

# Why tumultuous Tunisian tuna prices are troubling.

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07/13/2023



A Tunisian fisherman smoking while refueling his boat outside of Bizerte, Tunisia in 2016

Jacob Saggers – A recent New York Times [article](#) reports on an increase in tuna prices and lower quality imported tuna product in Tunisia. The situation poses many questions as to how the country ended up here. Tuna is deeply embedded within Tunisian cuisine yet holds further significance as it represents a possible forthcoming economic crisis. A cost-of-living crisis, worldwide inflation, food product shortages, and fiscal policy mismanagement are all factors in the problem, but supply chain issues hold the most influence. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, shortages of grain, cooking oil, and other items have become increasingly prevalent in North Africa due to their dependence on trade networks.

[Networks](#) are a combination of nodes that support their function. Networks tend to transcend national boundaries and can be a benefit or threat to countries. The term is broad but includes economic trade and shipping. Generally, networks are not frequently thought about until existing nodes become disrupted; such as the places where crops are grown or the ports from where they are exported. War or natural disasters are examples of events that disrupt network chains. Tunisia's food supply is diminishing from disrupted networks, and state policy prevents sufficient domestic wheat from being grown. Hence, the current government is facing a challenge to its legitimacy and power.

Kais Saied was elected President of Tunisia in 2019. In 2021, protests over the state of the economy, and a strong response by the police, led to Saied dismantling parliament and democratic institutions. This has largely gone unnoticed in the international community. Most Western attention is on democracy, but it has overshadowed more troublesome economic woes.

The West's fixation on ideology underscores economic issues that have more immediate effects on a country and individuals. The current regime's legitimacy in the 2019 election comes from populist ideals and economic promises. If an IMF bailout and crisis ensue, then the president has lost part of his credibility in power. A political crisis among an economic one could create further instability and send millions into poverty. Furthermore, democratic progress since the Arab Spring could be lost because of unresolved and ignored economic problems. Meanwhile, traditional dishes with tuna survive but are becoming more out of reach for the public.

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