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Highlights

The June 2022 standard reference food basket has increased by 36 percent since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, up 45 percent since January 2022, and nearly double compared to June 2021, reaching SYP 318,726 (USD 113.26 at the official exchange rate of SYP 2,814/USD).

FAO Food Price Index continued to decrease for the third consecutive month. It averaged 154.2 points in June 2022, down 3.7 points from May 2022 though still 23.1 percent above its value a year ago. The decrease is largely on account of reduced prices for vegetable oil, cereals and sugar.

The Minimum Expenditure Basket decreased by six percent m-o-m, largely driven by decreases in nominal prices of animal protein, fruits and tubers. However, the June 2022 MEB remains 19 percent higher than at the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine and 51 percent higher since September 2021.

The conflict in Ukraine continues to impact global economies through supply shocks to energy and food prices. The increased energy costs have raised shipping costs for maritime transport sectors, with the transportation of dry bulk goods increasing by 60 percent between February and May 2022.

The official exchange rate remained at SYP 2,814/USD since the April 2022 devaluation while the June 2022 informal exchange rate stood at SYP 3,977/USD.

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Standard Food Basket

The first half of 2022 has seen the national average price of the standard reference food basket¹ increase by 45 percent, reaching SYP 318,726 as of June 2022 (Figure 1). Despite the basket being relatively stable for three consecutive months, the national average remained high — 36 percent higher than February 2022 (start of the Ukraine crisis) and nearly double compared to the same time last year. All commodities in the basket increased between 50 percent to 128 percent, year-on-year (y-o-y), including substitute commodities, which denotes limited options for households in switching to alternatives.

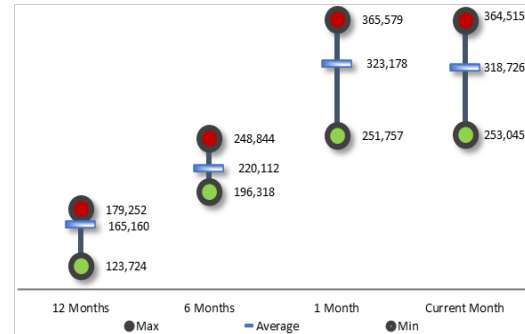
At governorate level, the month-on-month (m-o-m) price changes for the basket were marginal for all areas except Deir-ez-Zor where prices decreased by five percent. In nominal terms, Tartous had the highest price of the reference food basket at SYP 364,515 followed by Rural Damascus at SYP 335,481 while the lowest price at SYP 296,109 was observed in Aleppo. Since the Ukrainian crisis, the price of the reference food basket increased between 16 percent to 52 percent, with As-Sweida having the highest increase and Ar-Raqqa the lowest. Year-on-year, the price of the food basket has nearly doubled in all governorates except for Ar-Raqqa (up 57 percent), Deir-ez-Zor (up 75 percent), Aleppo (up 83 percent) and Idleb (up 85 percent).

Furthermore, the gap between the highest and lowest average food basket prices across the governorates has significantly increased in the last four months. The gap has more than doubled compared to six months ago and over the last 12 months (Chart 1). The increase in the gap, in nominal terms, underpins some level of disparities in market conditions being faced by households across governorates.

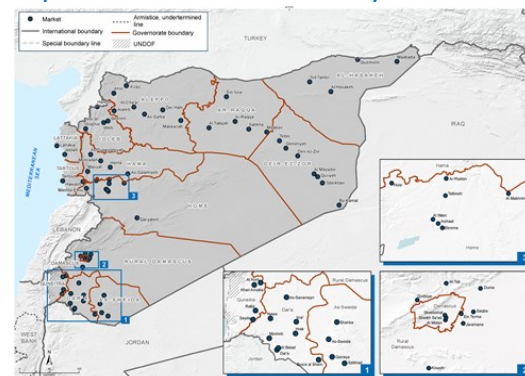
Figure 1: Food basket cost and changes, SYP

Governorate	Price June 2022	One month change	Six months changes	12 months changes
Aleppo	SYP 296,109	-1%	36%	83%
Damascus	SYP 330,058	-3%	54%	90%
Dar'a	SYP 359,706	1%	55%	114%
Deir-ez-Zor	SYP 261,008	-5%	33%	75%
Hama	SYP 326,819	-1%	52%	96%
Al-Hasakeh	SYP 253,045	1%	28%	103%
Homs	SYP 330,497	2%	56%	102%
Idleb	SYP 331,616	0%	33%	85%
Lattakia	SYP 345,975	1%	55%	96%
Ar-Raqqa	SYP 269,443	-1%	25%	57%
Rural Damascus	SYP 335,481	-3%	56%	88%
As-Sweida	SYP 342,257	-2%	61%	109%
Tartous	SYP 364,515	0%	48%	120%
Quneitra	SYP 332,562	-1%	43%	89%
Average	SYP 318,726	-1%	45%	93%

Chart 1: National min., max. and avg. food basket cost, SYP



Map 1: Location of markets monitored by WFP



1. The standard food basket is a group of essential food commodities. In Syria, the food basket is set at a group of dry goods providing 2,060 kcal a day for a family of five during a month. The basket includes 37 kg bread, 19 kg rice, 19 kg lentils, 5 kg of sugar, and 7 liters of vegetable oil.

Impact of the Ukrainian crisis on global food prices

In June 2022, the global inflation rates remained at record levels (see page 3 of this report) manifested through soaring global food prices. The surge, among other reasons, is on account of a battered global food system weakened by COVID-19, climate change and an energy shock. The Ukrainian crisis is an added challenge that has brought supply shocks to energy and food prices as Russia and Ukraine are key producers of major commodities, especially, oil, gas and wheat.

The Russian Federation is a key oil and gas exporter. However, with trade restrictions, the cost of oil and gas has increased as alternative sources are called upon from relatively distant locations. For instance, the average price of one barrel of Brent crude oil increased by eight percent, m-o-m, to USD 122.71 in June 2022². The current price is the highest since 2008. Increased energy costs have also raised shipping costs for all maritime transport sectors³. Between February 2022 and May 2022, the price paid for transporting dry bulk goods such as grains increased by nearly 60 percent. As such the soaring shipping costs do reflect the current increases in food prices.

Despite the drop in international wheat prices in June 2022, after reaching record levels in the previous month, current prices remain well above their values a year earlier. The June decline provides some temporary relief. Within the region, export prices of milling wheat increased by five percent during the reference period in the Russian Federation amid the appreciation of the Russian rouble⁴. While in Ukraine, the wholesale prices of milling wheat seasonally declined by around 12 percent than a year earlier.

Earlier this year, the Government of Syria decided to cut some 600,000 people from the national subsidy program for essential commodities. Furthermore, in March 2022, Syria's government announced two packages of decisions in anticipation of fiscal and supply chain disruptions from the crisis in Ukraine, which included restrictions on imports, a two months export ban for fresh produce and animal products as well as release of domestic stocks of commodities like flour, fuel, oil, rice and potatoes onto local markets. The impact of the Ukrainian crisis and the mitigation measures adopted by Syria are likely to weigh on Syrians' purchasing power (i.e.: during June 2022, the minimum wage of 92,970 SYP could only afford 29 percent of one WFP reference food basket).

Impact on prices in Syria

June 2022 marks nearly five months since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis. The ongoing crisis continued to fuel hikes in global commodity prices, inflation as well as freight costs⁵. High import dependency (wheat flour, bulgur, rice, cooking oil, sugar and petrol among other items) aggravated by poor performing agriculture seasons and other economic factors render Syria more susceptible to high global prices.

WFP's standard reference food basket has increased by 36 percent since the onset of the crisis with much of the increase coming soon after the start of the crisis (Chart 2). For instance, the basket increased by 24 percent between February 2022 and March 2022. Specifically, notable increases since February 2022 (start of the Ukrainian crisis) were observed for vegetable oil (up 55 percent), wheat flour (up 38 percent), sugar (up 32 percent) and rice (up 23 percent).

Despite relatively stable national average price of the standard reference food basket prices in the last three months, hovering around SYP 320,000, the current prices elevated at nearly double the June 2021 levels.

Looking ahead, the deal to open a safe 'trade corridor' in the conflict zone could ease global supply of grains and hopefully ease pressure on food prices in the coming months.

Chart 2: National weekly average food basket cost between Jan 2022 week 1 and June 2022 week 4, SYP



Source: WFP

2. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262861/uk-brent-crude-oil-monthly-price-development/>

3. UNCTAD, The War in Ukraine and its effects on Maritime trade logistics, June 2022 | 4. <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>; 5. "Freight Rate Index / Freightos Baltic Container Index"

Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)

MEB Trend

In June 2022, the national average MEB (HCT Cash Working Group) for a household of five members decreased for the second consecutive month, recorded at SYP 780,696 (USD 279). The MEB decreased by six percent m-o-m, largely driven by decreases in nominal prices of animal protein, fruits and tubers. However, the June 2022 MEB remained 19 percent higher since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine and 51 percent higher than in September 2021 (Chart 3).

Vegetable oil allocations occupy around 16 percent of the total MEB, while tomatoes, cooking gas and eggplants account for six percent of the total MEB each. Compared to May 2022, notable decreases were observed for tomatoes (down 52 percent), potatoes (down 33 percent) eggplants (down 21 percent), onions (down 11 percent) and meat (down 11 percent). The decrease in the price of vegetables could be attributed to arrival of new summer harvests coupled with the effect of export restrictions on fresh produce issued earlier in the year. While increases m-o-m were observed for apples (19 percent).

Worldwide food prices, freight costs and overall inflation trends

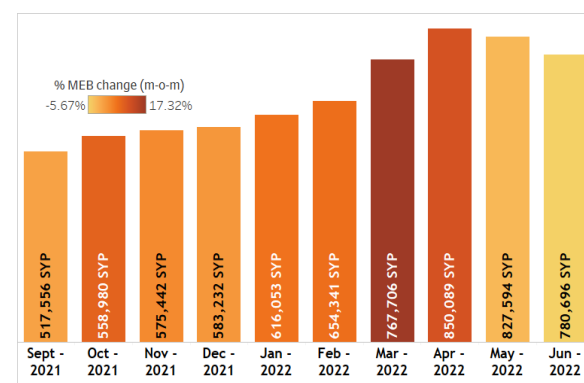
The June 2022 FAO Food Price Index⁶ (a measure tracking monthly change in international prices of a basket of commonly traded commodities), continued to decrease for the third consecutive month. It averaged 154.2 points, down 3.7 points from May 2022 (Chart 4). The decrease is largely on account of reduced prices for vegetable oil, cereals and sugar.

The Cereal price index declined to 166.3 points in June, down 7.2 points from the previous month, however, it remained 27.6 percent above values from 2021. The decline is driven by seasonal availability from new harvest, improved crop conditions and slower import demand at this time of the year. Specifically, wheat prices fell by nearly six percent in June (but still up 48.5 percent y-o-y). And among coarse grains, maize and barley prices fell in June by almost four percent and six percent, respectively, in tandem with lower wheat quotations. While Oil Index averaged 211.8 points in June, a decrease of nearly eight percent m-o-m driven by lower prices across palm, sunflower, soy and rapeseed oils.

The June 2022 IGC Grains and Oilseed Freight Index (GOFI)⁷ decreased by eight percent compared to the previous month, the first decline since the start of the Ukrainian crisis. However it is still 20 percent higher compared to February 2022. Increases in freight costs have a direct bearing on soaring food prices for import dependent countries. Chart 6 shows m-o-m price index in freight costs for the routes that commonly feed Türkiye and Egypt (main exporters to countries in the region including Syria).

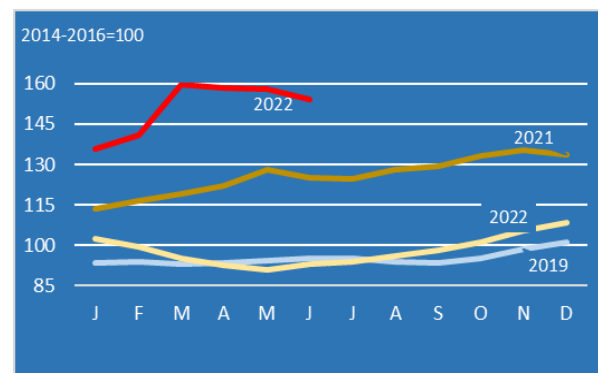
Annual inflation rates remained high within the region and globally. The June 2022 annual inflation rates⁸ for Iran stood at 52.5 percent, a 13.4 percentage points increase m-o-m; Türkiye and Lebanon had five percentage points increases (78.62 percent and 211 percent respectively). Egypt and Iraq had minor changes over the period. The United States and Euro area had a 0.5 percentage point increase at 9.1 percent and 8.6 percent respectively. Ukraine's annual inflation was observed at 21.5 percent, an increase of 3.5 percentage points m-o-m while Russia's rate decreased by 1.2 percentage points to 15.9 percent.

Chart 3: MEB Trend in Syria (HCT), SYP



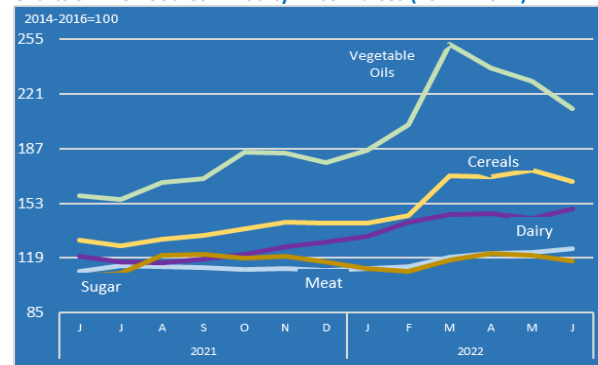
Source: Damascus Cash Working Group

Charts 4 FAO Food Price Index (2019 –2022)



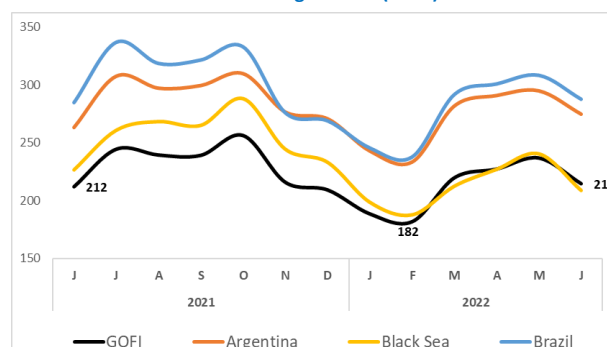
Source: FAO

Charts 5. FAO Food Commodity Price Indices (2021 –2022)



Source: FAO

Chart 6: Grain and Oilseeds Freight index (GOFI) m-o-m



Source: IGC GOFI

6. <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

7. "Freight Rate Index / Freightos Baltic Container Index"

8. Trading Economics "Inflation Rate"

Retail prices for key commodities

Rice

The June 2022 national average retail price of Egyptian white rice increased by three percent compared to the previous month recorded at SYP 3,686/kg. The current price is 27 percent higher than six months ago and 49 percent above its level a year earlier. This is reflective of the global rice price trends measured by the FAO All Rice Price Index (2014-2016=100) whose June 2022 value of 110.8 points is 1.4 percent higher m-o-m and a 2.5 percentage points higher than a year earlier.

At regional level, the Coastal area continues to record the highest monthly average price of Egyptian white rice observed at SYP 4,242/kg as of June 2022, same level as the previous month but a 10 percent decline compared April 2022. Over the last 12 months, percentage increases ranged from 46 percent to 71 percent, with the middle and southern regions on the lower end while the Coastal region still on the higher end of the spectrum.

Bulgur

Price of bulgur exhibited some mild changes compared to the previous two months at national level with the June price at SYP 5,160/kg, however, the current price was more than twofold that of June 2021. Over the last 12 months, bulgur prices doubled in all regions and reached up to 189 percent increase in the Coastal region. Bulgur is an essential component of main Syrian dishes and has experienced the highest price increase among the monitored staple food commodities.

Bread*

The national average price of subsidized bread slowed down in the last two months, reaching SYP 259/bundle as of June 2022. However, the current average price remained nearly double compared to a year ago, reflecting currency loss coupled with wheat supply chain disruptions likely to be further impacted by current crisis in Ukraine.

An uptick in the national average price of commercial bread was observed during the reference period at SYP 3,198/bundle, two percent more than the previous month. The regional variations range from minus two percent to six percent m-o-m, Northeast being the lowest and XB region being the highest. Over the last 12 months, the national average of commercial bread has increased by 81 percent largely driven by double increases in the Northeast and Coastal regions. Locally, May/June marks the start of the wheat harvest season, as such, the new produce may bring some temporary relief in the key growing areas.

Sugar

The June 2022 national average retail price of sugar, a key ingredient in Syrian diets, increased by five percent (m-o-m) reaching SYP 4,072. The middle and north-western regions recorded the highest monthly increase at 12 percent. The current price is 32 percent more than February 2022 (start of the Ukrainian crisis) and double compared to same time last year. The current increase could denote some level of supply imbalances due to import restrictions amid economic challenges.

Chart 7: Retail Prices of Rice, SYP

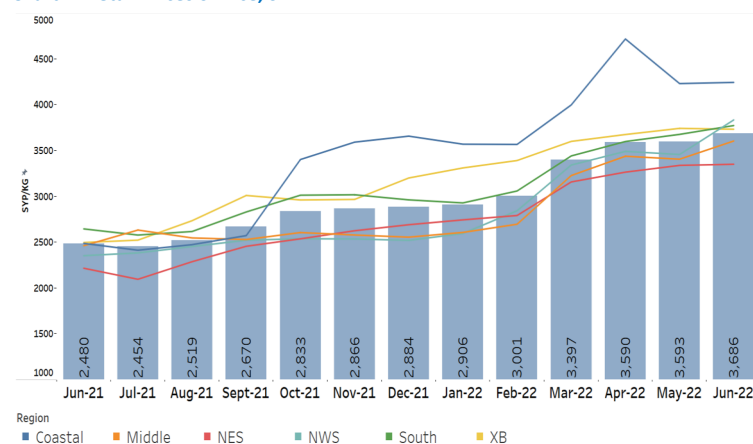


Chart 8: Retail Prices of Bulgur, SYP

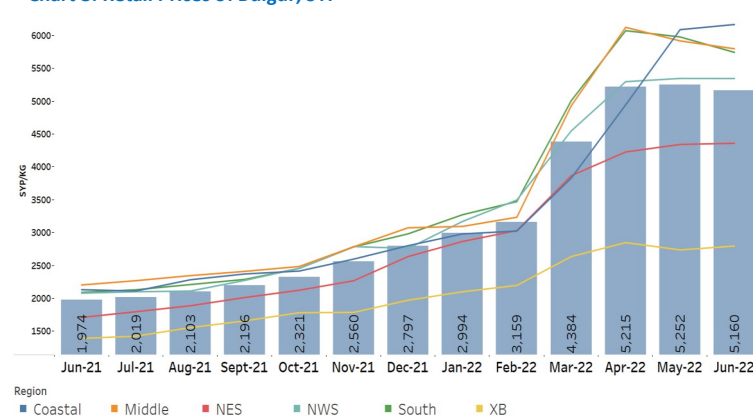


Chart 9: Retail Prices of commercial bread, SYP

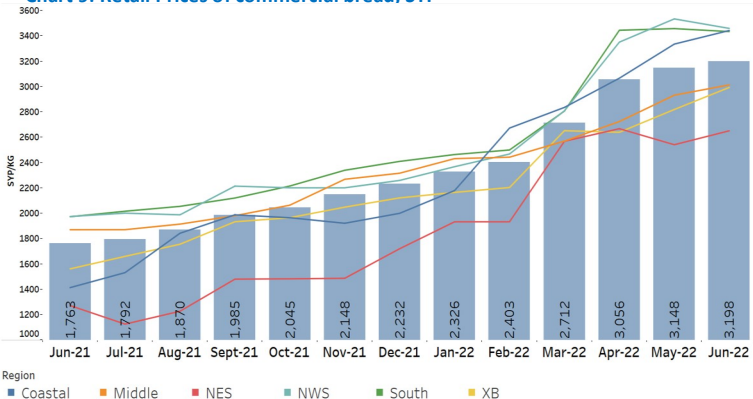
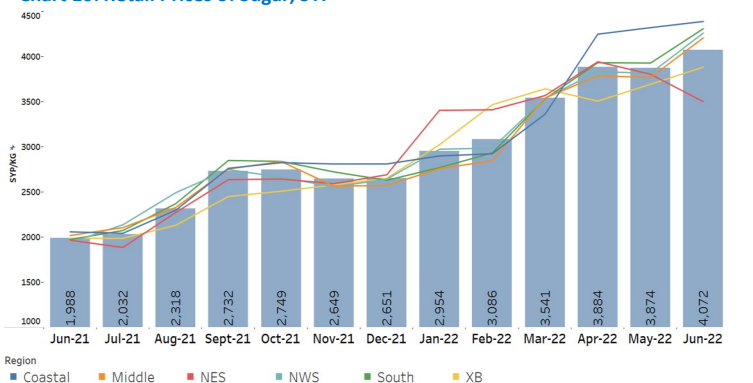


Chart 10: Retail Prices of Sugar, SYP



Source: WFP Field Offices

*Starting from March 2021, WFP-monitored commercial bread has been switched from resold public bread bundles to commercial bread sold at shops. Prices for the past year have been adjusted to include commercial bread resold from shops. Moreover, all prices have been adjusted to reflect bread bundle size of 1.1 kg instead of 1.3 kg since November 2020.

Exchange rate**

In the first half of 2022, the Syrian pound depreciated by 10 percent on the informal exchange market and 21 percent compared to a year ago, reaching an average of SYP 3,997/USD as of June 2022. The June 2022 exchange rate is slightly higher than the record high recorded in March 2022 when the SYP/USD rate depreciated by six percent m-o-m.

The March 2022 depreciation reflected relatively higher vulnerability of the Syrian pound as the Ukraine crisis began to unfold. The following month, April 2022, the Central Bank of Syria officially devalued the national currency, setting the formal exchange rate to SYP 2,814/USD (Table 1). The devaluation provided the possibility of attracting remittances, boosting exports, increasing competitiveness and bringing about control and stability on the informal exchange market.

On the other hand, the June 2022 operational UN rate was at SYP 2,800/USD, the last adjustment being made in May 2022 following the April 2022 devaluation.

Diesel

June 2022 marked the tenth consecutive month with relatively stable formal diesel prices at both national and regional level, reflective of the government fuel subsidy. The June 2022 national average price at SYP 481 per litre was 173 percent more than 12 months ago.

While for the price of informal transport diesel, the national average was recorded at SYP 4,255 (nine percent more than in the previous month). Over the 12-month period, the national average price of informal transport diesel has more than doubled (up 164 percent) with the north-west and middle regions registering as much as an 184 percent and 245 percent increase, respectively. Rising diesel costs are a major contributor to high food prices especially for food import-dependent country.

Butane gas prices

The June 2022 national average price of formal butane gas cylinder (25L) remained high but stable compared to the previous two months. The June 2022 price at SYP 10,665 per 25L refill was 161 percent more than 12 months ago. Regionally, the coastal areas registered the highest increase in formal butane gas (200 percent increase over a 12-month period) followed by the southern region (169 percent).

Similarly, the national average price of informal butane gas remained unchanged, m-o-m, recorded at SYP 85,665. However, the national average price of informal butane gas has increased by 200 percent in 12 months.

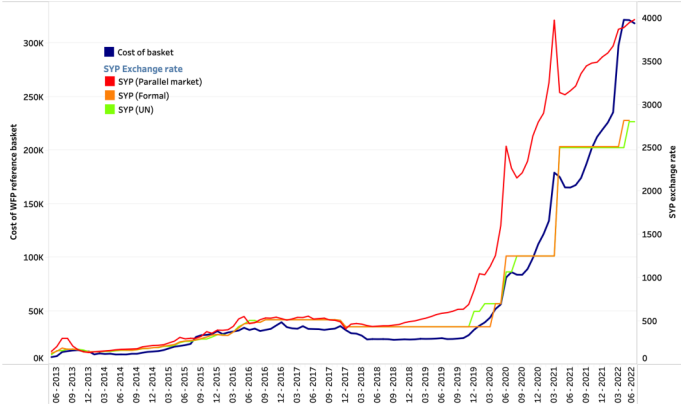
Regionally, the highest price rise was observed in the coastal area with nearly a fourfold increase in the last 12 months while the lowest, still at 65 percent, was observed in Cross-border region. Butane gas is a key energy source for cooking and heating, especially, amid power supply challenges.

Table 1: Informal market exchange rate, 1 US \$ to SYP

Governorate	Jun-22	Percent change (m-o-m)	Percent change (y-o-y)
Al Hasakeh	3,946	-1%	-22%
Aleppo	3,957	-1%	-21%
Al Hasakeh	3,946	-1%	-22%
Ar-Raqqa	3,949	-1%	-21%
As-Sweida	3,983	-1%	-20%
Damascus	4,010	-1%	-20%
Dar'a	3,983	-1%	-21%
Deir-ez-Zor	3,975	0%	-20%
Hama	3,988	-1%	-21%
Homs	3,988	-1%	-21%
Idlib	3,970	-1%	-20%
Lattakia	3,984	-1%	-21%
Quneitra	3,983	-1%	-21%
Rural Damascus	4,010	-1%	-20%
Tartous	3,985	-1%	-21%
Rukban	3,688	-2%	-19%
National average	3,977	-1%	-21%
Official rate	2,814	0%	-11%
UN operational rate	2,800	0%	-11%

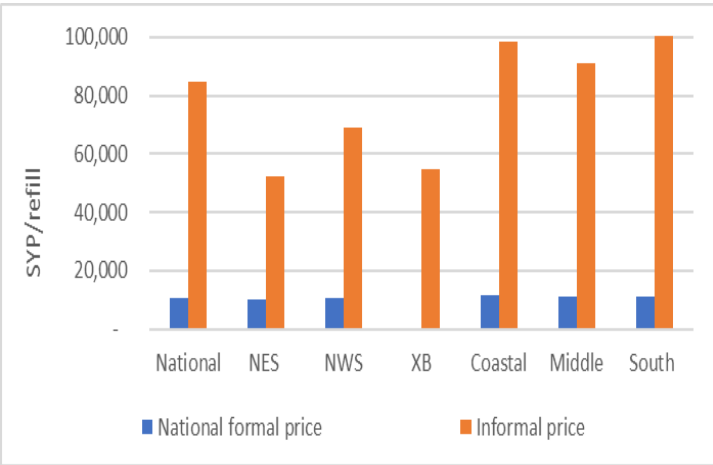
Source: WFP field offices

Chart 11: Cost of basket and currency exchange rate trends



Source: WFP

Chart 12: Formal and informal butane gas cylinder prices, SYP***



Source: WFP

**When measuring exchange rates, there are two quotations. The first is the direct quotation where the US dollar is the base of measuring the change in exchange rate against the local currency. The second one is the indirect quotation where the local currency is the base of measuring the change in the exchange rate against the US dollar. The change in the exchange rate used below reflects the indirect quotation (measuring how much has the Syrian pound improved (appreciated) or worsened (depreciated) against the US dollar).

***No formal prices have been reported in the cross-border region because there is no subsidized diesel or butane gas in the region.

Terms of Trade (ToT)⁹

ToT between wage labour and wheat flour

The national average non-skilled labour wage has remained relatively stable for three consecutive months. At the average of SYP 11,149/day, the June 2022 wage rate was 29 percent higher than six months ago and up 66 percent y-o-y (Chart 11). Notable wage variations were observed across regions during the reference period, June 2022. At SYP 17,556/day, the coastal region wage was more than twice that of northwest and nearly double the rate in the middle region.

Using terms of trade between wheat flour and wage labour as a proxy indicator of purchasing power, the TOT marginally decreased by one percent between May 2022 and June 2022, reaching 3.23 kg of wheat flour/daily wage (Chart 12). The TOT decreased even further when compared to six months ago and over the last 12 months. The national average daily wage of a non-skilled worker could buy 3.23 kg of wheat in June 2022 compared to 3.63 kg in December 2021 and 3.60 kg in June 2021. This denotes that the rate of increase in wheat prices has been much more than the rate of increase in the daily wages in last 12 months. As such the purchasing power for non-skilled labour dependent households has been shrinking. Broken down by region, the middle areas recorded an improved ToT, up 12 percent m-o-m, while the southern region TOT decreased by seven percent m-o-m. Over the last 12 months, only the coastal and northeast areas had an improved TOT for the non-skilled labour dependent household. Overall, TOT for the non-skilled labour has been eroded by nearly 50 percent in the last five years.

ToT between sheep and wheat flour

In June 2022, the national average price of a two-year old male alive sheep marginally increased by one percent to SYP 578,046/sheep. The June 2022 price was 20 percent more than six months ago and 18 percent more than the same time last year. Broken down by region, the northwest recorded the highest percentage increase in the average price of a two-year male alive sheep across Syria at 14 percent, m-o-m, while a decrease of six percent was observed in cross-border areas.

The June 2022 TOT between wheat flour and an alive two-year old remained almost the same as the previous month at 168 kg per sheep. The terms of trade have decreased by 20 percent over the last six months and by 35 percent over the last 12 months. The reduced TOT means the purchasing power for households in pastoral communities has been eroded over the last 12 months. At regional level, the north-eastern region's purchasing power has shrunk by 42 percent within 12 months, followed by the southern region at 39 percent with the lowest loss at 14 percent observed in the coastal region.

Chart 11: Daily wage for unskilled labor, SYP

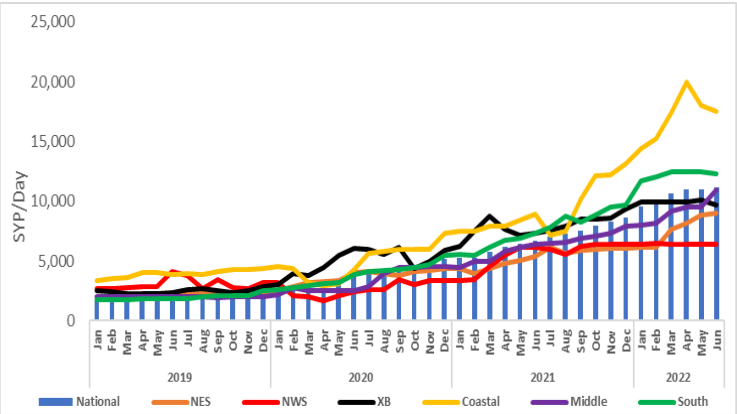


Chart 12: Terms of Trade (ToT) between wheat flour and wage rate

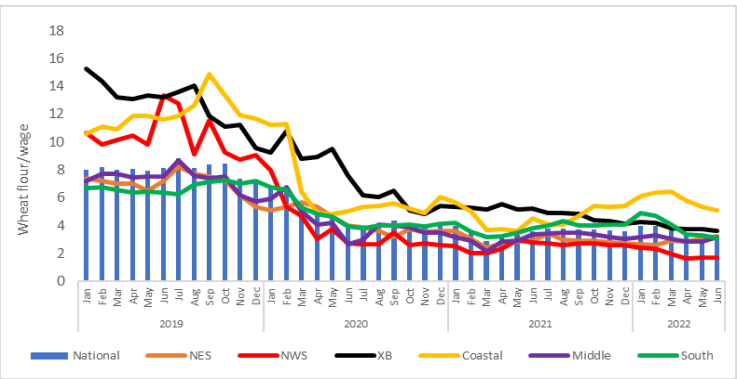


Chart 13: Price of livestock, SYP/one 2Y old sheep

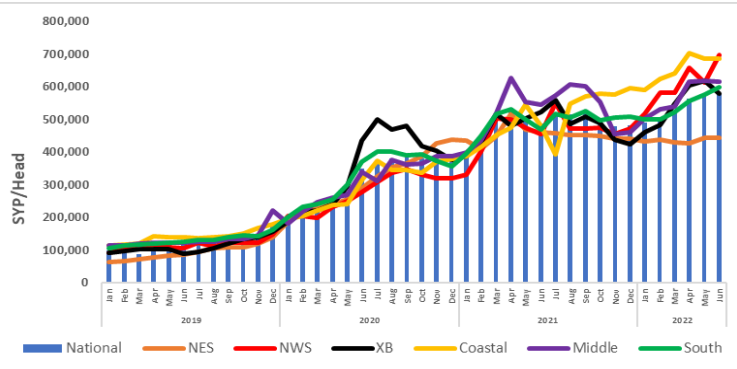
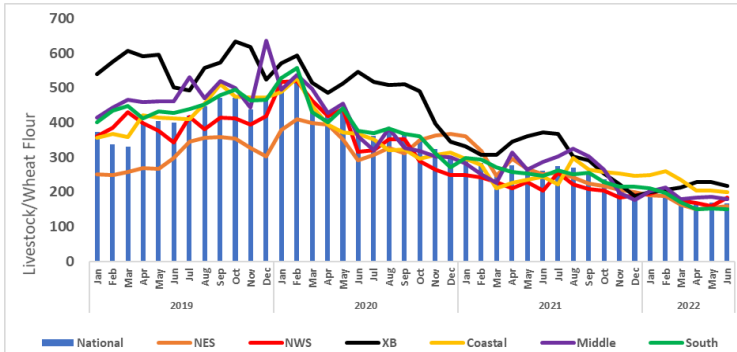


Chart 14: Terms of Trade (ToT) between wheat flour and the price of a 2 year old sheep



Source: WFP

9. The 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. ToT are important components of food security analysis. Changes in the terms of trade between wages/livestock and staple food commodities are indicative of the trends in purchasing power and the impact on the food security situation of households dependent on food purchases through income from daily wage labour and/or the sale of livestock.

