

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

April 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

As of mid-April, all procured milk has arrived in country. Out of the 19,246.23 mt of milk procured, 17,548.773 mt have so far received positive lab test results and were cleared for onward dispatch.

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.

Milk Shipments	
	Qty-mt
Total milk procured and received in country	19,246.23
Total quantities cleared	17,548.77
Pending clearance	1,697.45

Dispatches to schools

During April, WFP dispatched 4,831 mt of milk to schools in Aleppo, As-Sweida, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, Rural Damsacus, and Tartous governorates.¹ These quantities are estimated to benefit 390,885 children, based on a daily ration per child of 400 ml of milk.

Milk dispatches		
	Dispatched to Schools (mt)	Allocated to GFA (mt)
Quantity of milk dispatched in April	4,831.338	1,904.068
Number of children benefitting from the dispatched milk in March	390,885	148,057
Cumulative quantity dispatched since the beginning of the 2017-18 school year	14,571.444	1,904.068

¹The exact quantity of milk dispatched in April is pending final confirmation and is likely to increase by approximately 900 mt once confirmed. The unconfirmed figure for dispatches of milk in April is 5,759.489 mt.

Finalisation of the milk project

As of the beginning of May, WFP has dispatched some 17,400 mt of milk during the 2017-2018 school year, with 1,850 mt of milk remaining to be dispatched by the end of May 2018. On average, WFP has been dispatching 200-300 mt of milk per day to schools during April.

Within the coming weeks, WFP is planning to distribute approximately 1,500 mt of milk for vulnerable primary school children who benefit from homeschooling at social centers (childcare centers, youth centers, orphanages, and centers for children with special needs, among others) in Damascus and Rural Damascus governorates. The planned dispatches will be conducted in mid-May and will benefit approximately 35,000 children.

While the 2017-2018 academic school year in Syria ends on 10 May, WFP, together with the Ministry of Education, has identified eligible schools organizing an extension of the school year for primary school children to catch up on missed classes. This plan includes an allocation of 550 mt of milk to schools offering these make-up classes in Aleppo and Rural Damascus, and will benefit some 40,000 children.

WFP, together with the Ministry of Education, has previously been able to extend its initial plans for the school meals programme on several occasions, by identifying new eligible schools to benefit from the fortified milk.

The above mentioned plans exceed the quantity of milk remaining to be distributed to children in Syria. However, they will allow for flexibility in the complex operational environment in Syria, in case of access restrictions and if approvals for some locations are not received. WFP also maintains the option of dispatching milk under the GFA programme, should any of the above plans not materialize and approvals not received. WFP has already put in place preparedness measures to dispatch milk under GFA to vulnerable families with school-aged children. These measures can quickly be activated, thanks to WFP's flexible supply chain set-up. However, dispatches to schools are the preferred option.

Achievements

Within the 2017-2018 academic year, WFP has so far reached about 540,000 children in 12 of Syria's 14 governorates. Children were reached under the school meals programme and through the general food assistance programme (GFA) in areas accessible from inside Syria.

The overwhelming majority of children aged 6-12 years were reached through the school meals programme. The allocation of milk under GFA has so far only accounted for 10 percent of the total quantity of milk procured for the 2017-2018 school year.

Coordination

With the milk project coming to an end in May, WFP is using its internal coordination mechanisms to ensure the successful implementation of the project. 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.