



2021 1st QUARTER SECTOR DASHBOARD

Food Security and Agriculture

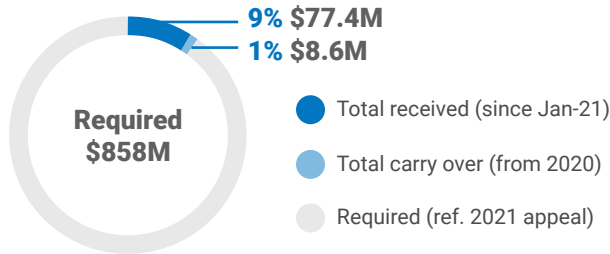


Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

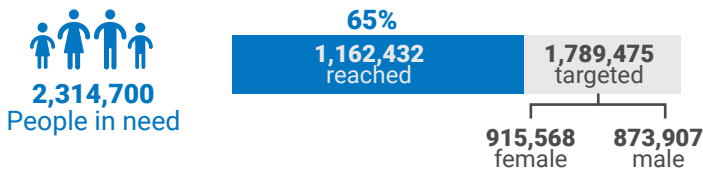
The dashboard summarizes the progress made by partners involved in the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan and highlights trends affecting people in need. The Food Security and Agriculture sector in Lebanon is working to: OUTCOME 1) Promote food availability; OUTCOME 2) Promote food accessibility; OUTCOME 3) Promote food utilization; OUTCOME 4) Promote stabilization.

2021 Sector Funding Status

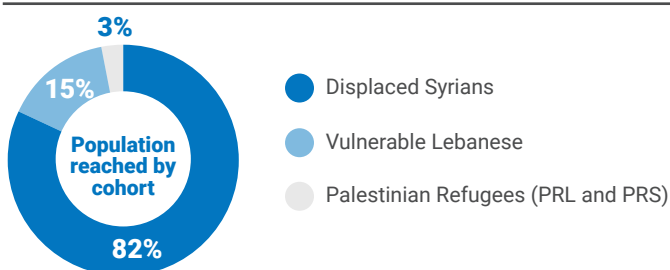
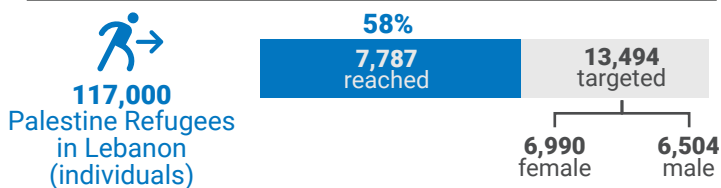
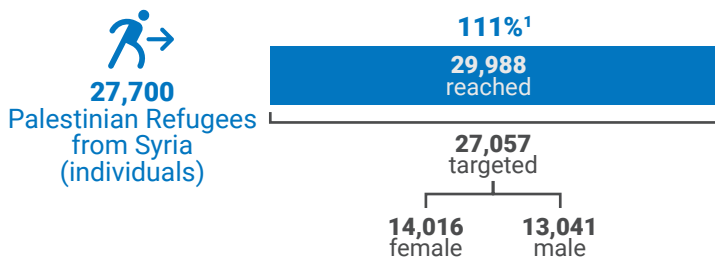
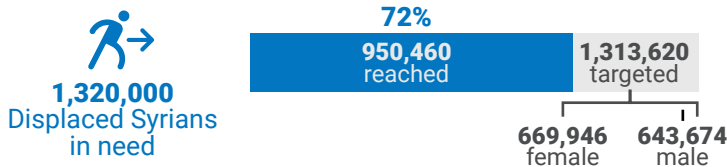
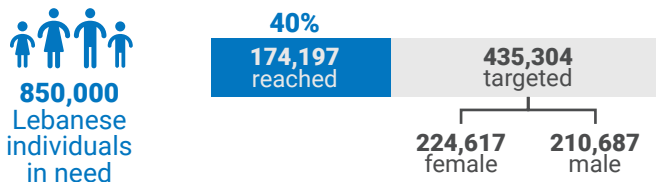
As of 31 March



2021 population reached



2021 population figures by cohort



Progress against targets

Key Achievements

Number of individuals provided with in-kind food assistance (parcels provided on one-off basis)

177,474 / 125,947

of individuals having access to cash-based food assistance (through e-cards, NPTP, ATMs, food vouchers...)

974,380 / 1,633,528

Total amount of cash-based food assistance (\$) redeemed through (e-cards, NPTP, ATM.)

53,967,990 / 565,577,466

Total amount of cash-based food assistance (LBP) redeemed through Food vouchers

1,249,570,000

farmers receiving emergency assistance (cash or vouchers) to promote agricultural investment

1,000 / 30,000

of individuals having access to temporary/casual agricultural labor

5,094 / 13,340

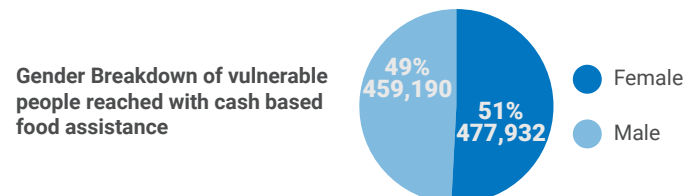
of local agricultural groups/ associations/ cooperatives/ SMEs receiving technical and or material support

311 / 457

of individuals attending trainings on skills and competencies to access temporary/casual labour in exchange of Food Assistance for Training

2,537 / 6,500

Gender breakdown



COVID-19 Response

Food Parcels distributed **6,049**

of individuals receiving food parcels **18,301**

Hot meals distributed **19,200**

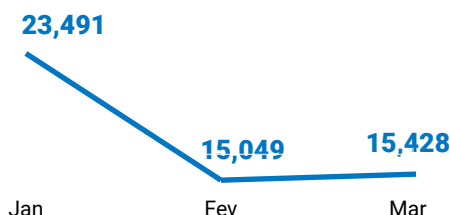
of individuals receiving hot meals **18,800**

¹The number of PRS reached corresponds to the services provided to individuals, rather than to the unique number of beneficiaries

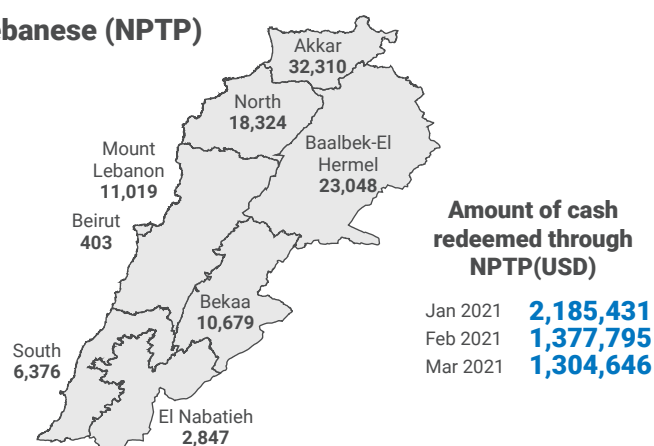


Analysis

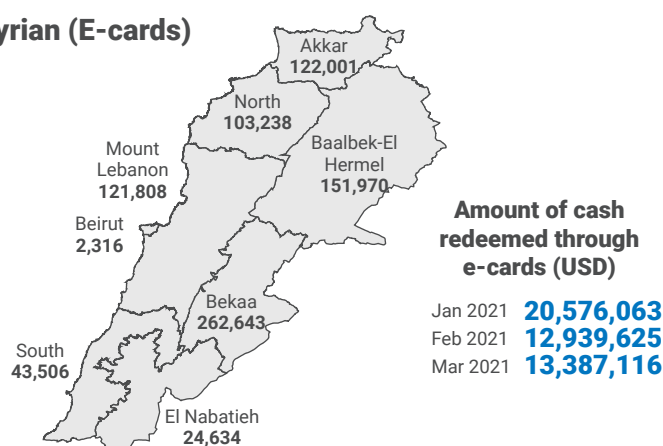
Amount of USD (In Thousands) injected in the cash based food assistance system through various modalities (e-cards, ATMs, food vouchers..)



Lebanese (NPTP)



Syrian (E-cards)



1. Key achievements of the sector at the output level

The beginning of 2021 continued to witness the dire impact of the multiple crisis in Lebanon on vulnerable populations, with a further deterioration in the food security status of all populations. Twenty percent of Lebanese, 50 percent of displaced Syrians, and 33 percent of refugees of other nationalities are estimated to be food insecure.² With the latest market developments, these estimates are likely to increase.

The expected modification or removal of the subsidies on essential goods (including key commodities and medicine) could further increase inflation. The lifting or removal of subsidies would not only decrease households' purchasing power (especially for the most vulnerable),³ but will likely also lead to and increase competition over resources, tensions, discrimination and potentially civil unrest.

In this context, during the Q1 of 2021, the Food Security and Agriculture sector partners have been working to cushion the impact of the crisis on all population cohorts, with food assistance and interventions in support to agricultural livelihoods.

In Q1, 108,317 displaced Syrians received in-kind food assistance through dry food parcels, either as one-offs or short-term assistance, while 832,000 continued to receive monthly cash-based food assistance, with almost USD 47 million redeemed by beneficiaries in Q1. Women represented respectively 54 and 52 percent of the caseload. The food voucher modality was used to assist an additional 6,792 displaced Syrians. However, more than 470,000 displaced Syrians, currently living under the SMEB, do not yet receive cash-based food assistance.

Extremely poor Lebanese were reached through a partner's assistance to the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), with almost USD 4.9 million disbursed directly to beneficiaries. Women represents slightly more than half of the total of

beneficiaries (53,093). The in-kind modality, in line with 2020 results, continues to benefit vulnerable Lebanese with 60,115 people reached with one-offs assistance in Q1.

27,260 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) continued to receive monthly cash-based food assistance (of which 52% were women), while 1,200 benefited from in-kind food parcels, on a one-offs or short-term basis, and 1,473 from food vouchers.⁴ Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) were assisted through one-offs or short term in-kind food assistance, benefitting 7,800 individuals.

Interventions to support agriculture activities were negatively impacted by the extended lockdowns needed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, some results were achieved in terms of support to 1,000 vulnerable small-scale farmers through cash and vouchers schemes. In total, USD 200,000 were disbursed to farmers to facilitate their access to otherwise unaffordable agriculture inputs, and support to agriculture cooperatives allowed 529 of their members to receive business plan preparation trainings and nutrition sessions.

In Q1, 2,453 displaced Syrians and 2,641 vulnerable Lebanese benefited from food assistance and temporary employment related to building, maintaining and rehabilitating agriculture assets and infrastructure. Further, some 2,055 vulnerable Lebanese (of which 66% were women) and 482 displaced Syrians attended technical or vocational trainings to build skills in a wide arrange of areas, but mainly in agriculture livelihoods, and received conditional food assistance transfers.

²WFP, mVAM (November – December 2020); VASyR 2020

³Please see Food security and agriculture sector Advocacy Note on the Impact of the Removal of Subsidies on Food Security, and Recommendations <https://fscluster.org/lebanon/document/fss-advocacy-note-removal-subsidies>

⁴The number of PRS reached corresponds to the services provided to individuals, rather than to the unique number of beneficiaries



2. Key challenges of the sector

In Q1, sector partners continued to face programmatic and operational challenges. Unemployment, a key reason for people's lack of income, and ultimately ability to purchase/cover essential needs, has been rising over the past year. WFP surveys found unemployment rates for both Lebanese and Syrians to be 39 percent in 2020. Furthermore, inflationary pressure increased the cost of the revised food Survival and Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) to LBP 176,203 in March, a 194 percent increase since October 2019. Despite the surge in prices, transfer values have not been increased and partners struggle to provide meaningful food assistance to their beneficiaries or meaningful daily wages to agriculture workers.

The rapid decrease in the informal exchange rate market has also affected food supply with several shops around the country closing their doors temporarily or reducing operation hours until a stable rate emerged. The stock coverage witnessed a large drop in mid-March: in the weeks of March 19 and March 26, 67 percent and 70 percent of shops contracted by WFP reported having more than two weeks of stocks, down from 85 percent on March 12.

Although Lebanon has set out to lift subsidies on some essential goods, no official decision on the scaling back of the current subsidization mechanism has been taken yet.⁵ In April, shops across the country witnessed several social tensions incidents over subsidized products, with customers fighting over available

products. Syrian customers in several areas were reportedly denied access to such goods. Risks of discrimination and tensions are becoming more prominent.

Lockdown and curfews measures in January and February also severely impaired the work of partners, in particular those working on support to agriculture livelihoods as these activities were not exempted from movement restrictions. The spike in COVID-19 positive cases in January and the high number of infections, accompanied with widespread food insecurity, are also continuing to put additional pressure on partners' stocks. A number of partners' projects to support to COVID-19 food assistance will come to an end in Q2, which could create gaps in assistance, if the referrals continue at the same pace as in Q1.

During Q1 the sector achieved a number of results which served to improve coordination. This included putting in place coordination tools by preparing interactive dashboards on the implementation of LCRP FSS activities (Microsoft Power BI) and on the agriculture cooperatives supported by both the Food Security and Agriculture sector and the Livelihoods sector (Microsoft Power BI). In addition, an Advocacy Note on the impact of removal of subsidies was drafted and disseminated; a M&E Task Force was established to improve monitoring and reporting; and a series of trainings on action on child labour in agriculture was rolled out for FSS, livelihoods and child protection partners.

3. Key priorities for the following quarter

The priorities in Q2 for the sector remain aligned with the priorities already identified for Q1.

Cash-based and in-kind food assistance

- Continue to ensure access to regular cash-based food assistance for the extremely vulnerable, including advocating for meaningful transfer values. The scale up of the NPTP to 300,000 individuals in 2021 and reaching out to the 1.3 million displaced Syrians currently living under the SMEB with food assistance remain of critical importance

- Support to local institutions working under the NPTP, such the social development centers

- Continue to ensure access to in-kind food through different modalities related to emergencies such as COVID-19 and severe weather events

- Scale up malnutrition prevention through the provision of food assistance to households nutritionally vulnerable and particularly children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women

- Emergency support to vulnerable populations to address the gap after food subsidies are adjusted or removed

Support to agriculture to increase food availability (due to limited domestic food production)

- Ensure and scale up access to inputs and finance for farmers (to support 2021 cropping season)

- Continue support to value chain and agriculture cooperatives, in particular those targeting women, and MSMEs

- Promote seasonal agricultural job opportunities and linkages to local economy/local livelihoods

- Support to local institutions working on agriculture
- Create a platform to link partners procuring food parcels to local producers, easily accessible, comprehensive, able to be filtered by region and by item

Analysis and Advocacy

- Continue to monitor food security situation and malnutrition outcomes

- Assess gaps in understanding impact of crises on vulnerable households

- Refine referral process and analysis for the sector

Guidelines and Quality Assurance

- Develop guidelines for door-to-door distribution/home-based deliveries/proof of distribution

- Improve use of the Assistance Coordination Platform for Deduplication– advocate for all FSS organizations to register and implement the deduplication of beneficiaries between organizations for the purpose of assistance coordination, in consultation with WFP

- Put in place standard templates/core questions/indicators for outcome monitoring

- Draft note on the prevention and mitigation of tensions during food distributions, in collaboration with the Social Stability Sector

- Publish guidance on the contents/cost of the fresh food basket, in collaboration with the Nutrition Sector

⁵Covering combustible fuel, wheat, medicine/medical equipment, infant milk, and the basket of food/agricultural items



4. Mainstreaming of COVID-19

The sector, at national and regional level, continued to coordinate and monitor partners' interventions in support to food assistance according to the different level of isolation due to COVID-19 infections (individual, isolation facilities and families living in informal tented settlements in isolation). In-kind food assistance was continued to also mitigate against lockdown measures, with full COVID-19 precautionary measures taken at distribution sites.

The assistance provided in Q1 amounted to 15,560 food parcels distributed nationally which followed a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases following the relaxation of restrictions during the Christmas-New Year period. Food assistance continued during Q1 lockdown movement restrictions as it was an exempted intervention, but was slowed down as partners needed to replenish their stocks and needed time and capacity to conduct beneficiary validation.

The sector continues to update, when needed, the COVID-19 guidelines produced in 2020 which outline the recommended content of food parcels and modality of distribution. The sector regularly circulates other relevant guidelines including those related to safe practices, etc.

Advocacy with donors is required to increase partners' stocks to continue the assistance throughout 2021 to food insecure individuals, being positive and/or in isolation due to COVID-19. The sector continues to advocate for additional resources for partners providing COVID-19 food assistance through humanitarian pooled funds.

Monitoring and assessments have shifted to remote modalities, including through phone and the web. E-cards food assistance continues to be loaded in batches to avoid overcrowding at ATMs and to allow for replenishment of cash. Additional ATMs were installed to increase access points for beneficiaries.

Training classes have been split into smaller groups and some partners shifted to online classes to ensure the safety of participants and staff. This modality though is showing its limits especially during trainings to agriculture cooperatives and farmers, where more in presence or hands-on trainings are needed.