

Beat: Politics

EU to provide milk to 350,000 Syrian children

Humanitarian aid

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USPA NEWS - European Commission adopted a 30 million Euros programme to provide 350,000 Syrian children with drinking milk, as part of the already substantial aid provided by the EU to those in need as a consequence of the crisis in the region.

The funding for this latest programme is part of the 500 million Euros support package for European farmers presented by the Commission in 2015, which represented a substantial response by the Commission to support European farmers. It will be used to buy milk which should originate in the EU. As well as supporting European farmers through the purchase of drinking milk, the 30 million Euros programme will also contribute significantly to the major challenge posed to the EU by the refugee crisis. The milk will be distributed to Syrian children and will reinforce an already operating food distribution programme for school children financed by the EU in Syria.

"This new programme will help hundreds of thousands of Syrian children in need. We must remain committed to helping the most vulnerable victims of the conflict. This additional support will go to humanitarian partner organisations working in the country," said EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides. The milk provided will be of EU origin and is part of the Commission's 500 million Euros solidarity package to European farmers presented in September 2015, where 30 million Euros was earmarked to address the needs of vulnerable groups in third countries, in the context of the current refugee crisis.

EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, also said: "I am pleased that the Commission has adopted this programme, which is an integral part of the Commission's 500 million Euros support package for European farmers. This new programme delivers on two Commission priorities, to support farmers at a very difficult time, while also ensuring that we remain fully focused on the major challenge posed by the ongoing refugee crisis."

The conflict in Syria had a severe impact on the agriculture sector of the country, leading to a decline in food production, in particular of dairy products. Consumption of milk has been significantly reduced especially amongst poor households due to high food prices. Syrian families typically consumed milk and other dairy products on a daily basis prior to the crisis. At present, milk has in some cases completely disappeared from their diet.

Besides being the type of dairy product that better suits the food and nutrition needs of the people that will benefit from this programme, the treatment of drinking milk makes it suitable for human consumption over a long period and allows for its consumption on a stand alone basis, without there being a need to add water. The quality of which cannot always be guaranteed up to the required standard in all parts of the intended areas of intervention.

Two million people have access to safe water

Inside Syria, thanks to lifesaving aid provided by the European Commission, some 2 million people have gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene items; 850,000 people have received food, 1 million people have received non-food items and shelter, and 350,000 children have been covered by child protection programmes. In Jordan, the Commission's humanitarian aid is helping more than 350,000 Syrian refugees. In Lebanon, through its partners, the EU's humanitarian aid reaches around 665,000 people.

In Turkey, EU humanitarian aid is funding the provisions of food, health assistance and protection through humanitarian partners and is now being channelled to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. On March 4, 2016, the EU announced 40 million Euros in humanitarian aid through the World Food Programme (WFP) working in close cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent as part of the first allocation to the Facility.

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