vinetur

France’s Senate approved a bill that would give restaurants higher meal voucher spending limits

The proposal would affect nearly 6 million workers, preserve supermarket use under lower caps, eliminate paper vouchers by 2028

Friday, November 20, 2026



France’s Senate approved a bill on Thursday, November 19, that would reshape the country’s meal voucher system with a higher and a lower daily spending limit depending on what workers buy, a change designed to give restaurants an advantage over broader supermarket use.

The measure, adopted in a first reading and with amendments, would affect a payment system used by nearly 6 million workers, according to figures cited by the French government during the parliamentary debate. A legislative file updated on Friday, November 20, showed that the text had been sent to the National Assembly for a second reading, meaning the proposal is still moving through Parliament and is not yet final law.

Meal vouchers in France are provided by employers to help cover the cost of workers’ meals. They are widely used in restaurants, bakeries, cafes and food stores. The Senate text keeps that broad role but changes the rules in ways that could shift how the money is spent and what costs businesses face when they accept the vouchers.

The most important change is the creation of a two-tier daily spending cap. Under the Senate’s proposal, workers would be allowed to spend more in one day when the vouchers are used for meals, ready-to-eat products, items meant for direct consumption, and fruit and vegetables. Other eligible food purchases would fall under a lower daily limit. The bill does not yet set the exact amounts for either ceiling.

That structure is a break from the broader use that has taken hold in recent years, in which meal vouchers could be used more freely to buy food products outside restaurants. By creating a more favorable limit for prepared meals and directly consumable items, lawmakers are trying to steer part of that spending back toward restaurants and similar businesses without removing supermarket access altogether.

The text also would end paper meal vouchers. If the measure becomes law in its current form, the old printed vouchers would disappear and payments would be made only through electronic methods such as cards or mobile phones. That change would make the system fully digital.

The bill also keeps open the use of meal vouchers in supermarkets, which has become an important issue for workers who rely on them for food shopping as well as for restaurant meals. The Senate version does not roll back that access. Instead, it would treat purchases differently through the new spending limits, allowing continued grocery use while giving a regulatory preference to meals and products that are ready to eat.

Another part of the proposal addresses fees charged by voucher issuers to restaurants and other merchants that accept the payments. The Senate text includes new transparency rules on those commissions and opens the door for the government to limit them by decree starting in July 2028. It does not impose a numeric cap now, but it creates the legal basis for one later.

That issue matters for the restaurant industry because commissions reduce the amount businesses receive when customers pay with meal vouchers. The Senate’s approach suggests lawmakers want more oversight of those costs while leaving the details to future regulation.

The broader reform would not take effect immediately. The Senate text provides for general application starting on January 1, 2028, if the bill completes the rest of the legislative process. The separate provision allowing commissions to be capped by decree would begin in July 2028.

Because the measure is still in Parliament, it has not yet produced any direct economic effects. The National Assembly can amend the bill, and the final version could change before adoption. But the Senate vote marks a clear policy move: French lawmakers are trying to rebalance a system that sits between restaurant spending and household food purchases.

The proposal also reflects the size of the market built around meal vouchers in France. With millions of workers using them, even small rule changes can affect restaurants, supermarket sales and the companies that issue the payment tools. A higher spending limit for restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food could help channel more voucher use toward dining and takeaway outlets, while a lower ceiling for other grocery purchases could temper how much of that spending goes to standard food shopping.

For workers, the practical effect would be a system that remains flexible but becomes more structured. They would still be able to use the vouchers in different places, including supermarkets, but not all food purchases would be treated the same. For merchants, especially restaurants, the bill combines two potential benefits: a stronger incentive for customers to spend vouchers on prepared meals and possible future limits on issuer fees.

The Senate’s action on Thursday, November 19, does not settle those changes, but it places them firmly on the legislative agenda as the bill moves to the National Assembly.