

# Northeast Syria Flash Report

## Deterioration of the Livestock

### Feed and Fodder Market

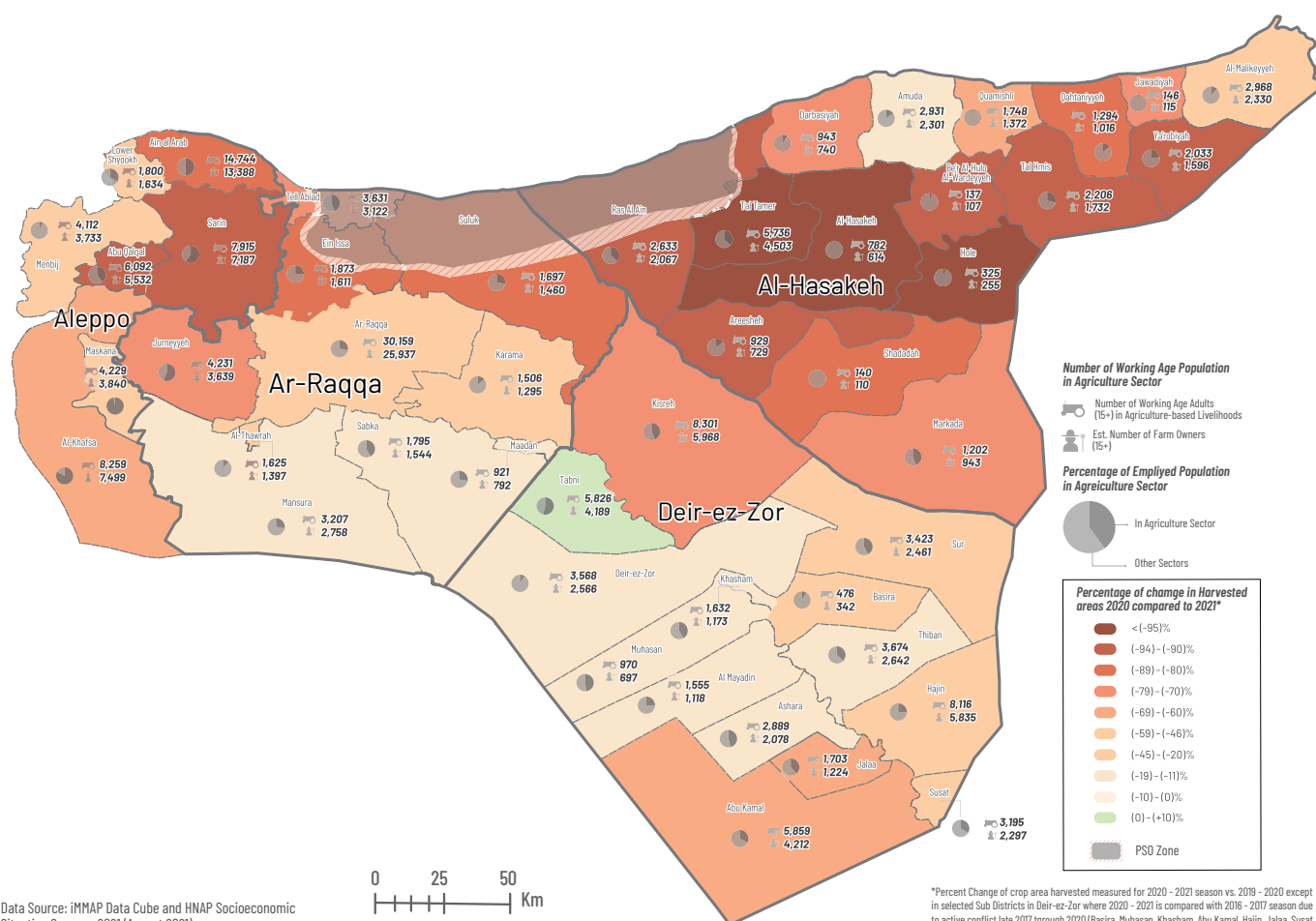
The Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group in Northeast Syria, with the support of iMAP, drafted this appeal to highlight the current troubling situation of livestock producers in Northeast Syria (NES).

## Problem Statement

The NES region has faced an unprecedented water scarcity season in 2021, and a historic shortage in rainfall levels. The impact of the water crisis was coupled with an economic one, which resulted in a series of shocks on agriculture production. Several organizations conducted assessments in 2021 that projected a catastrophic impact of water scarcity on farmers and livestock producers in the 2022 season.

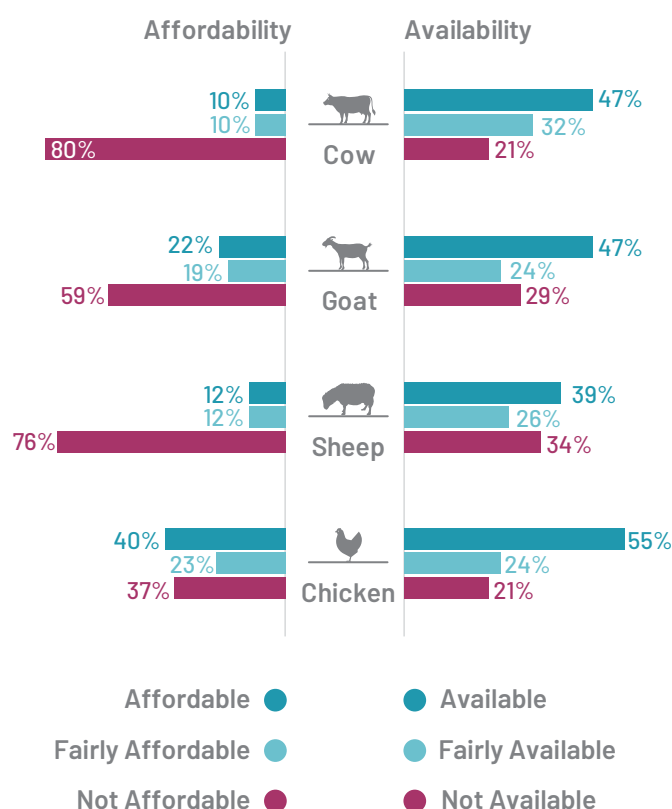
- Due in large part to failed rainfed crops, **18 sub-districts across NES recorded losses in harvested crop area of over 75% – 13 were in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, including 7 with over 90% losses – affecting an estimated 60,087 people in agriculture-based livelihoods – 50,474 of which are farm owners – and an estimated 228,496 total people in agriculture-dependent households.** – iMAP Crop Monitoring and Food Security Situation Update, October 2021–

**Map 1:** Map of Change in Total Harvested Crop Area and Agriculture-based Livelihoods in NES, 2021 versus 2020 (and 2017).



- The capacity of the Economic and Agriculture Commission (EAC), and the Agriculture Community Development Company (ACDC) in providing extension services, i.e., veterinary services and subsidized animal feed/fodder had been disrupted and failed to reach all registered livestock producers in NES in 2021. ACDC usually conducts six rounds of animal feed/ fodder distribution to registered farmers, meaning a total of six rounds per year. However, due to great shortage in feed/fodder supply ACDC completed two out of six rounds in 2021. According to recent observations by NES Food Security and Livelihood cluster members, the first round of distribution for 2021 took place at later stages in July, and the second round was conducted in the last quarter of 2021. The second round failed to cover all registered farmers and was an incomplete round of distribution. – *iMMAP Livestock Market Systems Rapid Assessment August 2021*–
- A rapid market assessment conducted by iMMAP reported farmers' high concerns towards the shortage in fodder/feed supply in the NES region. The shortage in feed/fodder supply was a result of the water crisis and decrease in the local production of animal feed/fodder raw materials, i.e., barley and corn. More than 80% of the study respondents anticipated a decrease in the livestock count per household in the next six months. – *iMMAP Livestock Market Systems Rapid Assessment August 2021*–

Figure 1: Affordability and Availability of Animal Feed – July 2021<sup>1</sup>



The above findings and other field observations from partners throughout 2021 provided strong early warnings on how the drought-like conditions and the shortage of fodder/feed supply would have a major impact on livestock production in 2022. A natural market reaction to a dramatic increase in animal feed/fodder prices is a reduction in live animal prices. This is a result of producers' inability to sustain growing their livestock and providing them with adequate nutritional and medical needs, where they lean towards selling their animals as a coping strategy. The average price of a live milking cow, live cow calf and live lamp decreased by 24%, 20%, and 38% respectively in 2021 compared to 2020.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> iMMAP (August 2021). Livestock Market Systems Rapid Assessment – Northeast Syria. [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> iMMAP (August 2021). Livestock Market Systems Rapid Assessment – Northeast Syria. [Link](#)

## What is happening now?

### High Number of Sudden Livestock Deaths and High Rates of Animal Destocking

In the first two months of 2022 the impact of feed/fodder shortage had tremendously escalated with a high number of reported sudden livestock deaths. Livestock producers are failing to provide their animals with the necessary nutrition and support needed to sustain their production. In the last two weeks of February, the FSL cluster received multiple emergency requests from the Deir ez-Zor Agriculture Department, Tabqa local authorities, and Agriculture Technical Working Group partners to mobilize efforts to support livestock producers in Northeast. The situation is forcing farmers to reach an extreme coping strategy level of selling their livestock for lower prices.

**There were several reported incidents of scabies disease outbreaks amongst sheep herds.** Since the emergency is still ongoing, the actual number or percentage of animals lost has not been determined. However, many disturbing videos and photos have spread on social media showing the devastating deaths of sheep in the countryside of Deir ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh.

### Continuous Increase of Feed/Fodder Prices in NES

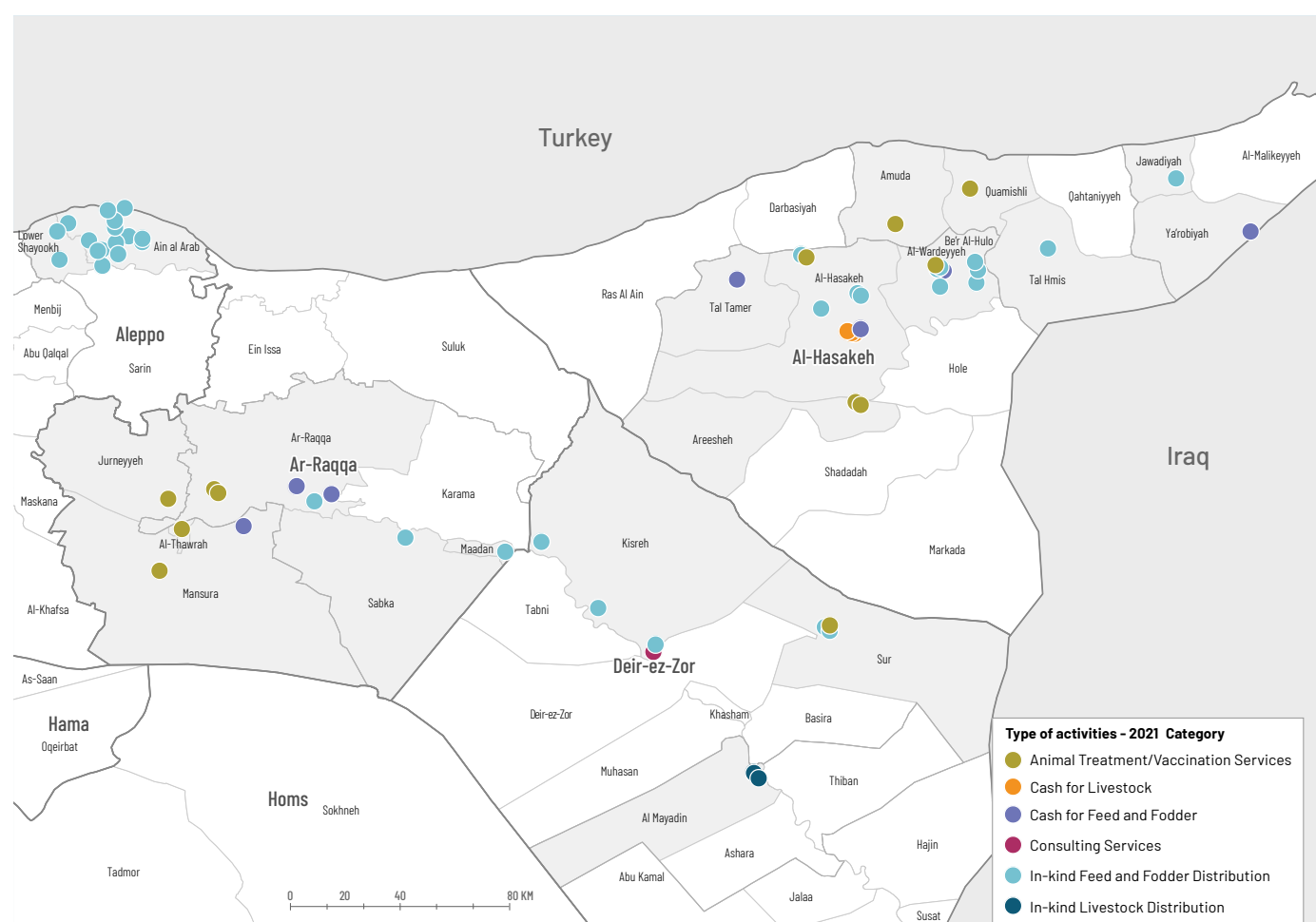
The scarcity of locally produced animal feed/fodder in the market had increased dependency on imported products. However, the prices of imported animal feed/fodder are significantly higher, putting farmers in a position of extremely limited purchasing power. The Economic and Agriculture Commission (EAC) has responded by removing taxes on imported animal feed/fodder. Despite this mitigation measure, farmers remain incapable of purchasing the quantities needed to compensate for the nutritional loss and sustain their production.

The price of one kilogram of barley reached 1,400 SYP in the black market, which is around 200% higher than the price offered by the self-administration entities.<sup>3</sup> The supply at the Agriculture Community Development Company remains incredibly low, leaving farmers with limited market options.

## What was the response by humanitarian organizations in 2021?

Organizations provided several response packages to livestock producers in NES, namely feed and fodder distribution, cash for livestock, and animal treatment services. Map 2 illustrates the geographical coverage and the type of livestock production activities conducted in 2021. The most dominant activity was the in-kind distribution of animal feed/fodder, followed by cash for livestock. Despite the organizations' efforts, clearly there are finding gaps compared to the size and spread of the water scarcity impact on livestock producers.

**Map 2:** Humanitarian Organizations Livestock Activities in NES - 2021



**In-kind and cash for feed and fodder distribution activities were implemented in 39 communities around NES with 90% of these activities conducted for one round of distribution**, where the in-kind or cash distribution amount of animal feed/fodder were mainly provided to cover the needs for three months.

The few distribution rounds by humanitarian organizations did not cover the needs gap, especially that the Agriculture Community Development Company (ACDC) was only able to conduct two incomplete rounds of feed/fodder distribution out of six.

## Livestock Emergency and Early Recovery Recommendations

Clearly there are funding gaps for livestock based-livelihood activities in NES, and there is an urgent need for a rapid response. The provision of animal feed/fodder tackles one aspect of the market system which might have an immediate to medium-term impact but does not address the root cause of the disruption in animal feed/fodder production. There is a need for a holistic intervention plan to address the different components of the livestock market system, considering the water scarcity emergency and the economic crisis. **Taking livelihood perspective in emergency response highlights the need to develop close links between relief, recovery, and development, considering emergency preparedness and post-emergency rehabilitation.** The following are a set of recommendations to respond to the current emergency and pave the way for a long-term recovery plan for sustainable livestock production in NES:

### 1) Destocking as a possible recommendation

During the slow onset of emergencies such as the water crisis and its impact on fodder, the conditions of the livestock deteriorate as feed/fodder and water become scarce. Destocking as the removal of affected animals before they become emaciated, lose their value, die, or pose a risk to public health. Destocking releases the tied value of affected animals and provides much need household income (or meat) to the vulnerable communities. Destocking protects key livestock assets by ensuring the survival of the remaining animals. Removing animals relieves pressure on the scarce feed/fodder, grazing and water supplies to the benefit of the remaining stock. As destocking involves handling, transporting and slaughtering livestock, special attention is needed to ensure animals do not suffer pain, fear or distress.

- **Commercial destocking for household income** – assist the marketing of livestock before they deteriorate in condition and value and become impossible to sell.
- **Slaughter destocking for consumption** – invariably when animals are in poor conditions and prices have collapsed. In these cases, external agencies or partners purchase animals and arrange for their humane slaughter. Fresh meat is distributed to the affected vulnerable people. Because fresh meat is perishable, immediate action must be taken to preserve it by either refrigeration, salting, boiling, or drying if it cannot be distributed on time.
- **Slaughter for disposal** – when animals are emaciated or diseased that they are unfit for human consumption, the decision is made by the relevant veterinary or public health authorities based on ante- and post-mortem inspections. In such cases, carcasses must be well disposed of, to minimize risk to public health.

**Timing of destocking interventions** – the stage of emergency usually determines the type of destocking to be undertaken (see guidance from the Livestock Emergencies Guidelines and Standards<sup>4</sup>). Removal of marketable livestock (commercial destocking) is most effective in the Alert and Alarm phase of the slow-onset emergency. Slaughter destocking invariably takes place in the late Alarm, emergency, or early recovery phases when livestock are in such poor condition that they are unmarketable.

## 2) The importance of ensuring feed/fodder supplies in emergency response

Any emergency response that aims to maintain livestock populations in an affected area must therefore make adequate provision for the continuing supply of feed/fodder resources and water. This may be particularly important in cases of water scarcity when excessive livestock deaths are due to starvation rather than diseases.

- **Options for ensuring feed/fodder supplies** – emergency feeding provides a substitute when feed/fodder resources are unavailable in adequate quantities due to an emergency. Livestock feed/fodder distribution can be guided by the local standard guidelines of livestock support through the provision of livestock kits described by the NES FSL Response packages for SO2<sup>5</sup>.
- **Emergency feeding in situ** – the feed/fodder is transported and distributed to individuals/households who collect it and take it home. Conditional cash grants and voucher schemes can be effective mechanisms for emergency feeding in situ and should be considered where markets are functioning.
- **Emergency feeding in camps** – where distribution in situ is not possible, feed camps may be established to which livestock keepers can bring their endangered livestock.

Timing of intervention on the provision of feed/fodder – emergency feeding can be implemented as a short-term measure in the emergency phases of the rapid or slow onset emergency in order to maintain the livestock assets until longer-term measures like improved local fodder production can be affected or until natural rangelands recover.

## 3) Support local feed/fodder production to initiate the long-term recovery

The link between relief and recovery needs to be planned as early as possible, to mitigate the knock-on effect of the emergency on upcoming seasons. This can be articulated by supporting the local production of animal feed/fodder raw material, i.e., barley, wheat, and soya beans.

- **Improve access to high quality and drought-tolerant varieties of fodder seeds/seedlings** – the seeds or seedlings can be distributed directly to farmers before the plantation season. Conditional cash grants and voucher schemes can be adopted to purchase seeds from reliable market outlets.
- **Promote climate smart agriculture practices** – provide training to local farmers on the adoption of adaptive climate smart agricultural practices in fodder production. Support for rainwater harvesting, irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation and establishment of hydroponics or greenhouses for improved fodder and barley production are some of the interventions that can address the challenges of climate induced aridity that usually limit the local production of fodder and barley.

**Timing of supporting local feed/fodder production**– support to farmers needs to be aligned with the planting season of the feed/fodder key raw materials (i.e., barley and wheat). The planting of wheat and barley starts in the last quarter of the year (winter season).