E-food card Programme
Assisting refugees in camps in Turkey

E-food assistance to refugees in Camps
Turkey continues to be the country hosting the greatest number of refugees in the world, almost four million people. Of these, 3.6 million are Syrian while the rest are from other countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran.

By September 2019, around 62,000 of the most vulnerable refugees, mostly Syrians, are housed by the Government of Turkey in 7 camps across the southeast region.

WFP partners with the Turkish Red Crescent (TK/Kizilay) to provide them with e-voucher assistance in camps. The programme started in 2012 when, for the first time, WFP used e-voucher assistance from the onset of an emergency. Each household receives a card, topped up monthly with 50 Turkish Liras per person. These are redeemable in participating shops in exchange for food, giving beneficiaries choice and restoring independence to their lives.

The Government of Turkey manages the camps and provides an additional monthly voucher worth 50 Turkish Liras for both food and non-food needs.

Since 2012, WFP has injected over USD 222.6 million into the Turkish economy through the e-Food Card Programme.

Objectives
WFP’s assistance aims to:
- Ensure vulnerable refugees can consume enough food and have a diverse diet;
- Reduce or stabilize negative coping strategies such as lowering food intake or sending children to work instead of school;
- Enhance national crisis-response capacities.

Achievements
Thanks to sustained assistance since 2012:
- 99 percent of households have acceptable food consumption;
- Refugees in camps generally have diverse diets;
- Women are involved in decisions on the use of assistance in 82.6 percent of households;
- A strong partnership has been built with the Government of Turkey and Kizilay.

Way forward
WFP will continue working with the Government to support assistance to refugees hosted in camps.
WFP is currently seeking funding to continue supporting refugees in camps also in 2020.
With Turkey’s annual food inflation reaching 29.77 per cent in March 2019 *, negative coping strategies, such as borrowing money, are increasingly being adopted by beneficiaries as a means of meeting food and other needs. Progress secured thanks to regular assistance over the past years is starting to reverse. In this context, WFP is concerned that the current transfer value is not sufficient to meet the needs of beneficiaries and is advocating for suitable solutions.

As some camps close and many camp residents choose to resettle in cities and villages, WFP encourages approaches that take into account the preferences and specific needs of camp residents, avoid multiple relocations, and prevent gaps in assistance to the most vulnerable.

*(Food inflation decreased to 19.2 percent in June but latest PDM findings pertain to March 2019)
Kızılaykart helps vulnerable refugees navigate uncertain times

Teysir and his family have been residents of the Kahramanmaras refugee camp in southeast Turkey since 2015, after fleeing from Idlib.

Nadia, Teysir’s wife, says “we arrived with no expectations four years ago. We came straight to the camp since we had no money to even consider anything else. But it has been good, thank God,” she says. “We are safe and we have the e-food card.”

When WFP field staff learned three months ago that Hadil, Teysir and Nadia’s 17-year-old daughter, had an eye problem, they started advocating on her behalf. With the full support of the Turkish government, this eventually led to cornea replacement surgery in Hadil’s right eye.

“There were times when I couldn’t even go to school because my eye hurt so much. Now there is no more pain and I am so happy,” Hadil says. Nadia, her mother, adds that “I sold all the jewellery family had accumulated over the years to pay for her visits to her doctor. But I would never have been able to afford the cost of the surgery.”

This changed when “these friends [WFP and Turkish Red Crescent field monitors] learned of the problem and helped the family out. Nadia was told the surgery cost USD 2,600, “which was thankfully paid for.” The eye problem cured, Hadil will start 12th grade next year and is very much looking forward to it.

Accountability to those in need

WFP and Kizilay constantly assess the quality of goods and prices in the shops where the e-voucher is redeemable. WFP field teams keep in contact with registered card users to hear their experiences, so that their voices can be heard and their views help inform adjustments that need to be made. Kizilay has helpdesks in camps which can provide assistance including replacing lost, stolen, or non-functional cards.

How refugees cook in camps

Containers are provided with electrical stoves and utensils by the Government of Turkey, Kizilay and UNHCR. This means refugees can use their assistance to prepare wholesome meals for their families.

Refugees outside of camps

More than 99 percent of refugees in Turkey live outside of camps in towns and villages. Many live in poverty. The most vulnerable of them are assisted by the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme, which provides monthly cash assistance to more than one and a half million refugees to help them cover their basic needs.