



World Food Programme

Bulletin 2 — February 2016

Syria



Deteriorating food security in besieged Darayya

Highlights

- The food security situations in Dar'a (Sheikh Miskine), northern Aleppo (A'zaz) and Al-Hasakeh are still of major concern due to active conflict and massive displacement.
- An already dire food security situation in Darayya is rapidly deteriorating as a result of long siege and severe restricted access to food.
- In Darayya, Madaya and Az-Zabadani bakeries are not functioning because of extreme fuel and wheat flour shortages.
- The Munich agreement facilitated deliveries to several besieged locations in February 2016, including Madamiyet Elsham, Kafr Batna, Madaya, Az-Zabdani, Al-Wa'er, Foah and Kafraya, helping to alleviate food shortages.

Context:

Since December 2015, the escalation of conflict has pushed basic social services to near collapse and the economy has ground to a virtual halt. Humanitarian needs continue to rise, with 13.5 million people needing protection and some form of humanitarian assistance (more than 75 percent of the population). Population displacements are increasing, and an entire generation is exposed to war and violence, shortages of food, water, shelter and education.

The active conflict and sharp depreciation of the Syrian Pound continue to disrupt trade and access to food. The ongoing inter-agency convoys delivering humanitarian supply have become the only source of food for vulnerable households under siege whose mechanisms to cope have been depleted.

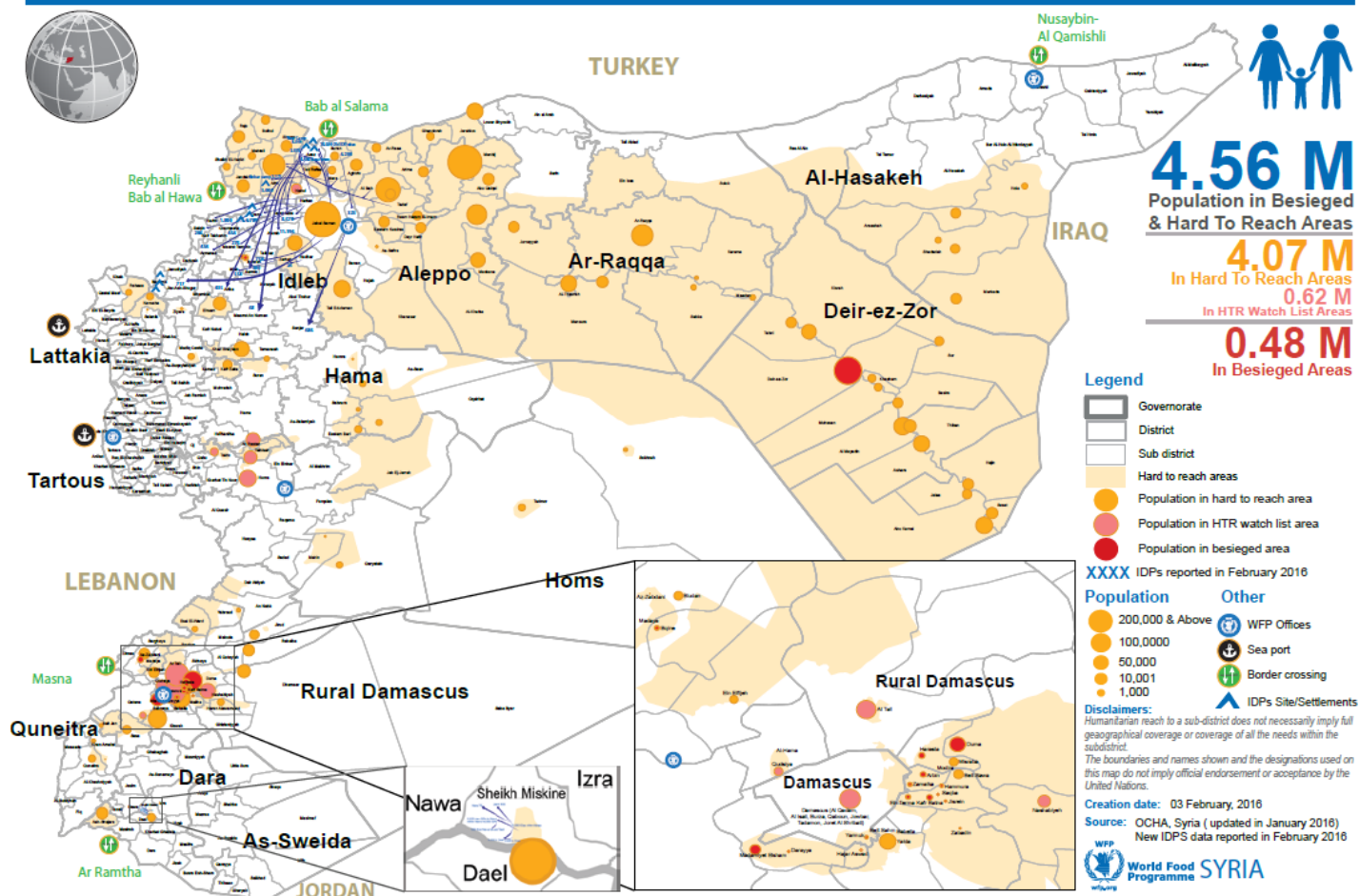
Some 2.5 million in besieged and hard to access areas are food insecure:

It's estimated that 4.5 million people are located in besieged and hard to reach areas in Syria, of which 2.5 million are severely food insecure. Households living in besieged areas such as Deir-ez-Zor, Darayya, Madamiyet Elsham, Kafr Batna, Madaya, Az-Zabdani, Foah and Kafraya have exhausted their food stocks and coping strategies and become highly food insecure. In Madaya and Az-Zabadani, mines have made farming land inaccessible so households are dependent on purchasing food from markets, using credit and assistance if available.

The primary road that brings supplies to Deir-ez-Zor city remains closed since ISIS controls access routes, leaving the airport as the only supply corridor for all commodities, including food.

The food security situation in Dar'a (Sheikh Miskine), northern Aleppo (A'zaz) and Al-Hasakeh remains a major concern. Households in these areas have been particularly stricken by active conflict and massive displacement. IDPs who fled from fighting to neighboring areas are struggling to survive in host communities whose own capacities to cope are over-stretched.

Syrian Arab Republic: Besieged and Hard To Reach Areas



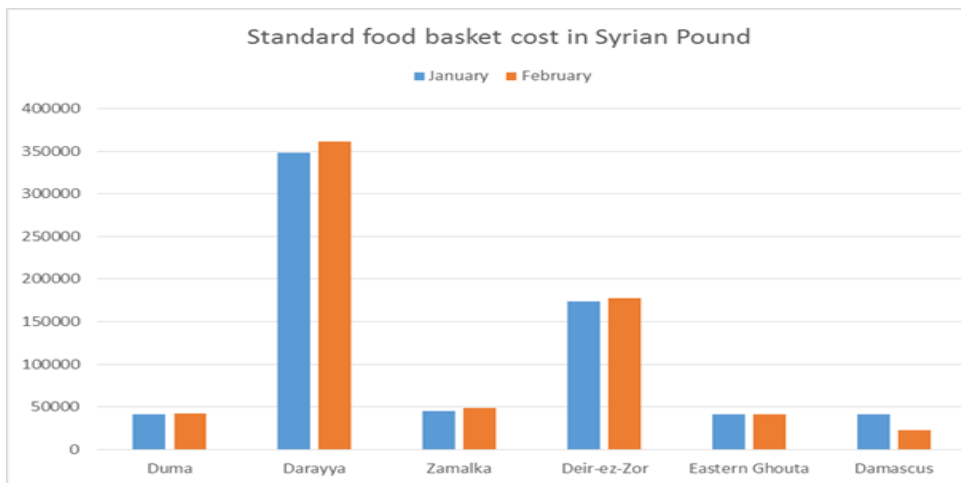
Source: WFP mVAM, February 2016

In besieged areas the poor can no longer buy enough food because of livelihood disruption:

In Darayya, Zamalka, Sheikh Miskine and Deir-ez-Zor food access is greatly affected by the devastation of infrastructure, armed clashes and breakdown of electricity and fuel. It is reaching worrying levels with a complete breakdown of livelihood activities and poor households unable to meet their minimum food requirements. In Al-Hasakeh food is very scarce because of the continued closure of the Nusaybin border crossing with Turkey and the little that is available is beyond the reach of poor households.

In A'zaz the agricultural lands that were the main source of income and food are no longer accessible and IDP households are dependent on food assistance. However, food access in besieged areas of Madaya, Az-Zabdani, Madamiyet Elsham and Kafraya & Foah has slightly improved since January 2016 after the arrival of inter-agency convoys.

Figure 1. Cost of standard food basket in besieged areas



Diets chiefly consist of starches and sugar:

It was reported from most besieged locations, such as Zamalka, Madaya and Duma, that most people are eating only bread, sugar and the cheapest available cereals. Poor households cannot afford vegetables, fruits, eggs or dairy products. What's more the dire shortages of cooking oil and wood for fuel have rendered cooking impossible. While households in Deir-ez-Zor and Darayaa are unable to consume more than one meal per day and are giving priority for eating to children, the majority of households in Darayaa are reserving sparse dairy products for their babies. Fruits and vegetables aren't available in Madaya, where residents have been reduced to eating rice, bulgur and sugar from the last food aid consignment.

In Sheikh Miskine and Al-Hasakeh (Shadadah, Markada, Areesheh), the majority of displaced households have no access to vegetables, fruit or dairy products. Most households in A'zaz are consuming two meals per day and are mainly living on a diet consisting solely of cheap cereals, pulses and roots.

Households have exhausted most severe coping strategies throughout most of the besieged areas, poor households with scarce food resources and limited income have resorted to asset selling to meet their daily food needs.

In Deir-ez-Zor city and Darayya vulnerable households have exhausted many distressed food related coping mechanisms including limiting food intake, gathering wild food, eating cheaper less nutritious food, borrowing food and going into debt. In the most severe cases, they are enduring entire days without eating, sending children to beg and eating grass/ wild vegetation.

In Duma, Zamalka, Arbin, Az-Zabdani and Madaya some households have reported marrying off daughters early, joining armed groups and sending children to work in order to support themselves.

In A'zaz, more than half of the population are consuming less preferred food, limiting the number and size of meals. In Al-Hasakeh (Shadadah, Markada, Areesheh), the majority of households are worried about not finding enough food during the week and are limiting the size and number of meals with high priority given to children.



Blocked supply routes limit food availability:

Markets are generally not functioning in most of the besieged locations where fighting and long sieges severely restrict food trade by destroying supply routes and infrastructure.

Food availability has also been disrupted by poor road conditions and a widespread lack of transport preventing the internal movement of food commodities. Besides affecting food availability these factors have also pushed up food prices across the area, especially in Darayya and Deir-ez-Zor city.

In Foah and Kafraya, Duma, Zamalka and Arbin markets are functioning poorly with limited capacity and inadequate availability of very highly priced food items. Humanitarian assistance and purchasing on credit are the main food sources. Bread has only been sporadically available in past months.

In Al-Hasakeh governorate basic food commodities have increased by more than 50 percent because of border closures. Some items, such as pasta, tomato paste and the more affordable rice types are not available.

In Madaya and Az-Zabadani bakeries are not functioning at all due to extreme shortages of fuel and wheat flour. Food is only available in the market through smuggling and it is highly priced.

In Sheikh Miskine, the entire population has been displaced to neighbouring sub districts and markets are not functioning at all. In A'zaz, active clashes and the recent closure of Turkish borders has blocked supply routes and prevented markets from operating. Food is sporadically available in markets but in very limited quantities and at high prices.

Significantly higher prices of bread and rice in besieged areas than in Damascus:

During February 2016 in Deir-ez-Zor city one kg of rice cost SYP 2,250, 50 percent higher than in January, 36 percent higher than six months ago and 324 percent higher than the same month last year.

In Darayya, the price of rice was SYP 6000/kg, some 17 times the price of the Damascus market, while in A'zaz and Al-Hasakeh the price was 164 and 171 percent higher respectively.

Rice prices in eastern Ghouta and Al-Hasakeh were SYP 500/kg and SYP 600/kg, increases of 25 percent and 14 percent compared with January 2016, while in Zamalka, the price was up by 13 percent.

In Darayya and Madamiyet Elsham fresh bread was sporadically available at an extortionate cost of SYP 1500/bundle (30 times higher than the Damascus market price). It has increased by 7.1 percent since January 2016 and by 139 percent compared with six months ago.

In Deir-ez-Zor city the price of a bread bundle rose by 100 percent since last month and by 757 percent compared with February 2015.

The price of bread in A'zaz market was SYP 120/bundle, some 240 percent higher than in Damascus.

The price of a standard food basket increased in most besieged areas and places exposed to conflict. A food basket costing SYP 22,805 in Damascus, was 15 and 7 times higher in the besieged areas of Darayya and Deir-ez-Zor at over SYP 350,000 and SYP 170,000 respectively.

The cost of a standard food basket in A'zaz was SYP 30,015 which is 130 percent higher than Damascus, while that in Al-Hasakeh was SYP 26,700, up by 12.7 percent compared with January 2016.

Figure 2. Trend of rice prices over past year in besieged areas

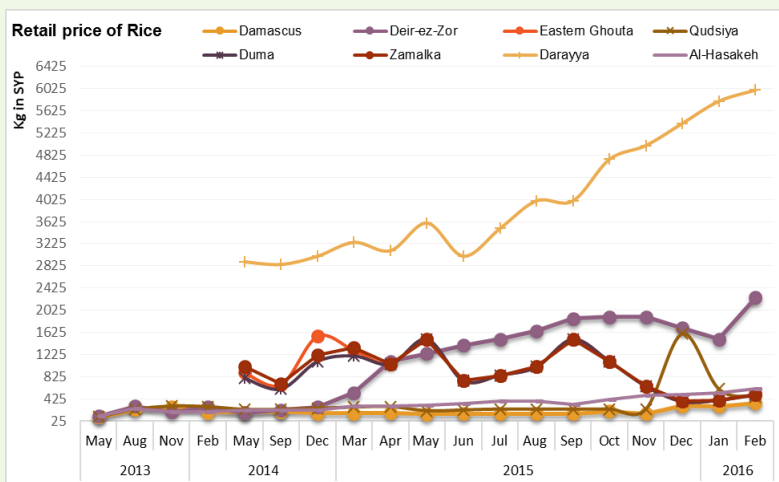
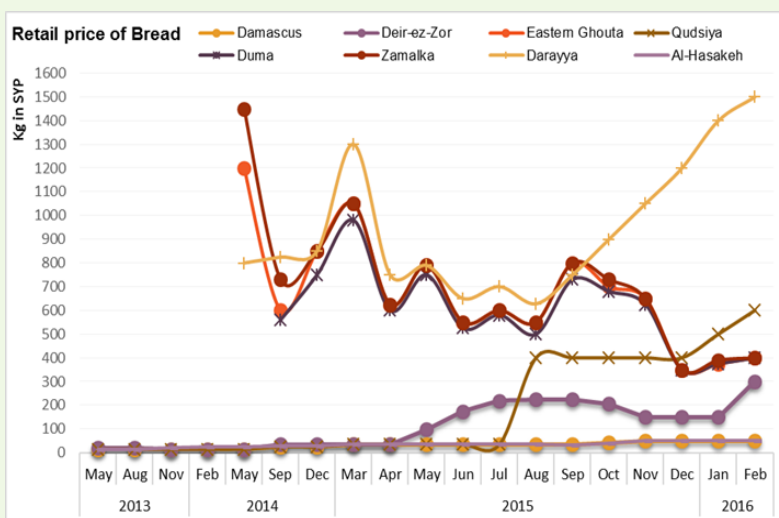


Figure 3. Trend of bread prices over past year in besieged areas



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