



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



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Agriculture Input and Commodity Bulletin October 2020



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Introduction

Agriculture, including crop and animal husbandry, forestry and agro processing, constitutes the basis of socio-economic lives of most smallholder farmers in Syria. FAO's attention is not only focusing on working with farmers to improve agricultural production and productivity, but also broadening their activities to include processing, marketing and entrepreneurship. The Organization in Syria releases the "Monthly agriculture input and commodity price bulletin" that provides timely insights from 35 districts across Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Tartous, Deir-ez-Zor, Rural Damascus, Al-Hasakeh and Dar'a Governorates, in an effort to inform relevant stakeholders and food security sector (FSS) partners, who are supporting agriculture and food security interventions in the country, about the prevailing prices of agriculture inputs and commodities. The bulletin is a beneficial publication since markets and market information both play an important role in food security, income generation, resilience and rural-market linkages. Regular dissemination of market information will benefit smallholder farmers in their market-oriented production endeavours.

Key Highlights

- There was an increase in most of the agriculture inputs' prices in October 2020 across the 35 monitored sites. The highest increase was yet again observed for barley seed in local markets across most of the sites, with an average of at least 47 percent. There was also a significant month-on-month increase in the price of diesel fuel with a 38 percent increase for a 20-liter gallon. Other input prices recorded a slight average price increase with a margin ranging from 5 to 13 percent.

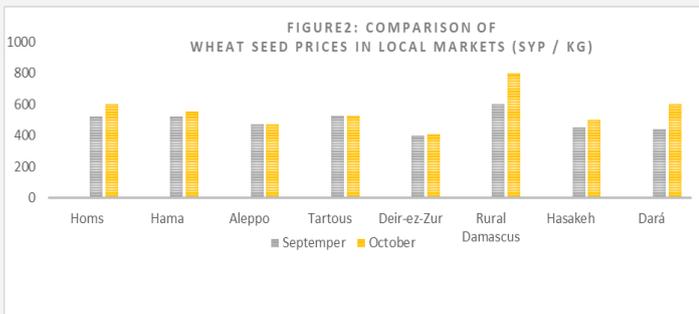
The only average price drop is for Nitrate and Phosphate fertilizers, which declined in most local markets by at least 2 percent and 17 percent respectively.

- As noted in September 2020, the major reason for the continued upward pressure on the cost of barley seed in the local market is attributed to the increased seasonal demand due to the onset of the winter cropping season and local traders' opportunistic approach. The persisting economic measures and an increase in fuel costs is also a factor to most agriculture inputs prices increase. The prevailing high cost of agriculture inputs in the local market will continue limiting access to seed, agro-chemicals, diesel fuel other essential supplies, especially for smallholder and crisis-affected farmers, since the Government subsidized sources are unable to adequately meet the farmer's full requirements. The pre-existing constraints regarding the depreciation of the Syrian Pound (SYP) and the dwindling foreign currency reserves will continue to affect importation of most agricultural inputs and raw materials.
- The price of sheep and cow milk increased by 25.71 percent and 23.70 percent respectively, this will definitely affect the prices of dairy products. An expectation for further increase with the increase in feed prices, the lack of green fodder and the lack of production in the winter. The price of dairy products will need to be closely monitored in November and December 2020.

Agriculture Commodity and Input Prices

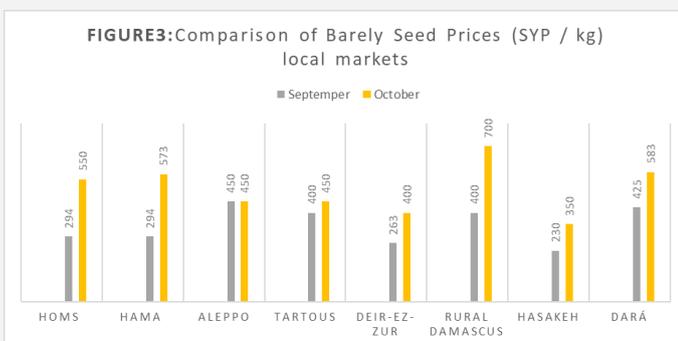
Wheat

The General Organization for Seed Multiplication (GOSM) continues to provide wheat seed in Syria through a supportive price of 450 SYP/kg in 2020/21 winter season. The available quantity of wheat seed from GOSM only meets 50 percent of the farmer's needs and farmers receive 25 kg for each donum from GOSM. Farmers get the remaining seed requirements from the local market at an average of 558 SYP/kg (Figure 2). When farmers have limited ability to acquire seed through cash purchases, they meet the remaining requirements through using seed saved from previous seasons. The highest and notable price of wheat seed was recorded in Rural Damascus with a kilogram selling for 800 SYP in the local market. In Daraa and Homs governorates, there was a month-on-month increase of 36percent and 15percent respectively. The price of a kilogram of wheat seed reached 600 SYP in both the aforementioned governorates with an average price increase of 13 percent observed across the 8 governorates monitored by FAO.



Barley

GOSM provides farmers barley seed through a supported price of 200 SYP/kg as each farmer receives 25kg of barley seed for each. To meet the gap of farmer's seed requirements, they continue to purchase barley seed from the local market at an average price of 507 SYP/kg. There is yet again a notable and significant price increase for barley seed from the local markets in Rural Damascus, Daraa, Hama, Homs, Deir-ez-Zur and Al-Hasakeh. An average month-on-month increase of 49 percent was recorded for the monitored sites; the barley seed price reached a peak of 700 SYP/kg in Rural Damascus as highlighted below.

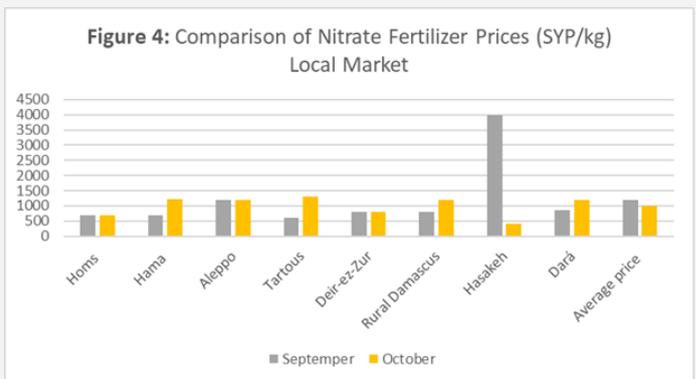


Topdressing Fertilizer

Nitrate fertilizer is provided by the Agriculture Bank through a supported price averaging 214 SYP/kg and the quality is generally good. The top-dressing fertilizer from the Agriculture Bank covers not more than a third of the farmer's needs. In October, farmers purchased the rest of their requirements from the local market at an average price of 1,002 SYP/kg.

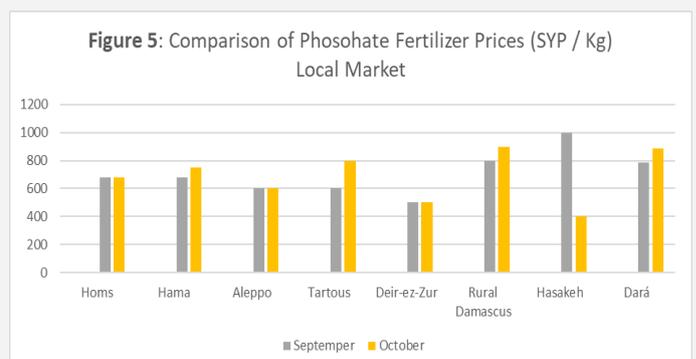
Concerning Nitrate fertilizer price in Al-Hasakeh, the price was 4,000 SYP/litre in September 2020 for the imported liquid fertilizer. The current available fertilizer is local granular fertilizer, which is sold by local traders at 400 SP/kg. It is also important to note that the price of top dressing fertilizer more than doubled from 600 SYP/kg to 1,300 SYP/kg and this represents 117 percent month-on-month increase. There was also a significant month-on-month increase of 81percent for topdressing fertilizer in Hama.

Bringing in top dressing fertilizer and other agriculture inputs from neighbouring countries in areas controlled by Non-State Armed Group (NSAGs), contributes to the high price observed. This is due to the high transportation costs, which are included on top of the selling price by local traders.



Phosphate fertilizer

This is mostly provided by the Agriculture Bank through a supported price of 250 SYP/kg as an average. Farmers reported purchasing the rest of their needs from the local market at an average price of 689 SYP/kg. The highest price of 900 SYP/kg for phosphate was recorded in Rural Damascus, with the lowest price of 400 SYP/kg being observed in Al-Hasakeh, due to a 60percent month-on-month decline in the afore-mentioned governorate. A slight decrease of about 2 percent in the average price for phosphate fertilizer was also recorded in the local markets across the monitored sites. It is important to note that the application of phosphate fertilizer comes before the seeding process to ensure effective tillering and root development of wheat and barley, hence the price increased could be related to high seasonal demand. The price of phosphate fertilizer will need to be closely monitored in November and December 2020.



Agriculture Commodity and Input Prices

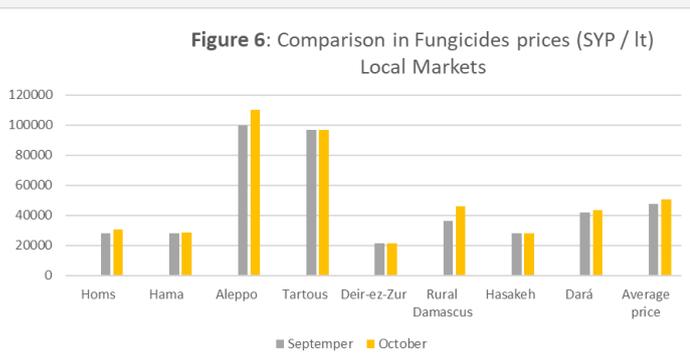
Pesticides

Crop-protection agrochemicals (i.e. pesticides), which include insecticides, fungicides and herbicides, remain available across all the 35 monitored districts but generally expensive for most farmers compared to pre-crisis prices. Therefore; pesticides are used or applied at below the recommended or efficacious rate, or not used at all, due to the limited access. Furthermore, most of the pesticides in the local market are of uncertain origin and the quality is difficult to determine. This is because some unapproved crop protection material continue to find their way into the local market.

Insecticides are available at an average price of 40,454 SYP/ litre, up by almost 5 percent from the previous month.

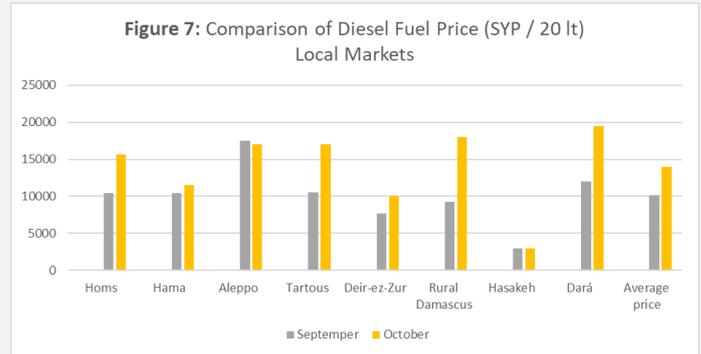
Herbicides prices remained generally stable month-on-month except for this reporting month when a 9percent increase in the average price was noted from reaching 22,744 SYP/litre. Taking into consideration that recently the Herbicide prices remain high compared to the pre-crisis situation.

For **Fungicides**, the average price of a litre increased by 7percent month-on-month, Aleppo governorate has recorded the highest price at 110,000 SYP/litre, while Tartous governorate recorded a 97,000 SYP/litre for October 2020 as highlighted in the table below.



Diesel Fuel

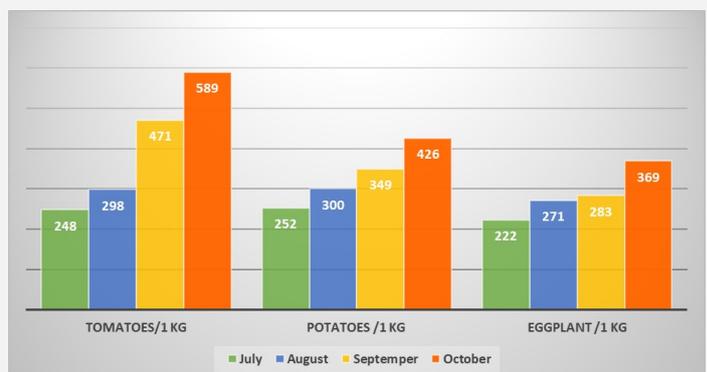
In an endeavour by the government to support agriculture, a specific amount of diesel fuel is allocated to each farmer for agriculture purposes through a supported price of 185 SYP/ litre. There was a significant month-on-month increase of 38 percent in the average diesel fuel price in the local markets. Daraa governorate recorded the highest price of diesel at 19,500 SYP for 20 litres, while the price in Al-Hasakeh was 3,000 SYP for 20 litres as well; this represents the lowest diesel fuel price across all monitored sites. It is important to note that most farmers cannot access adequate diesel fuel due to the prevailing acute fuel shortages. Most farmers across the monitored sites are relying on other sources from the market to cover the unmet diesel fuel needs at an average cost of 698 SYP/litre, which represents an average of 13,950 SYP for 20 litres across the monitored sites. FAO will closely monitor the changes in availability of fuel (and other energy sources) and subsequent price as this may have ripple effects on land preparation, subsequently, on agricultural production and processing.



Food Prices

In October, the monitored foodstuffs had increased in varying proportions, except for chicken meat price that decreased by 15percent, comparing to last month. The most significant food commodity price increase was the price of bread the main food staple for Syrians, which rose by at least 75percent, reaching an average price of 109 SYP for a packet of bread. This price is not high as bread is still one of the food commodities subsidized by the government, however; it presents a burden for large families.

The prices of summer vegetables (tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant) continued to rise due to the end of the summer season in many districts, as shown in the chart.



The price of sheep and cow milk increased by 25.71percent and 23.70percent respectively, affecting the prices of most dairy products. There are expectations that dairy products' prices will increase in the upcoming months due to the feed prices rise and the limited availability of green fodder and subsequent delay of the rainfall this winter, which has delayed rejuvenation of fresh green vegetation.

A slight increase in the prices of rice, sugar and sunflower oil, and a further increase in olive oil's average price by almost 16percent was noted. The increase in olive oil average prices may be due to the late rains, besides the recent wildfires occurred in the Coastal Region of Syria Mid-October 2020, It is predicted that olive oil's prices might increase more in the coming days and months due to the mentioned factors.



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The following table presents the comparison of average prices (monitored in October) for selected foodstuffs with the observed prices in July, August and September 2020.

Table 1: Comparison of Food Prices across 35 monitored locations from July to October 2020.

Items	OCT & SEP %	OCT & AUG %	OCT & JULY %
Bread (1 pack)	75.76	81.25	94.07
Eggplant / kg	30.12	36.17	65.71
Milk Sheep / litre	25.71	39.95	66.37
Tomatoes / kg	25.18	97.49	137.79
Milk Cow / litre	23.70	29.56	49.51
Potatoes / kg	21.91	41.91	68.85
Flour / Kg	19.26	29.59	46.68
Pack of 30 Eggs	19.00	8.08	41.79
Olive oil / litre	16.36	24.13	22.34
Sunflower oil /1 litre	11.77	17.93	17.07
Sugar / kg	9.09	7.76	8.40
Rice / Kg	4.40	5.62	7.37
Cow meat / kg	3.42	11.67	15.75
Sheep meat / kg	2.17	7.86	10.01
Chicken meat / kg	-15.10	-7.56	-1.99

Average Agriculture Inputs Price SYP											
Month	Items	Homs	Hama	Aleppo	Tartous	Deir-ez-Zur	Rural Damas-cus	Hasakeh	Dará	Average price	Average percent increase
September	Wheat seeds/ 1kg GOSM	450	450	450	450	450	-	450	-	450	0.0
October	Wheat seeds/ 1kg GOSM	450	450	450	450	450	-	450	450	450	
September	Wheat seeds /1kg local market	520	520	475	525	400	600	450	442	491	13.5
October	Wheat seeds /1kg local market	600	554	475	525	408	800	500	600	558	
September	Barley seeds/ 1 kg GOSM	200	200	200	200	200	-	200	-	200	0.0
October	Barley seeds/ 1 kg GOSM	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	
September	Barley seeds /1kg local market	294	294	450	400	263	400	230	425	345	47.2
October	Barley seeds /1kg local market	550	573	450	450	400	700	350	583	507	
September	Nitrate fertilizers /1kg, Agriculture Bank	198	198	-	200	200	200	-	195	199	7.9
October	Nitrate fertilizers /1kg, Agriculture Bank	198	193	-	200	300	200	-	195	214	
September	Nitrate fertilizers /1kg , Local Market	680	680	1,200	600	800	800	4,000	850	1,201	-16.6
October	Nitrate fertilizers /1kg , Local Market	680	1,233	1,200	1,300	800	1,200	400	1,200	1,002	
September	Phosphate fertilizers /1kg Agriculture Bank	245	245	-	240	300	240	-	240	252	-0.5
October	Phosphate fertilizers /1kg Agriculture Bank	245	237	-	240	300	240	-	240	250	
September	Phosphate fertilizers /1kg, Local Market	680	680	600	600	500	800	1,000	783	705	-2.3
October	Phosphate fertilizers /1kg, Local Market	680	750	600	800	500	900	400	883	689	
September	Average pesticides /1 liter	32,000	32,000	75,000	38,000	25,333	34,500	35,000	37,167	38,625	4.7
October	Average pesticides /1 liter	35,000	23,800	80,000	40,000	25,333	44,500	35,000	40,000	40,454	
September	Average fungicides/ 1 liter	28,000	28,000	100,000	97,000	21,333	36,250	28,000	41,833	47,552	6.7
October	Average fungicides/ 1 liter	30,800	28,800	110,000	97,000	21,333	46,250	28,000	43,667	50,731	
September	Average herbicide /1 liter	21,400	21,400	20,000	14,500	16,667	16,250	40,000	16,000	20,777	9.5
October	Average herbicide /1 liter	23,400	18,300	22,000	14,500	16,667	18,750	50,000	18,333	22,744	
September	Gallon diesel fuel(20) liters	10,400	10,400	17,500	10,500	7,667	9,250	3,000	12,000	10,090	38.3
October	Gallon diesel fuel(20) liters	15,600	11,500	17,000	17,000	10,000	18,000	3,000	19,500	13,950	

Average Food Item Price SYP											Average percent increase
Month	Items	Homs	Hama	Aleppo	Tartous	Deir-ez-Zur	Rural Damascus	Hasakeh	Dará	Average price	
September	Bread (1 pack)	65	65	70	70	50	50	75	50	62	75.8
October	Bread (1 pack)	125	105	125	115	100	100	100	100	109	
September	Flour/1 Kg	870	870	1,000	950	867	688	1,000	583	853	19.3
October	Flour/1 Kg	1,080	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,063	1,000	1,000	1,018	
September	Sugar /1Kg	1,060	1,060	1,100	1,225	1,200	1,100	1,050	1,133	1,116	9.1
October	Sugar /1Kg	1,160	1,280	1,100	1,275	1,200	1,325	1,100	1,300	1,218	
September	Rice /1 Kg	1,340	1,340	1,700	1,350	1,300	2,000	1,500	1,300	1,479	4.4
October	Rice /1 Kg	1,300	1,550	1,700	1,550	1,300	2,000	1,500	1,450	1,544	
September	Dozen Eggs	4,200	4,200	4,000	4,117	4,567	4,500	3,875	4,400	4,232	19.0
October	Dozen Eggs	5,120	4,830	5,000	5,250	5,500	5,300	4,125	5,167	5,036	
September	Milk Cow/1L	600	600	625	625	500	775	550	550	603	23.7
October	Milk Cow/1L	720	840	725	825	617	775	800	667	746	
September	Milk Sheep/1 L	-	-	1,350	750	750	-	-	767	904	25.7
October	Milk Sheep/1 L	-	1,600	1,350	-	800	-	1,000	933	1,137	
September	Chicken meat/1kg	5,720	5,720	5,000	4,250	5,000	3,500	3,400	3,500	4,511	-15.1
October	Chicken meat/1kg	4,690	3,650	4,000	3,750	5,000	3,500	2,650	3,400	3,830	
September	Sheep meat /1kg	15,600	15,600	14,750	16,500	13,333	14,750	13,000	14,667	14,775	2.2
October	Sheep meat /1kg	15,700	15,400	14,750	17,000	14,000	14,750	14,500	14,667	15,096	
September	Cow meat 1kg	13,500	13,500	13,500	14,333	14,000	12,000	13,000	12,667	13,313	3.4
October	Cow meat 1kg	14,600	13,000	13,500	14,750	14,000	12,625	14,500	13,167	13,768	
September	olive oil /1 liter	5,000	5,000	4,500	4,167	5,000	6,000	3,875	5,000	4,818	16.4
October	olive oil /1 liter	4,780	5,900	5,500	6,000	5,500	6,000	5,000	6,167	5,606	
September	Sunflower oil/1 liter	3,100	3,100	2,900	3,000	3,600	3,500	2,875	3,167	3,155	11.8
October	Sunflower oil/1 liter	3,540	3,560	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,700	2,813	3,800	3,527	
September	Tomatoes/1 kg	500	500	375	525	467	388	613	400	471	25.2
October	Tomatoes/1 kg	620	570	500	750	500	600	725	450	589	
September	Potatoes /1 kg	325	325	300	350	367	350	469	308	349	21.9
October	Potatoes /1 kg	400	410	400	425	500	388	500	383	426	
September	Eggplant /1 kg	302	302	263	300	200	300	325	275	283	30.1
October	Eggplant /1 kg	370	375	500	375	200	400	388	342	369	

ADVISE TO FOOD SECURITY SECTOR (FSS) PARTNERS

Concerning wheat flour shortages and market price volatility

What intervention options are there?

- I. To prevent further reduction in national food production and particularly shortages of wheat flour and bread, continued support to small-scale farmers in wheat production combined with other diversified edible pulses is fundamental. This should be done through provision of improved inputs, such as quality wheat and pulse seeds, to address the limited access to seed, coupled with training on good agricultural practices to increase wheat and pulse production and productivity. Pulses can be complementary food to wheat, it will also support the food insecure population with nutritional and health benefits to reduce malnutrition rates in the country.
- II. There is a need to enhance the entrepreneurship capability of farmers engaged in vegetable farming, coupled with provision of agriculture inputs and training in seedling production, agro-processing and marketing. This will contribute to increasing the availability of vegetable production inputs at a local level, therefore, it will improve the availability of fresh food, and boost the farmers' income as well.

ADVISE TO SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AND PARTNERS

Concerning the delayed rainfall onset

What are the options for farmers as a risk management measure?

As the quantity of rainfall and its distribution are very important for field crop production and livestock rearing, and based on the slight delay in the onset of the rainfall season observed during this current winter season, and also taking note that this delay will NOT automatically affect the length of the growing season or result in water deficit, farmers are encouraged to adopt Climate Risk Management (CRM) strategies as below. The proposed options are based on weather forecasts, rainfall behaviour this season and rainfall trend analysis.

- I. Farmers must consider adopting varieties that meet the requirements of the expected duration of the rainy season and check with local extension people for recommended varieties with appropriate maturity classes (i.e. early, medium and late-maturing varieties) and with lower water requirements.
- II. Farmers are encouraged to continue planting wheat and barley crops since we are still within the planting window.
- III. Securing agricultural inputs early is also vital, as this will enable farmers to maximize on the full growing season, besides assisting farmers to get the inputs at a reasonable price before peak demand.

DISCLAIMER: The information in this bulletin comes from monthly market surveys conducted informally by FAO field staff. While FAO Syria strives to provide accurate and timely early warning information, there may be slight unintended technical or factual inaccuracies. Decisions based on information contained herein are the sole responsibility of the reader.

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