


INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the first cases of COVID-19 in Libya, authorities have implemented curfews and closed all stores, apart from groceries and pharmacies. Consequently, prices for most staple goods have doubled and shortages for key items persist. REACH has conducted a rapid assessment in Libya to provide a brief city level overview of market functionality, with a focus on shortages and price spikes for basic food and hygiene items.

METHODOLOGY

This factsheet presents information gathered between March 30 and April 1 from 25 key informants (KIs) in 21 cities across Libya. Per city, one KI was interviewed, with the exception of Sebha (3), Tripoli (2), Ghadamis (2). All KIs were enumerators that usually collect data for the [Libya Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMMI\)](#), and who are familiar with market contexts.

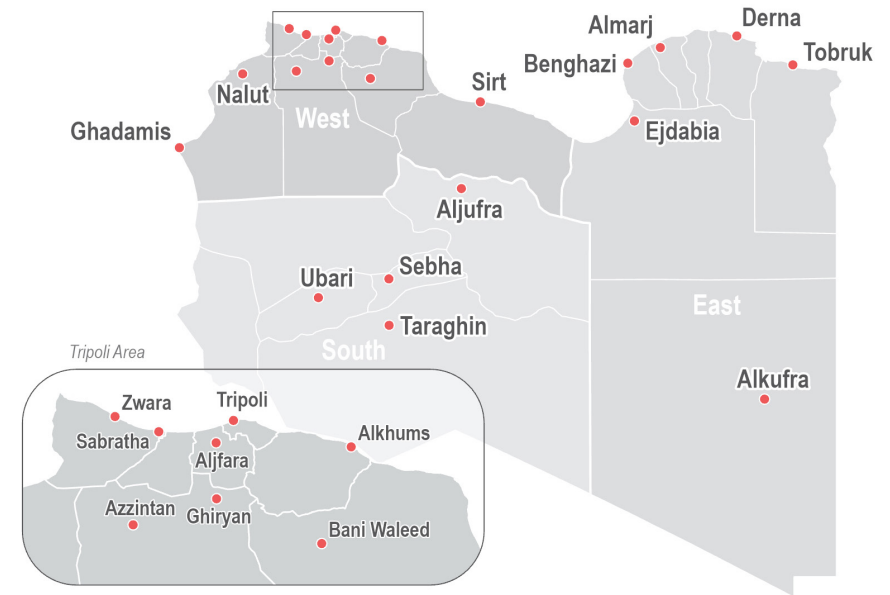
Interviews covered perceived shortages and price spikes in food, pharmaceutical and hygiene items. Price spikes were defined as more than 20% price increases, while shortages were defined as cases where stock had significantly reduced in the last 14 days to a point where supply could no longer meet demand. Where possible, KIs estimated the percentage increase in goods. Due to the limited number of KIs interviewed and the questions that were asked, findings are to be considered as indicative estimates. Full market pricing data will be available in the JMMI data set within the next week.

 **48% of assessed cities reported food shortages**
86% of assessed cities reported food price spikes

About REACH's COVID-19 response

As an initiative deployed in many vulnerable and crisis-affected countries, REACH is deeply concerned by the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the millions of affected people we seek to serve. REACH is currently working with Cash Working Groups and partners to scale up its programming in response to this pandemic, with the goal of identifying practical ways to inform humanitarian responses in the countries where we operate. COVID-19-relevant market monitoring and market assessments are a key area where REACH aims to leverage its existing expertise to help humanitarian actors understand the impact of changing restrictions on markets and trade. Updates regarding REACH's response to COVID-19 can be found in a devoted thread on the REACH website. Contact geneva@impact-initiatives.org for further information.

ASSESSED LOCATIONS



KEY TRENDS



Food prices spiked in the majority of cities directly after the COVID-19 measures were implemented. In some cities in the eastern and southern regions, authorities reportedly intervened to correct these price hikes. **Shortages of basic food items, such as eggs, vegetables and wheat products** were most frequently reported.



In terms of hygiene products, **latex gloves and masks** are commonly reported as scarce, at times also with significant price spikes. Across the country, **hand sanitizers and cleaning products** containing alcohol were also reported to be in short supply.



The most commonly reported **curfew** in the **East and South** was **3pm-7am**. In the **West**, the curfew in most cities was set from **2pm to 7am**. Some informants speculated that a 24h curfew may be implemented in the coming week. Furthermore, **access to cash continues to be poor across the entire country**, with a lack of functioning cash machines and open banks to withdraw money.



WEST LIBYA

Sabratha

In Sabratha, **staple food prices increased by at least 50%, of which vegetable prices rose by 80%**. Shortages were also reported for paracetamol, antibiotics, and Vitamin C. Common hygiene items such as hand sanitizer and latex gloves were also in short supply, with price spikes of up to 65%.

Zwara

The price of the majority of **food items were reported to have increased by 50%** and **vegetable prices by 85%**. Standard hygiene items increased by 30%, whereas latex gloves, masks and medical alcohol items have witnessed price increases of 100%. consumer behaviour, at around 100% higher than before. Shortages were reported for milk, antibiotics, masks, and hygiene products containing alcohol.

Tripoli

KIs in Tripoli did not report any food shortages, but did indicate severe shortages in medical alcohol and hand sanitizers. **Food items reportedly increased in price by about 40%**. **Hygiene items** have reportedly increased in price by at least **60%**, with price spikes for **gloves and masks** going up to **200%**.

Nalut

The KI reported shortages of couscous, rice, hand sanitizer, masks, latex gloves, and any hygiene product containing alcohol. Sharp price increases have also occurred for these products. **Price increases ranged from 50% for food products, 60% for standard hygiene items, 350% for latex**

Alkhums

Little information was provided on the market impact of COVID-19 crisis in Alkhums. However, the KI noted shortages of products containing medical alcohol.

Ghyrian

The KI in Ghyrian reported that couscous and eggs were scarce, and most staple food items experience price spikes of at least 50%. Price increases were most notable for **latex gloves and masks, with price spikes between 300% and 500%**.

Aljfara

In Aljfara, the KI claimed that only **limited price spikes (20-50%) occurred for several food items**. While food shortages had not yet occurred, there were reported shortages for soap and sanitizer. The KI also claimed that masks were in very short supply.

Ghadamis

A range of hygiene and food products, specifically wheat and vegetable items, were reported to be scarce in Ghadamis. **According to the KI, shortages were particularly notable in medical alcohol products and vegetables**. Hand sanitizer was rarely available. **Vegetable and fruit prices increased by 100-150%**. Vegetable prices could be attributed to the closure of roads to the Tripoli region. The price of gloves rose by 200%; for masks the price spike amounts to a 300% increase.

Sirt

In Sirt, the KI described how the COVID-19 outbreak led to **vegetable and other food prices to temporarily increase by 900%**. Vegetable prices were still higher than prior to the initial COVID-19 consumer behaviour, at around 100% higher than before. Shortages were reported for milk, antibiotics, masks, and hygiene products containing alcohol.

Azzintan

Covid-19 induced price hikes reportedly occurred for food (50%) and hygiene products (30-50%). **For latex gloves, prices rose by 300%**. Masks reportedly rose in price by 480%. The KI in Azzintan stated that there were shortages of couscous, eggs and chicken.

Bani Waleed

In Bani Waleed, masks and gloves were reportedly scarce. Since the start of the COVID-19 restrictions implemented by authorities, **food and hygiene items have been subject to 70-100% price spikes**. The KI also claimed that local authorities in the city have imposed a 24h curfew.





EAST LIBYA

Almarj

Since the COVID-19 measures were implemented, a range of food items in Almarj had been in short supply, including **chicken, rice, bread, water, and milk**. Accordingly, **food prices rose by as much as 900%** on some items. Shortages are also noted for cleaning products and sanitizers containing alcohol. It was stated that many of the food shortages could be attributed to consumers hoarding supplies.

Derna

The KI stated that there were only minor food shortages in Derna. More evident were the noted shortages in face masks and latex gloves. There was an initial spike in food and hygiene prices after news of the virus reached Derna. An intervention by the authorities have corrected the price increases related to COVID-19.



Benghazi

Minor shortages were reported for medical alcohol, masks, and cleaning materials. There have also been reports of minor increases in food prices.

Tobruk

According to the KI, Tobruk has not yet experienced any shortages in hygiene items. However, reported shortages in **milk and tomatoes have led to price spikes of up to 600%**. Price spikes were noted for most items, apart from bread.

Ejdabya

Shortages related to the COVID-19 crisis were reported for diapers, antibacterial soap, masks and latex gloves. The availability of pharmaceutical items, such as paracetamol and baby formula, had reportedly decreased. KIs reported that the prices of food and **pharmaceutical items initially increased by 100-300%**. After an intervention by the authorities to impose price controls, the cost of staple goods had subsided, but was still 20-30% higher than before.

Alkufra

In Alkufra, the KI reported shortages in milk and vegetable oil, as well as gloves and face masks. **Price spikes of around 50% were common for most food items.**



SOUTH LIBYA

Sebha

In Sebha, medical alcohol, masks, latex gloves, and hand sanitizer were all noted to be in short supply. One KI indicated that some hygiene items were being distributed for free by local authorities. Shortages of vegetable oil and milk were reported, **but price spikes of 20-50% were common**. KIs reported further that some fuel vendors were selling an **11 kg cylinder of cooking fuel for 300 LYD**, as compared to the median price of 100 LYD in March, or 40 LYD in January 2020. **sanitizers** were in short supply. Health centres are reportedly also struggling to obtain these items. Shortages and price spikes are expected to continue and worsen with the ongoing road closures. Many shops had been forced to close due to very minimal supply.

Ubari

Most products associated with COVID-19 protection, such as gloves and masks, are reported to be scarce in Ubari. The KI reported that prices for food items such as **vegetable oil, wheat, rice and vegetables increased by roughly 40%**. There were no reports of shortages of food yet, although shortages were feared as supplies from Sebha were seemingly decreasing.

Taraghin

Soon after news of COVID-19 reached Tragen, significant hoarding of hygiene items took place. According to the KI, latex gloves and masks were still experiencing shortages. Food products such as **oil, tomatoes, and wheat products were also claimed as scarce**. These products were approximately **50% more expensive** than before the spread of news. According to the KI, overpopulation, due to an influx of displaced families fleeing the conflict in Murzuq, likely increased Taraghin's susceptibility to shortages.

Aljufra

In Hun, Aljufra, the situation deteriorated quickly. There were reported shortages and 150% price increases for all staple food commodities. In terms of hygiene items, **masks, latex gloves, and hand sanitizers** were in short supply. Health centres are reportedly also struggling to obtain these items. Shortages and price spikes are expected to continue and worsen with the ongoing road closures. Many shops had been forced to close due to very minimal supply.



About REACH

REACH is a program of ACTED. It strengthens evidence based decision-making by humanitarian actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis in contexts of crisis. ACTED is an international NGO. Independent, private and non-profit, ACTED respects a strict political and religious impartiality, and operates following principles of non-discrimination, and transparency. Since 2011, ACTED has been providing humanitarian aid and has supported civil society and local governance throughout Libya, from its offices in Tripoli, Sebha and Benghazi.