

Milk contribution from the European Union

WFP Syria

Update as of 1 February 2017

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1. Background, Receipts and Distributions to Date

The objective for the project is to distribute the milk in the WFP supported schools together with the fortified date bars across two academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). WFP's school activities take place in schools located in areas that have a high prevalence of food insecurity, high number of IDPs and low education indicators; during 2017 the programme aims to reach up to 750,000 children. The project is in line with the objectives of the European Commission's Implementing Decision (ECHO/-ME/BUD/2016/01000), *Financing the distribution of dairy products as part of the response to humanitarian crises from the general budget of the European Union*, which state that "The humanitarian actions financed under this Decision shall be implemented in order to address food and nutrition needs of internally displaced persons, refugees and other vulnerable people affected by humanitarian crises" (article 2(1)).

According to Syrian regulations, it is generally not permitted to import liquid milk into Syria from non-Arabic countries and WFP therefore had to work with all relevant authorities to obtain an exemption and pave the way for the generous contribution from the European Union. Nonetheless, despite the obtained approvals, the milk still had to undergo extensive testing as outlined in Section 3. Prior to the departure of the vessel from the countries of origin, the producers also had to comply with documentation requirements as outlined in Section 2.

Preliminary plans had called for the first batch of milk to arrive at the port of Lattakia in Syria by mid-August in time for the commencement of the new academic year in September. However, due to challenges faced with Syrian customs regulations, the first shipment did not arrive into Lattakia until the latter half of October 2016. Syria has a strong regulatory framework related to food, and therefore

upon arrival into Syria, the UHT milk underwent thorough testing (details in Section 3) before it was possible to transfer the milk to WFP warehouses in late November.

The quantities received by month are outlined below; however, the month refers to when the batch is received at the port level, not when all required testing had been completed and the commodities transferred to WFP warehouses for onward dispatch. It should be noted that WFP is not allowed to move the commodities from the port to WFP's warehouses until all documents have been properly legalized and submitted to the veterinary directorate.

Month	Net quantity received (MT) as of 30 January 2017
October	1,496.668
November	1,047.857
December	740.139
January	1,220.228
Total	4,504.892

The first quantities received in October and November were scheduled for almost immediate distribution. However, due to the aforementioned delays, some of the quantities were no longer compliant with Syrian regulations, which have two stipulations related to shelf life:

- 1) The shelf life of UHT milk in Syria is six months compared to nine months in European Union countries; and
- 2) Food items such as UHT milk need to arrive in Syria with at least half of its shelf life remaining.

The majority of the milk that arrived in the first batches had a "best by date" of late January or early February and consequently was not compliant with Syrian regulations. As a consequence of the short shelf life of the initial batches, WFP was negotiating and dealing with no less than six different governmental ministries, the Prime Minister's office as well as departments at the governorate level. Actors included Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Local Administration, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms, Ministry of Internal Trade, and the Customs Department of the Ministry of Finance which enforces the food import laws amongst other key actors.

Following extensive efforts, the milk was approved for usage despite the shorter shelf life. Hence, distributions started in the schools during December as seen in the photo as well as in the larger photo gallery in Annex 4. During December 2016 and January 2017, an estimated 239,000 children in four different governorates (Damascus, Tartous, Hama and Homs) received milk together with the fortified date bars. A carton with 200 ml of UHT milk provides 120 kcal, while an 80 g fortified date bar provides 340 kcal for a combined 460 kcal per school day or almost 30 percent of the daily energy requirement for school children of that age.



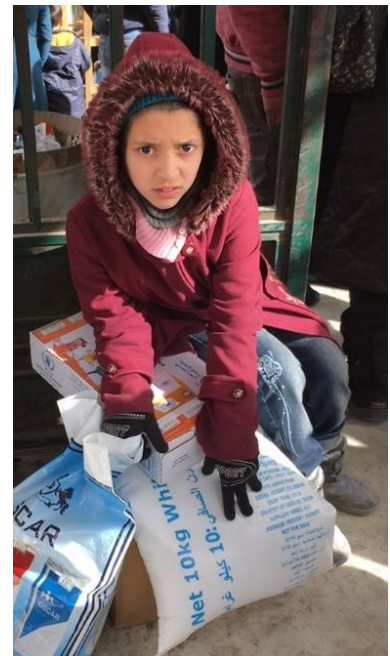
In spite of the successful distributions, there were concerns that WFP would not be able to distribute all the milk with a “best by date” of late January or early February, particularly as Syrian schools observe a winter break during the month of January. This prompted the need to identify an alternative way of distributing the milk to school age children to avoid any possible destruction of the commodities and to ensure effective use of the contribution. Following extensive consultations with WFP’s nutrition advisor and the Nutrition Sector, a decision was reached to include some of the milk into its standard food rations to reach families with children with the understanding that the distribution of milk under the general food assistance (GFA) modality is likely to be a one-off mitigation action as a direct response to an unforeseen circumstance.

WFP, as an active participant in the Nutrition Sector, is cognizant of the potential risk of milk being utilized as breast milk substitute. Hence, the situation was shared with the Sector, and in close coordination and agreement with the Sector a number of preventive measures were put in place to minimize the risk and to ensure that the donation would be used only by the intended beneficiaries, i.e. children between the ages of five and 12. The following measures were implemented to sensitize both the partners that would distribute the food rations as well as the families that would receive the milk.

- Large adhesive labels advising the specific age group targeted by the milk were placed on each distributed carton of milk. The label used both visual and written communication in Arabic stating that the milk is only to be consumed by children between five and 12 years of age. The label can be seen in the photo as well as in Annex 1.
- WFP’s cooperating partners carrying out the actual distributions were sensitized by WFP staff, so that they in turn could advise beneficiaries on the proper usage of the milk. WFP staff maintained a high level of vigilance at the distribution points in Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Tartous to ensure that beneficiary families received clear instructions.
- Regular post distribution monitoring is ongoing and will also follow-up on compliance with distribution protocols.

To date, the majority of this milk has been used for the response in Aleppo, where WFP has scaled up its response to the dire situation in the city following the siege and long unrest. An estimated 145,000 children have so far benefitted from the distributions done within the framework of GFA. While distribution to children within the framework of the GFA programme was not covered by the proposal, it is nonetheless in line with the objectives stated in the European Commission’s Implementing Decision focusing on vulnerable Syrians.

A summary of receipts to date as well as distributions in schools and through general food assistance can be seen in the table below.



Details		Quantity (in MT)	Percentage
Total quantity of milk received as of 31 January		4,484.889	
Total quantity of milk distributed in schools		1,082.860	24%
Damascus	543.624		
Tartous	160.131		
Homs	267.865		
Hama	111.240		
Total quantity distributed to children age 5-12 under general food assistance (GFA)		405.524	9%
Aleppo	200.000		
Tartous	80.000		
Homs	6.137		
Lattakia	119.387		
Quantity still remaining to be distributed		2,988.462	67%

The quantity that still remains to be distributed as of 31 January has vastly different expiry dates (as seen in Annex 2). All quantities with an expiry date of 12 February and onward will be distributed within the framework of the school meals programme.

2. Documentation Process

There is an extensive documentation process required in order to bring the milk to Syria. As per the agreement, the milk was procured in Ireland and Portugal respectively.

For the shipment from Ireland, both the shipment documents and commercial documents need to be stamped by the following authorities in the exact order:

- 1) The company in Ireland;
- 2) Chamber of Commerce of Ireland;
- 3) Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce in Ireland;
- 4) Union Chamber of Commerce in Damascus; and
- 5) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Damascus

For the milk shipment from Portugal two parallel processes must take place: one for shipping documents, and another for the commercial invoices, as the shipment originates from Portugal, while the supplier is registered in the Netherlands. The approval process (legalization) is as follows:

For the shipping documents (from Lactogal)

- 1) The company in Portugal;
- 2) Chamber of Commerce in Portugal;
- 3) Arab-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce in Portugal;

- 4) MOFA in Portugal;
- 5) Syrian Embassy in France (this Embassy covers Portugal);
- 6) Union Chamber of Commerce in Damascus; and
- 7) MOFA in Damascus

For the commercial invoices (from Hoogwegt)

- 1) The company (Hoogwegt) in the Netherlands;
- 2) Chamber of Commerce of the Netherland;
- 3) MOFA in the Netherlands;
- 4) Syrian Embassy in Brussels (this Embassy covers the Netherlands);
- 5) Union Chamber of Commerce in Damascus, and
- 6) MOFA in Damascus

3. Testing of UHT Milk

As explained in Section 1, imported UHT milk is subject to an extensive regime of tests to ensure adequate food safety measures. The types of tests can be grouped into three different categories as illustrated in the table below.

Physical tests	Chemical tests	Microbiological tests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organoleptic characteristics: smell, color, taste, texture, impurities and foreign matter • Filling size • Shelf life • Markings • Fungi visual test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat content • Non-fat solids • Acidity • Alcohol test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total plate count • Salmonella • Coliforms

The required microbiological testing of UHT milk requires at least 21 days at the laboratory in Syria.

In recognition of the extensive testing regime and strict Syrian standards and regulations, the Food Quality & Safety team located at WFP's regional bureau in Cairo and at headquarters in Rome developed a detailed specification sheet for UHT milk to be imported into Syria. The document can be seen in Annex 3.

4. Mitigation Measures and Way Forward

Based on the lessons learned from the initial received batches, WFP has already taken several steps to mitigate any further challenges.

The Syria Country Office is currently in dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to:

- Streamline and clarify the documentation requirement for the legalization process;

- Reduce some steps to shorten the overall processing time; and
- Adopt the European standard shelf life for milk (nine months) rather than the Syrian standard shelf life (six months) for the milk donated by the European Union to WFP's operations in Syria.

Furthermore, as highlighted in Section 2, WFP Syria is currently engaged in discussions with the two suppliers in order to:

- Provide consignments in large lots with the same expiry date, rather than numerous small lots of varying expiry dates which cause significant delays due to the extensive testing regime (as can be seen in Annex 2, the current stock has 46 different expiry dates); and
- Improve the consistency and accuracy of documentation to avoid delays in custom clearance process.

Another important step has been the development of the specification sheet to ensure that suppliers are fully aligned and aware of all Syria standards and regulations.

Annex 1: Label placed on milk cartons included in GFA

هذا الحليب
مخصص فقط للأطفال
من عمر 5 إلى 12 سنة



Annex 2: Consignments and Expiry Dates

	Expiry date	Qty (MT)
January	24-Jan-17	0.667
	29-Jan-17	0.667
February	12-Feb-17	17.336
	18-Feb-17	1.068
	19-Feb-17	29.907
March	10-Mar-17	12.817
	19-Mar-17	8.668
	20-Mar-17	117.485
	21-Mar-17	141.720
	22-Mar-17	109.258
	23-Mar-17	89.999
	25-Mar-17	45.342
	26-Mar-17	33.506
April	1-Apr-17	80.063
	5-Apr-17	181.500
	6-Apr-17	18.681
	13-Apr-17	10.679
	14-Apr-17	14.658
	15-Apr-17	54.017
	16-Apr-17	116.728
	17-Apr-17	39.341
	28-Apr-17	2.001
	29-Apr-17	80.016
	30-Apr-17	108.021
May	1-May-17	100.686
	2-May-17	72.680
	3-May-17	79.004
	4-May-17	100.903
	5-May-17	65.721
	6-May-17	71.098
	17-May-17	7.335
	18-May-17	110.633
	19-May-17	99.352
	20-May-17	47.342
	21-May-17	110.723
	22-May-17	96.625

	23-May-17	80.646
	24-May-17	73.408
June	6-Jun-17	38.676
	7-Jun-17	90.022
	8-Jun-17	73.352
	9-Jun-17	7.334
	10-Jun-17	100.692
	11-Jun-17	102.026
	12-Jun-17	58.015
	13-Jun-17	88.688
Total		2,989.107

Annex 3: WFP Specifications for UHT Milk

Technical Specifications for UHT MILK

Specification code: **DAIMLK010**

Version: **V16.0**

Date of issue: **01/06/2016**

Developed: [REDACTED]

Reviewed: [REDACTED]

Approved: [REDACTED]

*V16.0 is the 1st version of WFP
specification for Sterilized milk*

1. SCOPE

This standard prescribes the requirements for **UHT milk** that WFP receives from donors or purchases then distributes to beneficiaries.

2. STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The specification of UHT milk was elaborated after consulting the standards of potential recipient countries, of international regulations and the requirements of country of origins. Since the standards and regulations of countries of origins (such as EU countries) and recipient countries are quite variable, the first version of the specification illustrates principle requirements and controls to ensure that the products will be accepted by main potential recipient countries. Further update would be conducted to make the specification fully fit for WFP operations.

The following referenced standards are indispensable for the application of this specification. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced standard (including any amendments) applies.

- CAC/MRL 02-2006, Maximum residue limits for veterinary drugs in foods
- CAC/RCP 57, Code of hygiene practice for milk and milk products
- CODEX STAN 1: General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods
- CODEX STAN 192, Codex general standard for food additives
- CODEX STAN 193, Codex general standard for contaminants and toxins in foods
- CODEX STAN 206, General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms
- Milk and Milk products_ Codex second edition, 2011.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Products

Products are Sterilized Milk that are covered by the provision of this specification.

3.2 Raw cow milk

The normal mammary secretion of cow obtained from one or more milkings without either addition to it or extraction from it, intended for consumption as liquid milk or for further processing.

3.3 Homogenization

Process by which milk fat globules are finely divided and interspersed to form a homogeneous product so as to prevent the fat from floating on the surface and adhering to the inside of the container.

3.4 Commercial sterilization

The application of heat at high temperatures for a time sufficient to render milk or milk products commercially sterile, thus resulting in products that are safe and microbiological stable at room temperature.

4. PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

4.1 General requirements

4.1.1 Contaminant

The products covered by this specification shall comply with the Maximum Levels for contaminants that are specified for the product in the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995).

The milk used in the manufacture of the products covered by this specification shall comply with the Maximum Levels for contaminants and toxins specified for milk by the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995) and with the maximum residue limits for veterinary drug residues and pesticides established for milk by the CAC.

4.1.2 Hygiene

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this specification be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CAC/RCP 1-1969), the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products* (CAC/RCP 57-2004) and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice. The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods* (CAC/GL 21-1997).

4.1.3 Food additives

No additives are allowed.

4.1.4 Fit for human consumption guarantee

Suppliers shall have to check the quality of the products and guarantee that the products covered by the provision of this specification are '**fit for human consumption**'.

4.2 Specific requirements

4.2.1 Product type

The products shall be made from cow milk that is homogenised, standardised to a specific level of fat and processed to be commercially sterile. Fat level and type of milk (Full fat milk, Fat reduced milk, or Fat free milk) are specified in the contract.

4.2.2 Characteristics

The products shall also comply with all requirements from table 1.

4.2.3 Shelf life

The products shall retain table 1 qualities for at least 6 months from date of manufacture when stored dry at ambient temperatures prevalent in the country of destination.

5. PACKAGING

The products covered by the provision of this specification must be packed in appropriate packaging which safeguard the hygienic, nutritional, technological, and organoleptic qualities of the product. The containers, including packaging material, shall be made of substances which are safe and suitable for their intended use. They should not impart any toxic substance or undesirable odour or flavour to the product.

5.1 Primary packaging

Unless otherwise specified in the contract, the products shall be packed in only one type of packaging such as Tetra Pak® Aseptic, Combibloc® Aseptic, or equivalent. Net volume and any additional requirement are specified in the contract. Filled Milk should occupy at least 90% of the internal volume capacity of the packing unit.

5.2 Secondary packaging

The cartons used to pack the primary packaging of the products shall be fit for export and multiple-harsh handling. The cartons for 15kg of products (including primary packaging) should meet the following requirements:

- Number of ply: 5
- Total grammage: MIN. 870 gsm
- Edge Crush Test: MIN. 12 kN/m

Carton must be fully filled and glued. Secondary packaging (e.i. cartons with full product) must pass the drop test as per ISTA 2A standard (after each drop, there shall be no rupture or loss of contents).

Two percent empty, marked cartons (included in the price) must be sent with the lot.

Unless fully shrink wrapped pallets are used, dunnage (of strong sheets such as carton, plywood, etc.) should be placed inside each container at every three layers of cartons to provide the required stacking strength. In addition protecting material like air bag, carton, polystyrene, can be used.

Note: For shipping containers, unless fully shrink wrapped pallet are used, and unless otherwise specified in the contract, kraft paper must be adhered to all internal sides, door, and floor of container. Kraft paper also need to be placed on the top of packaging. Desiccant needs to be placed/laid in container at appropriate

location in order to absorb moisture. Supplier needs to use high quality desiccant and calculate the quantity of desiccant based on:

- Efficiency of desiccant*
- Length of time in transit in container*
- Container capacity*

Supplier needs to provide in the offer the type of desiccant and quantity to be used for the consignment. If silica gel is used, 15 bags of at least 1 kg each must be placed in each 20 feet container.

6. MARKING

The making of the products shall comply with the provisions of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) and the General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms (CODEX STAN 206-1999).

Unless otherwise specified in the contract, the products covered by the provision of this specification must have below making:

- Name of the product (*as per contract requirement*)
- Net content (ml)
- Name and address of the supplier (including country of origin)
- Production lot
- Production date
- Best use before date / expiration date (*as per contract requirement*)
- Recommended storage condition: stored dry at ambient temperatures

Additional marking is as per contractual agreement.

7. STORING

The products shall be stored under dry, ventilated and hygienic conditions and far from all source of contaminations.

8. ANALYTICAL REQUIREMENTS

As per contractual agreement, WFP will appoint an inspection company that will check if quality and characteristics of the products match the requirements specified in table 1. Additional tests may be defined in case further quality assessment is required. The tests in table 1 will be performed in addition to analysis performed by supplier according to his own sampling plan.

Table 1: List of compulsory tests and reference methods

No	Tests	Requirements			Reference methods (Or equivalent, latest version)
		<i>Full fat milk</i>	<i>Fat reduced milk</i>	<i>Fat free milk</i>	
1	Fat (% , m/m)	MIN. 3.0	0.5 – 3.0	MAX. 0.5	ISO 1211
2	Milk solids not fat (% , m/m)	MIN. 8.25			ISO 1211 and ISO 6731
3	Acidity (expressed in lactic acid) (% , m/m)	MAX. 0.17			DIN 10316
4	Alcohol test (68% ethanol)	Negative			
5	Phosphatase test	Negative			ISO 11816-1
6	Coliforms	Absent in 1g			ISO 4832
7	Salmonella	Absent in 25g			ISO 6785
8	Total Plate Count (cfu/ml)	0			AOAC 986.32
9	Aflatoxin M1 (mcg/kg)	MAX. 0.1			AOAC 986.16
10	Organoleptic characteristics	Normal in colour, smell, taste and texture. Homogenous and free from impurities and foreign matters.			Organoleptic examination
11	Net content (ml)	As per contractual agreement			Volumetric measurement

Annex 4: Photos from WFP's Warehouse and Distributions at Schools



Milk arriving at the Port of Lattakia



Milk being loaded at WFP warehouse



The packaging of the milk



A WFP staff member visits Abi Zaid Al Ansari elementary school in Tabbaleh neighbourhood in Damascus where 300 school children received milk for the first time, as well as locally produced date bars.



Eight year old Ahmed says "Milk is my favorite drink. I learned that if I drink it every day, it will help me to concentrate in school and succeed in my future."



Eight-year-old Zeina (left) learns about the importance of milk for her growth and success in school. "Milk is good for me. It gives me calcium for my bones and helps me to focus on my learning," she said.



Students at Abi Zaid Al Ansari elementary school in Tabbaleh neighbourhood in Damascus hold up their milk cartons

Annex 5: Syria CONOPS Map

The map was developed to illustrate how the milk travels from the European Union to Syria and is stored in WFP warehouses before being dispatched to the schools for distribution to the school children. The map was produced in 2016 and therefore some of the indicated figures may have changed slightly.

During the school year 2016-2017, WFP targets up to 750,000 children. By the spring of 2018 (for the 2017-2018 academic year), the planned target is one million children.

