



## Briefing note

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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 to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices to achieve good nutrition for all. FAO Lebanon Programme 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.

## Technical agricultural education

### Sector context



Agricultural technical education was established in Lebanon in 1943 by virtue of Decree No. 2106. In 1962, the agricultural technical education was affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture and the first technical school was established in Fanar, Beirut. In 1987, a law organizing the Agricultural technical and vocational education was issued. The MoA established seven Agricultural Technical Schools. The schools aim at reducing the unemployment rate in rural areas and increasing interest in the agriculture sector. Graduating students can pursue higher education or enter the agricultural labor market. However, the said schools needed capacity-building support for student trainings (aged 15 to 20 years old) with a revised curriculum for the three-year Technical Baccalaureate (BT).

### Challenges in Lebanon



The agricultural sector in Lebanon continues to face several significant social challenges. One is the high youth unemployment standing at 37 percent for youth under the age of 35<sup>1</sup>. Another challenge is the steady loss of workforce and aging farm population as a result of rural-urban migration. Increased demand for skilled workforce that would respond to emerging market needs is coming to the surface. On the other hand, 12 percent of the active displaced Syrians are working in agriculture, representing over 80 percent of the agriculture labor force (World Bank and FAO unpublished data). Agriculture has a great potential for employment opportunities and poverty reduction, as it constitutes a major source of rural livelihoods. However, the performance of the agricultural sector largely depends on the capacity and knowledge of the people employed in the sector. Thus, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and advisory services play such an important and fundamental role in developing competencies of agricultural development professionals engaged in or preparing to engage in agricultural production.

### Key facts



- Enrollment of 2 010 students in the years 2017, 2018 and up to October 2019 in non-formal education
- Enrollment of 135 students in the MoA BT programme
- Training of 65 teachers in various agriculture-related technical topics
- Training of all school teachers on curriculum development, following a competency-based training approach
- Co-publishing of a study with ILO on trends in supply and demand of agricultural labor markets and a study on occupational standards for five jobs in agriculture by February 2020

<sup>1</sup>Arab Weekly Digest, Interview with Minister of Labour, Beirut, August 2017.



In 2016, FAO initiated a project on “Upgrading the technical agriculture education system in Lebanon”, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), International Labour Organization (ILO), AVSI<sup>2</sup> and WARD<sup>3</sup>. The project ends in September 2020. It is upgrading the technical agriculture education system and rehabilitating the seven agricultural schools while offering enrollment opportunities to young Lebanese and Syrian students. The project aims at enhancing the efficiency of the agriculture education system in Lebanon, reaching out to and supporting more youth by improving agricultural capacity development and creating entry points into jobs. This will allow young Lebanese graduates to have a better chance in accessing the job market. The project also provides young displaced Syrians residing in Lebanon with the necessary technical qualifications, skills and official diploma to use after they return to their homeland.

Based on a supply and demand assessment, the project has revised, updated, and validated elements of the Lebanese Technical Baccalaureate curriculum. It has further developed new vocational training modalities as part of the non-formal accelerated learning in agriculture. In addition, the project coaches teachers to secure a competency mindset of agricultural education as a foundation for reaching out to students and expanding their skills and knowledge.

The project is also working on improving technical facilities and other laboratory materials for students to be able to partake in laboratory work and field practice. In partnership with UNICEF, the project is also rehabilitating the schools’ infrastructure to ensure a better school environment.

<sup>2</sup> AVSI is a non-profit Italian organization focusing on development cooperation and humanitarian aid worldwide (<https://www.avsi.org/en/country/lebanon/1/>).

<sup>3</sup> WARD is a non-profit Lebanese organization focusing on research and development in education in Lebanon and MENA region.

### Story from the field

“I started my vocational training two years ago in the Agricultural Technical School. Now, I am responsible for the quality of the whole potato production process” proudly explains Ahmad Tarshishi, a student at one of the Agricultural Technical Schools. Ahmad benefited from the “Upgrading the technical agriculture education system in Lebanon” project lead by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), funded by the Kingdom of Netherlands and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, UNICEF, ILO and AVSI.

He shared his experiences in one of the videos prepared in the framework of a social media campaign developed by FAO in partnership with UNICEF in September 2019. The campaign was an advocacy tool to show the challenges facing youth in Lebanon in this field. It highlighted the importance of the technical education in agriculture and raised awareness on the youth employment horizons in agriculture in Lebanon. It also encouraged them to make a difference in this sector, playing a leading role in the country’s economic growth, at the personal and national levels.



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