

Monthly Update on Milk for WFP Syria's School Meal Programme

March 2018

Background

Since August 2014, WFP Syria, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, has been implementing a school meals programme aimed at encouraging enrolment and regular attendance among pre-primary and primary school children in Syria. Initially providing fortified date bars only, thanks to a generous contribution from the European Commission, starting in the 2016-17 school year, WFP introduced UHT milk of European Union origin as part of the meal provided to children.

Due to operational challenges linked to the nature of the commodity as well as the challenging context in Syria, WFP maintains the possibility of channeling part of the milk quantities through the General Food Assistance (GFA) programme as a contingency measure.

Implementation to date

Arrival of milk shipments

Out of the total of 19,245 mt of milk procured from European milk suppliers, WFP has received 17,768.13 mt in country. These include packaging of 200 ml, 330 ml and 1 litre of milk.

Among the quantities of milk arrived in country, 14,632.523 mt have so far received positive lab test results and were cleared for onward dispatch.

WFP expects the final shipments of the remaining milk quantities to arrive in early April 2018 – a total of 1,477.49 mt. With an average of 21 days to receive the positive lab test results, these last quantities are expected to be ready for dispatch during late April and May.

Expected milk shipment	
	Qty-mt
Milk received in country as of April	17,768.13
Milk expected in April	1,477.49
Total milk procured	19,245

Dispatches to schools

During March, WFP dispatched 3,886.399 mt of milk to schools in Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous governorates. These quantities are estimated to benefit 314,432 children, based on a daily ration per child of 400 ml of milk (two packs of 200 ml) or 330 ml.

Dispatches under the GFA programme

In addition, WFP dispatched 1,904.068 mt of milk under the GFA programme, benefiting some 148,057 children in vulnerable households supported by WFP with monthly food assistance, covering a daily consumption per child of 400 ml. The children were reached through WFP's GFA programme in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, As-Sweida, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Lattakia, Quneitra, Rural Damascus, and Tartous governorates. Within the framework of the GFA programme, milk was also allocated to the comprehensive response

that WFP has provided to the dire humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus, and Afrin in northern Aleppo governorate.

This represents the first allocation of milk to the GFA programme since the start of the 2017-2018 school year, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the total 19,245 mt of milk procured for the 2017-2018 school year.

As mentioned in previous updates, the allocation of milk through GFA is being made in light of a large amount of milk quantities cleared at the same time and the limited absorption capacity of schools within one month. Given the short shelf life of the relative sensitive commodity, the allocation of milk to GFA also takes into account the issue of the Best Before Date (BBD) to avoid commodity losses. Operational and logistical issues also might play a role.

Combining dispatches to schools and under the GFA programme, a total of 11,644.174 mt of milk were dispatched since December 2017, benefitting an estimated 462,489 children in 12 governorates.

Milk dispatches		
	Dispatched to Schools (mt)	Allocated to GFA (mt)
Quantity of milk dispatched in March	3,886.399	1,904.068
Number of children benefitting from the dispatched milk in March	314,432	148,057
Cumulative quantity dispatched since the beginning of the 2017-18 school year	9,740.106	1,904.068
Remaining quantities to be dispatched as part of the 2017-18 school year	7,600.826	

Planning ahead

Reaching more school children

WFP is in the process of identifying additional schools benefitting from the milk under the school meals programme. Additional schools are considered in Hama, Homs, Latakia, and Rural Damascus governorates. Already as of February, WFP increased the number of schools in Aleppo governorate, which have since then been receiving the fortified milk for their school children.

The proposed list of new schools is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, while it was already discussed and approved by the Ministry of Education.

With the identification of the additional schools, WFP expects that all the remaining milk quantities (some 7,600 mt) will be dispatched under the school meals programme during April and May. Accordingly, no further distribution of milk through GFA is expected, though operational conditions on the ground may change.

Sensitization efforts

To ensure a successful implementation of the milk project, WFP conducts extensive sensitization targeting all stakeholders involved in the transportation, storage and distribution

of milk. This includes trainings and briefing sessions for relevant focal points of the local Departments of Education, as well as cooperating partners implementing the milk project under WFP's GFA programme. The sensitization aims at ensuring that beneficiaries are duly informed about the milk distribution.

Additional sensitization measures include the display of posters and banners at relevant GFA distribution sites, informing families on the correct usage and consumption of the fortified milk, e.g. to benefit children between the age of 6-12 years. As a precautionary measure, to avoid any misuse of the milk, WFP targets only families eligible under the GFA programme with children older than 2 years of age. Through these efforts, WFP also pre-empts the risk of milk being used as a breastfeeding substitute. WFP's established vulnerability criteria to identify eligible families under the GFA programme ensure the assistance reaches the most vulnerable Syrian families.

Coordination

WFP continues to use its internal coordination mechanisms to ensure the successful implementation of the milk project. In addition, WFP maintains its regular meetings with the ECHO TA in Damascus, which includes briefings on the part of WFP technical experts, to discuss progress and any other occurring issues.