

Food Security and Market Dynamics | Repercussions of a transitioning Syria

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Food security highlights

Before the recent shift that began on November 27th, food security in Syria was already critical, with 9.1 million people classified as food insecure, including 1.3 million severely food insecure, and an additional 5.4 million at risk of hunger. Households struggled to access nutritious diets, with 62.1 percent reporting never consuming iron-rich foods. Wages—while often tied to permanent employment¹—covered only a fraction of basic living costs, forcing many to adopt unsustainable coping mechanisms like borrowing, cutting non-food expenses, and withdrawing children from school.

After more than 13 years since the beginning of the conflict and economic sanctions, Syria still faces significant challenges in restoring order and essential services to address the urgent needs of its people. Stabilizing the economy, securing the Syrian pound, and ensuring reliable supply chains are central to mitigating worsening humanitarian conditions. It is important to note that the current economic crisis, predates the recent governance upheaval and has long undermined household access to essential goods and services, compounding vulnerabilities across the population.

The governance shift and its short-term effects, including limited labor opportunities, reduced cash liquidity and likely prolonged closure of banking and money transfer services, might push more families towards dire and irreversible coping mechanisms. Reports from media sources indicate an increase in burglaries and lootings taking place in major townships, especially along the coast and center Damascus.

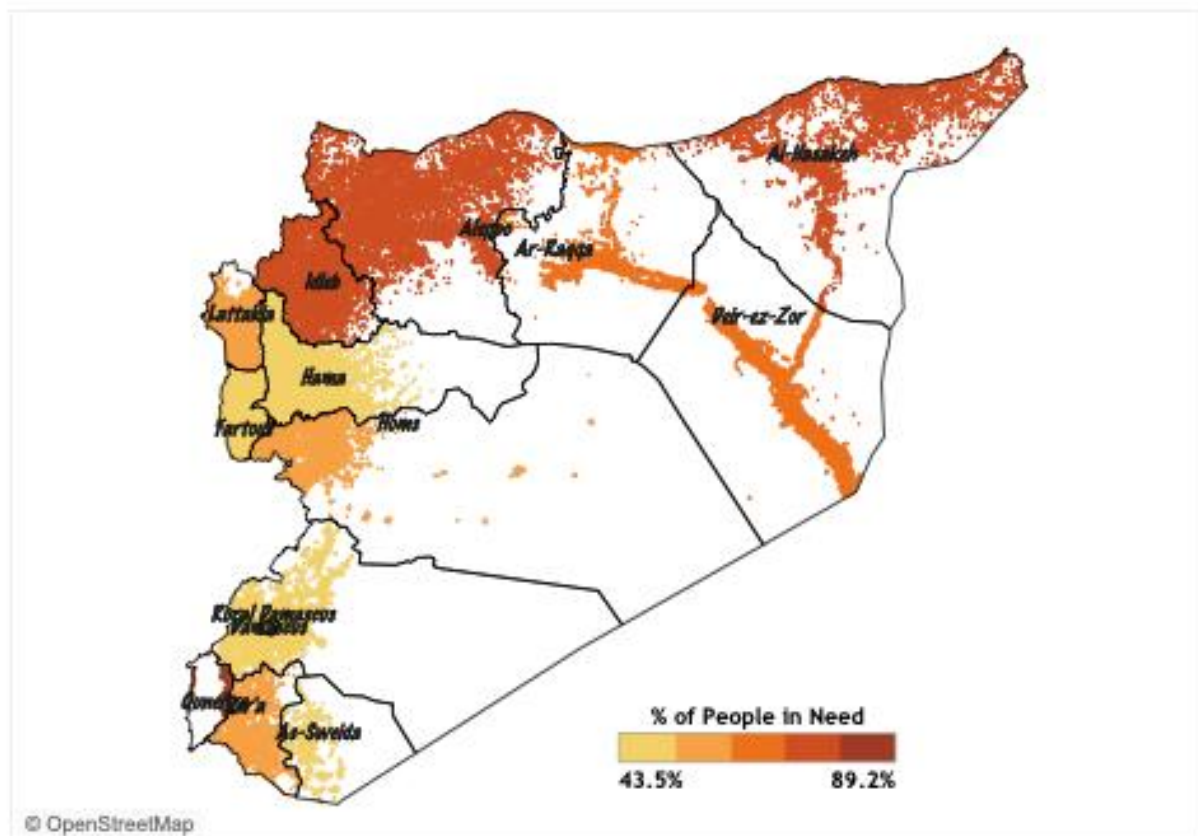
As Syria undergoes this transition, the humanitarian response faces mounting challenges. While some parties have pledged to safeguard UN operations, their fragmented and diverse nature underscores the urgent need for a coordinated approach to establish unified engagement modalities. Until public administration and order are restored, humanitarian access is expected to remain inconsistent, hindered by security risks, fragmented control, and competing priorities.

WFP had already been assisting nearly a million of severely food insecure people while also planning tailored responses for newly identified vulnerable groups. However, the situation has been compounded by two distinct waves of displacement: the influx of people who fled Lebanon following the intensification of the conflict in September/October and those internally displaced by ongoing transition in Syria. These

¹ The Government of Syria was historically a net employer

overlapping crises combined with the humanitarian funding shortfall add significant strain to WFP's operations, making it more challenging to prioritize, identify, and reach those in need. Bureaucratic obstacles, unpredictable supply routes, and potential interference may hinder the timely delivery of critical assistance to both longstanding and newly vulnerable populations, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian crisis.

Prevalence of risk and actual food insecurity | HNO2025



Summary of Key Market Developments

As Syria enters a new era, the ongoing chaos in the major cities has significantly impacted market stability. Supply routes are uncertain, and many stores remain empty or closed due to panic buying. The soaring exchange rate has heightened the cost of living for many residents, while critical shortages persist for essential items, such as rice, sugar, oil as well as fuel for both transportation and heating, particularly as winter is looming. Signs of a resumption of business activity have emerged in key cities like Aleppo and Hama; however, media sources and key informants on the ground have raised concerns about alarming levels of hyperinflation and depleted stocks at retailer outlets, with no clear timelines for restocking.

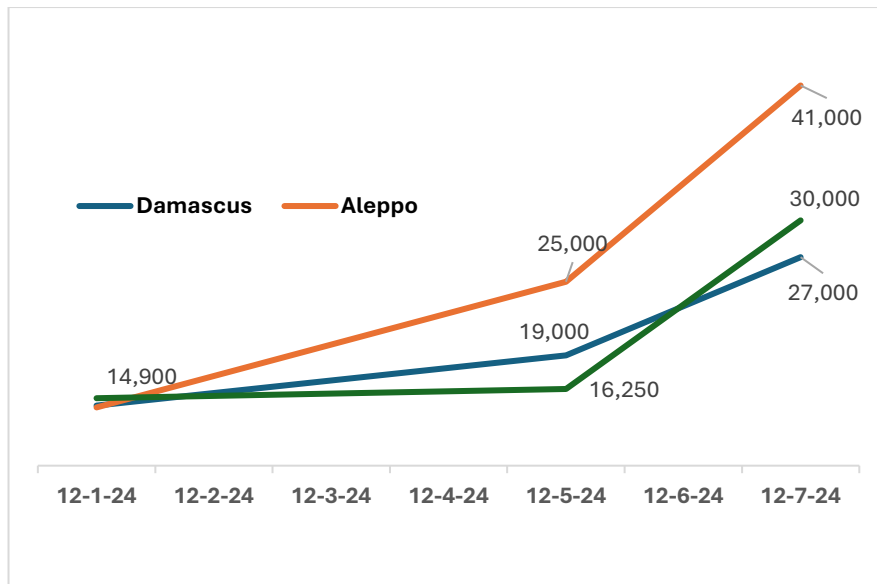
Key Price Trends (in SYP)²

Item	27-Nov	3-Dec	8-Dec	Increase from 27 Nov
Apples	10,000	14,000	25,000	150%
Bananas	20,000	29,000	37,500	88%
Bread (bakery)	400	4,000	4,000	900%
Bread (shop)	11,000	15,000	-	N/A
Bulgur	13,000	17,000	-	N/A
Cheese	45,000	51,000	75,000	67%
Eggs	55,000	67,500	65,000	18%
Fish (tuna, canned)	20,000	28,000	-	N/A
Meat (sheep)	190,000	220,000	250,000	32%
Meat (chicken, plucked)	36,000	45,000	79,000	119%
Noodles (instant, indomie)	4,500	5,000	12,000	167%
Oil	27,000	40,000	-	N/A
Parsley	1,500	3,000	3,500	133%
Pasta (spaghetti)	15,000	20,000	-	N/A
Rice	15,500	19,500	-	N/A
Spreadable Cheese	54,500	82,000	-	N/A
Wheat flour	9,000	12,000	-	N/A
Yogurt	9,500	12,500	-	N/A

SYP per US Dollar exchange rates on parallel market³

² Prices in Aleppo city, likely worse in other markets where normalcy is yet to materialize

³ <https://sp-today.com/en/>



Key Narrative

1. Food Availability:

- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Since late September, Syria has faced significant supply challenges due to the closure of border crossings with Lebanon. Shifting control dynamics, mutual agreements and priority objectives among involved parties will detect the nature of short to medium-term market dynamics while the cross-border trading will heavily depend on both internal policy, currency revival and more so how perceived in the lenses of the international views, normalization and acceptance of the transitional leadership.
- **Impact on Bread Production:** Services, particularly the production of bread—a staple food for vulnerable populations—are severely affected. Public and private bakeries, reliant on government subsidies for fuel and wheat flour, are expected to face major disruptions due to limited access and availability raw and production materials. Rising displacement is further straining local markets, as demand for staples like bread, sugar, rice and cooking oil outpaces supply.
- **Scarcity of Fresh Produce:** Fresh vegetables and fruits are becoming increasingly scarce due to seasonal production declines and disrupted trade routes.
- **Conflict-Driven Market Constraints:** Imposed curfews, safety concerns (social unrest, fear of looting, burglary, celebratory gunfire, territorial disputes), and any infrastructure damage will significantly reduce service levels for essential outlets such as WFP retailers, restaurants, and food vendors. These challenges risk heightening the cost of living across the country, further deepening the humanitarian crisis.

2. Currency Impact:

- Few days in the conflict, the Syrian pound (SYP) has depreciated significantly, with the exchange rate in some townships reaching as high as 45,000 SYP per U.S. dollar, up from 15,000 SYP in October. This sharp decline fuels inflation and depletes

supply levels. Contributing factors include heightened demand, a likely introduction of multiple currencies, and emergency mass cash conversions driven by fears of total devaluation amid potential unfavorable control shifts.

3. Humanitarian Concerns:

- **WFP Response Challenges:** Around 43 percent of WFP's assistance in Syria is delivered through Cash-Based Transfers (CBT), which depend on functional banking systems, sufficient liquidity, and consistent supplies at retailers. The /ongoing conflict poses a significant risk of delaying or completely halting assistance delivery. In December, about 18,147 families (90,111 person) severely food insecure households, including mothers and children at risk of malnutrition in North West Syria, are expected to receive support from WFP. However, initial estimates suggest that around 75 percent of these households won't be able to access their assistance. Similar risks extend to several thousands of households in the central, coastal and south areas as well as Aleppo where WFP planned to reach 63,618 households (318,090 people) by end of year. The looting of WFP warehouses marks a major setback in terms of days and people WFP would have been able to respond to until supply and logistical routes are restored. Partners assets and infrastructure were not spared, affecting CPs ability to continue registration, distribute assistance and support WFP in ongoing prioritization efforts. who also face potential interruptions in aid.
- **Impact of Shifting Territorial Controls:** Changes in control require extensive negotiations to adapt programmatic and logistical arrangements. This includes modifying assistance modalities, adjusting food dispatches and securing facilitation approvals for commodity movement, as well as ensuring assistance reaches the most vulnerable populations.
- **Challenges to accessing basic needs:** the provision of basic needs, such as bread, fuel, and electricity, has become increasingly uncertain for most of Syrians. Traditionally, bread served as a crucial safety net provided by the government to millions at a reduced cost, but the current situation raises concerns about how these essential resources will be sustained moving forward. The disruptions in electricity supply and or fuel to generate one, with reports of outages lasting several hours if not days, further complicate the situation. The systems previously in place for sharing resources in a social protection framework appear to be faltering, which may lead to further instability in access to these basic needs. As these challenges persist, the sustainability of essential services remains a significant concern.
- **Syrian refugees returning to Syria:** millions of Syrian refugees have been living in neighboring countries for years, and the conditions in the host countries, along with the developments in Syria, can greatly influence their decisions about returning to their country. However, the challenges remain significant as WFP and other humanitarian organizations face operational hurdles and funding shortages which can hinder the ability to provide necessary support to both refugees and those in Syria.

- **Limited monitoring:** WFP's capacity to conduct physical market monitoring across the country is expected to become increasingly constrained until a semblance of order and safety is restored. This limitation could hinder timely assessments of market dynamics, price fluctuations, and the availability of essential goods, impacting the informed decision and programme adjustments.

4. **Forecast:**

- **Short-Term:** Prices for essential goods are likely to skyrocket while the SYP will further depreciate as conflict intensifies. WFP contracted retailers and other trading outlets will likely take time to adjust to rapidly changing environment and uncertainties (security, exchange rates, supply routes, etc.) needless to mention any likely regulatory changes.
- **Medium-Term:** Limited agricultural production and disrupted supply chains may result in prolonged price volatility and reduced market functionality.
- **Long-term:** The incoming leadership's ability to implement effective policies and establish governance will depend not only on its vision but also on mutual agreements and power-sharing arrangements among the various groups involved in shaping the country's future. However, the long-term success of these efforts—particularly in revitalizing cross-border trade and lifting imposed sanctions—will ultimately rely on achieving normalization and acceptance in the eyes of the international community.

Action Points | VAM

- **Market Monitoring:** Maintain close monitoring of price changes and supply disruptions, focusing on staple food and fuel.
 - **Forecast Updates:** Provide timely updates on supply route changes and currency fluctuations and other factors driving Syria's markets
 - **Tailored Assessments:** Conduct rapid needs and national food security assessments to paint a real picture and effects of recent intertwined crises
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