



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Lebanese Republic
Ministry of Agriculture

Analysing the agrifood sector in Lebanon through the perspective of gender- sensitive value chains

Concise study

Analysing the agrifood sector in Lebanon through the perspective of gender- sensitive value chains

Concise study

Required citation: FAO. 2023. *Analysing the agrifood sector in Lebanon through the perspective of gender-sensitive value chain – Concise study*. Beirut. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc6891en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

ISBN 978-92-5-137994-3

©FAO, 2023



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO license (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Under the terms of this license, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organisation, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons license. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: “This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition.”

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the license shall be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) as at present in force.

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Contents

Acronyms	iii
Executive summary.....	1
Background	3
Approach and methods	6
Summary of findings.....	11
Gender dynamics in Lebanon’s agrifood labour force: overview.....	14
Gender realities across sectors and impacting factors.....	16
I. Access to assets, services and financial resources:.....	16
II. Power, agency and decision-making:	18
Intersectional challenges for Syrian refugee women	21
Barriers to access and agency	22
I. GBCs on the individual level.....	22
II. GBCs on the household level.....	23
III. GBCs on the cooperative level	23
IV. GBCS on the national level.....	24
Exploring opportunities for women	26
I. Opportunities in plant production	34
II. Opportunities in fisheries and aquaculture.....	41
III. Opportunities in animal production	44
IV. Opportunities in agroprocessing	47
Concluding remarks	51
I. Persisting challenges	51
II. Main enablers and recommendations.....	54
References.....	58
Glossary.....	61



Acronyms

CAS	Central administration of statistics
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTL	Fair Trade Lebanon
GBC	Gender-based constraints
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDC	General Directorate of Cooperatives
GSVC	Gender-sensitive value chain
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KII	Key informant interview
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LFHLCs	Labour force and household living conditions survey
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoL	Ministry of Labour
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SME	Small and mid-sized enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UoB	University of Balamand
USD	United States Dollar
VC	Value chain
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WEF	World economic forum



Executive summary

Under the scope of the Canada-funded project implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Lebanon in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, General Directorate of Agriculture and General Directorate of Cooperatives and titled “Support to women’s cooperatives and associations in the agrifood sector in Lebanon”, fair trade Lebanon (FTL) has completed “*Analysing the agrifood sector in Lebanon through the perspective of gender-sensitive value chains*” study. In Lebanon, the participation in agrifood cooperatives and associations, particularly for women, remains limited due to a number of impeding factors, such as, but not restricted to: (1) limited access to infrastructure and services, (2) restricted knowledge and skills in agribusiness, (3) patriarchal system that governs the sector, and ultimately gives women restricted roles and responsibilities leaving them with no chance for upward social mobility and decent employment. FAO and FTL in consortium with Infopro, a market research company in Lebanon that was in charge of the data collection process, completed the analysis in July 2021. These challenges are encountered on various levels by all working women in agriculture as individuals, as part of a family business, or as part of a cooperative.

The study identifies value chain (VC) opportunities for women cooperatives, associations and individuals by adopting the FAO gender-sensitive value chain (GSVC) framework of analysis. In addition to the core and extended VC levels, as well as the national and global enabling environment, this framework adds two dimensions to be analysed: the individual and household levels, the areas in which gender inequalities frequently start from. Therefore, adding these two levels of analysis facilitate the systematic integration of gender equality into VC development programmes and projects. In addition to experts in each subsector, namely Plant Production, Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Animal Production and Agroprocessing, this study included a gender consultant who played a key role over the various phases of the study. This included preparing and giving workshops to the subsector experts prior to the literature review and analysis, as well as aligning their work within a gender framework, participating in the data collection phase, where the consultant revised the data collection tools prepared by the subsector experts for the key informant interviews (KIIs), survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) and attended the majority of the KIIs. What is more, the consultant revised the analysis of each subsector, included a gender assessment and assisted in the study’s reporting.

Due to the delays this study endured, several activities were added to the initial deliverables as mitigation measures to alleviate the impact of such interruptions on the beneficiaries’ business plan development, another component of the Canada funded FAO project. As such, the literature review phase was followed by a meeting between subsector experts with the Project facilitators to update them on the initial findings. A further unplanned activity occurred after the FTL’s submission of progress report 1 (on the literature review phase) and progress report 2 (on the KIIs phase): it involved a second meeting between the subsectors experts and the study’s beneficiaries, where they were informed about the KIIs findings. As the data collection process took much longer time than expected because of the lockdowns, inability to perform in-person survey, and the forced switch into a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing survey, a new activity was launched. Such additional activity consisted of a debriefing session, with experts directly addressing the Project beneficiaries. During the session, the experts discussed the identified opportunities, each in their respective subsectors, and gave

practical and operational recommendations women can consider in case they wish to seize a certain opportunity. This activity was concluded by a Questions & Answers session, in which beneficiaries raised questions directly asked to experts related to the former's specific concerns and opportunity.



Background

After decades of corruption and bad governance, Lebanon is currently facing the greatest financial crisis since the 1850s. In 2021, all industries were on the brink of collapse: exponential devaluation of the Lebanese Pounds (LBP) against the United States Dollars (USD), shortage in hospital equipment, harsh fuel scarcity, lack of medicine in pharmacies including those for chronic diseases, unofficial capital control imposed by the banks without access to one's funds, among others. It is important to note that this crash has been accelerated by the on-going Syrian crisis that commenced in 2011: the war in Syria has created a spill over to Lebanon negatively impacting the country on many fronts, namely humanitarian, socio-economic, and political. By the end of 2020, Lebanon was hosting around 1.5 million Syrian refugees out of a population of almost 4.5 million Lebanese, creating the second highest density of refugees per capita (159 per 1 000 habitants, excluding the Palestinian refugees).

Adding to this inevitable economic crisis, the neglect amongst the ruling and executive power in Lebanon has led to one of the largest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded in history: the Beirut Port explosion on 4 August 2020 that has devastated the city, resulting in more than 200 casualties, 6 500 injured and more than USD 15 billion in property damage across the city and the surrounding areas. Up until the completion of the study in October 2021, and two years after the 2019 revolution's breakout and the massive popular movements that followed refuting the unprecedented poverty level Lebanon has been going through, deterioration on the Lebanese scenery continues with political disputes hindering the execution of the required reforms for the economy recovery. Such a state of instability drags down susceptible populations into more vulnerability: women in particular, who constitute almost half of the Lebanese population, continue to be severely impacted by the job losses in sectors which were heavily female-dominated, such as the health sector, the bank sector, and the education sector.

Additionally, women in Lebanon have been suffering on many levels long before the current economic deterioration of the country: despite Lebanon's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which outlines the social-economic, and political rights and participation of women, Lebanon's legal framework maintains several discriminatory laws and policies that prevent gender equality and women's socio-economic empowerment, integration and protection. First, Lebanon's constitution does not make explicit reference to gender equality in relation to civil and political rights and fails to specify, or protect against, gender-based discrimination. Also, a more blatant gender-discriminating law is the nationality law that denies Lebanese women the right to pass the nationality to their children. Thus, the absence of laws that ensures gender equality is the main reason behind Lebanon's failure to empower women and give them the opportunity to take part in achieving sustainable development. This modest progress in passing such laws is not only due to the slow process of legal and constitutional reforms in the country, but also to the objection of some confessional parties to the draft gender equality-related laws presented in the Lebanese parliament.

Furthermore, gender inequalities are exacerbated in rural areas, where some traditional and religious practices often prevent women from accessing economic resources and assets. These inequalities are also evident in the agrifood sector, notably in food processing, plant production, forestry, animal

production, and fisheries and aquaculture: all these subsectors have their own characteristics, history, and obstacles in Lebanon. Adding those difficulties to the systemic gender gap makes it even more challenging to understand and address women's economic, social, cultural, and religious barriers. Lebanon's agriculture is characterised by a very smallholding with an average of 1.4 hectares that are not equally distributed. In Lebanon, the agriculture sector is one of the most prevalent sectors with the arable land constitutes 19 percent of the total area of 10 452 km². Today, this sector encounters several technical and social challenges, that include, but not restricted to, low agricultural productivity, high production costs (due to high costs of imports), poor organisation of farmers into cooperatives and associations, vulnerable groups prone to poverty, especially the youth and women, and limited opportunities for youth employment.

To respond to all the aforementioned discriminations, FAO Lebanon collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC) to implement a project funded by Canada entitled "Support to Women's Cooperatives and Associations in the Agrifood Sector in Lebanon". Within the framework of this project, FAO aims to empower women cooperatives, associations and informal groups through communal engagement, by promoting a social and cultural environment that enables women's economic empowerment while also increasing the opportunity for these women groups to participate in local economies to establish or expand agrifood income-generating enterprises. The project aimed at building the capacity of the women groups through the Cooperative Business School methodology enabling them to develop their own business plans. The implementation of selected business plans was supported by grants. Being an integral part of this project, the current GSVCA Analysis Study aims to understand the opportunities for women cooperatives, associations and informal groups in the agrifood sector helping the women groups chose the right business. The study provides accurate and updated information on five subsectors (plant production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, animal production and agro-processing), using a gender perspective, and offers expert analysis and recommendations to identify opportunities for women and women cooperatives, associations and informal groups to participate in, and benefit equally from, these VCs. As a result of this study, priorities and action plans to address the identified challenges were put forward.

The study commenced by a thorough literature review made by each of the subsectors' experts, allowing them to acquire the available data, studies and information regarding the relevant subsector in Lebanon. A data collection phase in each subsector came next. It included key informant interviews (KIIs with around 41 stakeholders (22 men and 19 women) from various backgrounds, such as the representatives from government and local authorities (Ministries of Agriculture, Industry and Public Work and Transportation, Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Lebanese Agriculture and Research Institute, association of Lebanese industries), from Chouf biosphere reserve, cooperatives, input supplier/importers/exporters, international and local NGOs, academic institutions and others. The data collection also included a survey of 2 139 main actors in the sector (954 women and 1 185 men), as well as 22 FGDs that involved mainly 57 women and 64 men producers, cooperative members or heads in the five agrifood subsectors. After the completion of this phase, each subsector expert embarked on the analysis work based on their field of expertise, the collected data and the information they were able to extract from the literature review. Finally, the business opportunities, that were identified during the analysis of each subsector, underwent a gender revision and assessment to

guarantee these opportunities can be seized by the project's main beneficiaries— the 250 women groups. Prior to conducting the gender analysis, a subsector analysis was conducted to avoid overlooking any business opportunity that might be financially rewarding to cooperatives, associations or individuals. The gender expert then analysed the identified business opportunities with a women's empowerment and gender equality perspectives, ensuring each opportunity does not exacerbate risks of marginalisation, inequality or gender-based violence (GBV). It is worth to note that while the study's approach set the subsector analysis before the gender one, the subsectors' experts attended a series of workshops prepared and given by the gender expert prior to literature review and data collection phases to provide them with gender guidelines they should be aware of during their analysis. In conclusion, the main beneficiaries of the study are expected to learn about identified business opportunities suitable for women, the expected outcomes, potential barriers/challenges they could face, and recommendations/best practices that might encourage them to adopt a specific opportunity that falls within their scope of work and field of expertise.

When discussing gender, particularly when discussing it in respect to “women”, there is often a reductionist approach that fails to recognise the many facets of what and who women are. The term “women” is a denotation to a deeply complex multi-layered cross cutting number of issues that affect “women”. Women in Lebanon, for example, are defined by their nationality and residency status (Palestinian, Syrian, host, migrant workers). Yet they are also defined based on many other dimensions like education, age, place of residence (rural or urban), work status (employed or unemployed, full-timer or part-timer, self-employed/entrepreneur or worker), type of work, and marital status, to name a few. As such, this research has taken conscious efforts to avoid falling into this classing trap of treating women as a homogenous group of people while disregarding the details that make up the reality of their problems. Consequently, when approaching the topic of women through the study, the approach made sure to take into consideration a number of characteristics to ensure maximum inclusion for all vulnerable individuals. These categories, with nationalities taken into consideration, include the following:

- Level of education: educated/uneducated;
- Employment status: (part time/full time/casual employment, employment in family business/individual enterprise, inherited family business, housewife);
- Family composition (number of children);
- Age (Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers II);
- Marital status (single, married, divorced, separated, widow);
- Level of income (low, medium, high);
- Place of residency; and
- Area/region of morphology (rural, urban, nomad, and the like).



Approach and methods

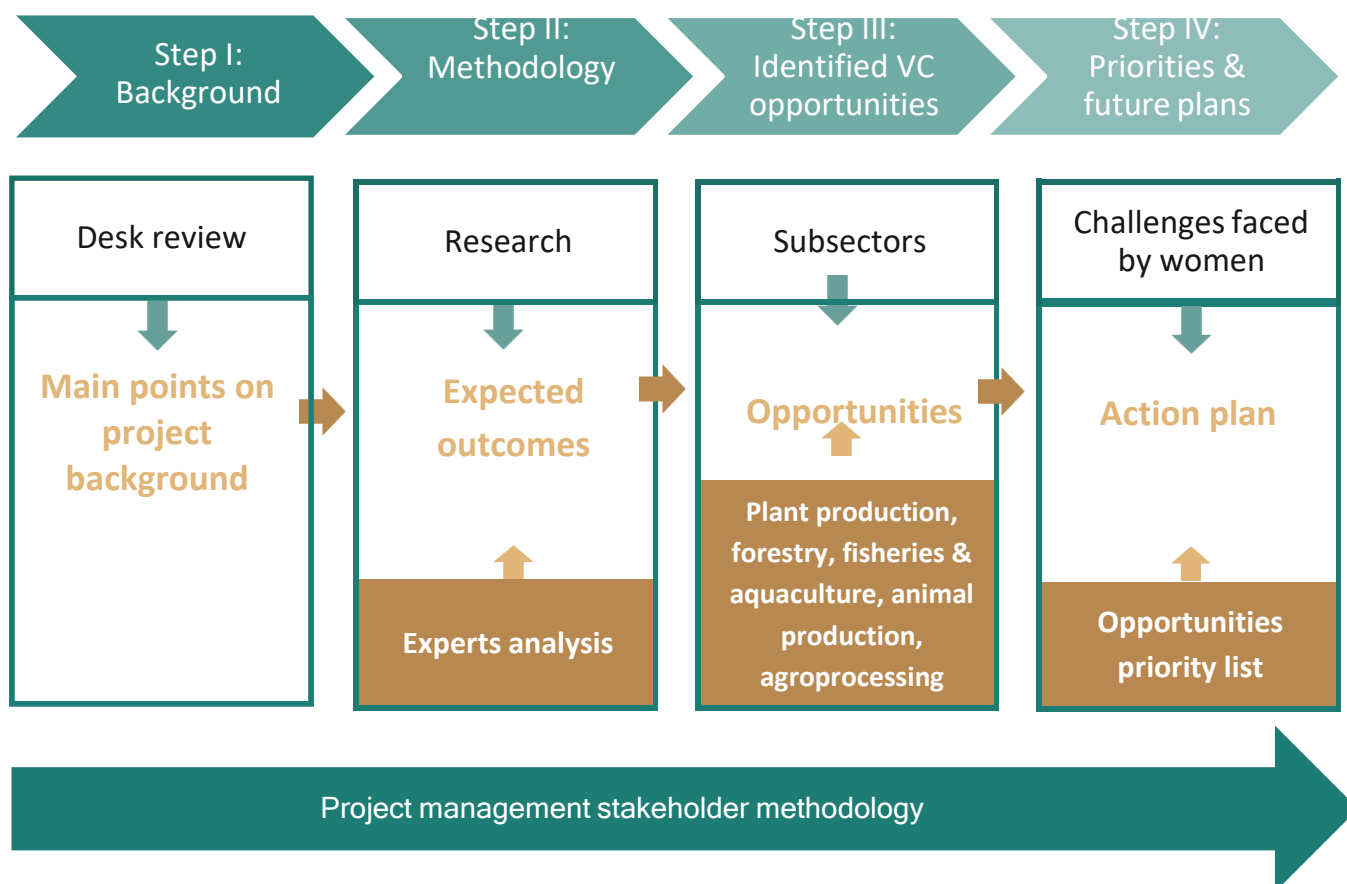
The study was conducted according to the FAO Sustainable Food Value Chain (SFVC) and GSVC Frameworks. The FAO SFVC Framework offers entry points for GSVC development by stating that interventions need to be targeted where the most impact can be attained. Gender gaps in VC development are wide; however, if they are analysed and addressed properly, structural and systemic change may be achieved. By doing so the sustainability of the VC is greatly enhanced, fulfilling one of the primal aims of the SFVC framework. The SFVC focuses on core and extended VC as well as national and global enabling environments. The GSVC framework features two additional levels: the household and individual level. Most VC development approaches, including SFVC, stop at the household level. Yet, gender inequalities often originate within the household, and individual agency and power might also depend on intra-household dynamics. Hence, FAO created a GSVC Framework to build on the SFVC Framework and ensure an all-round approach to achieving inclusiveness in its work, and both approaches were employed for the following study. Accordingly, the study's approach that was developed for the project will be following 4 steps as discussed and explained below:

Key concepts in the GSVC framework

Individual level: The individual level represents a person's ability to make use of economic opportunities in a system.

Household level: The household is a system with different stakeholders, resource flows and power structures affecting participation and benefits from agricultural production.

Gender-based constraints (GBC): Can be defined as "restrictions on men's or women's access to resources or opportunities that are based on their gender roles or responsibilities (USAID, 2009)"



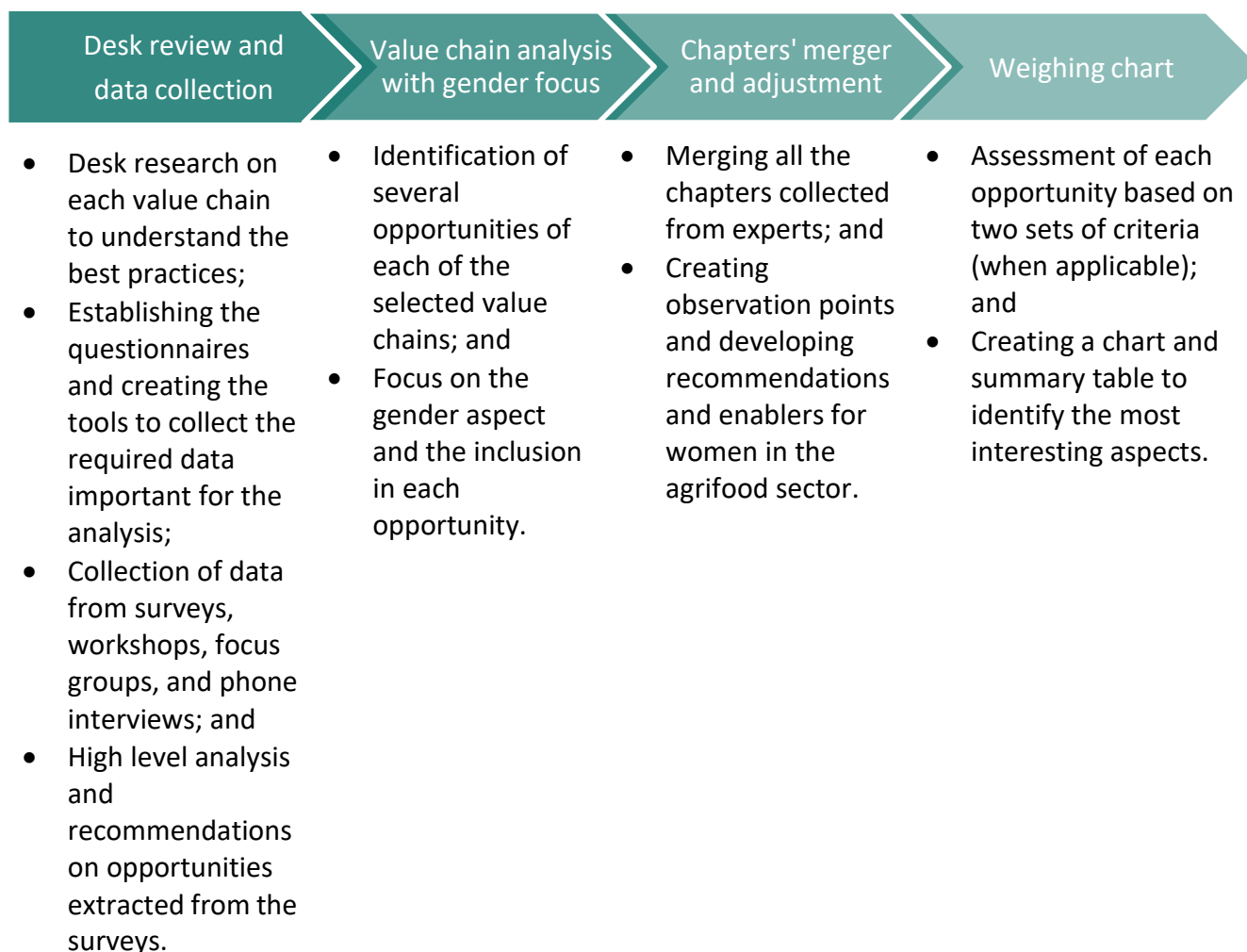
Step 1: Background

At this step, the background is outlined to understand the initial context of this report. It explains the objectives of this report:

- Identification of gender-sensitive opportunities in five subsectors in agrifood;
- Measuring the extent of women inclusion in all these opportunities; and
- Future plans including recommendations and suggestions on how to involve women more in this sector.

Step 2: Methodology

At this step, the approach of the study sets the expectations and potential outcome of each part while confirming the milestones of the project's objectives.



The study started by a thorough literature review, in which each expert/consultant identified the secondary data available relevant to their respective subsector, as well as the gaps that were lacking yet crucial for the GSVC analysis they were seeking. Then, according to the findings and gaps, experts/consultants prepared the data collection tools for the KIIs, FGDs and the survey,. After agreeing on the sample for the five subsectors (around nine KIIs for each subsector, and 2 000 people surveyed for the overall agrifood sector), the data collection process started and was performed by Infopro, a market research company in Lebanon. At the end of the data collection process, a report synthesizing the collected data was presented by Infopro to the experts (referred to as Infopro's report throughout the study) to start the analysis phase and identify the VC opportunities, each in their respective subsector. It is important to note that the consultant deployed the 'do-no-harm' approach for the data-collection phase to make sure that the information was collected in a way to ensure the safety and comfort of all interviewed persons.

Step 3: Identified value chain opportunities

This step identified several VC opportunities in the five agrifood subsectors studied within the scope of this study. In efforts to reach inclusiveness, social justice and gender equality in the agrifood sector in Lebanon, this project studied all levels of the VC, starting at the individual and household levels, moving to the core and extended VC, and reaching the national and global enabling environments.

After identifying opportunities, a weighing chart was added at a later stage to the initial design to help beneficiaries prioritise the identified opportunities. The chart was created to rank all identified opportunities according to gender criteria (vertical axis) and economic criteria (horizontal axis). Below is a list of criteria that was part of the scoring exercise for each opportunity (where applicable).

Economic axis	Gender axis
Geographic location and impact	Legal capability
Market needs (consumers' demands)	Physical capacity
Potential to export	Cultural and tradition tolerance
Expertise needed and availability	Religious acceptance
Time to implement/change/amend	
Level of complexity	
Funds needed	

Business opportunities were identified throughout the different nodes of the VCs in each of the 5 agrifood subsectors: the study aimed to provide relevant information about these opportunities, such as background, general description, potential gender-based constraints (GBCs), as well as recommendations.

Background/general description of opportunity/expected outcomes:

This section attempted to explain the process of the business opportunity: potential problems, potential opportunity for enhancement that will boost and increase the cooperative's revenue, types of inputs and raw material, the availability of imported vs. local products, the expected outcomes and impact of the cooperative. Other elements such as the personnel, their education level, and qualifications, implementation time, profitability, infrastructure, access to loans, and other details are mentioned when available: these elements will be further elaborated once a cooperative decides to adopt a certain opportunity and develop a business plan accordingly.

Potential GBCs

Following the description of the opportunity, potential GBCs that might arise during the implementation process were discussed. This information is of relevant importance and should be used by women cooperatives, associations, informal groups and individuals: it will help them mitigate the risks, as well as provide ease in the implementation of the opportunity.

Recommendations and good practices

This part is dedicated to providing the beneficiaries with the key recommendations. Such recommendations vary from being a mix of the business environment, gender inclusion, and other elements important to the success of the suggested opportunity.

Step 4: Priorities and future plans

Identify main GBCs:

Based on the data collected within the scope of this study, the gender expert summarised the main GBCs faced by women in each of the subsectors from the most severe to the least. This section

highlights these challenges and barriers, which will lay the ground for future interventions that will aim to create favourable working conditions for women in the agrifood sector in Lebanon.

Main enablers and recommendations:

The subsector experts jointly with the gender expert provided general recommendations and other remarks for the subsector, after proposing specific operational/pragmatic recommendations for each business opportunity in the sections above. Additionally, the gender expert stated the main enablers that would improve women's status in the sector in Lebanon.



Summary of findings

Despite that the national legislation provides women and men with equal rights in regard to ownership, access to loans and banking facilities, rural women in general and those who work in agriculture lack awareness of their rights and discrimination is still very common, particularly when it comes to credit. Legal provisions on employment in the agricultural sector are inadequate for both men and women. In addition, the National Social Security Fund that provides health and maternity insurance, end-of-service indemnity, and family and education allowances, covers only permanent agricultural employees. And since most of the women who work in agriculture are part-timers, they are not protected by labour laws governing working hours, maternity leaves, health measures and other aspects of employment. In particular, Article 7 of the Lebanese labour law excludes workers in the agriculture sector from having the rights that other workers have, which exposes many rural women who work in agriculture to all kinds of abuse, sexual harassment and discrimination.

Additionally, there are no official precaution strategies or even an official mechanism of complaints that protect women who work in agriculture from being exploited, abused, exposed to sexual harassment, arbitrarily dismissed from work, unfair pay, or deprived of health protection. This gap allows employers to deal with women unfairly in the absence of laws to deter them. It is important to note that farmers are not unified under one syndicate, but rather dispersed under many syndicates and federations. Consequently, not being part of a large lobby prevents women working in the agricultural sector from speaking up in case of exposure to violence, harassment, or any other harm.

The problem is further deepened due to the scarcity of special organisations or lack of ministries that are in charge of protecting those women; even with the presence of a hotline provided by the Internal Security Forces and helplines provided by local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dedicated to reporting on domestic violence. There is some availability of shelters and social services for violence against women survivors but are of limited capacities and remain dependent on NGOs or non-state actors for their existence. Access to these services is, however, limited among women for several reasons: many are not aware of the hotline or helplines and presence of such shelters and lack knowledge on their basic rights, humanitarian principles and international treaties that protect them from violence. Others fear the judgement of their community and are under social pressure. The attempt to establish the National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas in 2008, arguably the first of its kind in the Arab World, could have been a step in recognizing and promoting the role of women in agriculture, rural products, and agrifood. The organisation aimed to promote territorial development through the valorisation of women entrepreneurship and support rural women by spreading knowledge and good practices. Unfortunately, this body didn't capture the interest of policy makers and the many attempts to adopt it as an official public institution is yet to succeed.

Gender inequalities regarding access to, and control over, resources persist and undermine sustainable and inclusive development of the sector. Despite taking on a large share of work in agriculture, women are often unpaid, and their efforts are unrecognised labour: their work is framed as part of their

domestic work or assisting in the family businesses. Furthermore, even though women farmers play an active role as traders, processors, labourers, and entrepreneurs, they nonetheless often face large barriers in access to land, labour, financial services, water, rural infrastructure, technology, marketing, extension services, agricultural inputs and membership in cooperatives. It is important to note that women in rural areas who take an active role in agriculture are usually in charge of most of the household issues and reproductive activities.

Adding to the inequalities and discriminations that women face in the agricultural sector, their sufferings continue in regard to the safety related to the sector itself. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) notes that agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of occupational safety and health, irrespective of the age of the worker. In addition to occupational diseases, it results in a high rate of work-related fatalities and non-fatal accidents, largely through the use of agricultural machinery. While traditionally men have the highest rate of occupational accidents, the large number of working children and women in agriculture narrows this gender gap. Contact with agrochemicals puts workers, especially children and women, at risk, with potential health repercussions transmitted to the next generation.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Lebanese women economic participation and opportunity is very low. Based on the Gender Gap Report of 2022, Lebanon was ranked 135 out of 144 countries. According to ILO estimations, unemployment among Lebanese women could reach twice the average. Despite that women's enrollment and educational attainment have increased significantly during recent years, there are not enough women entering the workforce.

Migrant women face compounded challenges. A gender report done for Mercy Corps in 2017 demonstrates that, among the Syrian communities, women are the most vulnerable segment. There is a shift in the gender roles and more Syrian women are currently at the forefront of their families and the breadwinners, yet decision-making authority is still exclusive to men, a social norm that has its roots in religion, oriental traditions, and costumes. For instance, women from rural areas are paid daily and their income is taken by the husband or the father. Similarly, the latter can decide to force kids to leave schools and involve them in the labour market; he can also accept on behalf of his daughter, and without her consent, to have her married to a man at a very early age: fathers get the money (*Mahr*) that is supposed to be promptly given to the girl as the marriage gift (*muqaddam*), which varies between USD 1 000 and USD 2 000.

Among the major findings flagged while attending the KIIs and the FGDs was the relatively shallow knowledge among stakeholders in terms of gender issues despite the technical knowhow present for those working in the sector. Women issues were not raised in a conscious manner nor discussed openly, which kept the matter unresolved and without any proposed solution to eliminate or at least reduce the gender gap in the sector. Issues faced by women were often overlooked by employers given the context of the daily hassle of work in each subsector; vast differences in pay checks between men and women were never discussed and often assumed normal. Consequently, and with the sudden depreciation of the LBP against the USD, gender discrimination in the agricultural sector has never been more pressing topic: women working in the sector and who send their income to their families back home such as migrant workers found themselves unable to do so anymore; single headed female

household, who had been suffering from unfair wages, found their meagre income stripped in half and even less. The difference in effects on various women types, of different nationalities, marital status and job sector was once again displayed to confirm the need for a multi-layered and crosscutting approach in dealing with the issues. The economic situation and its repercussions on the local currency devaluation relative to the USD had a negative impact on all the sectors, and especially on agriculture where the rate of wage is already below the minimum.



Gender dynamics in Lebanon's agrifood labour force: overview

Although employment regulations in Lebanon do not differentiate between men and women, social welfare remains predominantly focused on men according to the UN Women's Country Gender and Economic Profiles Report of 2016. This is partially due to many legislations in Lebanon that still discriminate against women, including the inheritance law. As stated in the FAO GSVC framework, power go hand in hand with agency, with the latter being the ability to make autonomous choices and transforming them into desired outcomes, and the former being the control over resources and profits. Inequality in this regard puts women in a vicious cycle where her lack of access to productive resources negatively impacts her capabilities, self-confidence and decision-making power. Consequently, the labour force in the agri-food sector in Lebanon is focused on men, leaving behind the weakest link in it, the women. According to the report, it also remains common for families to support the education and employment of women until marriage or motherhood. The ILO's labour force and household living conditions survey (LFHLCS) of 2018-2019 conducted by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), states that the overall labour force participation of women in Lebanon is 29.3 percent. The LFHLCS additionally highlighted a "relatively high degree of gender occupational segregation," despite the fact that the percentage of women in managerial positions is "in proportion to their overall share in total employment".

On another level, despite women's right to sign contracts and manage their own properties, the management of women's financial assets and income is strongly influenced by their family members. As highlighted by UN Women, inequality is further aggravated by women's lack of awareness of their legal rights, particularly in rural areas. According to CAS, students registered in higher education in the fields of agriculture, fishery and forestry were almost equally divided among males and females between 2007 and 2008. Despite these numbers, women have so far maintained a very limited role in the agrifood sectors in formal capacities, and are often referred to as "family helpers," with their roles often depending on the specifics of each subsector. Estimated rates of women's participation in the agrifood sector's different subsectors ranges between 10 percent and 40 percent. As highlighted in an assessment study on governance frameworks for fisheries completed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Tyr in South Lebanon for subsectors such as fisheries, women's participation remains virtually nonexistent, and confined to repairing nets or assisting in ancillary jobs. In the plant production subsector, their roles are limited to minor tasks away from the field and rather related to the agroprocessing subsector and the preparation of stock (*mouneh*)¹ products.

According to this study, some of the most recurrent themes associated with the aforementioned realities include perceptions on the physical inability of women to carry out field or sea work, their main role as caregivers, the limitation of their roles to household chores and tasks, as well as more traditional viewpoints that hover around the presence of women in close contact with foreign men.

¹ *Mouneh* is an Arabic word meaning 'stocked or stored food'. Storing food using traditional ways was essential to all Lebanese throughout history.

Additional barriers that prevent women's adequate participation in the agrifood sector include the fact that they are generally paid less than men for the same work, their careers and work is halted periodically depending on their duties as caregivers, as well as the fact that women often lack land and capital, as arable land is typically passed down to the men in the family.

Perceptions gathered from women as part of this study highlight their unfavourable attitude towards working in the agriculture sector. This is mainly due to an overall perception that it requires difficult physical labour. Although this remains the sentiment, the status quo seems to be shifting more and more towards the enhancement of women's roles in the sector, a matter that may be attributed to the shifts in social roles (because women need to work) as a result of Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis. As mentioned, women comprise 50 percent of students enrolled in agricultural studies at the university level, and technical academies are also witnessing a spike in female enrollment across many sub-disciplines related to the agrifood sector. A more recent phenomenon of men encouraging their wives to work (and subsequently get involved in the agrifood sector) has emerged as a result of Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis, although since the COVID-19 pandemic this trend has also backtracked as the amount of unpaid care and other household work expected of women sharply increased since the pandemic. In rural areas, women are undertaking initiatives to create cooperatives for producing *mouneh*, among other goods. According to this study, women are more likely than men to attend training sessions, and are also more open to receiving training in general. According to the fieldwork associated with this study, women are also more eager to invest in developing their line of work, not to mention that they are more likely to explore new opportunities.

Opportunities for women have increased in general across the agrifood sector — as machines have replaced strenuous physical labour in many cases. Each of the subsectors within the agrifood sector presents several opportunities for women to explore. Women's role in the sector has been realised in everything from planting crops, to creating recipes, raising cattle, managing greenhouses, generating added-value transformed products, and smoking fish. Opportunities for women are also present in complementary activities to the sector, such as managing touristic facilities near farms and fishing harbors, or in the areas of marketing for more traditional production entities that lack this expertise.



Gender realities across sectors and impacting factors

I. Access to assets, services and financial resources:

Rural women in Lebanon suffer from restricted access to assets and social entitlements, and experience subordinate and unequal gender relations. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), rural women constitute 40.7 percent of the total paid and unpaid workers in agriculture. Although women provide at least one third of the labour required to sustain agricultural production, most, if not all, of women's work in agriculture is not accounted for. Most women work on a seasonal and part-time basis, and thus their contribution is not counted in the economy. Furthermore, as per United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, "the fruit of their labour is channeled directly into their household for the household's consumption, and does not enter into a market cycle". In addition to long hours spent working in agriculture, women have responsibilities in their homes such as cooking, cleaning, caring for their children and fetching water and fuel. On average, rural women end up working between fourteen and sixteen hours per day.

In the agricultural sector, the community of farmers continue to face restricted access to infrastructure and land ownership inequality. Rural women in particular experience further limited access and remain widely subject to exploitation and other forms of unjust labour. The agricultural share of economically active women has decreased significantly over time in the country. In fact, it has dropped from 20 percent in 1980 to 7.1 percent in 1995, eventually reaching 2.2 percent in 2010. According to FAO, this indicates that women have not been given incentives to engage in the agriculture sector in Lebanon. In 2010, only 32.1 percent of the economically active population in the agricultural sector (1.8 percent of the total population) were females. As for their farming presence, rural women make up 9 percent of the total farm owners with their roles largely restricted to the production of dairy products, food preserves and subsistence farming.

In addition to restrictions in the areas of ownership and infrastructure, women in the sector continue to face limited access to markets and technology. Women in different agriculture value chains are highly involved at the production and processing levels, with very marginal roles in marketing through the women cooperatives. They have limited access to technology mainly because they carry out activities as dictated by superiors, such as planting or harvesting manually, using traditional methods away from technology. Any equipment introduced to the farms, such as mechanical harvesters, are managed by male workers, either due to the perception that women do not possess the skills to operate the equipment, or that new uncommon machines are too difficult to operate. In the areas of access to fresh fruits and vegetable markets, women additionally encounter challenges in accessing wholesale markets — a field that remains highly male-dominated in Lebanon. On the other hand, women involved in processing are perceived to be in a better position in terms of direct access to markets. However, their inability to compete through the development of marketing strategies, as well

as their overall lack of experience in the areas of negotiation, ultimately diminishes their abilities to fully access markets.

Barriers to access for women additionally extend to accessing training and information. Women receive much less training than men at the national level, and their lack of interaction with other actors in the sector and experts, significantly limits their access to information and emerging realities. This study found that only 18 percent of women who took part in the administered survey received training, as opposed to 57 percent of the surveyed men. These constraints negatively impact women's ability to increase productivity, mitigate risks, respond to shocks, or adapt to emerging realities and developments in the agrifood sector. As a result, women tend to resort to second-hand information from their husbands or other male household members. Furthermore, higher illiteracy rates among women also puts them as a disadvantaged segment when it comes to accessing information.

On another level, an overall lack of access to cooperatives and associations places women at a significant disadvantage across the sector. For women, working at the individual level often limits the potential for improving production/processing and accessing different marketing channels. A clear example of this lies in the fact that although women play significant roles in the agricultural sector value chain (from production, through processing, to marketing and trade), they lack ownership and access to productive resources such as land, credit, which in turns limits their ability to gain membership in producer organisations and marketing cooperatives that can improve their working capital, activities and productivity.

In their roles as food producers, constraints to women's access to productive resources such as land, credit, inputs and services (particularly extension services) result in lower levels of output, as documented in FAO's report on gender gaps in agriculture. For rural women, access to land is the single most important condition for economic empowerment. This is chiefly due to the fact that access to most other productive resources is conditional on land ownership, as well as the fact that land is often a condition for social inclusion. Access to financial services, for instance, is largely dependent on security of land tenure. FAO notes that while all smallholders face constraints in their access to financial resources, in most countries the share of female smallholders who can access credit is 5–10 percentage points lower than for male smallholders. Lack of access to credit diminishes the amount of assets female smallholders can marshal, thereby perpetuating a gender asset gap in most regions. Access to inputs and technology is additionally decisive in explaining differences in yields between male and female smallholders. The greater capacity of men to command labour, both from (unremunerated) family members and from other members of the community, is evident in the Lebanese case.

In terms of basic infrastructure, Lebanon still falls behind in the fields of acceptable, reliable, and accessible transportation, communication, and clean water provision. In rural areas, barriers regarding distance and transportation to gain services and/or seek work opportunities limit women's mobility and access to resources and markets. Internet and communication availability, quality, and cost are other women-specific challenges since they have limited access to finances. While this issue affects all sectors, it has a greater impact on creative and knowledge economies, and on access to input and marketing linkages. Access to clear clean water remains a pivotal barrier across all agricultural sectors,

particularly since safety and quality norms for export must be applied and respected. Women's lack of access to water brings forth a highly gender-specific reality, as women are typically those in charge of transporting water from the source for a plethora of purposes: irrigation, cooking, drinking and hygiene practices. This particularly halts their abilities to integrate into the sector and generate an income.

For its part, the rural cooperative sector in Lebanon is mostly if not entirely male-dominated; however, women mostly provide the invisible but critical labour essential for its survival and sustainability. Within this gender-discriminatory system, many women have organised in women-only rural cooperatives. Those rural women's cooperatives encounter gender-specific oppression and discrimination. Women cooperatives, in general, face difficulties in marketing their goods, a factor that impedes their long-term sustainability. This is essentially due to gender barriers to mobility, mismatching between their products and market demands, lack of subsidies or investment in inputs, total liberalisation of local markets and flooding with similar, cheaper and more competitive products.

II. Power, agency and decision-making:

The Lebanese labour market is characterised by low employment rates, low contributions of women to economic life, a large informal sector, high influx of foreign workers and a large number of skilled Lebanese people seeking and obtaining employment abroad. The absence of tangible laws and policies that support women in the labour force across all sectors has further resulted in discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of social benefits, taxation, and medical services especially in the non-formal sector. Gender inequality in Lebanon remains a societal norm. According to the WEF gender gap report of 2020, Lebanon has one of the broadest overall gender gaps in the world (ranking 145 out of 153 countries), and it is placed amongst the lowest global rates of women's labour market participation, hovering at 29 percent for women and 76 percent for men. Since 2010, Lebanon has seen a consistent decline in its global index rank and relative gender gap score primarily as a result of scores consistently close to zero in political empowerment. These inequalities translate into the country's agrifood sector — as discrepancies in access, agency and leadership across the sector remain widespread across different gender categories.

Structural and legal constraints, sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, decision-making structures, public policies, development strategies, ongoing conflicts, and a rise in social conservatism all play key roles in perpetuating women's vulnerability on the national scale — particularly in the agrifood sector. Findings from this study highlight that literacy rates remain low among farm operators in Lebanon. Across the country, farm operators (all males) who control 60 percent of the total useful agricultural lands in Lebanon did not even complete their primary education. In regions such as the Beqaa and North Lebanon, the agricultural sector relies mainly on temporary workers and women labour in their extended cropping systems — in which women play a very marginal role in the decision-making process, and have little-to-no control over their working hours, conditions or benefits. In many cases, as per the findings of this study, women are paid much less than men for the same work.

Rural women, who constitute 34 percent of the total family workforce in agriculture, are marginalised and overexploited in Lebanon. According to IFAD, they remain either unpaid, or hired for seasonal agricultural work during harvest time with low salaries. According to CAS, the gender pay gap in the agriculture sector is 21 percent. Women working in agriculture are believed to work more than men as their responsibilities include: planting, weeding, harvesting, food processing, livestock rearing and selling. What is more, they are in charge of management of the family budget to meet the family needs through a system of goods exchange with other families, hospitality and cooperation. Women “produce mostly staple crops for household and small scale cash crops”, and are involved in agrifood activities (dairy products, canned food, olive oil and honey production, and so on). They work manually utilizing rudimentary equipment, collect wood for energy, with nearly forty remote rural villages across the country require women to fetch water”.

According to the latest FAO’s “Women, agriculture and rural development” fact sheet of Lebanon, men care for the health of animals and marketing by-products, while women carry out all other tasks. The fact sheet further insists that “men make almost all decisions related to farming activities except for allocation of water for livestock”, described as a “women-dominated activity”.

In Lebanon’s fishing sector there are evidently different levels of participation and of occupational burden between men and women. As per FAO 2012 report, men are the ones that do the actual fishing, whereas women are seen as involved with post-harvest and marketing activities. This has led to the overall diminishment of women’s roles within the subsector — as their role remains “marginal” compared to their male counterparts. Women’s roles however, remain much more diverse. Within the fishing subsector, women are involved in every part of the daily activities of fishing, such a preparing nets, sales and cleaning. The findings of this study indicate that women’s presence in the fishing subsector remains very rare, and their agency in the subsector is absent. This is primarily due to the fact that their presence in the workforce is restricted to unpaid work in family business, and often enough, working in these capacities from home.

Research and data on women’s participation in the fisheries sector at the national level in Lebanon remains scarce — with almost no studies directed at the gender dynamics across this subsector in the country. One of the only assessments of women participation in the fisheries sector was carried out in Anfeh (North Lebanon) by the University of Balamand (UoB)’s Marine and Coastal Resources Programme in 2018. The survey conducted for the purpose of this study highlighted that all women working in the fisheries sector are relatives of the fisher: 76 percent were wives, 13 percent daughters, eight percent mothers, and three percent sisters. This is consistent with a European Union study completed in 2013, highlighting that women are mostly working in family enterprises alongside what is perceived as their main responsibilities within the household. Women are responsible for selling the fish, mending nets, preparing hooks and even managing book-keeping and paying invoices. Women’s contributions have been known to allow the household to reduce costs and keep income inside the family. In the areas of perception among women, the UoB study found that the women themselves do not see working in the family business/from home as a job, but rather as a contribution to the overall well-being of the household. As a result, the work carried out by women remains invisible amid more traditional gender dynamics, and they remain unable to access resources or benefit from social security or protection schemes. According to the “Assessment of the commercial seafood chain in

Lebanon,” women’s employment was generally limited in the commercial seafood chain. In the subsector, women were found particularly in administrative, marketing and accounting departments although their salaries might be lower than men’s by up to 20 percent. In the GSVCA study conducted by FTL and subject of this report, it was found that single, divorced, and widowed women are perceived to have a “lower status” in society, with decisions are typically made by other males in the family; in the areas of decision-making, women are said to have a say in the allocation of family expenditures only.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD) 2020 study titled “Gendered value chain studies: barriers and opportunities”, in the small ruminant dairy sector, especially in Northern Beqaa, women are mainly involved in “milking sheep and goats” while their husbands transfer the milk directly to the milk collectors who, in turn, sell them to processors. Only some women cooperatives focus on the collection process as well as selling directly to retailers. The UNDP study found out that the involvement of women in dairy processing is considerable through cooperatives within their premises or in-house. Small farms in Lebanon employ around 80 percent and 90 percent of the casual and permanent agricultural labour force respectively. Small farms in Lebanon are in the majority family farms; however, there is no data available on the distribution of the working population by age, gender and size of farms. The percentage of female permanent workers in the animal production sector nationwide is 18.2 percent, versus 81.8 percent males. The overall pay gap for all nationalities and across all working levels is 19.3 percent.

As per the findings of the fieldwork attached to this study, women still have very limited power to decide over the use of family income, even when they are working themselves. Based on fieldwork, only 48.9 percent of participants believe that women should have decision-making power over the household income, while 26.7 percent insist that only a portion of her own income should fall under her control, with the rest of the amount contributing to the overall family income that the “man of the house” ultimately has decision-making power over.



Intersectional challenges for Syrian refugee women

Gender-specific challenges faced by Syrian refugee women remain prevalent and dominant across the agrifood sector, as well as across broader lines. Syrian women continue to encounter severe challenges in accessing labour markets in the host countries where they reside, with Lebanon additionally serving as one of the host countries that largely restricts Syrian refugees' employment and integration into the labour force across all sectors. Although 52.5 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon are females, a gender imbalance is present within this community in different working age groups. In Lebanon, the male-to-female ratio is particularly low in the 20–24, 25–29 and 30–34 age groups, where females consistently outnumber males. Employment and activity rates of Syrian women remain particularly low in Lebanon. Nationwide, unemployment of Syrian women is estimated at 68 percent, with economic activity rates at 19 percent. Furthermore, the gender pay gap is substantial for Syrian women workers in Lebanon. According to the ILO, Syrian women reportedly earn 40 percent less than men. The need for women to engage in childcare additionally requires them to seek out only part-time and home-based forms of income. According to the ILO, of the entire Syrian refugee women population (aged above 15 years old), only six percent are currently working in Lebanon. Syrian refugees in Lebanon's informal economy are mainly employed in services, agriculture, commerce, construction, and factories. Most refugees work in Lebanon informally, whereby 92 percent have no work contract and over 56 percent work on a seasonal, weekly or daily basis.

Only 23 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon earn regular monthly wages, with women reportedly earning at least 40 percent less than men per month. Among the Syrian communities, women remain the country's most vulnerable. Syrian women in rural areas are routinely paid on a daily basis, with their income being given to their husbands in order to allocate family expenses. While there has been a shift in traditional gender roles, and more Syrian women are becoming the breadwinners of their families, the possibility for this remains rooted in cultural, religious and social dynamics. Fear of harassment in the workplace is a common concern among Syrian refugee women and their families. A UN Women study on women's participation in the agricultural sector indicates that while the phenomenon is frequently and widely cited as a significant concern, the number of women who report having personally experienced harassment physical or verbal tends to be significantly lower, likely due to reporting concerns and barriers.



Barriers to access and agency

While measuring and understanding the underperformance of the VCs, the FAO GSVC framework adds two dimensions that help in finding the origins of gender inequalities in the agrifood sector. Accordingly, this project studied constraints faced by women on the individual and household levels, and was able to depict the root causes of gender discrimination that originate from these two levels and have its repercussions on the challenges faced by women on the cooperative and national level in general. Having women-led cooperatives and associations as the main beneficiaries of this project, the two added dimensions helped in assessing the constraints faced by members of these cooperatives on the individual and household levels, which in turn limits and negatively impact the organisation's work and progress. Being short of certain capabilities (knowledge, skills and experience), self-confidence and decision making power, and lacking access to assets, agricultural and/or financial services hinders women's growth on the individual and household level as well as on the cooperative and national level. As such, the GBCs and barriers listed below are categorised under four levels: individual, household, cooperative and national environment.

I. GBCs on the individual level

Limited access to finance and credit facilities: Women are less likely than men to have access to financial institutions, bank loans, and financial resources as they have fewer assets and less land ownership due to Personal Status codes in Lebanon that are unequal to women, and the overall dominant inheritance culture which favours men over women. Moreover, women seeking to start their own businesses in rural areas cannot access the business management support required, nor any rural incubators that can serve the local communities and encourage women to establish businesses with access to finances based on sound business models. Government funding for agrifood industries is often limited and insufficient to the sector's needs and potentials. Women continue to encounter multiple obstacles in accessing finances and loans from banks and other formal financial institutions to invest in agrifood businesses. Despite the efforts cooperatives put in terms of partnership with the private sector and organisations to access funds, the situation remains very challenging with income being limited to selling products. Women in cooperatives need credits to grow their work, to buy materials or other inputs, but this remains very limited and the conditions are not always in the favour of women. According to this study, this is mainly attributed to the nature of most rural microfinance programmes and credit schemes which are designed to target male clients and tend to be biased against women.

High cost of resources, energy and land: Inheritance law is particularly influential in the agrifood sector (particularly in agriculture), where women often do not possess or have access to land. This is particularly challenging for women engaged in fruit or milk processing activities, as they need to ensure a consistent supply in order to manufacture the products. This not only incurs more costs, but also influences market access, and further limits market opportunities. As a result, women joining cooperatives will have less opportunities in the farming and food processing sector.

Limited knowledge of safety and quality standards: a common feature for the small ruminant and other value chains in the agrifood sector is that women also have limited knowledge of the safety and quality standards regarding the different products; this, in turn, affects market access and linkages with potential buyers who require assurance of quality before purchasing. The processing methods are still traditional, artisanal, and do not always respond to the market demand.

II. GBCs on the household level

Socio-cultural barriers: Gender-based barriers in the areas of cultural norms remain the main obstacle that restricts women from participation in the agrifood sector. There are several economic sectors and activities that are still considered as “men’s jobs” and deemed not suitable for women. Such gender dynamics remain persistent, and result in women continuing to be at a disadvantage in many subsectors and industries. The following stereotypes apply to the individual, professional and cooperative levels. These socio-cultural factors imposed on women by society, coupled with the psychological factors imposed by women on themselves and on their aspirations, inhibit their participation and employment in different activities. In particular, the agrifood sector remains highly dominated by males across Lebanon, making it increasingly difficult for women to breakthrough and gain support in order to further integrate into subsectors within this space. Men hand over different senior roles to their male peers rather than to a woman for the same reasons: an overall lack of confidence in her abilities, expertise and an overall narrow understanding of her roles in general. The root causes of women’s limited economic participation and leadership are traced back to the social norms that dictate the expected roles of women and men. In Lebanon, women’s participation in the labour market is further constrained by deep structural power relations that result in men controlling financial decision-making processes, an uneven distribution of household and home care work, limited awareness of women’s rights, social restrictions on women’s mobility, low self-confidence amongst women, and specific resulting risks such as GBV. As per the GSVCA requirements, gender gap between women and men in Lebanon remains wide, and reaching a higher level of sustainability in the value chain requires narrowing it, as well as raising awareness about such challenges limiting the role of women in agriculture.

III. GBCs on the cooperative level

Lack of learning and training opportunities: inadequate technical training (skills and techniques) for women related to several agrifood subsectors such as fishing for instance is an impending factor. The majority of training programmes offered by the public sector and NGOs are perceived as non-women friendly, with very few of them explicitly targeting women. Women are typically involved in more productive and reproductive tasks within the household; therefore, they have little time to attend training and educational programmes. Such a lack of education and training opportunities for women results in persistent employment barriers in the agrifood sector at the national level. There is additionally insufficient women integration in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. This impacts their level of knowledge and access and usage of technology. There is not

enough counseling and orientation to motivate more women to pursue such specialties, which could increase their opportunities for integration within different emerging sectors.

Limited access to markets and technology: women have limited access to technology within the agrifood space. This is mainly due to the fact that they carry out activities dictated to them by their superiors, such as planting or harvesting using traditional methods of agriculture. These tasks are generally carried out manually, without the assistance of technology.

IV. GBCS on the national level

Lack of information: one of the pivotal issues to address when it comes to women's participation in value chains, as well as their integration into the agrifood sector as a whole, remains the absence of gender disaggregated data across all subsectors. Cooperatives are often asked to complete work related to stereotyped tasks; pantry, food processing, and other tasks remain required from men. While the presence of women in the sector is prevalent, this is not captured by labour statistics due to the fact that much of their involvement is informal, unpaid and/or unreported. This in turn contributes to an underestimation of women's role in the sector/value chains, and renders it difficult to address gender-related issues including unequal employment opportunities, access to resources and decision-making. The absence of data additionally translates into little policy attention being given to the gender dimension of this sector, and sectorial support not being channeled adequately to women. A reason for gender information unavailability originates from an evident gap in research on women in the agrifood sector.

Weak institutions: the inefficiency of government departments, women NGOs and cooperatives could be a factor determining the little attention that has so far been given to women's roles and potentials within agrifood sector. Women-targeted income-generating activities implemented by these institutions revolve predominantly around traditional small-scale agribusiness activities, ignoring larger impeding realities, and rarely including programmes for addressing gender inequalities in the sector as a whole. This could be a result of limited women's representation and participation within these institutions.

Restrictive legal frameworks: labour law includes several discriminatory codes that, for example, prohibit women participation in certain professions that are considered "hard," and lacks clear mechanisms for protecting women's rights in terms of remuneration, promotion, and competence in the private and public sectors. Measures for social security and protection, including parental leave, welfare benefits, and safety from sexual harassment are largely absent. For Syrian refugee women specifically, other challenges in the areas of legislation include the increased costs of attaining the required legal documents they need, as well as the very restrictive conditions they continue to navigate at all levels.

Cross-cutting services and infrastructure: a sense of safety and protection needed to encourage and support women's economic involvement is lacking in most cases, particularly in the agrifood sector. These needs include social and medical insurance, day-care services, and reliable and safe

transportation. Agriculture workers, household caretakers, freelancers, and workers in informal sectors still do not receive any social or medical insurance.

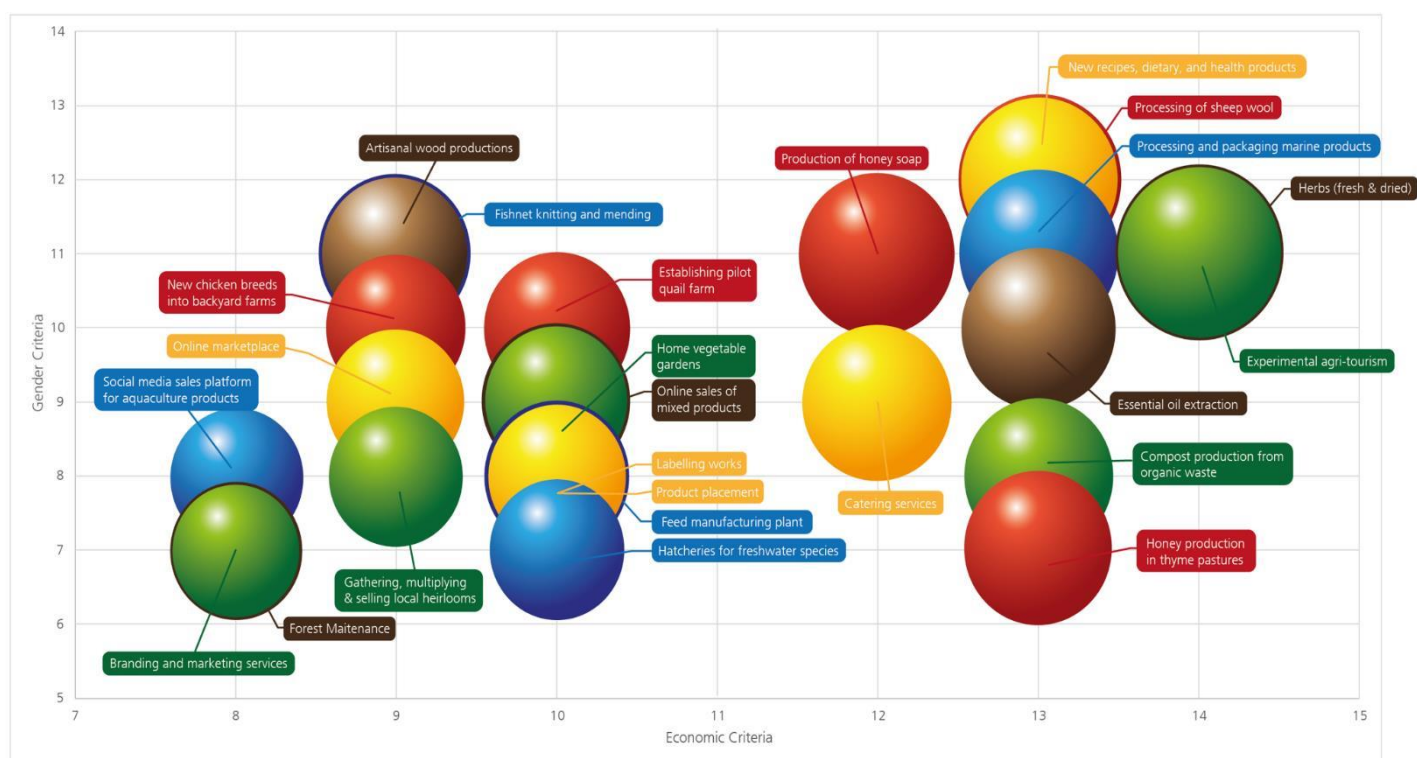
Limited business development services: Business development service providers are not sufficiently gender-focused, with little awareness of the constraints that women face. There is not enough attention given to the needs of women enterprises at different levels, or to the geographical distribution of such services.



Exploring opportunities for women

Despite the fact that Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis has been worse on women, it has provided for additional opportunities for them to assume roles as income generators within their own households. According to an interview with a key informant from the Chouf Biosphere Reserve, "[...] households now require an additional source of income, and this has resulted in attempts to integrate women everywhere possible". Additional interviews found an emerging trend among men: encouraging women to work outside the house as long as they are earning a "good income". Interventions that would increase women's involvement in the agrifood sector include opportunities in marketing, management, packaging, and sales. Potential areas of intervention for women in rural areas also include taking care of existing or future guest houses, within or besides the production units. Findings also referred to women's abilities to serve as rangers, supervisors, or have administrative duties. Prior to the crisis, microcredits were provided as a solution for very small production projects led by women. The sections below explore gender-sensitive opportunities in each of the five agrifood subsectors, that were identified following the data collection phase which included KIIs, surveys and FGDs that were completed with experts in the field, practitioners, workers, farmers, and various organisations and cooperatives that work in the sector.

A VC approach was adopted to explore the possibility of women inclusion in all nodes of the selected chains under each subsector and ensure gender mainstreaming is encouraged. Therefore, all opportunities were identified based on their economic viability as much as their degree of gender-sensitivity. As shown in the weighing matrix below, five opportunities for each subsector that scored the highest in the economic criteria (X axis) and gender criteria (Y axis) were included in the chart: economic criteria include parameters such as the geographic location and its impact, market needs, potential to export, expertise needed, level of complexity, time to implement, and funds needed. As for the gender criteria, it included parameters like legal capacity, physical capacity, cultural and traditional tolerance, and religious acceptance. Consequently, the farther up opportunities are positioned in the weighing chart below, the more appealing they ought to be for women cooperatives; by the same token, the farther right ones, the most economically appealing as per the aforementioned parameters. Each of the subsector opportunities was allocated a different colour and overlapping opportunities that scored the same in the gender and economic criteria are appearing in the weighing matrix with an encircled bubble whose filling and border colours match the two subsectors that opportunities belong to. The weighing chart is followed by sections for each subsector, in which a description of the prioritised opportunities is given along other relevant data.



● Plant Production
 ● Forestry
 ● Fisheries and Aquaculture
 ● Animal Production
 ● Agro-Processing.

Matrix 1: Weighing chart for the gender-sensitive opportunities across all subsectors

I. Opportunities in plant production

- 1. Compost production from organic waste:** a wide variety of fruits and vegetables are by nature perishable and have a very short life cycle, consequently, a compost production opportunity arises from this condition. Not only will it partially solve an existing fragile waste disposal system, this opportunity will provide locally produced compost that will substitute some of the relatively expensive imported agricultural inputs such as fertilisers. The compost production opportunity is based on gathering all organic waste resulting from fruit and vegetable losses on a daily basis from all selling points, wholesale and retail, and composting them to produce non-synthetic organic fertilisers. It is an important component of an agricultural value chain based on circular economy. Collecting and composting organic waste provides an important opportunity for women since they can be involved in every level of production starting from gathering organic waste from selling points through composting units and compost distribution. Women making use of this opportunity do not require a special level of education; however, this work requires some physical labour and geographical mobility. Launching this service requires a fair amount of investment, supervision by specialists to avoid contaminating underground waters and minimise gas emission. Compost production is equally suitable for women and men, and thus women cooperatives having the required funds and expertise will benefit from having a leading role in this project that is rather considered under-exploited in the country. This will have a positive impact through creating a new dynamic in the gender distribution of roles and responsibilities, and through making women challenge the socially constructed gender roles, as well as challenge themselves. Moreover, women empowerment is also achieved through providing value for what anyone in the project is doing. Trainings should be provided for women, men, and youth about compost in order for workers to learn how to do this job with zero harm to the environment. Certificates of accomplishment as per the levels and content provided can be given in order to encourage participation and to formalise the learning. For cooperatives and farms, certified farms doing compost and showing the number of women and other workers who were trained can provide the company, association or cooperative with more benefits in terms of access to local and foreign markets. These elements should be visible in the marketing inside and outside Lebanon, at the local, national, regional and international levels. The objective would be to attract and motivate the ethical consumer to buy from certified cooperatives, seeking more transparency, more gender equality and more support for women and men farmers. Capitalizing more of these experiences is a must, while involving more women in the process will have a double positive impact: raising women opportunities on the one hand, and supporting the environment chain on the other.
- 2. Branding and marketing services:** most fruit producers currently sell their products to traders who have the connections to sell the produce to the farmers' market or to export it. Usually, all the risks of monetary fluctuation or wastage are the responsibility of the producers since they are the weak link along the VC. It is important to create new marketing channels that would link the producers directly to the consumers while providing the former with an edge: an added value, be it the origin of the produce or its characteristics. In this framework, branding strategies can be designed and applied for apples, cherries, and other products with attractive and efficient packages to be sold in direct sales points close to the producers' regions. Women can excel in branding, networking and

sales as well as the linkages they would create within this opportunity leading to a network of local stakeholders, that would decentralise part of the VC. This opportunity would require a marketing background to set the branding and the sales points. It would also require proper training to make the network function. Younger generations are more involved in branding and social media. Cooperative deciding to opt for this opportunity should set a network of producers and sales points that would be attractive to clients. They should also diversify the products offered to guarantee their sustainability that is challenged by the seasonality of fruit production.

- 3. Experimental agri-tourism:** the proposed opportunity is based on hosting tourists for experiential touristic activities during emblematic seasons such as harvesting or picking and sharing the lives of the farmers during these times in order to re-establish the link between consumers and producers. It is important to provide special training on touristic activities and the different security rules and regulations and quality standards. Women can be involved in this activity on different levels including marketing and organizing of the events, as well as their logistical support of the tourists. There is also a priority for household women where they can participate in this initiative in parallel with their usual duties, and using an accumulated know-how in household maintenance and cooking, among others. It will provide a sustainable seasonal income through two ways: the first is the additional labour force assisting in the harvest activity, and the second is the income generation from the bed and breakfast activities. Acknowledging that this opportunity is a rather new concept in Lebanon and might be challenging for some farmers to receive people in their houses, specific training on communication, health and hygiene, hospitality basics, and others would be crucial. Furthermore, this opportunity is applicable by both women and men, even though cultural barriers in communities might constitute an obstacle for women more than men, where it is not acceptable to receive strangers in the household. Today, more than 151 rural cooperatives run by women are active around Lebanon (crtda.org.lb): they promote healthy, natural and authentic agrifood produce and preserves, along with local crafts; all produced in a traditional way. Internal tourism activities present a recently acquired trend among Lebanese women, but it is still considered limited and has room for expansion: it is crucial to encourage more activities and provide visibility and networking between the Lebanese guest houses. These activities vary for each season, attracting tourists all year long and securing sustainable income: it includes, among others, hiking in the nearby nature, picking fresh fruits from the surrounding orchards, preparing and/or tasting local dishes that are unique to each village. Establishing a yearly agenda for activities would guarantee a regular and non-seasonal income for women, which would attract women from different generations to carry out such work. It will also raise the level of decentralisation and improvement of the rural areas in Lebanon.
- 4. Gathering, multiplying and selling local heirlooms or adapted species:** most of the seeds produced in plant nurseries are imported F1 Hybrids, that are resistant to diseases and harsh environmental conditions: these seeds need to be imported every year and cannot be reproduced locally because they will lose their genetic advantage. Due to the current financial crisis, farmers are commonly replacing these seeds by lower grade ones that are causing the spread of diseases and the use of more pesticides, resulting in lower production volumes. The proposed initiative is based on collecting heirlooms or seeds of vegetables that have been used by farmers for decades which

helped them acquire adaptation to local environmental conditions. These seeds need to be tested and reproduced to be made available for farmers. This would provide farmers with better seeds, which means lower consumption of pesticides and better-quality produce. Such a medium-term initiative would take 3–5 years and can be launched with a budget of USD 10 000. The needed profile for this initiative is women with agricultural academic backgrounds and geographic mobility. Adapted species may present some weaknesses if they were not present long enough to develop resistance to environmental conditions, so it is important for this opportunity to be supported by a university or a research centre to follow up on the development of the plant productivity criteria. It is highly recommended that women, men and even youth have training or courses on the usage of pesticides and their effects on the environment and the risk on their health.

5. **Home vegetable gardens:** households usually purchase fruits and vegetables from sale points without any quality assurance at varying prices. These items represent an important component of households' monthly expenditure. Moreover, the quality of the products may be questionable due to the delay between the harvest, transportation, storage and sale. Home gardening can be a partial or total substitute to the fruits and vegetables bought from sale points and it would provide quality and freshness assurance. This opportunity can be implemented over a period of six months between training and production with an average investment that ranges between USD 200 and USD 500 per case. This opportunity is mainly directed to household women, where they can participate indirectly in income generation while still being able to fulfill the responsibilities they have to sustain. Moreover, women will encourage their children to be more eco-friendly and get back to nature. Women also should have some courses culminated with certifications about plantation and the usage of pesticides. They can also have sessions on how to use the food waste as natural compost. According to the AFD advisor, women are capable of managing greenhouses, if their knowledge and skills are improved. 'We can use the household approach, which supports women inside their households, by teaching them about financing, budgeting, production, and soon.' The sustainability of the project depends on input supplies; therefore, it is important to minimise procurements such as seeds by using heirlooms, fertilisers by implementing composting techniques and the like. Available spaces and weather conditions constitute a significant challenge, so the use of small greenhouses can provide a solution. Home gardens are usually grown in small surfaces. In such gardens, diversifying the production is a key factor, while it will be impossible to use the same agricultural practices calendars for the different crops. The result is the use of smaller quantities of different pesticides and fertilisers. Provide training on home gardening will encourage more women to join the battle of boosting the agriculture sector. Home-based jobs for women in this subsector include planting fungi at home, home vegetable gardens, producing soap, planting flowers, as well as creating and managing plant nurseries. Through a home business, opportunities such as door-to-door sales might be an opportunity.

Opportunities in forestry

- 1. Artisanal wood production:** artisanal wooden works are currently available in many touristic facilities; they include writings or drawings carved on woods from falling branches or dead trees and they are usually bought by tourists. The needed skills are mainly artistic ones and they are usually developed by the persons without specific training. Such production is mainly hand-made and therefore requires time. In order to widen the scope of available writings and drawings, it is advisable to provide equipment to make the carving more precise such as automated wood burners and to provide technical training on the use of these machines. At the same time, training can be provided on artistic writing, especially on the Arabic calligraphy that would transform them into beautiful drawings. The cost can be below USD 10 000 for the equipment. This opportunity doesn't require physical presence at the points of sales and would support women who opt to work from home to cope with other household responsibilities. This opportunity also concerns the women who lost their jobs because it will provide them with an important skill that could be used in seeking different job opportunities. Maintenance of the equipment might cause a problem with the decreasing availability of foreign currencies; another challenge is the limitations of sale points and the limited number of tourists. A possible solution would be to put these wooden souvenirs in gift boxes and to market them online. Since this opportunity would target tourists mainly, it is recommended to enlarge the scope of carved objects to cater for the needs of all tourists, adding to them the Lebanese traditional items. Social media could be utilised to target specific populations, as well as foreigners and the diaspora communities. Mentioning the kind of wood that is used for the carved product and its location in the Lebanese territory is also an added value.
- 2. Forest maintenance:** little effort is being made to maintain forests in most of the Lebanese territory, which greatly increases the wildfire risks. Due to this low maintenance, many hectares are burnt every year over the period from the end September to early October. Maintenance activities include pruning the lower branches, cutting smaller shrubs and creating a passage for fire fighters to use in case of fire. As mentioned before, all the produced waste can be composted or transformed into pellets or briquettes for different uses. According to Infopro's report, charcoal is produced in considerable volumes but additional quantities are imported to fulfil the local demand, which is mainly for heating, barbecues, and hookah; the report also states that women participate, with men in planting, ploughing, pruning, managing fields, and cleaning the forest. This opportunity requires work away from home and an important physical effort, which would necessitate women with a certain physical ability; also, mechanisation may provide an answer to facilitate women inclusion in this opportunity. Additionally, forest maintenance supports mixed teams where women can be team leaders supervising actual physical work and marking the spaces and species that need to be cleared: it will place women in leading positions for advocacy for environmental protection and forest management. The advantage is a large number of created jobs with the required period of work extending almost all year round. The needed investments are mainly paying workers and basic equipment. Trainings and certifications by MoA in collaboration with NGOs and qualified institutions are required to understand the flora and acquire adequate pruning and clearing skills. Collaboration with MoA/Directorate of Natural Resources and Rural

Development for open spaces and with the Ministry of Environment for the reserves is highly significant. Collaboration should further extend to the firefighting brigades (Civil Defence) to identify all the hotspots where forest fires usually take place and provide support to their activities. The proposed activity would decrease the forest fires probability and would provide job opportunities year-round for women in rural areas. This will also increase their role in preserving the environment and generating income for their households. Municipalities or reforestation institutions could provide the financial support to preserve the attractiveness of the region for touristic activities. Moreover, it is important to include male family members at the beginning of the inclusion to allow them to share responsibilities with women and as the precursors of women's emancipation and integration as an important and equal partner in the socioeconomic domain. Men should be part of the change and they should support women's actions and work. As they are the decision makers in general in the local society, they can prohibit women from accessing resources and work.

3. **Online sales of mixed products:** with the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses have chosen online tools to market their products and delivery services to avoid opening their stores. Now that the pandemic restrictions are lifted and that face-to-face sales have reclaimed their natural status where human interaction plays an important role, online services have proven that they are efficient and decrease the cost of the final product, especially that they don't require a physical space for display and that delivery services include different items at the same time, reducing the costs even further. Currently, most carved wooden souvenirs are sold as separate pieces, but broadening their range and incorporating them with other items can increase their marketability. It remains interesting to sell online artisanal wooden works with door-to-door delivery; however, to increase their sales, packing them in carved wooden boxes of gifts and souvenirs containing jewellery, chocolate or the like is a key step. For this opportunity to be a success, networking is very important and should include e-marketing and sales platforms and producers of jewellery and high-end chocolate and sweets. The needed investment is quite low, since it will be mainly based on collaboration and on sales income distribution. This opportunity, which can be performed by both women and men, needs some marketing and networking skills and could be functional within six months. It is nonetheless particularly interesting for women in households with certain knowledge of the e-marketing activities, where they can integrate the whole production chain: the creative part which would provide mixed products and designs, the production part and the delivery part. This opportunity can be done on a part time basis. One of the major drawbacks of e-sales of wooden souvenirs is the limited supply for some wood such as cedars, where the available quantities of dead branches and dead trees are limited, whereas pine wood and oak wood are more available; other woods can also be used such as willow and juniper, among others. Where they are more available, therefore, it is important to adapt the size of the items to the availability of their wood. Another challenge is the important human contact and the physical presence for customers to see, feel and smell the wooden items; therefore, it is important to note that online sales should target a specific segment of customers who already know about the products or need to get this service remotely. Guaranteeing wood quality is a must, since there are many ways for adulteration through covering low quality wood with special perfumes that would disappear by time. Women's presence should be very visible as part of the branding to support a fair and inclusive sector that offers women an equal opportunity of integration as men.

- 4. Essential oils extraction:** Lebanese forests are typical Mediterranean lands where many herbs grow with diverse tastes and smells. As the national and international markets for many herbs such as sage and rosemary of medicinal and therapeutic effects are booming, they are gathered every year and sold to agents to extract the essential oils. In addition to these oils, another product can emerge from this activity which is less concentrated and provided in larger quantities: plant (or floral) water. However, picking is currently done without any control nor any regards to the plants' sustainability: on one side, such activities are not done by local populations who have the right to benefit from their surrounding lands; on the other, picking is sometimes done too early and often roots are extracted in the process which would delay the plants restoration. Another draw-back is the competition with pickers from other regions, hence the importance of the intervention of local authorities to organise this process and to allow residents of each region to benefit from the whole VC, starting with the picking activity and reaching the extraction of essential oils. Also, connection with pharmaceutical companies or perfume producers is an important step towards the success of this opportunity. It is important to guarantee the quality of the products and their traceability as adulteration methods are diverse. The investments include basic equipment for cutting and gathering and gloves that would protect the hands of the pickers and the roots of the plants. As for the extraction part, extraction and refining apparatus can also be purchased at around USD 2 000. Trainings about the plants and the extraction process are needed. This opportunity requires the participation of local citizens since they know the exact geographical distribution of these plants and the right knowledge about their life cycle. It is a seasonal work for the gathering and extraction part, but a part-time job for the products sales. According to LRI, extracting essential oil is another way to give women more income, as there are a lot of aromatic plants in our forests that can produce useful essential oils.
- 5. Herbs (fresh and dried):** herbs such as thyme and oregano are usually gathered from forests and prairies during the summer season, the concept is the same as the plants used in essential oils extraction. Workers usually gather them as they are later dried and chopped. Some of them are used in salads and in cooking; others, such as thyme, are mixed with other components like sesame and sumac. The support that can be provided to the herbs field relies on tackling the organisational component that would allow municipalities to identify their territories and sustain their production and their use by local communities. Training on the plant's life cycle, as well as on picking, gathering and transportation techniques is required. It is also important to provide existing mills with special drying and chopping machines that would support the post-harvest activities. It is a short-term investment below USD 2 000 for the machines but it can benefit a whole community and decrease the drying and chopping costs users have to pay. This opportunity is very inclusive and cross cutting with other activities, especially for cooperatives, it would allow them to increase the diversity of their products within a traditional framework. Picking needs a minimal know-how of the plant life cycle and picking technology as it also requires some physical labour and geographical mobility. As for the drying, chopping, mixing, filling and sales, they only need minimal physical labour and know-how, and in case the mills are in the vicinity of houses, it is possible for women to carry their household responsibilities for the ones who are in the obligation of carrying full time household activities. Drying activities are highly energy consuming; however, there are low-cost dryers that can be built and that rely solely on solar energy. Also, these herbs are only available for a short

period of time over the year; therefore it is important to dry them to increase their shelf life. Another challenge lies within the storing conditions whereby it is essential to guarantee adequate storage away from humidity to preserve their quality. It is important to work with solar dryers in order to decrease the energy cost, thus decrease both the environmental and the financial cost. Innovation is also key in providing different sorts of herb mixes such as *Zaatar* (thyme) mix. *Zaatar* has a huge potential at the export level: it guarantees the participation of women in the production chain, raises the level of training and innovative technologies, and highlights the presence of women at the marketing level, which would require their participation in training to strengthen their marketing skills. New flavours and tastes, fusion of flavours in the *Zaatar* to provide a wider range of products to consume are highly encouraged. At the export level, it would be great to highlight the story of women working in the subsector, the regions, as well as some recipes for the usage.

II. Opportunities in fisheries and aquaculture

- 1. Social media sales platform for aquaculture products:** there is no direct marketing of aquaculture products as is apparent in the absence of marketing campaigns and commercials. Fish produced from aquaculture are sold fresh or served in restaurants around the fish farms. In the case of rainbow trout, the fish is also fileted and smoked, and the product also finds its way to consumers mostly through direct contacts. Social media provides an excellent opportunity for farmers to further enhance their direct marketing to consumers. Its connectivity provides the best opportunity to link farmers with consumers. Fish farmers are encouraged to rely as much as possible on social media applications to communicate with their customers. An additional approach would be to promote locally farmed rainbow trout on cooking shows aired on local TV stations, therefore ensuring that households are aware of the existence of this kind of fish and ways to cook and serve it. Moreover, providing a geographic identity to the product by labelling where it was farmed will most likely affect its price. This is another opportunity that favours the inclusion of women. More specifically, women in the aquaculture VC can handle communication and sales with customers on social media. In addition, women can work in direct sales of fish and/or in the restaurants associated with the farms. Fish farmers may consider that the level of production may not warrant launching marketing campaigns since the market is largely undersaturated and the product is easily sold. In addition, fish farmers may not have the initiative to promote their products nor the resources to launch sustained marketing campaigns. Furthermore, support is lacking by the government as MoA to date has not launched any marketing campaign promoting aquaculture products. Platforms are to be created by experts with the support of the aquaculture community. It is recommended that platform development be carried-out in an integrative approach where farmers are invited to be part of the whole process. This serves a dual purpose: 1) raising awareness of fish farmers about the benefits of the platforms; and 2) training the fishers management and functionality of the platforms. It is also recommended to involve younger generations at the level of social media. Younger generations are more familiar with social media, and they are also in search for jobs within the actual crisis. Involving them will bring new technologies to the aquaculture VC, and it will raise cohesion between the generations.
- 2. Processing and packaging marine products:** even though processing of seafood into value-added products is well known amongst fisher communities, the industry did not develop due to lack of interest of fishermen as can be clearly seen from the results of the current survey. Only 17 percent were interested in packaging and 16 percent in processing marine products. In addition, there were no incentives nor guidance by public authorities to establish such trades. Some small-scale opportunities are currently provided by the food and beverage industry through seafood restaurants where they commission fisher families to provide them with some processed products like pickled and/or salted fish, mostly during the summer tourist season. Due to the economic crisis, there is a growing opportunity for such products at the national level: for example, certain tuna-like fish species as the little tunny (*Euthynnus alletteratus*) are marinated in vinegar and olive oil; other species as the round sardine (*Sardinella aurita*) and the anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*) are pickled or dried with sea salt. There are most likely many other family/local recipes to add value to seafood that still need to be identified, evaluated and documented with potential to be produced

at industrial scale. Particularly, the perennial wild herb, the rock samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*) that grows just above the high-tide levels of marine rocky shores is commonly pickled and consumed in certain locations. It is important to recognise though that fishers cannot obtain microcredits to develop their trade as their boats and gears are not recognised as collateral by lending agencies. This hinders their capacity to improve their livelihood and diversify their economic basket. Given the reasons outlined throughout the study about the limited presence of women in fisheries VC, this opportunity seems by far the most appropriate for their inclusion in it. Further validating the availability of prospects is the willingness of almost half of surveyed women to participate in training courses on drying, pickling, smoking, salting, fish paste, fish sauce, packaging, labelling, marketing, and cooking. This is also clearly considered by MoA as the best area to integrate women in the sector where it was stated that: *“We have to put more added value to the products. Here is where women have a role to play, because men are already busy playing their role. Women could be integrated into the value chain through branding, packaging, labelling, and many other fields.”*

3. **Feed manufacturing plant:** fish feed for the freshwater aquaculture industry is imported and Lebanon lacks a functional feed production plant to supply the farms and reduce costs. A feed manufacturing plant was established in Hermel but remains inoperative due to both political and technical reasons. The main opportunity therefore lies in putting the Hermel fish feed manufacturing plant into operation by providing all the necessary material and financial resources. This will create employment opportunities for both women and men at different levels of expertise (feed manufacturing, equipment maintenance experts, nutrition experts, sales, marketing, to name a few) and adds another level of security to farmers and markets alike. The main barrier is political as the Hermel feed production plant is inoperative: to ensure that the plant is operational, lobbying with concerned authorities is essential, to secure the necessary material and financial resources until the plant becomes fully independent through product sales. Once put into operation, challenges may be experienced in the quality of the produced food, price, the acceptance of the product by fish farmers in the region and the ability of the plant to produce feed for different species. Stability of provision of fish feed will lead to stability in production and the potential expansion of the VC.
4. **Fishnet knitting and mending:** it is widely accepted that the fisheries VC is essentially male oriented where women are hardly present or play marginal assisting roles. Even though the presence of women is rare in fishing activities, as is the case globally, 58 percent of male respondents of the survey done within the scope of this study were in favour of their inclusion in the sector. Women are currently only involved in research and development, capacity building, provision of training, some gear manufacturing and net mending, and family-based, small-scale processing of seafood. Net mending and knitting are common activities that women offer their fisher husbands as a way of support, rather than a proper income generating job. This activity can be undertaken by women individuals or cooperatives from which they can earn income: women could learn the proper specs for the nets in order to contribute to decreasing the exploitation of small fish and over-fishing practices. There is an important role for women to play here in the areas of preparation and support for mainstream fishing – particularly in the areas of maintenance after fishing as well.

5. Hatcheries for freshwater species: the hatchery that is located in Anjar usually provides farms with rainbow trout larvae. Its status fluctuates between operative and inoperative depending on the availability of resources provided by the government. This opportunity is equally feasible for women and men and operations in a hatchery could drive women into this subsector even more. Given the small size of the freshwater aquaculture VC, there is no need for the construction of a new hatchery. Efforts and investments should concentrate on ensuring its sustainability and on providing its staff with the necessary tools, and material and financial support to test the viability of new species. This will surely lead to expanding the VC and allows current and new farms to diversify their product with positive impacts on the aquatic food industry. If the Anjar hatchery is provided with the needed resources to sustain its activities, women may be employed in broodstock maintenance, rearing of larvae and fry, identifying the feasibility of new species for farming, as well as in fish health and marketing. The main barrier is the small number of fish farms to which the hatchery is catered for in addition to the lack of material and financial resources by the government to ensure its sustainability.

III. Opportunities in animal production

- 1. Processing of sheep wool:** this opportunity consists of the creation of a facility for the production of yarn from sheep wool. Similar to men, women would equally fit within the work of such a facility they would collect/receive wool from existing or new sheep farms and process them. Several technologies exist for the production of yarn from sheep wool; however, they all include the same steps: cleaning to remove oils and debris; drying, picking (to remove remaining debris), dyeing (optional), carding (combing), and spinning. Based on the quality of the wool, it can be sold for the production of rugs and clothes, among others. The proposed project consists of establishing a facility/workshop for the transformation of sheep wool to yarn. The wool would be collected/bought from sheep farmers and transported to the facility, where it will undergo the process as described in the previous paragraph. The produced yarn could be sold as is or weaved and sold as intermediate (fabric) or finished product. Women can be involved in all stages of the process: coordination with farmers, collection and transport of wool, processing, and sale of wool. Initial training is required to acquire the skills (traditional and modern). Two main challenges arise: expensive processing equipment and the assurance of good quality wool. The quality and type of wool depends on the sheep breed. Therefore, it is important for the facility operators to be trained on the various types of wool produced by the local breeds and potential breeds to be introduced, as well as the specific requirements for their processing into finished products. It is recommended that the facility collaborates with an expert to determine the required specific processing steps per wool type (where applicable) and to identify potential types of yarn that can be produced and the associated potential end uses.
- 2. New chicken breeds into backyard farms:** The Lebanese market has a remarkable demand for free-range or backyard eggs due to the farming method used and nutritional value that gives them an advantage over commercial eggs. New productive chicken breeds can be introduced to existing and new farms to improve productivity, and increase the profitability of small-scale farms and allow the production of high quality, free-range eggs at the same nutritional input that is currently being used in farms. Alternatively, a series of backyard chicken farms raising high productive breeds can be established by several farmers in a selected area that would create a cooperative for the production and sale of free-range eggs and meat. The cooperative would put several conditions for farms and farming methods, hygiene, feed types, among others, that need to be followed by members. The cooperative would collect produced eggs, package them, and distribute them to consumers or markets. The creation of such a cooperative would allow the following: train members on the topic of farm management, monitoring of animal health, and livestock disease management; benefit from economies of scale through the procurement of needed input for farms; sign agreements with veterinarians for periodic inspection and consultation; assure the unified quality of production through monitoring of farms and provision of support; and finally assure markets for products. Women can manage and operate the farms, manage the cooperative, monitor and evaluate the production and quality, and market the products. Individual farm management could be a secondary activity practiced in addition to traditional jobs. No special skills are needed, except for professional support in the business setup stage, especially in breed selection and the development of tailored operating procedures. Farm operators need to be

educated on good practices, best ways to monitor animal health and manage diseases. Farm management should ensure compliance to production standards to be set by all farm members and should procure alternatives to commercial feed to reduce the production cost.

- 3. Honey production in thyme pastures:** to ensure the production of high-quality honey, bee pastures can be created through the plantation of agricultural lands with thyme. These fields would provide the bees with the needed pollen. The project could also include a workshop where thyme and honey-derived products can be manufactured. This methodology provides a safe pasture for bees and provides a secondary source of income from thyme. Women can plant and take care of the thyme field, and harvest the produce. What is more, they would take care of the bees and beehives, as well as produce honey, bee pollen, and propolis. In addition, foodstuffs derived from honey and thyme can be produced for sale. Women should be trained on planting and upkeeping thyme fields, in addition to beekeeping. It is worth noting that women in Lebanon have been traditionally involved in the production of Zaatar, and contribute to 12 percent of the market share; however, their involvement is more significant in wild collection from forested areas (USAID, 2020). Challenges in this opportunity include the availability of agricultural lands and the assurance that no pesticides are used in the vicinity of the pasture. Women-led cooperatives which would like to seize this opportunity should be encouraged to rent lands from religious corps (*Waqf*) and communal lands (owned by the government). The cooperative implementing this opportunity could align its efforts with one of the protected areas of Lebanon and would develop a programme for the proliferation of thyme planting and the availability of land. The development of a labelling programme associated with a certain village and protected area could reap benefits to all stakeholders. The project could be established in collaboration and/or under the guidance of experts or other cooperatives that have successfully implemented similar projects in Lebanon to learn the best practices and benefit from their expertise.
- 4. Production of honey soap:** honey soap can be produced through a cold process, using as main inputs oil, caustic soda, and honey. The production of honey soap could be an independent project, procuring honey from beekeepers, or could be associated with newly established apiaries. Women can manage and operate soap production, and market and sell the products. This opportunity would introduce the production of a new type of honey derived product and would assure an additional source of income for honey producers. Technical support by experts is needed at the initial stage of the project, to design the process, procure the needed equipment, advise on the types of materials, recipes and methodology for operation. The operation of the facility requires skills that should be taught to the facility operators; in addition, marketing and sales skills would be a plus. Extensive training for this opportunity might be required, especially in the creation of new soap twists using honey. Also, a marketing strategy will be needed to push this opportunity forward. A market linkage might also be needed for the introduction of such a new product concept. Depending on the desired quality and characteristics of soap, several recipes can be selected, using various components. It is therefore recommended to produce different types of soap depending on the accessibility to needed materials and market them for their benefits. Accordingly, such projects should be implemented in collaboration with experts to develop the recipes, including ingredients and their proportions, and to consult dermatologists on potential adverse reactions (such as allergic reactions) to certain ingredients. The packaging of the produced

soap should include a list of the main ingredients, and could include a short story related to the project and its impacts on local communities (beekeepers, women involved in production, and so on).

5. **Establishing pilot quail farms:** such farms that neither utilise too much space, nor require sophisticated resources. Quail are smaller-sized poultry birds that can be raised in cage systems in small places. A cage of 120 cm long, 60 cm wide, and 25 cm high can host 50 quail. Quail farms should be well lit and ventilated. These birds grow fast and start laying eggs within six to seven weeks. The expected outcomes of such farm are the production of an alternative source of protein for local consumption, as well as the production of a source of meat for potential international export. A quail farm can be managed and operated by women and men; but this opportunity presents a gate for women inclusion as they are able to establish such farms in family yards and outdoor spaces, along with resuming her household and caregiving obligations. The creation of a niche market is essential, possibly through the imaging as an *hors d'oeuvre*. The pilot farm can be operated by individual women and women associations who would need capacity building to ensure proper farm management. Several online sources provide guidelines and tips for starting a quail farm: including a description of the characteristics of quail, their life cycle, selection of breed, farm design, feed, breeding, diseases, hygiene, among others. Any organisation/individual should seek the support of an expert and take into consideration the local regulations, climate, availability of inputs, and other circumstances that might affect the project.

IV. Opportunities in agroprocessing

- 1. Labelling work:** most cooperatives perform manual labeling work, frequently placing the name of the product along with the name of the cooperative that prepared it. Information as ingredients, tracking number (batch number), expiry dates, attractive brand design are most of the time missing. Also, manual labeling is considered highly time-consuming and requires long hours of work from the cooperative members. Additionally, such labeling is not clear or accurate, which makes the final product less appealing for the end consumers. The opportunity is to provide labeling machines to the cooperatives and small groups of farmers to help them gain time, present nice aesthetic finishing and the required minimum information, and decrease cost. Both women and men have equally various opportunities in this project from label designing to writing accurate information. Inclusion in this opportunity can even embrace people with some disabilities. Employment of people with disabilities should go in parallel with capacity-building sessions. The objective is to integrate a marginalised community in all projects. The potential outcomes from providing a labeling machine to cooperatives are as follows: reduce work hours of the cooperative members which will consequently reduce the cost; obtain accurate and clean final products in regards to the nutritional data that should be present on the product, and an appealing design that will fascinate the consumer to buy it; include a tracking number of the production batch to track any deficiencies or issues observed once in the market. It is a simple task in agroprocessing, yet needs precision. Hence, the most eligible to fulfill the manipulation and functioning of a labeling machine are women. For operating the machine, women with a low level of education could perform the task, whereas for the label content and design requires women with a high education level to input the correct data and prepare the aesthetic design. Whatever the lines of product are, all cooperatives are eligible to implement such an opportunity and acquire labeling machines. The very first barrier to this opportunity is the relatively expensive price of the labelling machine, especially during the tough economic times the country is facing. Another challenge to this opportunity is the shortage of electricity that can also affect the functioning of the machine, and waste time, which might push the cooperative to go back to the manual labeling to finish their products and dispatch them to the market. In terms of labelling, it is highly recommended to study the targeted market, check the requirements to adapt their labeling content, language, and design. Women would need guidance to initiate such tasks, in order to understand and adapt accordingly. This guidance can be done by a local NGO that has already implemented such work or is already selling its products locally or exporting them to international markets. Concerning the labeling machine, training the team of women responsible for using the machine is highly recommended, to help them understand the functioning of the machine, the maintenance needs, and any mitigation measures that should be taken if a problem occurs.
- 2. Catering services:** most cooperatives' work is based on the seasonality of their raw material. When their stock reaches zero, their activity slows down considerably which causes a drop in revenue, leading to a decrease in the purchasing power of the cooperative members as well. Therefore, women can either start a catering service or increase the volume of an already existing one, which would allow them to be productive during the down period of the cooperative. This opportunity would not keep these women from performing household and caregiving tasks. Catering service

would particularly be appealing in rural areas where people often celebrate special occasions that constitute part of the Lebanese culture, such as newborn babies, religious celebrations, traditional occasions, and many others. Not only does this opportunity fall within the scope of most women cooperatives (meaning they have most of the skills and equipment required for it), offering catering services will fill the gap created by the seasonality of the raw material. The catering service can offer traditional cooking dishes, as well as innovate by adding twists to existing recipes, exotic tastes, and others. Having the required skills in cooking and the equipment and machinery, women cooperatives can directly start testing these recipes with small group of persons, and then grow with time while gaining more and more experience. They might need extensive training in food safety, hygiene, good manufacturing practices, and others to develop their skills further, which will lead to the shift from being only housewives providing a catering service to a more professional cooks with higher standards: women should have the opportunity to have vocational training that will help them have their own small business like a home-based catering. This opportunity would flatten the curve of revenue by increasing the cooperatives' income in the periods outside the season of the raw material they use to create their products; it would increase the household income which directly affects their quality of life during downturn periods; it will expand women's knowledge on food safety, stock management, and pricing strategy after attending such trainings; and last, it would adjust the gender balance in the catering team.

3. **Online markets:** currently, most of the cooperatives count on selling products to consumers of their surroundings. They based their sales on trust and good reputation gained through the quality and taste of their products: their reputation is their sales channel which is based on word-of-mouth communication. To sell all their products, increase the volume of their work and eventually generate more revenue, they cannot rely on their surroundings and reputation only. From this perspective arises the following opportunity that entails connecting the farmers and cooperatives directly to the terminal market, bypassing consequently all collectors and distributors who very often control the market. The online marketplace opportunity would succeed in increasing the network of the cooperative which is the main reason behind turning digital. In addition to the bigger reach out, transparency is key to the success of an online marketplace: all products should be listed with their prices, nutrition facts and quality levels. The creation of the online platform or marketplace should be followed by a strong marketing strategy to strengthen the project and make it a confirmed success. A prerequisite step to establish such a platform would be to train involved women to use social media, acquire all other necessary information such as how to be active and promote their products. This will give women the opportunity to have their own business from home, allowing them to become financially independent. The digitisation process needs patience, precision, and detailed oriented persons, which fits more women than men. An online marketplace would create awareness on the presence of such a cooperative along with the story behind it and open a new sales channel which will increase their potential to sell more products and therefore increase the members' revenue and purchasing power. This opportunity can be done at two levels: 1) At the level of the cooperative: social media pages linking the cooperative directly to final consumers. This would require educated women involved in social media platforms. 2) At the level of a region: a digital marketplace that encompasses several cooperatives from the same region or even from different regions. This would also need women at an advanced level of education but cannot be done at the cooperative level.

- 4. Product placement:** cooperatives are often used to the traditional way of selling their products: either from their location that relies on consumers to knock on their door or to be part of the village summer event: the cooperatives will still be targeting the same category and amount of people with little hope of expansion. As previously explained within the scope of the opportunity above, the conventional selling channels are not sufficient to generate enough revenue and provide decent incomes to cooperative members. Therefore, in addition to the online marketplace suggested, another medium to promote the cooperatives' products would be to place their products in physical spaces and take part in many events throughout the year. Women need to have good communication skills that will allow them to be part of such events and attract more consumers to try their products. Events would include train station and garden show events and FTL yearly food fair. Some cooperatives work on flyers to introduce and promote their products to the consumers, which should migrate to more innovative ways like QR codes to gather customer data and preferences. The cooperatives would also be able to promote new products such as distillates of *Zaatar* and not only orange flower blossoms for example. This opportunity would introduce new products to the local consumer; it would give a bigger exposure for cooperatives to a wider type of consumer building a profile for each event, each geographic location, and so on, which will potentially increase their revenue. It will also allow cooperatives to perform free food testing to receive feedback from consumers on new recipes. As communication is at the core of the product placement in the events, the required level of education is mid to advanced level: women need to have good communication skills that will allow them to be part of such events and attract more consumers to try their products. This can be done at the level of every cooperative involved in agroprocessing.
- 5. New recipes, dietary and healthy food products:** the health and diet markets continue to constitute a major staple of the subsector. There is a significant role for women to play at all stages of this process, be it in the areas of creating recipes, marketing products, being involved in production. Such products also have a higher value for export. Based on market study on dairy and meat products in Lebanon performed by RPS group, under a project with AVSI in 2021, interesting findings reflected the change in consumer behaviour in light of the financial crisis the country is going through. Concerning the dairy products, cooperatives already produced a wide range of products, mostly concentrated between *labneh* and *labneh* twists, in addition to a variety of white cheese (*Akkaoui*, *Halloum*, and the like). With the devaluation of the local currency and the high costs of imports, all kinds of cheese that were once considered exotic are either no longer available on the supermarket shelves or, if found, they are much more expensive for the majority of Lebanese consumers whose salaries are in local currency. Therefore, catering to the Lebanese market would push cooperatives to produce types of cheeses that are still in high demand among consumers, like exotic cheese (Boursin, brie, Roquefort, along with others) and yellow cheese (kashkaval, parmesan, and the like). Other dairy products could be expanded in the local market, such as "*aricheh*" — a traditional food made from milk, which is usually served for breakfast, as well as yogurt and *keshek*. As for the meat products, the scarcity of expertise in the meat processing products, as well as a weak development of meat processing, has made the sector weak and under-developed in Lebanon; also, some imported products like mortadella and others have started disappearing from the market. Therefore, this presents an opportunity to develop the processed

meat industry and explore the significant number of products that could be developed. While observing the Lebanese market, one can hardly notice a fresh meat brand: most consumers buy their meat from the village's butcher or big supermarkets. Hence, starting a brand for all sorts of meat would answer the market's need for such a product: it can include steaks, hamburger patties, sausage (*sujok/naqaneq*). Based on their skills in cooking, women's role is essential in these innovations, and they are the key to success for such an opportunity. Similar to previous opportunities, women cooperatives can start their own brand, promote their products on social media pages with the right labelling and packaging, and attract consumers who are longing to buy locally produced dairy and meat products. These customers would also empower women when they buy products that are exclusively produced and clearly labelled by women. In this opportunity as well, women should be trained on food safety and how to preserve food in the best and healthiest way. The required level of education should be intermediate as some knowledge is needed in quality and hygiene for the food preparation, especially in testing and creating new recipes. This opportunity can be implemented in all cooperatives without any barriers.

- In dairy processing, some opportunities need to be developed:
 - Increasing the kinds of twists for the *labneh*;
 - Increasing products of traditional white cheese as *halloum*, *akkaoui*, *arisheh*, and others;
 - Developing new exotic cheeses that are still requested by the consumers in certain regions as mozzarella, Boursin, brie, white cheese with dried fruits; and
 - Producing yellow cheese as it's the main component of every households' meal as kashkaval.
- In meat processing, there are existing, as well as new opportunities that need to be developed:
 - Increasing the production of hamburger, sausages (*naqaneq* and *sujok*) along with proper branding and marketing strategy; and
 - Replacing unhealthy imported processed meat (such as Mortadella that is largely consumed by Lebanese customers) with processed chicken or fish.

The introduction of new products, new recipes, and traditional products with twists will immediately increase the revenue of the cooperative and will incentivise the production team to increase the production volume. This will positively impact the cooperative's members income which will in turn impact their families.

Concluding remarks

I. Persisting challenges

Lebanon continues to endure economic hardships at all levels. Ultimately, this has shifted social roles and family dynamics, and laid the foundation for an expanded role of the woman outside her household duties and caregiving roles. As households continue to need more income to make both ends meet, the current crises indirectly serve as a push forward in the areas of breaking down gendered roles, and in the areas of pushing for women's empowerment in the long-term. Amid the aforementioned ongoing economic hardships Lebanon continues to endure, women-led cooperatives and associations across the agrifood sector remain in dire need of assistance and support. While some forms of assistance that target production units as a whole would indirectly benefit women and assist with their integration into the sector, there remains a need to target women specifically in long-term support and development responses. On a nationwide level, the following gaps and needs have been identified in most women-led cooperatives and the below sections categorises them by the individual, household, cooperative and national levels:

A. Individual and household levels

1. **Awareness of gender dimensions:** this remains limited in the agriculture sector, and this is common to all workers in the sector. Despite this constraint being present on all levels, women are very often the primary enforcers of gender norms and restrictions as mentioned in the FAO framework: gender roles are not only imposed upon women by the society, but they are also enacted by women themselves. Furthermore, stakeholders in the KIIs from the five subsectors view gender as a domestic violence element, not a mainstreaming concept related to all sectors. The lack of understanding of gender leads to a problem when addressing gender at the agriculture sector in general and subsectors in particular.
2. **Lack of capabilities in terms of skills, knowledge and experience:** in terms of income generation, it was very challenging to know if women can survive from pantry production, how were the first three years in terms of selling, and other major elements to assess their activity in the agricultural sector on an economic and income generation levels. Ambiguity in that regard is mainly attributed to poor book-keeping, unpaid labour, and resistance to declare such information.
3. **Sexual harassment:** women are often exposed and endure sexual harassment and abuse in the agrifood sector. Although it is very common, it was very hard to report it in the study because the topic remains a taboo, and no data was collected in this regard.
4. **Intrahousehold dynamics:** women tend to accept their place as inferior to men, especially for women in cooperatives, farmers, and other workers. Household dynamics laid the ground for such acceptance, where gender roles and responsibilities are assigned within the household and shape how women perceive themselves, and to what extent they are involved in the VC and control the benefits of this participation.

B. Cooperative Level

1. **Stereotype:** the cooperatives are essential in Lebanon, yet they are very stereotyped. Cooperative work is mainly related to pantry, with two main challenges encountered at their level. First, due to weak law enforcement, cooperatives are not a good example of democracy and rotation in terms of leading, elections, and clarification of roles, and responsibilities are not clear in general. The same president remains in position for years and controls the decisions and the relations with the external world. Second, cooperatives reinforce the stereotyped role of women, and don't question the benefits or the place of women in agriculture. In terms of production, women production moved beyond stereotyped and repetitive practices, which raised the level of competition and decreased the capacity to sell the products.
2. **Lack of financial support:** the direct cash or in-kind support that MoA used to provide has now plummeted in value. Similarly, subsidised material, according to the financial setup funded by the Central Bank is no longer a viable option. At the moment, the sector continues to navigate through a nationwide lack of available resources, distortion of prices, black market rates, smuggling, among others. International organisations, development agencies, and NGOs are unable to bridge this gap. The situation does not lend itself to the sustainable development of women-led cooperatives and of the sector as a whole.
3. **Limited training:** training needs to be more structured, tailored and specific. This remains a major lack as per the findings of this study. There is a need to target precise needs of the sector, as well as specific populations such as women cooperatives and refugees. Findings additionally highlight knowledge gaps across all agrifood subsectors.
4. **Lack of machinery and tools:** machinery and tools are lacking in the agrifood women cooperatives. In order to assist in modernizing the production process across a number of subsectors, machines and tools are needed nationwide. Not only would this assist in enhancing productivity, standards, quality, quantity, and variety of products, but will also assist in women filling a number of positions that otherwise required strenuous manual labour.
5. **Lack of cooperatives' clusters:** groupings (whether cooperatives or clusters) are still not encouraged despite the fact that the majority of the existing ones have proven to be useful despite their limited resources. This is particularly helpful for women as they have fewer financial resources than men and would benefit from these types of groupings in order to become more efficient in the marketplace. As per the findings of this study, actors need to complement each other along the value chain. Suppliers of raw materials, producers, providers of related services and marketers still do not have an evident and effective coordination scheme.
6. **Limited market access:** several producers across Lebanon remain isolated in their villages and rural regions, with the trader/middleman serving as their only selling window alongside local consumers and businesses. Few cooperatives participate in weekly producers' market, such as

the one that has been tested successfully in Beirut and some other regions.

C. National level

1. **Lack of gender awareness on the academic level:** it is noticed that no social courses, and more specifically gender courses are given neither at the university level, vocational or other training and workshops.
2. **Limited information on gender along VCs:** there is no data about women working in agriculture as a second job or as a first livelihood to rely on for a living. This leads to an under-estimation of women's contribution to agriculture and to their invisibility to practitioners and service providers.
3. **Unregulated workers:** workers in agrifood sector are informal ones and their job is not regulated by MoL. Agrifood is among the sectors where women are vulnerable the most, which leaves experts in a state of uncertainty regarding the status of workers, their rights and obligations.
4. **Absence of insurance and other types of protection:** women in the sector don't take advantage of insurance, benefits or any other type of protection. In addition, a lot of child labour and work in critical conditions are noticed across the sector.

II. Main enablers and recommendations

The following enablers and recommendations are applicable to all subsectors across the agrifood sector in Lebanon. The main challenges that were highlighted throughout this study require actions and enablers that would improve the gender status in the agrifood sector and protect and/or encourage women's participation in it. These actions and interventions should jointly be addressed by national authorities, as well as local and international organisations.

- 1. Becoming more gender-sensitive at the subsector level through mandatory gender awareness sessions:** gender awareness sessions should be given at all levels by IOs and NGOs in collaboration with MoA and Directorate of Cooperatives; awareness should equally reach universities, vocational institutes, farmers, private sector and cooperatives. Providing common sessions as a general requirement will raise the knowledge of all workers in the sector about gender, the impact of social norms on women and men, girls and boys. The content of the sessions can be prepared and given as different modules, and the level can be adapted as per the level of education, background and interest. It is crucial to clarify that gender is not a concept related to domestic violence. Gender is mainstreamed in all sectors, including agriculture. Increasing the knowledge can be done through campaigns, round- tables, adapted information for different age and background.
- 2. Providing more vocational training:** concerned parties such as ministries, local and international organisation involved in Agriculture should provide vocational training for women to encourage their enrolment in male-dominant work. Women should be provided with know-how that was exclusive to men and should benefit from new job opportunities that were once reserved to men.
- 3. Enhancing the role of cooperatives:** cooperatives are crucial to the sector and essential in Lebanon, yet they are very stereotyped. Through their gender-sensitive programming, international and local organisations should train and support cooperatives members to become more as a union. More crosscutting and clustering work between cooperatives is highly recommended, such as common exhibitions, round tables, exchange of knowledge in a systemised way, and so forth. Also, restructuring within cooperatives should be encouraged by donors and may lead to more democratic organisation, with potential fresh blood joining, mainly younger ones, to it. Cooperatives should be further incentivised by international and local organisations to provide support to women joining; benefits, protection, training, and introducing new products, among others.
- 4. Introducing new products into the market:** in terms of production, it is crucial to introduce new products as per the needs of the market. Concerned authorities, including MoA and Directorate of Cooperatives, in collaboration with International and Local organisations should provide women with training on new products and new technologies. It is essential to keep in the loop the environment level and to be certified on this level. It is also preferred to provide

training for women, men, and youth. Training and all activities should include Lebanese and Syrian women and men, in order to guarantee inclusivity. This reduces the tension between women and men, across the generations, and between nationalities.

5. **Generating data about women across the sector:** it is highly encouraged to start collecting accurate data about women in the sector. A regular census on the workers in the agrifood sector should be done by MoA, where segregated data on men and women is collected. Although it is challenging on the short-term level, collecting data will highlight the strengths and the weaknesses of the sector, and it will allow the FAO and the partners to programme projects aligned with the needs of the communities.
6. **Incorporating workers in agrifood sector under the labour law:** as mentioned earlier, the agriculture sector is not regulated by MoL, with workers in agriculture as well as domestic assistance not covered under the labour law. Accordingly, national (through political activism) and international (through preconditioning criteria) lobbying to integrate workers in these two sectors is crucial in order to value the agriculture and domestic works. This will attract more women and men into the oldest sector in Lebanon.
7. **Regarding women entrepreneurs outside the urban landscape:** it is crucial to raise awareness amongst both women and men entrepreneurs and SMEs about the elements that impact women contribution to the sector; awareness should tackle women's productive potential, as well as the qualitative addition they can make to the VC functioning and to their household's wellbeing.
8. **Providing women with services and support:** women working in the sector constitute a considerably important number. Yet, their income from the sector remains very limited due to unpaid labor, the devaluation of the local currency, and the constant drop in the value against the US dollar. Providing women with additional services and support will attract more women, and it will protect them at the medical level. Finding medicines, getting treated or hospitalisation has become increasingly challenging. Intervening at this level in terms of medical insurance and protection from work accident is a major step towards a sustainable empowerment for women. Women will also become stronger if they pass this protection and insurance to their husbands, children and parents. This protection should cover all workers in the sector: Lebanese, non-Lebanese and stateless, leaving no one behind. This support is to be provided by international donors and agencies, since the country is facing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis.
9. **Alleviating child labour:** it is very important to stop any type of child labour. Although this may be very challenging, FAO and all international donors, as well as local and national NGOs should make sure that all partners stick to the non-employment or abuse of children. Clear prerequisite conditions should also include women protection, fair payment for women farmers, and guarantee of the working number of hours.

- 10. Putting structures, as well as reporting and follow-up mechanisms in place to end all forms of sexual harassment:** sexual harassment should be entirely stopped. All organisations should impose strict rules and contracts should be terminated in case sexual harassment was reported. This is possible by raising awareness. In addition to that, a unit for complaint should be created among all parties. It is recommended to partner with an existing entity working on this level. Lately, the National Commission for Lebanese Women worked on the mechanism for referral and complaint from sexual harassment and violence with the municipalities, as part of the enforcement of the newly adopted law. It may be interesting to consider this partnership in order to protect women from sexual abuse or harassment.
- 11. Lobby for fair and equal inheritance and personal status laws:** many legislations in Lebanon still discriminate against women, most importantly the inheritance and personal status laws. Due to socio-cultural and religious barriers, gender equality is in particular politically sensitive. Therefore, international lobbying can be of significant importance if such preconditioning is set to the ministries' adherence or eligibility to certain programmes.

When tackling the intersectional needs of women specifically, studies must focus on economic opportunities, infrastructure and education needs. Along these lines, coordinated programming between various ministries (namely MoA and MoL) in Lebanon and international organisations could:

- 1. Improve the quality of education, including technical education** and update programmes to respond to today's technological advancements and to new market demands, with higher levels of student retention.
- 2. Revise the Lebanese educational curricula** and strategies to secure gender equality and non-discriminatory behaviour when encouraging women to select majors, and orienting women towards specific disciplines in line with broader traditional gender roles.
- 3. Provide gender responsive health and social coverage** to all citizens in all productive sectors, including agriculture, home services, construction, freelance work, and the like.
- 4. Develop infrastructure and transport services** in all geographic regions to secure cheap and safe transportation.
- 5. Engage qualified trainers** across all subsectors with the right technical know-how in terms of skills to adopt modern training methods through trainers with relevant technical experience, as well as gender responsive knowledge and training skills.
- 6. Link women with the private sector:** international organisations should create an ecosystem that supports and nurtures women-led businesses. Such environment would place women as leaders, give them decision making roles, invest in women's entrepreneurial ideas, and provide mentoring and coaching for women on a personal and professional. This will support women's economic integration. Corporate social responsibility activities should focus on empowering women.

- 7. Offer internships for women and job placement opportunities** to complement technical or vocational programmes.



References

- Abou Jaoude, H.** 2015. *Labour market and employment policy in Lebanon*, European training foundation.
https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/33A1850E6A358308C1257DFF005942FE_Employment%20policies_Lebanon.pdf
- Baroud, M. & Zeidan, N.** 2021. *Addressing challenges faced by Syrian refugees working in the Informal Economy: case studies from Lebanon and Jordan*, Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2020-20210101_addressing_challenges_faced_by_syrian_refugees_brief.pdf
- CAS (Central Administration of Statistics).** 2019. *Gender statistics in Lebanon: Current situation and future needs*. <http://www.cas.gov.lb/index.php/demographic-and-social-en/education-en/96-english/statistics-by-topics/gender-statistics-en>
- CAS.** 2011. *The labour market in Lebanon*. Statistics in focus.
http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/SIF/CAS_Labour_Market_In_Lebanon_SIF1.pdf
- EC (European Commission).** 2014. *Research papers of work package 5: water and agriculture*.
<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/documents/downloadPublic?documentIds=080166e5c040acb8&appld=PPGMS>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission** (n.d.), *What is equal pay?*
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-equal-pay>
- European Institute for Gender Equality** (n.d.), *Gender roles*.
<https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1209>
- FAO.** 1995. Fact sheet: the Republic of Lebanon, *Women, agriculture and rural development*. <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/es/c/a4ec307b-9998-55c6-954a-a31236d8d9ae/>
- FAO.** 2011a. *A review of empirical evidence on gender differences in non-land agricultural inputs, technology, and services in developing countries*, ESA Working Paper No. 11-11.
<https://www.fao.org/3/am316e/am316e.pdf>
- FAO.** 2011b. Module 1: *Conceptual framework: gender issues and gender analysis approaches*.
<https://www.fao.org/3/md280e/md280e03.pdf>
- FAO.** 2012. *Fisheries and aquaculture in Lebanon*.
<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4201en/>
- FAO.** 2014. *Developing gender-sensitive value chains: a guiding framework*.
<https://www.fao.org/3/i6462e/i6462e.pdf>
- FAO.** 2017. *The State of food and agriculture: leveraging food systems for inclusive rural transformation*. <https://www.fao.org/3/i7658e/i7658e.pdf>
- Hark, N.** 2021. *Lebanon is in crisis. And it's worse for women*, Lutheran World Relief.
<https://lwr.org/blog/2021/lebanon-crisis-and-its-worse-women>
- IFAD.** 2017. *Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment*.
https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40187194/GRE_WEB.pdf/9fb80e6a-0463-4571-b6df-234635454aab
- ILO.** 2014. *Assessment of the impact of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_240134.pdf
- ILO.** 2017. *Gender Equality Tool: Definition of Gender Mainstreaming*.
<https://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm>
- ILO.** 2017. *Gender equality tool: definition of gender mainstreaming*.
<https://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm>
- ILO.** 2019. *Labour force and household living conditions survey in Lebanon 2018–2019*.
https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_732567/langen/index.htm

International Union for Conservation of Nature. 2019. *Assessment study on governance framework for fisheries in the Caza of Tyr -South Lebanon*.
https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/annex_4.3.1.pdf

K4D. 2017. *Gender equality and women's empowerment in Lebanon*, Helpdesk report.
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/175-Gender-Equality-and-Womens-Empowerment-in-Lebanon.pdf>

Mounzer, L. 2021. *Working women and post-COVID Lebanon*, Wilson Center.
<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/working-women-and-post-covid-lebanon#:~:text=The%20pandemic%20and%20economic%20crisis,to%2064%20percent%20of%20men>

Pinello, D. & Majdalani, S. 2018. *Assessment of the commercial seafood chain in Lebanon*. Baabda, Lebanon, FAO and the Republic of Lebanon. [Cited 3 August 2023]. <http://www.agriculture.gov.lb/getattachment/3446e66a-1147-457b-a75f-08a5ca6b97a3/Assessment-of-the-Commercial-Seafood-Chain-in-Lebanon>

Salti, N. & Mezher, N. 2020. *Women on the verge of economic breakdown: Assessing the differential impacts of the economic crisis on women in Lebanon*, UN Women.
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/Lebanons%20Economic%20Report%20Updated%201110%20FH.pdf>

UN ESCWA (n.d.), *Gender glossary: gender awareness*. <https://www.unescwa.org/sd-glossary/gender-awareness>

UN ESCWA. 2009. *Women's economic empowerment in the ESCWA region*.
https://www.google.com/search?q=rural+women+work+lebanon+un+escwa&rlz=1C1GCEU_enLB972LB972&oq=rural+women+work+lebanon+un+escwa&aqs=chrome..69i57.5510j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

UN Women Arab States. 2020. The Republic of Lebanon.
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/countries/lebanon#:~:text=Lebanon%20has%20one%20of%20the,women%20and%2076%25%20of%20or%20men>

UN Women. 2016. *Country gender and economic profiles: Lebanon*.
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/all/country-gender-and-economic-profiles>

UN Women. 2018. *Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq*. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/unpacking-gendered-realities-in-displacement>

UNDP. 2020. *Gendered value-chains study: barriers and opportunities*.
https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/Gendered-Value-Chains.html

UNICEF. 2021. *Water supply systems on the verge of collapse in Lebanon: over 71 per cent of people risk losing access to water*. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/water-supply-systems-verge-collapse-lebanon-over-71-cent-people-risk-losing-access>

University of Balamand. 2018. Socio-economic assessment of the fisheries sector in Anfeh, the Republic of Lebanon.
<http://www.balamand.edu.lb/IOE/OurProjects/Details/Pages/MCR/SocioEconomicAnfeh.aspx>

USAID. 2021. Lebanon. *Agriculture and Food Security*.
<https://www.usaid.gov/lebanon/agriculture-and-food-security>

World Bank Group. 2017. *Jobs for North Lebanon*.
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/800821506102645484/pdf/119940-WP-PUBLIC-sept-27-3am-v2-Leb-Jobs-for-North-Full-report.pdf>

Yaacoub, N. & Badre, L. 2011. *The labour market in Lebanon*. Statistics In Focus, No. 1. Beirut, Central Administration of Statistics.
http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/SIF/CAS_Labour_Market_In_Lebanon_SIF1.pdf



Glossary

Gender: Socially constructed roles, behaviours and characteristics that a given society considers appropriate for males and females. These roles and characteristics are acquired through socialisation processes: people are born female or male, but learn to be women or men. Unlike sex, which is biological, gender attitudes can change and develop over time.

Gender vs women: Women are a category of people; gender is the socially constructed difference between women and men. This results in certain power relations and dynamics, causing inequality in people's capacity to make choices. As women often lag behind in this respect, many development interventions focus on the empowerment of women.

Gender-aware: Programmes that seek to understand the differences between men and women and how gender may affect programming. Gender concerns are integrated into some aspects of the programme life cycle such as market research, and participation targets between men and women are established and monitored. Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) is not a key objective of the programme.

Gender mainstreaming: Programmes that explicitly integrate women's economic empowerment into all aspects of the programme cycle. Examples include: conducting gender-responsive market research; gender-responsive sector and intervention selection; identifying key entry points for women in targeted VCs; strategies for enhancing women's participation and leadership; and gender-responsive results measurement systems. Interventions aim to facilitate change for female and male beneficiaries. WEE is one of the key objectives of the programme.

Gender roles: Are when a person is expected to act in a certain gender-based way as per society expectations. The term also entails behaviours learned in a specific community, or other particular groups, and sets the conditions of what constitutes the tasks or responsibilities specific to males or females. Gender roles are affected by age, race, social class, religion, and geographic environment, economic environment, and political environment. Changes often occur in gender roles in response to the changing economic, natural, and political conditions, as well as development efforts.

Gender-based violence (GBV): The different types of GBV: physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence, may affect women and men, boys and girls. However, the highest percentages remain in terms of men committing crimes, which is why it is important to involve men as part of the solution. GBV is considered to be one of the most serious human rights issues. A large number of persons in the world are subject to physical, sexual and mental abuse, with the highest rates still touch women and children.

Gender discrimination: Gender discrimination is unequal treatment of an individual or group of individuals based on gender. Workplace gender discrimination comes in many different forms, but generally it means that an employee or a job applicant is treated differently or less favourably in terms

of pay, working hours, among others, because of their gender, or because the person is affiliated with an organisation or group that is associated with a particular gender.

Equal pay for equal work: Equal pay for equal work is the concept of labor rights that individuals doing the same work should receive the same remuneration. It is most commonly used in the context of sexual discrimination, in relation to the gender pay gap. Equal pay relates to the full range of payments and benefits, including basic pay, non-salary payments, bonuses and allowances. Some countries have made much progress than others in addressing the problem.

Equality and equity: Gender equality is linked to sustainable development and is vital to the realisation of human rights for all. The overall objective of the gender equality is a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, same rights and same obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence, have equal opportunities for financial independence, enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions, interests and talents; share responsibility for home and children and are completely free from coercion, intimidation and GBV both at work and at home. Gender equity is used to refer to fair treatment of women and men, according to their particular needs. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, responsibilities and opportunities. Achieving gender equality implies changes for both men and women. Lives of men are just as strongly influenced by gender as those of women.

Women's empowerment: Empowerment can be defined as "a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire the ability to do so". In relation to women and VCs, empowerment is about changing gender relations in order to enhance women's ability to shape their lives.



FAO Representation in Lebanon

Email: FAO-LB@fao.org

Website: <http://www.fao.org/lebanon/en/>

Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/FAOLebanon>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Beirut, Lebanon

