

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

January 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 reallocating part of the milk quantities to the General Food Assistance (GFA) programme as a contingency measure.

Implementation to date

Arrival of milk shipments

WFP has procured some 19,248 mt of milk, which includes packaging of 200 ml, 330 ml and of 1 litre.

As of the end of January, WFP has received a total of 8,506.378 mt of milk in country, out of which 5,234.458 mt of milk arrived in Syria during January. Out of the total quantities of milk received so far, 2,593.980 mt received positive lab test results and were cleared for dispatch to schools.

With an average of 21 days to receive the positive lab test results, the quantities that arrived in January are expected to be ready for dispatch to schools between mid-February to early March. Since WFP received approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to dispatch milk directly after receipt of the positive lab test results and before receipt of the original shipping documents (see December update), the dispatches to schools are more predictable and can be scheduled in a more comprehensive manner.

As for the quantities expected to arrive in Syria in the next months, please see below table.

Expected milk shipment	
	Qty-mt
Milk received in country as of January	8,506.38
Milk expected in February	3,700
Milk expected in March	6,600
Milk expected in April	441.79
Total milk procured	19,248.17

Dispatches to schools

During January, WFP dispatched 1,829.44 mt of milk to schools in Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, and Rural Damascus governorates. All quantities dispatched were of the 200 ml packaging size. These quantities are estimated to benefit 148,013 school children, based on a daily ration per child of 400 ml of milk (two packs of 200 ml).

This brings the cumulative quantity of milk dispatched to schools so far to 2,012.005 mt, benefitting an estimated 171,335 children.¹

Milk Dispatches	
	Dispatched to Schools (MT)
Quantity of milk dispatched in January	1,829.44
Number of children benefitting from the dispatched milk in January	148,013
Cumulative quantity dispatched since the beginning of the 2017-18 school year	2,012.005

Planning ahead

In line with plans, WFP foresees that the large majority of the procured milk will be distributed as part of the school meals programme. However, WFP faced delays in the implementation of the project so far for this academic year, which were caused by the revision of the official Syrian specifications for milk, affecting the timely procurement process of milk from the European market. In addition, bureaucratic challenges prolonged the clearance of shipments that have arrived in Syria (mainly affecting the first shipments that arrived in November). Hence, it was not until the end of December that a significant quantity of milk was ready for dispatch to schools. As a result, the implementation of the milk project could not start in October 2017, as initially planned for, hence the majority is now being implemented between January-May 2018. In order to ensure all the available and incoming quantities are distributed ahead of their Best Before Date (BDD) and to avoid any commodity losses, it is currently expected that an estimated amount of 5,000 mt of milk will be distributed for children as part of the GFA programme. This represents 26 percent of the total milk commodity.

Any allocation to GFA will be based on the consideration of a number of factors, including operational and logistical issues, school absorption capacity in the various geographical areas and BDD dates. The reallocated quantities will be distributed for children of vulnerable households already targeted through GFA.

The delays faced in the initial procurement of the milk for the academic year 2017-2018 have resulted in the total quantities of milk commodity arriving during a truncated time period, leading to a more concentrated implementation cycle. However, it should be noted that WFP has put in place contractual arrangements ensuring adequate logistics capacities to scale up milk dispatches as required in the coming weeks and months. As such, WFP's logistics unit has an uplifting capacity of 300 mt per day, and 9,000 mt per month, meaning that these quantities can be dispatched from warehouses to their destined location on a daily and monthly basis. Accordingly, dispatches of the sensitive milk commodity can be initiated quickly upon requirement.

Due to the substantial uplift capacity and detailed implementation plans for both the school meals programme and allocation to GFA, WFP is currently on track to meet the goals of the project within the allocated timeframe (until 31 May 2018).

Coordination of the milk project

WFP has several internal coordination mechanisms to ensure the successful implementation of the milk project. This includes

¹ The final confirmed dispatches for December are 182,565 mt.

- Bi-weekly meeting of supply chain, budget and programming, and programme units based in Damascus, and staff based in HQ and at the ports in Syria and Beirut, connected via teleconference, to discuss progress and potential challenges;
- Issuance of a daily milk report, capturing all shipments arrived in country, their status in terms of clearance (legalisation process and lab test), and dispatch status to warehouses or schools, as well as the estimated time of arrival of new shipments, among others;
- Regular follow-up and coordination discussions between programme and supply chain unit.

In addition, WFP holds monthly meetings with the ECHO TA in Damascus, usually in between the Monthly Update on Milk for WFP Syria's School Meal Programme, provided to ECHO HQ in Brussels, to discuss progress and any other occurring issues.