

# WFP News Release

2 April 2009

## WFP LAUNCHES FIRST FOOD VOUCHER OPERATION IN MIDDLE EAST

**JERUSALEM** – The United Nations [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) has launched a food voucher operation, the first of its kind in the Middle East, to assist some 30,000 people in the [occupied Palestinian territories](#) (oPt).

The 12-month voucher operation began yesterday in urban areas of the West Bank, where the price of basic food commodities such as wheat flour, sugar, rice, oil, pulses and milk increased by almost 70 percent in 2008. Families will receive eight vouchers per month, with a monthly value of NIS200 (US\$50).

“The recent fall in global food prices has not yet translated into lower prices in local markets; Palestinian families are now spending about 60 percent of their income on food,” said Christine van Nieuwenhuysse, WFP Country Director in the oPt. She added that the project would improve people’s access to food, while at the same time providing a financial stimulus to the local economy.

Voucher and cash transfer programmes allow WFP to address [hunger](#) when food is available but people are unable to afford it.

The UN agency is also planning to start a food voucher operation in Gaza for about 15,000 people. This will enable them to access food directly from small- and medium-sized traders in Gaza and help restore the food chain that has been affected with the recent conflict there.

The US\$6.7 million voucher project was conceived and developed in collaboration with the Palestinian Authority. Voucher distribution took place yesterday in Qualqilya and will continue in Hebron, Nablus, and Tulkarem, with Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as WFP’s cooperating partners.

Beneficiaries will be able to use the vouchers in selected shops, to buy bread, eggs, milk, yoghurt and two types of white cheese.

A study carried out by WFP in July 2008 found that people in the oPt are highly vulnerable to the impact of global food prices on domestic markets because of their dependence on imports.

Donor countries contributing so far to the operation are Saudi Arabia (US\$2.5 million) and France (US\$2 million).

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the [UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions](#). In 2009, WFP aims to feed around 100 million people in 77 countries.

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos and photos as they are published on WFP.org. For more details see: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

*WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.*

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