%	77%
	NWS	388	326	-16%	506	55%	468	-8%	514	10%	836	63%	116%
	XB	292	320	9%	427	33%	419	-2%	453	8%	653	44%	123%
	Coastal	316	331	5%	488	47%	450	-8%	506	13%	694	37%	120%
	Middle	278	334	20%	419	25%	433	3%	445	3%	479	7%	72%
	South	239	246	3%	365	48%	356	-2%	366	3%	494	35%	107%
Eggs (30 pieces)	National	1,146	1,143	0%	1,976	73%	2,309	17%	2,085	-10%	2,399	15%	109%
	NES	1,228	1,289	5%	2,026	57%	2,454	21%	2,317	-6%	2,303	-1%	88%
	NWS	988	1,050	6%	2,071	97%	2,311	12%	2,059	-11%	2,466	20%	150%
	XB	978	952	-3%	1,569	65%	1,441	-8%	1,276	-11%	1,930	51%	97%
	Coastal	1,294	1,206	-7%	2,150	78%	2,456	14%	2,332	-5%	2,616	12%	102%
	Middle	1,199	1,149	-4%	2,027	76%	2,448	21%	2,208	-10%	2,509	14%	109%
	South	1,070	1,134	6%	1,919	69%	2,315	21%	2,037	-12%	2,374	17%	122%
Livestock (head)	National	113,772	134,493	18%	233,905	74%	253,149	8%	278,260	10%	348,649	25%	206%
	NES	86,389	109,167	26%	226,250	107%	240,536	6%	255,238	6%	289,821	14%	235%
	NWS	105,625	122,500	16%	198,313	62%	231,120	17%	248,469	8%	278,490	12%	164%
	XB	89,583	133,800	49%	221,467	66%	241,875	9%	294,007	22%	434,153	48%	385%
	Coastal	137,875	151,375	10%	221,250	46%	236,875	7%	240,938	2%	315,000	31%	128%
	Middle	121,167	133,446	10%	240,792	80%	270,542	12%	290,814	7%	380,623	31%	214%
	South	128,083	151,515	18%	246,500	63%	244,125	-1%	281,076	15%	310,868	11%	143%
Potatoes (kg)	National	278	260	-6%	555	113%	537	-3%	456	-15%	381	-16%	37%
	NES	259	267	3%	493	84%	535	9%	514	-4%	498	-3%	92%
	NWS	191	211	10%	532	153%	444	-17%	318	-28%	281	-12%	47%
	XB	253	215	-15%	349	62%	373	7%	309	-17%	328	6%	30%
	Coastal	394	325	-17%	622	91%	544	-13%	488	-10%	430	-12%	9%
	Middle	290	267	-8%	628	136%	598	-5%	517	-14%	377	-27%	30%
	South	250	258	3%	520	102%	527	1%	408	-23%	364	-11%	46%
Eggplants (kg)	National	278	151	-45%	684	352%	537	-21%	510	-5%	452	-11%	63%
	NES	265	181	-32%	691	282%	612	-11%	574	-6%	533	-7%	101%
	NWS	200	117	-42%	666	470%	378	-43%	389	3%	238	-39%	19%
	XB	279	102	-63%	773	657%	648	-16%	647	0%	825	28%	196%
	Coastal	344	231	-33%	650	181%	586	-10%	506	-14%	450	-11%	31%
	Middle	263	156	-41%	671	331%	532	-21%	528	-1%	435	-18%	65%
	South	290	126	-57%	684	444%	490	-28%	409	-17%	325	-20%	12%
Wheat Flour (kg)	National	285	285	0%	523	83%	604	15%	644	7%	939	46%	230%
	NES	291	310	6%	568	83%	611	8%	727	19%	995	37%	242%
	NWS	309	297	-4%	428	44%	552	29%	568	3%	886	56%	186%
	XB	178	211	18%	431	104%	498	15%	574	15%	796	39%	346%
	Coastal	334	319	-5%	494	55%	602	22%	649	8%	859	33%	157%
	Middle	272	280	3%	582	108%	605	4%	617	2%	935	52%	243%
	South	294	280	-5%	482	72%	666	38%	702	5%	1,031	47%	250%
Egyptian white rice (kg)	National	404	416	3%	882	112%	1,005	14%	1,018	1%	1,423	40%	252%
	NES	547	583	7%	850	46%	868	2%	1,073	24%	1,559	45%	185%
	NWS	438	394	-10%	848	115%	860	1%	951	11%	1,293	36%	195%
	XB	377	401	6%	637	59%	691	8%	811	17%	1,344	66%	256%
	Coastal	519	531	2%	963	81%	925	-4%	947	2%	1,216	28%	134%
	Middle	485	468	-4%	985	111%	1,118	14%	1,075	-4%	1,365	27%	182%
	South	509	514	1%	947	84%	1,092	15%	1,180	8%	1,610	36%	217%
Public bread (1.3 kg)	National	56	47	-16%	57	22%	61	7%	63	3%	60	-5%	7%
	NES	56	51	-9%	71	39%	81	14%	83	2%	78	-6%	40%
	NWS	72	53	-27%	56	7%	53	-5%	60	13%	51	-16%	-29%
	XB	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Coastal	50	50	0%	50	0%	66	32%	81	22%	76	-5%	53%
	Middle	50	42	-17%	53	27%	55	4%	55	0%	54	-2%	8%
	South	61	54	-11%	58	7%	60	3%	60	0%	59	-1%	-3%
Commercial bread (1.3 kg)	National	126	108	-14%	223	106%	218	-2%	194	-11%	264	36%	109%
	NES	139	109	-22%	139	27%	113	-19%	113	0%	116	3%	-16%
	NWS	213	173	-18%	174	0%	179	3%	498	178%	217	-56%	2%
	XB	238	279	17%	512	84%	589	15%	719	22%	1,273	77%	436%
	Coastal	84	71	-16%	155	119%	160	3%	166	4%	183	10%	117%
	Middle	85	72	-16%	220	207%	228	4%	93	-59%	98	6%	15%
	South	109	99	-10%	197	100%	103	-48%	101	-2%	103	3%	-5%

Annex 3: WFP Syria Supply Chain's Response to COVID-19 logistical and procurement problems

- **Contingency Planning and Prepositioning**:
  - **Prepositioned stock**:
    - Detailed scenario analysis was done to address the Supply Chain impact due to COVID-19 including for the potential nation-wide lockdowns. WFP Syria Supply Chain was well-adapted with available prepositioned stock enough to cover for two months (2.2 months) requirements at the end of February 2020 which allowed the Country Office to mitigate the initial impact of COVID-19.
  - **Strengthened Supply Chain planning**:
    - As trade disruption was foreseen in February with the delays in shipment (average two weeks' delay in shipment arrival), the risk mitigation measures through adjustment of rations were put in place in March 2020 to overcome the initial disruption through adjusting the food rations.
    - While the 'first-wave' of global food supply chain challenge was addressed successfully through the pre-existing contingency measures in place, continued advocacy for funding to allow for the prepositioning for contingency stock is critical for the stable Supply Chain operation. Planning discussion is ongoing especially given the current socio-economic condition in Syria, where local suppliers financial capacity has been hard-hit with their access to the foreign currency due to the sanction.
  - **Advocacy:**
    - Continued and regular contingency planning is essential in sustaining the supply chain to mitigate the risk of 'second-wave' COVID impact, as the pandemic continues to affect major food exporters – such as the numbers continue to rise in main food exporting countries, such as Russia, India, and US.[46]
    - Continue to work with MOFA on advocacy to simplify the documentation legalization process at suppliers' level.
    - Impact of sanctions for the food security in Syria is significant as local suppliers struggle to supply WFP requirements – therefore an alternative sourcing strategy is key in addressing the challenge.

- **Workforce:**
  - **Workers Health and Safety:**
    - Protect workers' health and safety is critical to the successful continuation of the operation. To ensure the continued workforce a guideline was issued by 20th March, in line with WHO issued guidelines, shared with all the service providers working with WFP Syria. Measures such as access control (also for surveillance purposes) social distancing, provision of masks were put in place to ensure operational continuity.
    - Initial investments were made for the warehouse operations to improve the hygiene measures in place as well as extension of the existing contract for stability; further reviews are being done for any additional longer-term improvements to sustain COVID-19 compliant operation.
  - **Continued revision on contingency planning for the business continuity:**
    - Alternative working modalities were encouraged throughout WFP, and it will be continued, and further strengthened with IT support to ensure business continuity.

- **Logistics:**
  - **Ensuring Business continuity:**
    - Key transporters were identified, and through our warehouse network.
    - Investment on business continuity and alternative planning is required in case of any significant breakout in Syria.
  - **Fuel Supply Chain:**
    - As survey indicated, to prepare for the potential shortage in fuel or for the price increase. Further review of fuel supply chain to be conducted.

- **Transformation:**
  - **Alternate delivery model:**
    - In close collaboration with the local retail sector, alternate delivery models are being developed to diversify and increase WFP's response capacity.

[46] https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/new-cases

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