



# Impact report

Forty-eight percent of project participants have gained new income sources after participating in the FAO project "Promoting self-reliant livelihoods through employment and micro-entrepreneurship"



## Opportunities exist, but with challenges to overcome

For many Syrian refugees in Turkey, the agrifood sector is an entry point into the Turkish economy because of the sector's prominence in the areas that host large numbers of Syrian refugees. Many Syrian refugees are engaged in agricultural labour and micro-scale food businesses to make their livings.

However, most of these opportunities are informal and seasonal, often exposing Syrians to poor working conditions and low and irregular wages. This also leads to lower wages for Turkish workers, fuelling competition and social tension. The limited access of women to entrepreneurship opportunities and the many unpaid and time-consuming domestic chores they are tasked with result in significant obstacles for women to start their own businesses.

## Supporting entrepreneurship and employment in local niche products

In close collaboration with local stakeholders, FAO assessed the feasibility of small-scale production cooperatives run by Syrian and Turkish women to provide income-generating opportunities. Based on the assessment results, FAO launched a project to promote self-reliant livelihoods of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) and their host communities through the provision of skills training and productive assets in Izmir, Sanliurfa and Mardin provinces, with financial support from the Government of Japan.

Three local niche products – stuffed mussels in Izmir, bell peppers (known as isot peppers) in Sanliurfa and olive soap in Mardin – were identified as agrifood products with strong and stable consumer demand in local markets. These products present specific characteristics linked to their geographical areas, giving them special qualities and reputations in their production.



## Impact story 1 Women's cooperative in Izmir

In Izmir, the project supported ten Syrian and ten Turkish women in the establishment of a cooperative for producing midye dolma (stuffed mussels), a popular food nationwide. Izmir has a special reputation for the production of midye dolma.

The all-women cooperative ensured that the stuffed mussels they produced fully met quality and safety standards. Through the project, cooperative members were trained in food safety, the production of midye dolma, and cooperative finance and management. The cooperative found buyers from local restaurants and retailers and started to sell their product in November 2019. Over time, the buyers increased the volumes of their orders as they realized the quality of the product. After the completion of the project in March 2020, the cooperative has continued to sell on average 500 kg of stuffed mussels each week.

## Cooperative named for the crane – a symbol of peace and hope

The cooperative was named “Turna,” meaning “Crane” – an international symbol of peace and hope originating from an ancient Japanese legend. Cooperative members gained self-confidence through interactions with buyers, producers, authorities and many other stakeholders. Syrian members who learned the Turkish language through the project said that they felt they had gained self-reliance and the ability to be more adaptable in Turkey.



*“We are building self-confidence.”*

### Derya Davaz, the leader of the Turna Cooperative

“We buy mussels from certified local farms, produce stuffed midye dolma hygienically and supply them to the market. Our goal is to attain a position in the local market in this way. I am very happy to be part of this cooperative. We are not only enjoying new friendships with Syrian women but also exploring new opportunities – in business and in building self-confidence. There were cooperative colleagues who could never be part of any community without being accompanied by family members because they were not confident enough. Now they have changed a lot! Some learned financial skills, some started to make decisions in their families on different domestic issues, and me – I am paying off my studies in the university without any relative support.”

*“The project removed many barriers faced by women.”*

### Nigar Şavluk Gürel, Izmir Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry

“Many women are economically dependent on their husbands while they have many responsibilities at home, such as housework and taking care of children and often elderly people. Women who want to gain their economic freedom cannot find financial and social support. They face many challenges to start their own business due to poor access to collateral and due to gender stereotypes. When they apply to banks for financial support, the banks are hesitant to give them loans because they have no guarantee. Our project helped women break down many of these barriers. Women who took part in the project are now running their own businesses. They took responsibility; they are delivering products. They don’t just produce. This project supported them not only economically but also socially.”

## Impact story 2 Joint farm in Sanliurfa



In Sanliurfa province, the project supported Syrian and Turkish entrepreneurs in starting small-scale vegetable farms. In cooperation with the Southeastern Anatolia Project Agricultural Research Institute (GAPTAEM), vegetable crops with strong consumer demand in local markets, such as red bell peppers, were identified for farming. Unstable supplies of these products due to chronic labour shortages in local labour markets also provided an opportunity for entrepreneurs to enter the market.

The project selected 15 Syrian and Turkish entrepreneurs from among 50 project participants who completed training on open field vegetable production and who were motivated to undertake new challenges in establishing a self-owned enterprise. Many of the selected Syrians had experience in farming in the Syrian Arab Republic before the war, but they were working as agricultural workers in Turkey due to a lack of access to such resources as land and inputs.

Entrepreneurs were provided with basic inputs for vegetable farming – including seedlings, irrigation systems, fertilizers and pesticides – in order to help them start their businesses. They also rented land. With FAO's technical guidance, GAPTAEM provided training and technical guidance to ensure that the farmers' products fully met quality standards. The training covered a broad range of topics, including the selection of inputs and tools, farm management and marketing.

After completing training in March 2020, the entrepreneurs produced 45 tons of eggplants, 36 tons of red bell peppers, 36 tons of cucumbers, 14 tons of pumpkins, 13 tons of cutes and 12 tons of tomatoes. They found buyers for their products among local wholesalers and the Syrian refugee camp (Temporary Accommodation Centre). Altogether, each farm earned around TRY 16 000 on average, part of which was used to purchase inputs for the next production season in 2020. Farmers will continue to produce **using the skills, experiences and networks they gained.**



*"We continue production using the skills and earning from last year"*

## **Fuat Ahmed, Syrian vegetable farm entrepreneur in Sanliurfa**

"At the end of the training, I was selected as an entrepreneur. With the guidance provided by the project team, I rented 3

decares of agricultural land around the camp with my own means. Thanks to the support and guidance, I had a high yield and good profit. With this income, this year I rented 7 decares of land. I produce vegetable seedlings myself in a greenhouse I established in collaboration with another project entrepreneur. This year, I will grow peppers, aubergines, tomatoes and okra"

## **Impact story 3 Olive soap in Mardin**



In Mardin province, the project trained 30 women (15 Syrian and 15 Turkish) on the production of traditional olive soap, which has been made for a long time in the northern parts of the Syrian Arab Republic and in southwestern Turkey. A small-scale soap production workshop was established under a local women's cooperative.

After three months of training on production, cooperative management, accounting and marketing, the cooperative started producing natural olive soap. The cooperative members named their soap "SEMİM" (which means "good scent" in Arabic). The soap uses olive oil from local producers in Derik district in Mardin province and laurel oil from local producers in Hatay. Currently, eight trained entrepreneurs are actively participating in the production.

The cooperative uses social media proactively for marketing and selling the products. As of April 2020, the cooperative had earned TRY 15 000. The entrepreneurs earn around TRY 70 per day. The cooperative expects to start



wholesale production and marketing in 2020 after receiving a full production certificate from the Ministry of Health.

*“The earning helps me in meeting the basic needs of my family during the coronavirus crisis”*

## Hassine Selaş, Syrian entrepreneur in Mardin

“I came from Haseki, Syrian Arab Republic, six years ago, together with my family. I am married and I have six children. My husband used to work in building sites, whenever he can find a job. However, there is no job for the last two months. My older kids were working at a restaurant as dishwashers. Now, they are at home due to the closure of restaurants amid the coronavirus crisis. I am lucky that I have been able to work at a soap workshop for the past month. My main work is soap cutting and drying. Using the earning, I can cook for my family and meet the basic expenses of home”



## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS



### Employment

**48 percent** obtained new income sources after the training

*(Syrian participants 52 percent and Turkish participants 43 percent; women 41 percent and men 78 percent)*

**150** participated in vocational training

**143** completed vocational training

*(73 Syrian participants and 70 Turkish participants; 116 women and 27 men)*



### Entrepreneurship support

**1** women's cooperative in Izmir producing midye dolma  
*(20 members)*

**15** small vegetable farms in Sanliurfa

**1** women's cooperative in Mardin producing traditional olive soap  
*(16 members)*



### Self-reliance and livelihoods

**78 percent** of project participants stated that the project had a positive effect on their self-confidence.

Income from newly obtained jobs was used for basic needs, such as food (71 percent of project participants) and child education (42 percent).



From the People of Japan

The project is made possible by generous financial contributions from Japan. During the past three years, ten activities have been implemented in five provinces of Turkey to support the livelihoods of Syrians and their Turkish host communities.



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