



Briefing note

March 2020



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is leading international efforts in the fight against hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries-related practices to achieve good nutrition for all. FAO's programme in Lebanon is aligned with FAO's global Strategic Objectives. Lebanon was among the first countries to benefit from a FAO Country Office to strengthen the Organization's programmes on the ground. Established in 1977, the office has sought to promote harmonious and sustainable development of the agricultural sector along with the national agricultural policy and in consultation with relevant ministerial departments.

Reforestation and afforestation in Lebanon

Sector context



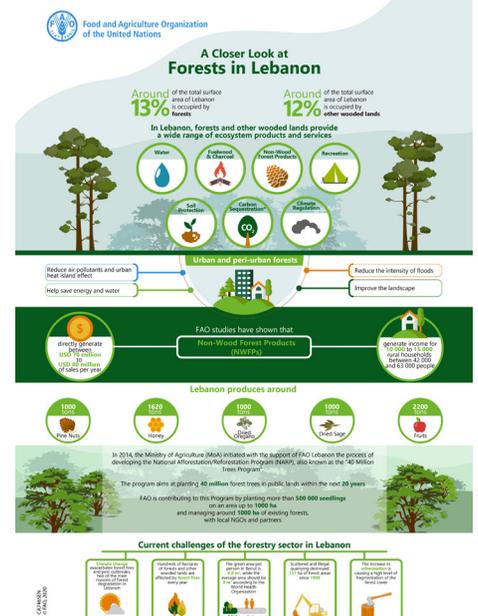
Lebanon's forests cover up to 13 percent of the country's surface area and other wooded lands account for about 11 percent. However, forested and wooded lands were subject to intense human pressure that led to their rapid degradation during the last 60 years. In 2012, the Lebanese Government launched the National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme (NARP), also known as the "40 Million Tree Program", which aims to increase forest areas in Lebanon to 20 percent in the coming years in order to restore Lebanon's ecological integrity and green identity. As a result, the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with other public bodies and NGOs, has intensified its reforestation efforts with funding support from local and international donors, in addition to the private sector.

Challenges in Lebanon



The Rural Development and Natural Resources Directorate (RDNRD) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is, by virtue of its mandate, responsible for the forestry sector. However, some of the responsibilities were scattered among different administrations in Lebanon thus contributing to weakening the national governance of this sector. Improper urban planning has led to the deformation and fragmentation of many forest areas and to the alteration of their land cover. In addition to urban encroachment, forests face many threats, including changes in land-use, wildfires and pests, resulting in the yearly degradation of hundreds of hectares, while forest management efforts are still not enough to mitigate such losses. The current Forest Law limits management practices and interventions necessary to promote resilience and reduce vulnerability to various threats, especially in coniferous formations. The Law is currently under review by the MoA to address some of its weaknesses. The RDNRD, many NGOs and public entities are leading reforestation and afforestation actions, nevertheless, the challenge remains in maintaining and protecting planted sites. Several newly-established forests are facing challenges such as wildfires, overgrazing, and improper follow-up.

A closer look at the forests in Lebanon



FAO interventions, response and impact



The first National Forest and Tree Assessment based on systematic sampling in Lebanon was implemented in 2003 by the Ministry of Agriculture with the support of FAO. This assessment estimates the forest area of Lebanon at 13 percent of the total area of the country, while "Other Wooded Lands" area is determined at 10-12 percent. The MoA, with the support of FAO, is currently conducting a new assessment to update the information accordingly.

The "Smart Adaptation of Forest Landscapes in Mountain Areas" (SALMA) is a project implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). It addresses both environmental and economic priorities through the promotion of environmental governance integrating community-based and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches.

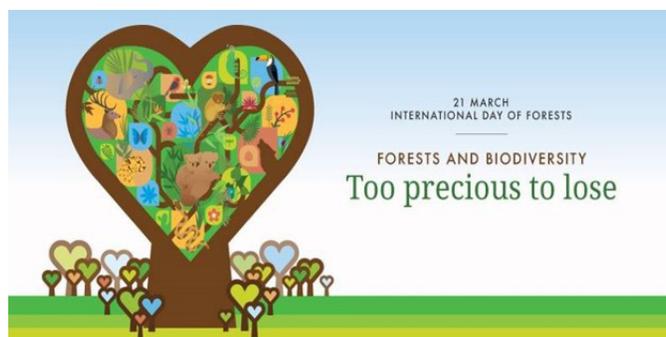
The project's objective is to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable rural communities in mountain areas through sustainable forest management. The project will contribute to the achievement of reduced soil and water erosion, forest fire prevention and control, pest management, diversification of livelihoods of 24 vulnerable communities, improved adaptive capacity of these communities through reforestation (1000 ha) as well as sustainable and participatory forest management at landscape level (1000 ha). The reforestation and afforestation component intends to expand and climate proofing the area under reforestation and afforestation in targeted project areas to counteract biodiversity loss and soil erosion. The project is also assisting consortiums of municipalities and NGO partners in implementing participatory reforestation and afforestation plans.

The forest management component is adopting a community-driven approach to forest management, informed by site-specific vulnerability and risk assessments of some of the most vulnerable forest stands. Interventions will focus on reducing forest fires risk with the adoption of innovative and integrated management practices, as well as reducing the risk of pest outbreaks by promoting integrated forest management and forest restoration techniques.

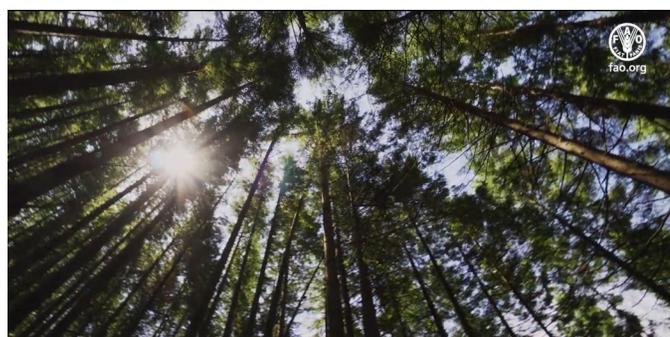
Since 2014, FAO has been assisting the Ministry of Agriculture in implementing forest landscape restoration activities funded by the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM). Completed activities include restoring stone terraces in the Qadisha Valley and in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. Planned activities will focus on restoring over 1000 ha of rangelands and degraded woodlands used for grazing and finalizing the revised Forest Law.

FAO has recently supported the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) and the MoA to establish a national center for forest seeds, funded by the Government of Norway, to support setting up a system for the appropriate collection, processing, distribution and storage of large volumes of high quality certified forest seeds, and in mapping most important sites of mother trees.

International day of forests



[International Day of Forests 2020 website](#)



[International Day of Forests 2020: Forests and Biodiversity video](#)



For more information

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