

KEY MESSAGES:



The food security situation deteriorated in Aleppo city; more than 45 percent of respondent households reported having an inadequate food consumption.



Food consumption levels remain consistently low; households in hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo and Idlib engaged in more negative coping strategies in August.



In Darayya and Madamiyet, rice prices and the cost of the standard food basket fell dramatically after the evacuations. However, prices remain extremely high in other besieged areas.



SITUATION UPDATE

The Evacuation Agreement of Darayya came into effect on 26 August after four years of restricted siege, giving a safe passage out of the city to both fighters and civilians. On 2 September, the second level of the agreement was implemented whereby Darayya IDPs who live in Madamiyet Elsham were evacuated. This has resulted in a massive displacement to both Rural Damascus (Harjal) and Idlib. In the first evacuation more than 190 households were displaced to Idlib and more than 200 households to Harjal while most of households in the second evacuation went to Harjal. The already dire food security situation of the IDPs who have fled is believed to have deteriorated and urgent assistance is required.

In north-western rural Hama, clashes between government forces and armed opposition groups intensified on 30 August, displacing 57,000 people from the worst-affected areas. These households mainly escaped to areas close to Hama city, but others fled to surrounding rural areas. The main supply route to east Aleppo city via Castello Road has been blocked since 7 July because of an escalation in fighting. Since then, humanitarian agencies have lost access to an estimated 250,000 to 275,000 people. By 1 September, WFP had completed 108 airdrop rotations to Deir-ez-Zor city and 82 airlifts to Qamishly in Al-Hasakeh governorate, which have had a positive effect on food security.

Figure 1. Sample Household characteristics



1,738
Interviews

42
years

Mean age of
respondents



Food Assistance
Yes: 63%
No: 37%



Respondent Status
IDP: 36.1%
Returnee: 3.0%
Resident: 60.9%



Head of household
Female: 9.8%
Male: 90.2%



Urban/Rural
Urban: 52.2%
Rural: 47.8%

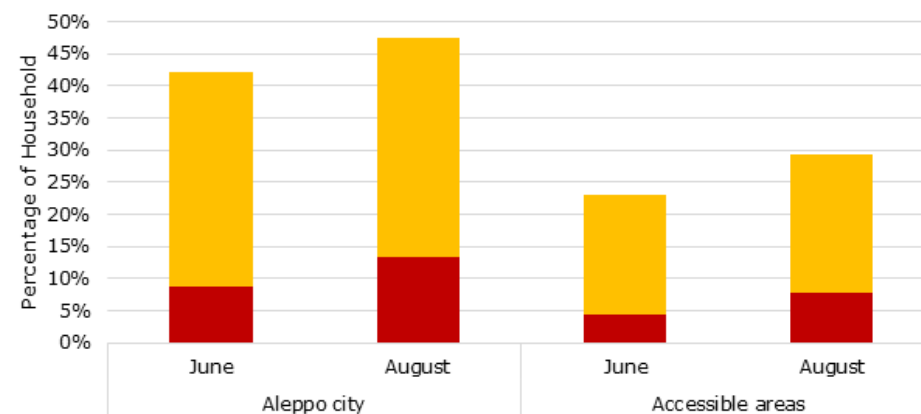


FOOD SECURITY SITUATION DETERIORATING IN ALEPPO CITY

The intensification of conflict and the restrictions on the humanitarian access continue to affect the food security situation in Aleppo city (the subdistrict of Jabal Saman). More than 45 percent of respondent households reported having an inadequate food consumption in August while less than 30 percent of households reported this in the accessible areas of Syria. The mean food consumption score (FCS) decreased from 50.5 in June to 48.5 in August. A greater number of households are also engaging more frequently in negative food-related coping mechanisms than in June (+20%).

The August mVAM data also revealed that respondents living in Aleppo city and Damascus have a similar consumption of staples (consumed almost 7 days a week), sugar (6 days a week), vegetables (4 days a week) and pulses (3 days a week). However, households in Aleppo city tend to consume dairy products and fruits less often than those living in Damascus.

Figure 1: Food consumption groups in Aleppo city and accessible areas



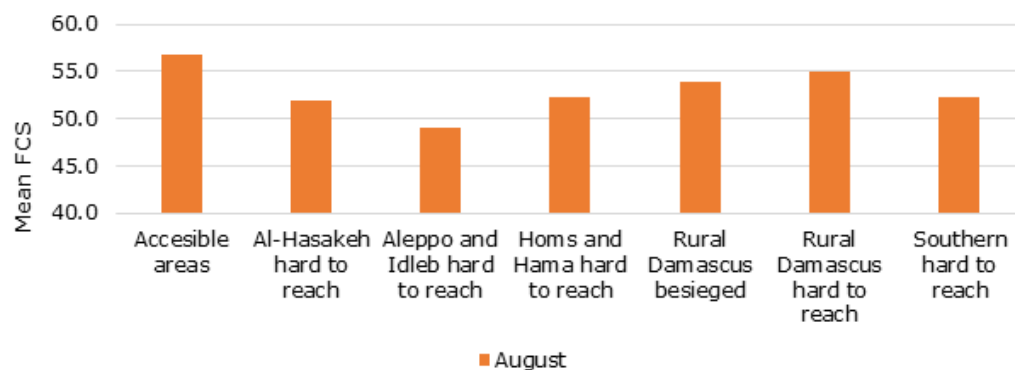
Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016



POORER FOOD CONSUMPTION IN HARD-TO-REACH AREAS OF ALEPPO AND IDLEB

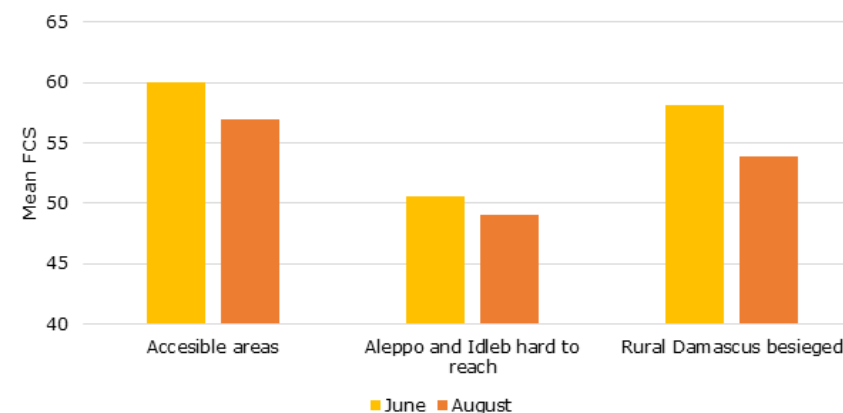
In August, food insecurity remained high in all surveyed areas of Syria. As shown in Figure 2a, a better FCS was recorded in the accessible areas of Syria, while the worst scores were in hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo and Idleb. Even so, households living in accessible areas saw their mean FCS drop from 60 in June to 56.8 in August (Figure 2b). This deterioration could be related to the temporary improvement in household food consumption that usually occurs during Ramadan.

Figure 2a: Mean FCS by aggregated district, August 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 2b: Mean FCS by aggregated district, June–August 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

*Results for Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor are not reported because of the small sample size



HIGH LEVELS OF NEGATIVE COPING IN ALL SURVEYED AREAS

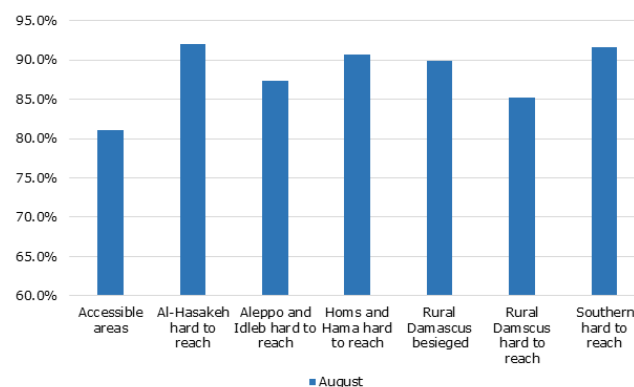
As Figure 3 shows, more than 85 percent of respondent households in hard-to-reach and besieged areas reported engaging in at least one negative coping mechanism because they did not have enough food or money to buy food in the week before the survey. The percentage was slightly lower (80%) among households living in accessible areas.

As well as the fall in the mean FCS in the accessible areas of Syria, the mVAM data also indicates a deterioration in the mean rCSI from 15.9 in June to 17 in August (Figure 4). Around 27 percent more households resorted to borrowing food or relying on help from friends or relatives – which is one of the most severe negative coping strategies in the reduced Coping Strategy Index.

An increase in the mean rCSI was also registered in hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo and Idlib, although the mean FCS remained constant at around 50. This rise most likely reflects the increase in food prices, mainly caused by active conflict that is disrupting supply routes. The negative consumption-based coping strategies most commonly used in August were reducing the number of meals in a day (40.8%) and relying on less expensive/preferred food (34.3%).

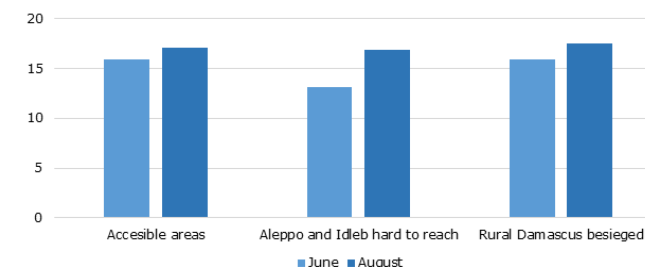
Households in besieged and hard-to-reach areas of rural Damascus have similar patterns in terms of food consumption and coping strategies (Figure 5a and b).

Figure 3: Percentage of households engaging in at least one coping mechanism, August 2016



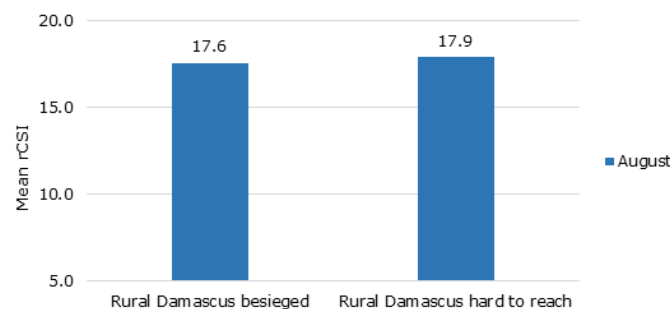
Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 4: Mean reduced coping strategy index by aggregated districts, June-August 2016



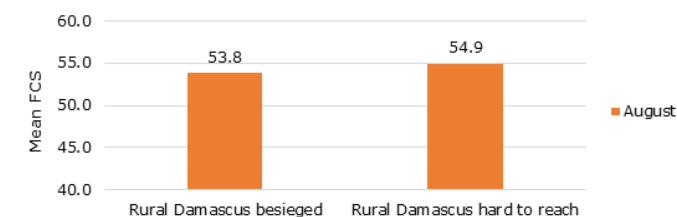
Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 5a: Mean rCSI –hard-to-reach and besieged rural Damascus



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 5b: Mean FCS –hard-to-reach and besieged rural Damascus



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

*Results for Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor are not reported because of the small sample size

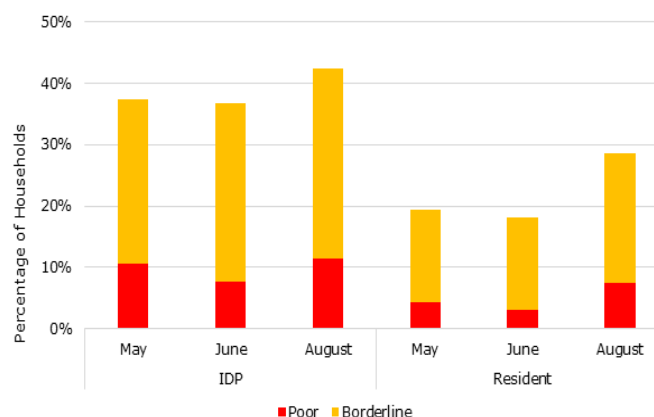


WORSE FOOD CONSUMPTION AND DIETARY DIVERSITY AMONG IDP HOUSEHOLDS

In August, the food security indicators measured through the FCS and rCSI deteriorated for IDP and resident households. Both groups reported a higher share of households consuming a poor diet (Figure 6) and using more negative food-related coping strategies (Figure 7) compared to June.

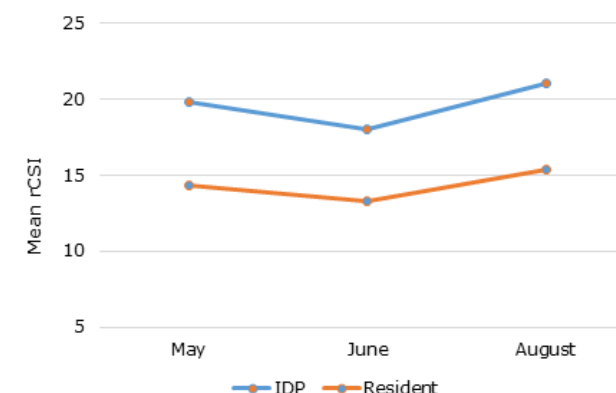
Notably, both displaced and resident households consumed significantly less protein (including meat, fish and eggs) than during the previous month. There was also a slight decrease in the consumption of pulses, dairy products and fruit amongst resident households. However, the dietary diversity of IDP households continues to be well below that of residents.

Figure 6: Inadequate food consumption for IDP and resident households, May–August 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 7: Mean FCS for IDP and Resident, May–August 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016



MARKET FUNCTIONALITY AND FOOD AVAILABILITY

Data shows that the Darayya evacuation and unstable security situation has had a significant impact on market functionality, food availability and prices in Madamiyet Elsham. Information from key sources indicates that food is available in the market but demand is very low as people are buying the food they need day by day. Also, daily monitoring data shows that prices are unstable and changing every day, reflecting an extremely fluid and fragile situation.

In Madaya, blockades, destroyed supply routes and lack of humanitarian access has severely depleted food stocks from markets and traders reported having exhausted most of their food supplies. This has had a noticeable negative impact on prices, which have become unaffordable for most households. Furthermore, bakeries are not functioning because of extreme shortages of fuel and wheat flour.

In besieged eastern Ghouta, most of markets are functioning poorly with limited capacity except three main markets (Duma, Zamalka and Arbin), which have become the major suppliers for all eastern Ghouta markets. Movement restrictions mean that traders cannot replenish food stocks regularly and they wait until they have depleted their whole stock.

In east Harasta, food availability is still low in the markets, but as households are depending on food assistance and their own production to meet their needs, demand is not high. However, the situation is expected to change in the winter when no fruit or vegetables will be available.

In Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh, markets are functioning better and prices are lower where demand has become more stable, reflecting the positive impact of WFP assistance.

In Aleppo and Hama, heavy clashes have severely disrupted supply routes, exerting upward pressure on food prices and restricting the supply chain. As a result, many foods have not been readily available in markets, with extreme shortages of fuel especially in rural Hama and eastern Aleppo city.



RICE & BREAD PRICES

Rice: In the last week of August, rice prices fell significantly in Madamiyet Elsham compared to levels prior to the Darayya evacuation: 1 kg of rice was selling for SYP200. This represents more than a three-fold decrease compared to one month ago and a fifty-fold decrease compared to six months ago. However, the situation is extremely fluid and prices are unstable. In Deir-ez-Zor city, rice prices are gradually falling (thanks to WFP assistance) reaching SYP700/kg in August, a drop of 36 percent compared to July and more than 200 percent compared to six months ago.

In Madaya, the prices of most foods are increasing due to poor availability and high demand. The cost of 1 kg of rice in August was SYP4,000 – ten times higher than the price in Damascus and a 100 percent increase compared to July. Close monitoring in eastern Ghouta shows more stable prices during summer season, with only slight variations in availability and prices between locations. The average cost of 1 kg of rice in eastern Ghouta during August was SYP665, remaining almost unchanged compared to July with an increase of less than 1 percent.

Bread: In Madamiyet Elsham, Madaya and Az-Zabadani fresh bread was not available during July and August. Data indicates severe bread shortages for more than nine months, with smuggling the only way to get bread inside these locations and even then, in very scarce quantities. In east Harasta, Kafr Batna, Zamalka and Arbin, and in all of eastern Ghouta bakeries are not functioning because of extreme shortages of fuel and wheat flour. Only two bakeries in Duma are operational and they have limited capacity. However, bread is available in most locations as traders have managed to source it from outside with a cost of between SYP450 and SYP550 per bundle (more than nine times the official price). In Deir-ez-Zor city, the price of a bread bundle during August was SYP200, remaining unchanged from July and representing a 33 percent increase compared to six months ago. However, the capacity of bakeries is limited and households have to wait for many hours to get a bundle.



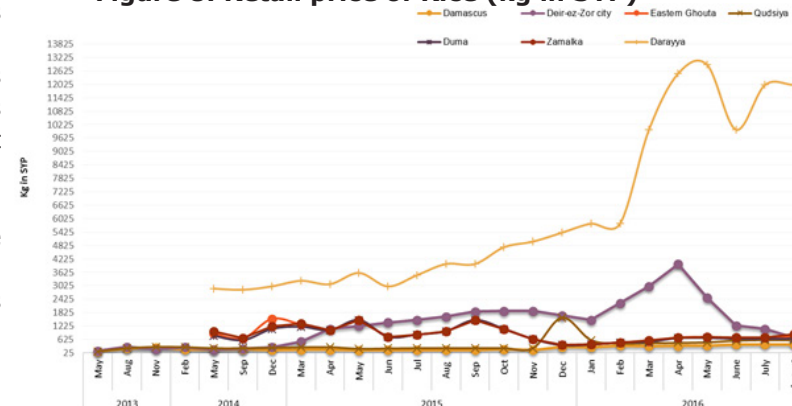
FOOD BASKET

During August, the cost of the standard food basket continued to drop in Deir-ez-Zor city reaching SYP55,100. This represents an 88.7 percent decrease compared to July.

Darayya markets recorded the most expensive food basket before the evacuation at SYP684,000, a 7.7 percent increase compared to July and a 94.3 percent increase compared to six months ago. In Madamiyet Elsham, the cost of the food basket is unstable and changing on daily basis. The average in August after the Darayya evacuation was SYP14,925, a 210 percent decrease compared to July and more than twenty times less than six months ago.

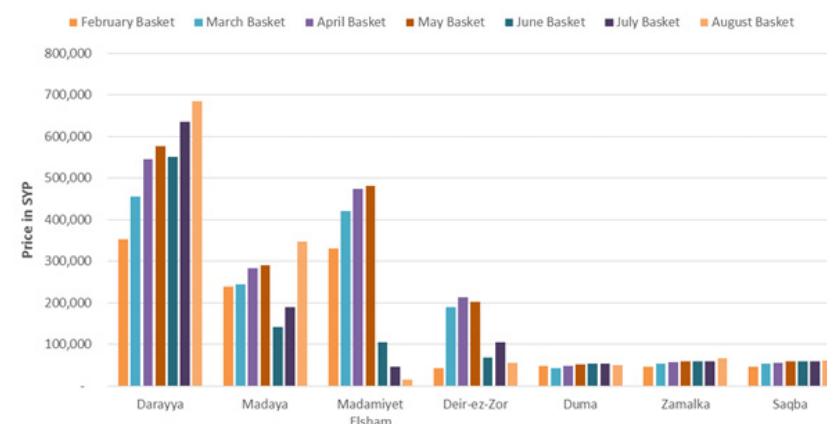
¹ The standard basket used in the analysis provides 1,930 kcal a day for a family of five during a month. It includes 37 kg of bread, 19 kg of rice, 19 kg of lentils, 5 kg of sugar, and 7 kg of vegetable oil.

Figure 8: Retail price of Rice (kg in SYP)



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016

Figure 9: Standard food basket cost in besieged locations



Source: WFP mVAM, August 2016



RISING PRICE OF BASIC COMMODITIES ARE A CONCERN

Figure 7. Word Cloud

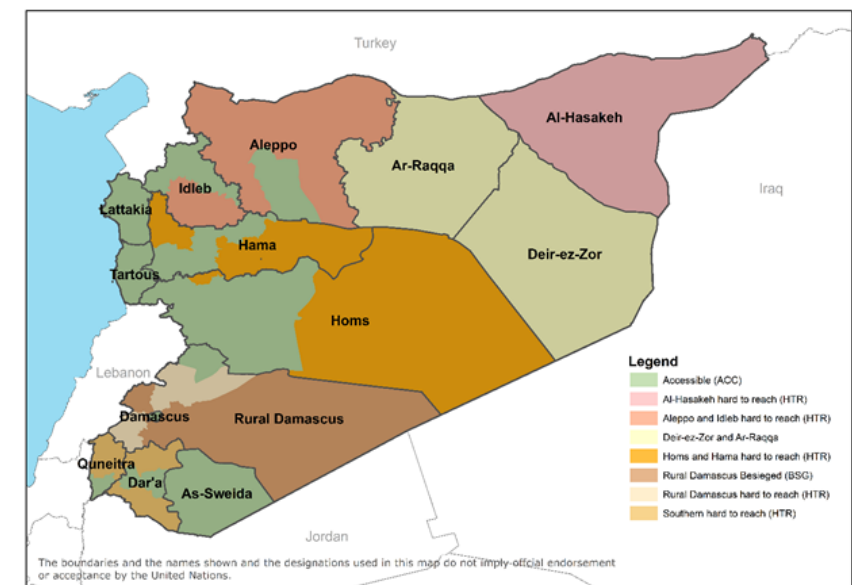


METHODOLOGY

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected in the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August through key sources and telephone interviews. The telephone numbers called were generated using random-digit dialling, yielding 1738 respondents. The questionnaire contained questions on demographics, income sources, food assistance, household food consumption, coping strategies and primary food sources. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information about the food situation in their communities. The data was weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household. Information collected through mobile phone interviews may be biased towards younger, somewhat better off households who live in urban areas and have better access to electricity and phone-charging services.

To obtain a more granular analysis of food security, districts have been combined into eight strata: accessible areas, hard-to-reach Al-Hasakeh, hard-to-reach Aleppo and Idleb, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, hard-to-reach Homs and Hama, besieged Rural Damascus, hard-to-reach Rural Damascus, and hard-to-reach Southern (Map1). This sampling frame groups together areas with similar geography and access status, allowing for a large enough sample size to make statistically significant comparisons.

Map 1: Syria aggregated districts – August 2016



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mVAM resources:

Website http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/

Blog mVAM.org

Toolkit <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



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