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Final activities report Lebanon: from july 2015 to june 2018

J.-P. Pellissier, Hatem Belhouchette, S. Darwich, J.-P. Rolland, W. Khechimi

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ENPARD SOUTH SUPPORT PROJECT II

FINAL NATIONAL REPORT LEBANON

FROM JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2018

ESSPII team:

Jean-Paul Pellissier, Team Leader

Dr. Hatem Belhouchette, Country Coordinator

Dr. Salem Darwich, National Coordinator

Jean-Pierre Rolland, Senior Expert

Wided Khechimi, Consultant

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For further information, please contact:

- Jean-Paul Pellissier - pellissier@iamm.fr
- Dr. Hatem Belhouchette - belhouchette@iamm.fr
- Dr. Salem Darwich- salemdarwich@yahoo.fr

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NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

Despite the country's political situation and the region instability since 2011, the implementation schedule of the second phase of **ENPARD South Support project (ESSP II)** in Lebanon has been respected. A very active communication and coordination dynamic has been established between the CIHEAM-IAMM team led by Dr. Hatem BELHOUCLETTE with the support of Dr. Salem DARWHICH and Mr. Anwar DAOU, Adviser to Minister and ESSP II focal point. It allowed defining a working methodology and a startup phase action plan which were validated during the launching seminar.

The proposal to set up a *think tank* to support decision-makers was very favorably received. Its composition and its main function as a reflection and dialogue platform were decided during the launch seminar in October 2015. While the *think tank* is essentially composed of ministry staff, the Ministry sector managers have mobilized private sector actors, Farmer's representatives and Civil Society Organization for activities implementation. The actors' participation, their enthusiasm and their involvement enriched and allowed to deepen the debate around the good agricultural practices (GAP).

Early 2017, His Excellency Ghazi ZEAITER was appointed. Two new focal points have been nominated: Ms. Hanadi JAAFAR, Quarantine Head Department and Mrs. Amal SALIBI, Statistics and Economic Studies Head Department. The working theme initially chosen was modified.

Overall, ESSP II activities were therefore implemented in good conditions thanks to the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and focal points. We should also underline the very good relations maintained with the EU Delegation in Lebanon which took part in most of the events and followed and regularly discussed the activities implementation with the project team.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

ESSP II LAUNCH SEMINAR

After a first informal meeting in early September 2015 to present the project and discuss priority themes, the national launch seminar was held on 19th October 2015 in Beirut, in the presence of the focal point and the Director General of Agriculture, Mr. Louis LAHOUD, with 60 participants from the private and public sectors.

The "*agricultural and rural development strategy 2015-2019*" defined as part of ESSP I and which focused on food security has been used as a discussion base. Three priority themes were identified for this second phase: *Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)*, *contract farming and extension and agricultural advice*.

GOOD FARMING PRACTICES

Several national workshops and working meetings were organized to deal with this first theme:

The first national workshop on **good agricultural practices** was held on December 4th and 5th 2015, on the same pattern as that held in Egypt. It brought together 48 participants representing the Ministry of Agriculture, research institutions, NGOs, agricultural cooperatives, etc.

A summary note on good agricultural practices, as well as a presentation by H  l  ne SUZOR, Chamber of Agriculture of H  rault representative, entitled: "*Good farming practices : a territorial project*" served as a discussions basis on these Good practices in terms of product valorization, agricultural sustainability and products quality for export and local market.

At the end of the workshop, it was suggested that the GAP theme be further developed by the *think tank* under a "**flagship sector - territory**" approach. The *think tank* chose 6 sectors – territories and has appointed, for each, a "referent" in the Ministry of Agriculture.

TABLE_ SECTORS, TERRITORIES AND RELATED ISSUES

Sector	Territories	Issues	Referent
Honey	Chouf district	Honey quality degradation caused by increased pesticide residues	Mme Milia CHBEIR
Olive oil	Chouf district	Production cost increase	M. Wassim ABOUDHAHER
Dairy	Bekaa and Baalbek- Hermel	Dairy quality degradation	M. Salim MAALOUF
Apple	North Lebanon	Harvest quality and quantity decrease	M. Dani BASSIL
tomato	Mouhafezeh of Akkar	Increase of pesticide residues in the final product	Mme Sonia ABIADH
Citrus	South Lebanon	Product Marketing and distribution	Mme Dina MANSOUR

A regional workshop on good agricultural practices bringing together Egyptian and Lebanese participants was organized on 6th and 7th December 2015 in Lebanon (see sub regional report)

Following the national workshop, for each sector- territories, the CIHEAM-IAMM produced a diagnostic sheet which has been completed during a local diagnostic meetings organized with the sector actors (farmers, cooperatives,...) in the identified regions . The final results were presented at a second national seminar held on March 14th and 15th, 2016 in Beirut. At the end of this seminar, it was agreed to draw up an action plan by issue and by sector and to identify possible technical, institutional and political needed actions.

A technical working session was held on April 19th and 20th 2016 in Beirut with the “sectors referent” to discuss the proposed action plans. They were then approved by sectors stockholders.

A third national seminar was organized on May 30th and 31st, 2016 in Beirut bringing together about forty participants (farmers, cooperatives, independent experts, municipalities heads, associations ...). The discussions on the Sectors action plans led to a consensus on the strategic orientations and required actions. It has been planned to peruse the work on further sectors in order to detail the action plans and to contribute to their implementation.

From 23rd to 26th July, the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, Minister Mr. Akram CHEHAYEB, undertook a mission to CIHEAM-IAMM in Montpellier accompanied by his advisors Mr. Anwar DAOU, ESSPII focal point and Mr. Louis LAHOUD, Director General of the Ministry of agriculture. The mission was an opportunity, for the group, to meet the local stakeholders, to discuss agricultural product valorization and local experiences of production costs support.

At the end of the mission, discussions with the Minister of Agriculture, the ESSP II focal point, the *think tank* members as well as the EU delegation led to propose the creation of “**local sectors support structures**”. Indeed, many strata and organizational levels intervene in support to the agricultural sector, but with limited financial and human resources and no synergy between them. Based on this observation, it was proposed to create “**pilot coordination structures**” for activities and stakeholders. These multi-stakeholder structures are mandated to intervene in different sector to fix and discuss marketing and quality control issues. This proposal was presented and discussed, during a 4th national workshop organized on 25th and 26th November 2016, and approved regarding its socio-economic potential impact and the decentralization support and the local institutions creation, which is in line with the *2015-2019 strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture*.

RATIONAL PESTICIDES USE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES CHARTER

The Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Ghazi ZEAITER, asked ESSP II Team to focus the efforts on the **rational pesticides use and sustainable agricultural production**, which in fact in line with the work already started on good agricultural practices. These themes represent important axes of the *agricultural strategy 2015-2019 of the Ministry of Agriculture*.

The random and uncontrolled pesticides use threatens the Lebanese agricultural products export regarding the non-compliance with European standards and regulations on pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables. The Gulf countries, also, tend to follow the European standards and stricter the entry rules of Lebanese agriculture products. At the same time, the sanitary products quality becomes a priority for Lebanese consumers.

Finally, the irrational use of pesticides has a negative impact on health and environment, which are of great concerns to Lebanese citizens.

Several meetings with the new focal points led to redefine the work plan and to set a methodology and schedule of activities on this theme. The apple sector has been chosen as a pilot sector.

A national workshop was held on October 23rd and 24th 2017 in Beirut, titled: "**Good use of pesticides in Lebanon and sustainable agricultural production in Lebanon**" to launch the work on this topics and to identify steps to follow for the establishment of a national charter on the pesticides use and sustainable agricultural production, as well as concerned sectors and territories. Discussions were based on a presentation of sustainable agricultural production approach experience for apple production in Languedoc Roussillon region in France and another presentation of sustainable agriculture for apple production goals in Lebanon.

Following this workshop, the ESSP II team, with the support of a phytosanitary international expert support, prepared a first draft of a national charter entitled "**Charter on good practices in the control and traceability of apple production in Lebanon**". A series of meetings was held on December 4th to 6th 2017 in Lebanon to present and discuss this charter project with:

- The Ministry of Agriculture staff, on the pesticides registration in Lebanon, the control systems and import procedures for pesticides and chemical substances,
- The EU Delegation in Lebanon to present the activities and discuss possible synergies with other ongoing European initiatives and projects,
- The FAO National Coordinator in Lebanon to discuss opportunities for collaboration between the ESSP II and the FAO Farmer Census Project launched in 2015.

The consolidated version of the charter was presented during national workshop organized with the Ministry of agriculture, apple producers, and members of cooperatives from different regions of Lebanon, as well as university researchers. The monitoring and evaluation framework of the charter was also discussed.

Nine apple cooperatives were interested in the national charter adhesion, representing five major apple growing regions in Lebanon: Matn, Keserwen, Jbeil, Tannourine and Bcharre. A meeting with the representatives of these cooperatives was organized in Beirut on February 15th, 2018.

A workshop was held on March from 5th to 7th 2018 to finalize the phytosanitary guide, including the annual updating elements, pesticides application and control regulations and to specify the working procedure allowing a long-term partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and cooperatives.

Two technical missions finally took place to:

- Complete the guide with technical information and to validate the adhesion form to the charter;
- Discuss the content and the legal status of charter articles with the legal services of the Ministry of Agriculture.

On July 12th 2018, the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Ghazi ZEAITER officially signed the National Charter on "**charter on good practices in pest control and traceability of apple production in Lebanon**" at a ceremony organized by the ESSP II team. This ceremony

was attended by Mr. Rein NIELAND, European Union Ambassador to Lebanon representative, Mr. Maurice SAADE, FAO Representative in Lebanon, Mr. Pascal BERGERET, Director of CIHEAM-IAMM, Mr. Naim KHALIL, President Vegetables and Fruits Importers and Exporters Union in Lebanon, and more than 80 participants and key stakeholders. During the ceremony, the nine partner cooperatives also signed their commitment and adherence to the Charter.

KEY RESULTS

The ESSP II was part of the agricultural strategy 2015-2019 of the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture especially on the agricultural products quality for both export and the national market and that through good agricultural practices and the rational pesticides use.

ESSP II, based on a national *think tank* set up an inclusive national dialogue on agricultural and rural policy which included farmers and cooperatives.

Concretely, ESSP II had immediate results concerning good practices integration through the establishment of organizational action plans for 6 sectors-territories and a proposal of creation of “**local sectors support structures**”.

Main project result is the “**charter on good practices in pest control and traceability of apple production in Lebanon**” adoption by the Minister of Agriculture and 9 partner cooperatives.

Finally, discussions were held on the possible connections between ESSP II and FAO in Lebanon initiatives including the farmer census project.

Overall, the project has enabled to:

- Set up a *think tank* composed mainly of a Ministry of Agriculture staff but which mobilized others agricultural sector stakeholders , in particular the cooperatives,
- Organize a launching seminar, **4** national workshops on good agricultural practices, **3** national workshops on pesticides use charter in the apple sector, including an official signing ceremony.
- Produce a concept note on good agricultural practices, **7** guidance notes and **7** workshop reports, to disseminate 5 presentations on good agricultural practices and the charter,
- Produce six sector / territory action plans,
- Develop a charter on Good Practice in the Control and Production of Apple Production national charter and pesticides use
- Involve **3** European experts including an expert specialized in the proper use of pesticides.

SUB REGIONAL ACTIVITIES (EGYPT AND LEBANON)

One of the main objectives of the ESSP II was to build and coordinate a framework for regional dialogue on agricultural and rural development policies.

At the time of project launching there was no cooperation instrument, or special institution or organization dealing with agricultural and rural development issues at the Mediterranean level that ESSP II could have strengthened. Thus, ESSP II has tried to fill this gap and appears today as the only regional project dealing explicitly and directly with agricultural and rural policies at regional level in the Mediterranean.

For that reason, ESSP had no other choice than to lean on the animation of a dialogue at the national level which allows informing a sub-regional and regional dialogue, by bringing out common themes concerning the agricultural and rural development in the Mediterranean.

The Machrek sub-region activities brought together experts, researchers and officials from both Egypt and Lebanon.

SUB REGIONAL SEMINAR ON “GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES”, CAIRO, DECEMBER 8TH AND 9TH, 2015

The first sub-regional seminar, which brought together some forty participants from Egypt and Lebanon, focused on “good agricultural practices (GAP)”. The seminar started with GAP concept definition. Then, discussions were focused on 4 main points introduced by a summary note¹:

- Good agricultural practice and access to the European market
- Good Agricultural Practices and Climate Change
- Good agricultural practices and free trade
- Research role in defining and implementing good agricultural practices.

Many ideas were shared from both countries concerning GAP on a regional level. To support ARABGAP and small farmers, and ensure innovative tailored actions, activities should be based on research and exchange of information. Both parties insisted on the necessity to:

- Establish GAP in the agriculture national strategy
- Provide incentives to farmers through conditional support
- Support agriculture cooperatives

¹ Access to summary note : <https://cloudia.iamm.fr/index.php/s/8PV1VhSV3kf6aMW>

- Support research on GAP through research centers and universities
- Introduce GAP as part of the educational system

A working plan could start by defining the necessary GAP for every crop; it should be risk based and not preventive and should be established in the national policy to ensure its sustainability and large diffusion of the information. Conditional support has proved to be effecting in enticing farmers to adopt new techniques. Future activities in agriculture should involve conditional support as part of their national agriculture strategy.

SUB REGIONAL SEMINAR ON “SHORT DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL AND MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS”, BEIRUT 2ND 3RD JUNE, 2016

Egypt and Lebanon have noted the same difficulties in accessing international markets due to the increase of standards number (sanitary, phytosanitary, technical, etc.), a highly competitive environment and a complex and unstable geopolitical context requiring adaptation of national productive systems which involves farms modernization, cost reduction and adapted and flexible marketing strategies development .

Moreover, due to a disorganized local market affected by brokers’ intervention agrifood products prices tend to increase and the incomes of the farmers to decrease.

Work in the national and sub-regional workshops on Good Agricultural Practices on the one hand, and on extension, on the other hand, and discussions on incentives facilitating the adoption of good practices, have leads to questions about the relevance of short-circuited marketing methods. They appear as an example of innovation able to improve the marketing conditions of small producers and disseminate good practices necessary for sustainable agriculture.

This seminar involved the Egyptian and Lebanese think tanks members, which are mainly composed of Ministries of Agriculture staff, private sectors, NGOs, syndicates and Farms unions, researchers and professors, making a total of 46 participants.

Each of the two countries presented examples of short channel distribution actions implemented on a national scale. The discussions focused on the limits and levers of promoting short channel distribution.

The participants have underlined the sub-regional discussions and exchanges benefits and came up with a series of propositions:

1. Develop a "knowledge bank" of good experiences and examples on extension system, good agricultural practices and short channel distribution topics.
2. Write and submit a summary note on ESSP II results and methodology to the Egyptian –Lebanese Inter-ministerial Committee, in order to inspire them with the project collaborative dynamic between different Mediterranean countries.
3. Invite the Inter-ministerial Committee to support Maghreb and Machrek experiences and knowledge exchanges.

SUB-REGIONAL SEMINAR ON “AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES ROLE IN AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY COMPETITIVENESS”, CAIRO 11TH AND 12TH JANUARY 2017

The 3rd sub regional seminar was held in Cairo on January 11th and 12th, 2017, on the theme “agricultural extension and advisory services role in agricultural commodity competitiveness: Lessons learned from the ESSP II and recommendations based on stakeholders testimonies”.

Overall, both countries have many similarities and dissimilarities in their agriculture sector when dealing with competitiveness challenges such as fragmentation of lands, weak advisory and extension services, the high presence of non-controlled private sector, etc. The objective of the workshop was to understand the reasons of non-competitiveness of agriculture products for each country by offering an insight on the previous work done by the think tank in each country whether on GAP or advisory & extension services and their role in reinforcing the competitiveness of agriculture products with a specific focus on quality and production cost.

Several consensuses emerged on the role of extension system and cooperatives, including:

- Regarding the low budget allocated to agriculture in Egypt and Lebanon and limited support for farmers, good extension system and cooperatives are two relevant tools for maintaining and promoting a sustainable, operational and competitive agricultural sector ;
- Both of these tools need to be strengthened and reformed to better meet farmers' expectations through increased collaboration with research centers to provide more operational results ;
- Good agricultural practices development appears as a solution to increase the competitiveness of agriculture and to respond to the agricultural challenges facing these countries (land fragmentation, pesticides excessive use, high production costs, quality of agricultural products). Good agricultural practices should be supported by extension and cooperatives ;
- Extension, agricultural advice and the cooperative system can also be adequate tools to support producers in their export effort by improving their knowledge of target markets (products quality, regulations and standards, etc.).

A number of recommendations were made by the participants:

- There are many individual initiatives undertaken, and so the creation of common companies between Lebanon and Egypt should be supported, which will present a common and strong front facing other exporting countries such as the Maghreb and Turkey.
- Coordinate between the Egyptian and Lebanese agricultural exporter's enterprises and exchange of expertise and knowledge, through the creation of a common network.

- Reduce the gap between the governmental sector, the private sector and research institutions: through the establishment of a legal framework that will allow the creation of a joint council representing all three sectors.
- Open horizons towards new markets such as the Maghrebi countries (Morocco, Tunisia, and others African or Asian countries) and the creation of a partnership between the two countries.
- Ensure that the following themes become a priority in each country; i) engage in encouraging the producing unit i.e. farmers, to have a more business oriented mindset, ii) Set investment incentives to revive the agriculture sector, and iii) Prioritize agricultural curriculum in universities and making them more market oriented.

Particular interest was shown to conducting study tours and visiting cooperatives in France to learn about their history, foundation and functioning, as part of the expertise and knowledge exchange.

The participants also insisted on the great opportunities that ESSP II has created since its beginning for both countries. Through the multiple reunions and workshops, communication increased and the exchange of knowledge was greatly reinforced, which helped in creating stronger links and shed light on common issues and potential of improvement in the agriculture sector.

SUB REGIONAL SEMINAR ON” PESTICIDES USE AND MANAGEMENT FOR MORE INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION”, CAIRO 14TH AND 15TH MARCH, 2018

This last sub-regional workshop, held in Cairo on March 14th and 15th 2018, was an opportunity to present ESSP II activities and results summary. It also allowed presenting pesticides use and traceability local experiences. The Sanine cooperative, Lebanese cooperative, was invited to present the certification system that it has put in place. This certification has enabled export the cooperators apple production. Then, the Egyptian Agricultural Export Council presented its export difficulties related to pesticide residues and the solutions put in place. A field visit to a private Egyptian company concluded the workshop.

The problem of pesticide residues is a major obstacle to agricultural products export from both countries and has a negative impact on populations’ health and the environment.

In Lebanon, a national charter and a phytosanitary guide applied to the apple sector were established with collaboration with different sector stakeholders. The Lebanese Minister of Agriculture signed this charter and it was adopted so far by nine agricultural cooperatives.

In Egypt, farmers support and pesticides use control were addressed as part of agricultural extension system reform.

An idea to create a charter and a logo on the products origin associating the two countries was greatly appreciated by the participants.