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**[LEBANON RECOVERY FUND]**

**MPTF OFfice GENERIC ANNUAL programme[[1]](#footnote-2) NARRATIVE progress report**

**REPORTING PERIOD: 1 january – 31 December 2013**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Programme Title & Project Number | |  | Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results[[2]](#footnote-3) | |
| * Programme Title: Recovery and rehabilitation of the dairy sector in Bekâa Valley and Hermel Akkar Uplands * Programme Number *– LRF-26* * MPTF Office Project Reference Number:[[3]](#footnote-4) | | *Lebanon (Bekâa Valley and North Lebanon)*  *Livestock and dairy production* | |
| *Mohafazat North Lebanon* | |
| Participating Organization(s) | |  | Implementing Partners | |
| *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)* | |  Ministry of Agriculture | |
| Programme/Project Cost (US$) | |  | Programme Duration | |
| Total approved budget as per project document:  MPTF /JP Contribution[[4]](#footnote-5):   * *by Agency (if applicable)* | ***US$ 1.2 million*** |  | Overall Duration *(months)* | 18 Months |
| Agency Contribution   * *by Agency (if applicable)* |  |  | Start Date[[5]](#footnote-6) *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 20 May 2012 |
| Government Contribution  *(if applicable)* |  |  | Original End Date*[[6]](#footnote-7)* *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 20 May 2014 |
| Other Contributions (donors)  *(if applicable)* |  |  | Current End date[[7]](#footnote-8)*(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 31 December 2014 |
| TOTAL: |  |  |  |  |
| Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval. | |  | Report Submitted By | |
| Assessment/Review - if applicable *please attach*  Yes No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy*  Mid-Term Evaluation Report *– if applicable please attach*  Yes No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy* | | * Name: Dr. Chedly Kayouli * Title: FAO International Livestock Consultant / Project Manager * Participating Organization (Lead): FAO * Email address: [Chedly.Kayouli@fao.org](mailto:Chedly.Kayouli@fao.org) | |

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

A.I. Artificial Insemination

LRF Lebanon Recovery Fund

MoA Ministry of Agriculture

PSC Project Steering Committee

VDPAs Village Dairy Producers Association

IPVMCCN Primary Village Milk collection and Cooling Centre networks

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The dairy project entitled “Recovery and Rehabilitation of the Dairy Sector in Beqaa Valley and Hermel - Akkar Uplands” LRF 26 Phase II has expanded its coverage to North Lebanon where important interventions have been successfully accomplished during the year 2013.

The dairy project has introduced innovative approach of setting up 40 small milk collection centres at village levels with the formulation of 30 village dairy producers association (dairy cooperatives) which were strengthened during this reporting period. This strategy had been an excellent breakthrough for the milk production and processing sectors in Lebanon. The project has very pronounced impact on the livelihood of people especially small farmers and women mainly in the poorest areas of Beqaa and North Lebanon. The support of the Project to the dairy cooperatives and Village Milk Collection Centres’ network is playing a key role in improving the general conditions of small farmers and increasing their income by 20% as well as improving the quality of milk as a whole.

The project is helping to improve knowledge and technical skills of smallholder dairy farmers through comprehensive programme of training, extension and demonstration together with side by side project activities. During this reporting period, two major workshops were organised. The first one was on good practices of processing dairy products. This workshop was attended by 200 producers (mostly women). About 100 women were provided with food-grade stainless steel equipment and utensils for small and medium size home production as well as certificates of participation. The second workshop was on artificial insemination (A.I.) techniques and improvement of cow fertility, and was attended by 80 participants. The successful students were provided with modern equipment for A.I. that allows them to serve farmers in their respective areas in coordination with the dairy cooperatives. Twenty seven A.I. centres are now created and operating in project sites.

The project is also contributing to the urgent needs of hosting communities of Syrian refugees in project sites particularly through the establishment of new milk collection centres and increasing capacity of the existing ones as well as by distributing mini dairies and provision of training on home dairy processing to increase traditional dairy products.

The project has earned good visibility as several distribution ceremonies and events were attended by Government Officials with press releases in major Medias. Officials have also visited project beneficiaries during the reporting period.

# Purpose

The LRF26-OSRO/LEB/201/UNJ) was officially signed on 20th May 2013 for duration of 12 months and this was extended to 31st December 2014 with no additional cost. The objective of this project was to build on the accomplishment of Phase 1 (LRF 21) and protect its achievements. Emphasis was given on improving the quality and hygienic standards of milk and dairy products to safeguard the Lebanese consumer and improve the milk prices. New geographical areas were added such as North Lebanon and other areas that were not covered in the first phase in areas like Akkar.

The target project sites cover more than 260 villages identified during Phase I starting from Southern Rashayya Caza to the northern border of Akkar Mohafazat passing through West Beqaa, Central Beqaa, and North Beqaa. In addition this proposed Phase II is extended to Mohafazat of North Lebanon. The project is targeting at least 300 villages and 3000 dairy farmers (2000 direct and 1000 indirect beneficiaries) from four large Mohafazats including their districts and municipalities: Beqaa, Baalbeck-Hermel, Akkar and North Lebanon.

**The project interventions**

1. Strengthening the Village Dairy Producers’ Associations (VDPAs) to reach self-sustainability with increased technical skills and capacities;
2. Improving milk quality standards through establishment and strengthening of Intermediate Primary Village Milk collection and Cooling Centre networks (IPVMCCN);
3. Supporting small-scale dairy farmers to improve milk hygiene and sanitary conditions of dairy production through the provision of milking machines, food grade stainless steel milk cans and milk filters;
4. Empowering female-headed households through provision of mini dairies for milk handling and processing at household level along with training on good dairy production techniques;
5. Support the artificial insemination services through training of inseminators and provision of quality semen to serve members of VDPAs;

The key activities implemented during 2013 are summarized in the following sections.

**2. Results**

**2.1 Training sessions and workshops**

Two categories of training sessions and workshops were conducted during the reporting period. Each category has a major topic and important auxiliary subjects.

**a. Dairy processing and milk hygiene**

Eight, each full day sessions, were conducted in the North before the handing of the small dairy processing units. The locations of the workshops were Batroun and Bakhaoon (Donniyyeh) held between 16 July and 01 August 2013. A total of 200 producers and farmers (90% women), have attended this training. Major topics were good manufacturing practices and new technologies in cheese and yogurt production. This was supported by production of 1 000 booklets covering all training material using very simple language and colourful attractive presentations entitled “Good practices of processing of improved traditional dairy products”. Other topics covered were proper use of milking machine and hygienic milk handling. After the training sessions, 100 women were provided with food-grade stainless steel equipment and utensils for small and medium size home production. Certificates were given to each successfully completed participant of the workshops and training sessions.

The smallholder dairy producers, mainly women have continuously requested the Project for training or upgrading of skills in manufacturing dairy products and supply of appropriate hygienic equipment. Small-scale farmers, especially those living in remote areas like Donniyyeh uplands, are the most vulnerable and affected farmers by fluctuations in milk prices. These farmers usually get paid the lowest prices for their dairy products by both milk dealers and dairy processing plants. Some small-scale dairy farmers are practicing home processing of their milk but at a very low volume. Increasing their production and processing may be a very good solution by giving these unprivileged farmers opportunities to add value to their milk and get relieved from the burden of milk dealers and the dairy processing plants. Home processing will also create new job opportunities especially for women and youth (particularly girls). Rural poor in remote areas were mainly the target beneficiaries in this project such as the Akkar, Donniyyeh, Hermel, North Baalbeck and Rashaya areas. In this regard in Phases I & II, the project supported 300 women-headed households to produce improved traditional dairy products.

**b. Artificial insemination and improvement of cow fertility**

At the start of the project, the Artificial insemination services in Lebanon have been generally very weak, except for individual pursuits for some big-farms. The proportion of farmers who use artificial insemination regularly do not exceed 10%, while 30% use both artificial insemination and natural mating together, while the largest proportion (60%) of farmers rely on natural bull service. The FAO dairy project has organized two training sessions on artificial insemination of cows, the first in Zahle - Bekaa and the second, in Batroun – North Lebanon. Each session lasted for two weeks. These intensive hands-on courses included all the theoretical and practical trainings required by such courses. Competent veterinarians and specialists in artificial insemination supervised every detail of these sessions. All other aspects associated with proper breeding of the cows and preventive veterinary care, were also given especially those that affect fertility. In the first session, in Zahle, 38 participants (including two females) from the Bekaa and Baalbeck - Hermel areas participated, while in the second session of Batroun there were 42 participants (including one female) from the regions of the North and Akkar, and a section of Mount Lebanon. Students that successfully completed both theoretical and practical exams were granted official Certificate signed by H.E. the Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon. Outstanding students each were given a complete unit of cow's AI that enables them to effectively manage the 27 AI centres established by the FAO in collaboration with MoA. These Centres were distributed as follows:

* 5 Centres in West Bekaa and Rashaya;
* 3 Centres in Central Bekaa;
* 7 Centres in Baalbek - Hermel;
* 10 Centres in Akkar and North; and
* 2 Centres in Mount Lebanon

Each complete Artificial Insemination Centre is equipped with tools and special liquid nitrogen vessels to store the frozen semen. For each Centre the MoA has provided imported frozen semen and a special car to be used for insemination missions in order to provide faster and better AI service.

**2.2 Households granted small and medium size dairy processing units**

The project has supplied 100 women-headed households with essential tools and utensils for home dairy processing (small and medium dairy processing units with accessories). The project staff paid regular field visits to beneficiaries for follow up and provide corrective measures.This follow up has been very important as it gave the team clear idea about the situation of project beneficiaries. This has built more confidence that the project interventions were very useful and have produced the intended impact on the general wellbeing of the farmers and the quality and hygienic standards of milk and dairy products. Most of project beneficiaries are following the directions given to them in the training sessions and they have the related booklets on dairy processing on hand and refer to it at all times. They are keeping the equipment clean and disinfected. The quality of the dairy products they are producing is very good and is sold to the neighbours and relatives in the village. The average volume of milk produced daily per household ranges between 80 and 500 kg. When the farmers do not have enough quantity produced at their farm, they buy milk from their neighbours and relatives for processing. They are very happy and satisfied with this equipment because the quality and hygiene of their products have improved a lot. They can increase the volume of production further as they can work in two to three shifts per day. The medium and small size home dairy processing equipment has given framers added value to their milk. Instead of selling raw milk at L.L. 1 000, for example, they sell Labneh, yogurt, and cheeses. By doing so, they are earning what is equivalent to more than L.L. 1 600 per kg of milk. The members of producers’ cooperatives who are using the medium size processing units have already doubled their volume of production and opened new markets. The producers with the small size home dairy processing units and small quantities of milk are no longer dependent on the milk dealers for their milk collection. They transform it into dairy products and sell to the neighbours in the village or those that reside in the cities. They also produce long shelf life products such as Kishk that can be stored without refrigeration. It is good to mention that most, if not all, people working in these units are women and girls that otherwise do not have any other source of income.

**2.3 Dairy cooperatives**

One of the most important outcomes during Phases I and II was the establishment of 30 village dairy farmers and producers' cooperatives (VDPAs) that include more than 3 000 farmers in 300 villages all over the Bekaa and Akkar areas. The VDPAs empowered these small farmers to negotiate with dairy processing plants, improving their revenues from milk production and sales. The VDPAs have also contributed in organizing small-scale dairy farmers, managing lacto-freezers, selecting members to participate in training events, organizing the purchase of farm inputs, and assisting members to secure public subsidies. Monitoring and supervising the farmers’ daily activities during the first phase of the project was an absolute necessity helping them to reach the stage of self-support and autonomous as they did not have experience in teamwork and problem solving being together.

During the 4th quarter report of the year (2013), the project has handed-over the files of VDPAs to the Directory of Cooperatives Department in Bekaa for its involvement and follow-up. The project team together with the head of the Cooperatives Department in Bekaa had been paying regular visits to all the dairy cooperatives. Regular evaluation report has been prepared on each cooperative regarding all aspects of the cooperative including the teamwork. Emphasis was made on legal, financial, and administrative issues. The inspection survey included cooperatives in Bekaa, Baalbek – Hermel, and Akkar areas. It was found that several cooperatives are flourishing and progressing steadily, for example, Kobayyat, Beino, in Akkar, Housh el Sayed Ali, Masharee El Qaa, El Nasriyyeh, Kafer Meshki in the Bekaa and Baalbek – Hermel. Other cooperatives needed great efforts to correct their conditions and these require continuous monitoring. Two new cooperatives in the Bekaa were supported as well. The project supported the socio-economic studies and legal procedures for the establishment of 10 new VDPAs in the North (Donnieh Minieh, Koura, Zgharta and Batroun). The project team has prepared complete documents and legal papers required. Unfortunately, the security situation in the region has delayed their establishment. Results of evaluation and status of each VDPA were presented in the 2013 quarterly reports.

**2.4 Milk collection centres and milk transportation trucks**

The Project has introduced innovative approach of setting up a total of 40 milk collection centres at village levels. During the year 2013 and through the LRF 26 budget, the project has established 11 milk collection centres mainly in the extended area – North Lebanon – for 500 smallholders and increased the capacity of 5 existing milk collection centres, particularly in Lebanese Syrian borders to cope with high demand of host communities of Syrian refugees. This approach was exceptionally praised as useful for the milk production and processing sectors in the Lebanon. Regular unexpected visits are made to check the hygiene and working conditions at these centres. All the milk collection and cooling centres are working at different rates of efficiency. They have added a great added value to the price of milk through improving milk quality and method of transportation. In few cases, cooling tanks and accessories were revoked from a VDPA and given away to another beneficiary group for lack of responsibility and cleanliness in the centres. The same applied for the milk transportation trucks as applied to strict standards of working conditions and hygiene.

The primary village collection centres network was very essential in solving several problems and drawbacks at the same time. The total quantity of milk handled and refrigerated is 150 – 200 tons / day (collected from 2500 to 3000 farmers). The VDPAs together with milk collection centres and the trucks given to dairy smallholders stand stronger in negotiating for better prices and deals in selling their milk. They are not anymore under the mercy of milk dealers and dairy processing plants. The direct impact is the improvement of income of dairy farmers and the quality and hygienic standards of milk and dairy products. There is significant improvement of milk hygiene standards (better quality of milk with lower detected acidity and contaminating germs) and significant increase in the milk prices. Before project interventions, milk analysis result was documented at high level of Aerobic bacterial counts (5 428 200 cfu/gr) and milk Dornic acidity (19.8) record. Current milk testing and analysis result show a significant and continuous improvement with a reduction in total aerobic microbial content in milk to 356 153 cfu/gr and Dornic acidity of 16.7. The milk price has increased from 750 – 850 LL to 1 050 – 1150 LL before and after project intervention.

**2.5. Field surveys on extended project areas – North Lebanon**

An extensive field surveys has been undertaken through individual visits to 1 152 farmers distributed in 131 villages from Mohafazat North Lebanon. The objective of this survey was to generate a better understanding of the general environment prevailing at the targeted areas to produce a necessary authentic and realistic database in order to sort out project intervention priorities and decide on the criteria of farmers selections and to collect realistic and accurate data on farmers and producers in these remote areas. The key results are the following:

* The North Mohafazat is composed of six Cazas: Tripoli, Zgarta, Batroun, Minnieh – Donnyeh, Koura, and Bcherri. In this primary field survey, more than 90 % of the farmers in all the towns and villages that has livestock farmers.
* About 40% of the farmers depend only on dairying as a sole source of income where 90% of the dairy farmers can be classified as poor and very poor, the highest poverty standards were observed in Minnieh and Donnyyeh Caza. The standard of living is directly proportional to the size of the farm; the larger the farm size the better is the standard. The source of income also has an important role on the standard of living. When only dairy is involved, lower standards are observed.
* All the farmers in the North Mohafazat are smallholders with an average of 4 cows per farm. More than three quarters of them (75.6%) own three or less cows, which clearly indicates that these are smallholder farmers with high poverty levels. Most women-headed households fall under three or less cows’ farmer’s category.
* More than three-quarters of the farms have an average daily milk production of less than 40 kg which is barely sufficient to feed the cows and with only some milk left for the family home use. This shows the poverty levels in these pockets of poverty in Lebanon.
* The Donniyyeh area exhibits the highest percentage and degree of poverty in the North where Sixty to seventy percent of the farmers and producers of Donniyyeh host Syrian refugees as whole families or individuals.
* Priority interventions and activities in response to the major problems identified in the North were elaborated: training, provision of milking machines to farmers owning 3 – 10 milking cows; provision of stainless steel milk jars with milk filters; provision of milk refrigeration tanks with accessories at central milk collection and cooling centers; and provision of mini and medium size dairy processing units for use at home by women-headed households.
* Selection of beneficiaries was done transparently based on priority taking into consideration of particular cases of each farmer including economic, social, and special tragic situations.

**2.6. Emergency assistance to host communities of Syrian refugee farmers in project sites**

The project activities are covering vast geographical areas including the Syria – Lebanese boarders and host communities where there is increasing influx of Syrian refugees. In many villages especially in borders areas (Wadi Khaled, Kobayat, Hermel, Machariaa El Qaa, Labwa and Delhamya), the number of the Syrian refugees has exceeded the number of the original citizens. Almost all of these are very poor, helpless, and vulnerable families composed of a high percentage of women, children and elders. The presence of such large number of refugees had impacted project activities through creating a very great demand on all supplies, especially dairy products. Whenever the project was able to give any assistance to such needy communities was made available regardless of the nationality as these belonged to poor, hungry, needy and deprived people. The project has particularly established new milk collection centres and increased the capacity of the existing ones, in these areas as well as the distribution of mini dairies and training on home processing of traditional dairy products.

**2.7. Procurement and delivery of project inputs**

During the reporting period, the project has completed the distribution and delivery of dairy equipment procured during phase II to the project beneficiaries. The List of dairy equipment procured within this phase was distributed to beneficiaries. All procured quantities had been distributed as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Supplies | Quantities | Number of beneficiaries | Mohafazat | Percentage | Remarks |
| Milk Cans & Filter | 2000 Cans &  3000 Filters | 1500 | * Bekaa: 643 * Akkar: 500 * North: 357 | 43 %  33%  24% |  |
| Mini Dairy Units | 65 Complete units | 65 | * North: 57 * Akkar: 2 * Beqaa: 6 | 88%  3%  9% | 70% of beneficiaries in the North are from Caza Donnieh Minieh |
| Medium Dairy Units | 14 Units | 14 | * North: 7 * Akkar: 1 * Beqaa: 6 | 50%  7%  43% |  |
| Milking Machines | 100 Units | 100 | North: 94  Beqaa: 06 | 94%  6% | 85% of beneficiaries in the North are from Caza Donnieh Minieh |
| Cooling Tanks | 10 Units (5 with 2000 litres capacities & 5 with 1000 litres capacities | * Creation of 4 New Milk Collection centres in Donnieh (3) and Koura (1) supporting 150 poor dairy smallholders * Creation of 5 New Milk Collection centres in Akkar (3 in wadi Khaled, one in Beinou & one in Akkar El Atika) supporting 250 poor dairy smallholders * Creation of 2 new milk collection centres in Beqaa (one in Taraya Shmistar & one in Bazzalia) supporting 100 poor dairy smallholders * Upgrading of Five milk collection centres: Two in Akkar (Halba & Kobayat), Three in Beqaa (Hermel, Machariaa El Qaa, Baalbeck)   NB: Considering the high demand for small and medium cooling tanks (550 and 1000 litres capacity) in Donnieh & Akkar because those regions are dealing with very small dairy farmers and because of the absence of electricity “Triphase”, the project management decided to replace the small & medium cooling tanks in the existing cooling centres with large ones (2000 litres capacity) and to retake the small and medium ones to the North & Akkar. | | | |

Details of dairy supplies with purchase order number as well as list of beneficiaries were presented in the 4th Quarterly report (2013). Furthermore, the artificial insemination kits and supplies procured within the LRF 21 (Phase 1) were distributed to inseminators and cooperatives as of 28th December 2014.

In response to the intensive demands and requests by the small dairy producers and smallholder dairy farmers, particularly in the poorest areas of Akkar, the project has procured additional dairy equipment as follows:

* Four (4) milk cooling tanks of one ton capacity each
* Two (2) milk pumps
* Twenty five (25) Milking machines
* Five (5) small medium size milk batch pasteurisers (250 litters capacity)
* Five (5) working tables (Large)
* Three (3) Labneh bag hangers.
* Two (2) cheese presses.
* Fifteen (15) mini dairy processing units 60 – 70 litres (Complete)

**2.8 Distribution Ceremonies and Events**

1. The project organised a distribution ceremony of milk cans and filters in Beqaa for project beneficiaries. The ceremony was held on 4th April 2013 in Zahle in Beqaa Valley (at Sugar Beet Cooperative building in Zahle) where 300 people attended this meeting in the presence of officials and Press and Media representatives. H.E. Minister of Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Hussein Hajj Hassan and his consultants, FAO Representative in Lebanon, government Officials and Farmers.
2. On 30th June 2013 for the launching of the rural village dairy processing centre in Brital and supporting the sheep and goat farmers in Tarrayya with milk cans. This gathering was attended by the Minister, FAO Representative, officials and farmers.
3. On 24th August 2013 in Batroun a distribution ceremony of dairy equipment: milk cans, milk filters, mini and medium size dairy processing units and milking machines for project beneficiaries in North Lebanon (Donniyyeh and Mennieh, Batroun, Zgharta, Koura, Bcherri and Tripoli).
4. Inaugural Ceremony was organised on 16th November 2013 under the patronage of H.E. Minister Hussein Hajj Hassan and a representative of Dr. Ali Moumen FAO representative in Lebanon and distinguished persons and activists and a remarkable crowd of farmers and producers from the Bekaa and Baalbeck Hermel Mohafazat. The objective was the inauguration of a milk collection and cooling centre and a dairy processing centre in Bezzalliyeh and the launching of DFID-funded project on "Emergency Vaccination and Targeted Feeding of Livestock Grazing in Areas along the Syria-Lebanon Border".
5. On 28th December 2013 in Zahlé a distribution ceremony of artificial insemination equipment and certificates to the outstanding inseminators who passed theoretical and practical exams successfully. This was held under the patronage of the MoA and was attended by 300 dairy farmers from the project sites.

**2.9. Project Visibility**

**a.** **Press conference at the Ministry of Agriculture on 29th of March 2013**

A press conference was held at ministry of agriculture that followed a meeting to expose the results of the primary field survey of the livestock farmers in the North in the presence of H.E. Dr. Hussein Hajj Hassan, the representative of FAO with a large number Municipalities and cooperatives representatives and farmers workers and employees in the field of dairy farming and business. The Lebanese newspaper Addyar (30 March 2013) presented summarized the press conference: Head line: Dr. Hussein Al Hajj Hassan: The most important outcomes of the project, "Recovery and Rehabilitation of the Milk Sector" are the stability of prices and improved quality and lower acidity of milk. Dr. Hussein Al Hajj Hassan, Lebanese minister of Agriculture declared that," the most important outcomes of the dairy project," Recovery and Rehabilitation of the Dairy Sector in Bekaa Valley and Hermel – Akkar uplands" are the stability of milk prices and improvement in its quality. Similarly the hygienic standard of the milk is improved by lowering the acidity and the reducing the Total Bacterial Counts and Coliform content in raw milk. These results were followed up and confirmed by the regular milk testing and analysis during the last couple of years. His Excellency mentioned the establishment of 34 Dairy Producers Cooperatives and a larger number of village milk collection and refrigeration centers and mobilization of 10 milk transportation trucks and launching a forage and feed subsidy project to support the dairy farmers. The project included three Mohafazat: Bekaa, Baalback – Hermel, and Akkar, now it is going to include the North as well. The special grant that was offered by the Lebanese Recovery Fund (LRF) is directed to operations of the project in the North and especially in Donniyyeh – Menniyeh Caza where the highest poverty rate in Lebanon is present. The project will support the dairy farmers to improve their conditions by providing them with Stainless Steel milk jars, milking machines, and establishment of dairy cooperatives."

**b. Visit of French Embassy delegates to the Bekaa on 10th of April 2013**

A group of visitors from French Embassy composed of Mrs. Jamilie Annan, Export Counselor at the French Embassy, Mr. Guilhem Brouzes, Umptest coopex. and Mr. Ferreol Roche, Export Area Manager visited the project activities in Beqaa. The objective was to visit the project activities in order to understand the project strategy and policy in upgrading the dairy sub-sector in Lebanon in sustainable way. The mission was particularly interested in reinforcing the dairy cooperatives in artificial insemination techniques. In fact and right after this visit, the French Minister of Agriculture invited the Lebanese Minister to France for the preparation of a cooperation agreement between the two countries in this field.

**c**. **Mission of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Staff to LRF−FAO dairy project Sites (13 and 14 November 2013)**

OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) representatives Mr. Thomas and Miss Rawad conducted field trips to different sites of the project activities. These visits covered random beneficiary sites in Bekaa and the North and Akkar. The objective of this visit was to monitor and touch the actual achievements in the field resulting from the project progress activities especially the impact on the life and livelihood of the small-scale farmers for identification of project sites and beneficiaries to be filmed.

**d.** **Meeting on project’ achievements, milk sector and milk price**

The project has organised a meeting at the office of H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Hussein Hajj Hassan, with Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. Nicolas Nahhas, Minister of Industry Mr. Vreij Sabonjian, the representative of FAO in Lebanon, Dr. Ali Moumen, and employees of the respective ministries and a number of major stakeholders engaged in milk and dairy sub-sectors. These stakeholders include dairy cooperative presidents, milk traders, and dairy processing plants owners or managers. The objective of the meeting was to present project’s achievements and to discuss issues and problems related to the sector.

The major decisions taken were: 1) Establishment and activating of the National Council of Milk; 2) Creating of a general union for all the milk producers' cooperatives at national scale; 3) Signing of mandatory milk sales contracts between the dairy processing plants and the milk producers cooperatives; 4) Activate and modernize the laws and regulations related to the sector; and 5) Looking for potential donors for funding and support to expand interventions of LRF−FAO dairy project “*Recovery and Rehabilitation of Dairy Sector in Bekaa Valley and Hermel – Akkar Uplands*” to include all regions of Lebanon.

**e. Success Story on “Georgette from Akkar”**

The LRF-FAO Dairy Project with both phases is considered by MoA as success story in Lebanon, implementing activities in sustainable production, improving food safety standards on the dairy industry and helping to generate income for poor rural farmers. A significant impact of the project was the support of 300 women headed families and women cooperatives with essential tools and utensils for home dairy processing, production and marketing of improved traditional dairy products increasing their income generation through growing demand for their improved quality products. FAO had assigned Senior Communication Specialist (Mr. Nasser Brahimi) last November 2013, to the identification and development of “Success Stories” from selected FAO interventions in the Near East and North Africa Region. The strategic objective was: “[Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition](http://www.fao.org/archive/from-the-field/fr/?keywords=39135&keywordslbl=Help%20eliminate%20hunger,%20food%20insecurity%20and%20malnutrition)”. The outstanding selected success story was published in FAO Website on Georgette, one project beneficiary from Akkar (Baynou): <http://www.fao.org/archive/from-the-field/detail/en/c/214507/>.

**3) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:**

**3) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Performance Indicators** | **Indicator Baselines** | **Planned Indicator Targets** | **Achieved Indicator Targets** | **Source of Verification** | **Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)** |
| **Development Goal:**  improve the livelihoods of poor dairy farmers and sustain the dairy sector in Lebanon, emphasis is made on improving the quality and hygienic standards of milk and dairy products to safeguard the Lebanese consumer and improve the milk prices through small dairy equipment, farmer’s organization and capacity building  **Immediate Objective:**  Provide assistance to the livelihoods of vulnerable livestock keepers through distribution of equipments, support with animal inputs and services, grouping farmers into village dairy producers’ associations and set up of milk collection centres network | | | | | | |
| **Output 1.1**  Empowerment of farmers through constitution of Village Dairy Producers Associations (VDPA’s) in management of milk collection centres and milk marketing | **Indicator 1.1.1**  30 VDPAs officially established & functioning in the region &  improve the standards of the dairy sector in Lebanon | Increase of milk prices and providing services to farmers (milk collection) | Follow up of the 28 existing VDPA’s & Establishment of 2 new ones in Beqaa & 10 VDPA’s in North  23 VDPAs officially established & functioning | Follow up: Yes  Five New ones in Beqaa: Yes  Ten VDPA’s in North: under constitution | Legal tables of cooperatives  Official Gazette of Lebanon.  MOA meetings on milk prices.  Copies of milk contracts.  Press coverage on milk prices. | Required documents and legal papers prepared, unfortunately the security situation in the region delayed their establishment. |
| **Output 1.2**  material support related to good farm management, milk hygiene, and farm house processing, | **Indicator 1.2.1**  # of dairy inputs distributed to farmers | Farmers able to increase milk production and improve hygienic practices | Distribution of :  2000 Cans &  3000 Filters, , 100 milking machines with 500 teat cup & detergents,  79 small & medium dairies & 10 milk cooling tanks with accessories | Yes | Distribution campaign and  List of project beneficiaries with signature  Press release |  |
| **Output 1.3**  improving the quality and hygienic standards of milk through development of primary milk collection and cooling network at village levels | **Indicator 1.3.1**  Creating primary milk collection networks supplemented by a milk refrigeration center on the village level | Farmers have collection points to bring milk for cooling & transport to dairy plants | Establishment of 11 new milk collection centres mainly North Lebanon for 500 smallholders and increased the capacity of 5 existing milk collection centres (Syrian borders).  There are now 40 collection centres cooling tanks and laboratories for milk analysis with capacity of 150  200 tons / day (collected from 2500 to 3000 farmers) | yes | Data on milk production recorded by milk collections centres  - Project M&E reports; |  |
| **Output 1.4**  Improving Dairy processing and milk hygiene:  Through capacity building and providing of essential facilities necessary for proper practices of processing improved traditional dairy products. | **Indicator 1.4.1**  Improve the quality and quantity of dairy products produced at home or farm level. | Women are able to transform all or part of their produced milk into quality dairy products that are usually sold at the village or sent to the city. | Capacity building for 200 women on  good practices and new technology in cheese and yogurt production with providing 100 women with dairy utensils & equipment | Yes | Tables of the attendant names with signature  Extension booklets on dairy processing  Tables of names of women that received the equipment with their addresses and signatures. |  |
| **Output 1.5**  improvement of dairy cattle fertility through  Capacity building of skilled artificial inseminator and their supply with artificial insemination kits & semen | **Indicator 1.5.1**  improvement of farm management with increasing cow reproduction efficiency and profitability | Farmers able to increase milk production through reducing calving intervals | Capacity building for 80 trainees from dairy coop’s and MOA extension service (38 from Beqaa and 42 from Akkar & North )  Distribution of AI kits & semen for establishment of 27 AI centres | **Yes** | Lists of attendance with signature of participants and detailed report produced on organization of training courses  Delivery notes of AI Kits to successful trainees with their signature  Delivery notes of semen doses (MOA) to inseminators  Monthly report from inseminators | There was a delay in this activities because of the security reasons in the region |

1. **Project constraints, corrective measures and lessons learned:**

During this reporting period, the project faced some constrains which were forecasted while others were not. To overcome these barriers we invented solutions or modifications or created shortcuts in most cases. Few cases were not curable as the decisions were not within our scope. The variety of stakeholders involved in our project made it very difficult to coordinate among all the parties especially when conflicting benefits were present. Such conflicting parties are: the dairy farmers, the milk dealers, the dairy processing plant, the milk smugglers, and last but not the least the consumer.

The vast geographical expansion in North Lebanon has forced us to squeeze the selection of direct beneficiaries very severely because of the budget restriction. Every day we receive several calls from needy farmers that want their names to be added to the list of direct beneficiaries. The areas of Donnyeh, Akkar and Fnaydek are mainly characterized with extreme poverty and most of the farmers in these areas are in grief need to any basic or essential support. The limited budget has forced us to put very strict criteria for selection of direct beneficiaries among the poorest farmers.

Taking into consideration the geographical area and the number of farmers involved and the volume of inputs and follow up necessary to achieve the goals of the project, we can confirm that the number of the working team is not sufficient. If we look at most if not all the achievements and accomplishments of the project especially the Farmers cooperatives and Primary milk collection and cooling centers, operation of the milk transportation trucks etc. We find that all of these require continuous follow up, control, and monitoring in order to reach a state of stability and sustainability. Also more training and milk sampling and testing are required. More time and personnel are required because the past experience has involved very hard work and lengthy working hours.

Another distressing constraint is the high influx of Syrian refugees. It is documented that there are almost one million Syrian refugees that have crossed the Syria – Lebanese boarders during the last three years with an increasing rates in the last few months (registered with UNHCR, 31st March 2013). Almost all of these are very poor, helpless, and vulnerable families composed of a high percentage of children and babies. The areas that are most populated with these poor refugees are concentrated in the border villages of Akkar, Baalbeck - hermel, and Minniyeh - Donniyyeh areas. Most of these areas are covered by the project interventions. The presence of such large numbers of refugees had interfered with the activities of the project. In most cases we have to take into consideration the increased population (more than 25% in some villages) and the magnified demand on food supplies and dairy products. Some of the refugees have brought with them some of their livestock that they were able to save. It was also necessary to attend to the needs of these herds such as feeds, vaccination, and milk collection and marketing.

Also another major constraint faced by the project is the restriction on movement due to security conditions. The current prevailing security conditions in Lebanon as mainly reflected by the situation in Syria have forced the UN security authorities to restrict staff movement to the minimum. Furthermore, there are many areas that are prohibited to go under any circumstances such as Al Qaa, Masharee Al Qaa, Akkar, Wadi Khaled, etc. It is also important to mention that these unfavourable conditions have been reflected on the activities and efficiency of work of the cooperatives, milk collection centres, and farmers located in these areas. These unstable conditions are affecting everything in the country. The impact of the current security situation on the LRF 26 work plan for the next reporting period will probably continue to be the same as we are not able to cover all areas adjacent to the border areas in the North and East with less follow up of Hermel, Machariaa Al Quaa and Akkar areas. To mitigate this, the project staff are in daily contact with farmers in the border areas that come regularly at our office. Moreover we spend nights on sites (North Lebanon) when the situation is calm, working in successive days.

Another constraint is the very slow budget transfer and the administrative routines**.** Although we had many good and generous sources for financial support from the MOA, the LRF and NGO’s, we were not able to use these funds yet. The MOA has proposed US$ 200 000 for training contract with the FAO Project but due to FAO administrative routine the project lost such donation, also the project had lost a kind donation of US$ 20000 from big hearted American journalist to support one poor dairy coop. Also, FAO was not able to sign an agreement with Save the Children (-UKan NGO), for a total amount of US$ 60 000 to train and supply groups of women-headed households with equipment for processing of improved traditional dairy products. Finally, LRF Steering Committee responded positively to transfer a balance (US$ 88 000) from LRF 21 (Phase I) to LRF 26 (phase two); unfortunately LRF is still waiting the final financial report from FAQ while this project ended since 30th September 2012.

The most important lessons learnt are related to:

*Farmers potential improved through better value for their milk, improving income and livelihoods.* This was achieved through improving the quality of milk produced at farm level and maintaining its quality through proper cooling, use of hygienic utensils and facilities for transportation. Imposing better prices on the dairy processing plants without improving the quality of milk will never bestow the desired effect on the long term. A win-win agreement must be reached in order to maintain sustainability.

*Follow up on dairy cooperatives as they are routes for interventions and connection with the farmers*. Cooperatives are simply business companies established for the sake of profit. Every member of this cooperative is a partner in the company that has rights and entails duties. Involvement and participation of each member are very essential for continuity and sustainability of these cooperatives. Transparent accounts and financial records should be available and updated daily. Extensive efforts should be exerted to change the individualistic mentality and convince the farmers and the members of the cooperatives of the feasibility and importance of cooperative and team work. Unfortunately training alone is not enough to create this change but an integrated sociological and psychological program must be implemented.

*Taking into account the Syrian refugees in project interventions*. As it was mentioned before the Syrian refugees accounted for 25 to 35 % of the population of several villages and became an integral component of the social framework of these villages. Any intervention should take them into consideration. The increased population in these originally poor and unprivileged communities requires additional inputs of food and water and all other essential aspects for living. The project was obliged to take into account these refugees as targeted beneficiaries because they are dairy producers and consumers. The demand on dairy products has increased and it had to be met mainly through local production.

Increase training sessions and workshops especially in new targeted areas. As a feedback from the all training sessions conducted by the project, there is a great demand for more such sessions and workshops. The same subjects have to be repeated in other areas and new topics such as nutrition, animal health, reproduction be introduced. The under skilled farmers and producers suffer a lot just due to bad management and lack of knowledge. Furthermore more dairy equipment are necessary to cope with the additional volume of producers and farmers such as small dairy processing equipment, milking machines, cooling tanks, etc.

1. The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document; [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)