



Understanding Agricultural Livelihood Solutions under Protracted Forced Displacement

The Case of Refugees from Homs in Lebanon



Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**





Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**



VISION

ESCWA, an innovative catalyst for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region.

MISSION

Committed to the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA's passionate team produces innovative knowledge, fosters regional consensus and delivers transformational policy advice. Together, we work for a sustainable future for all.



**UNDERSTANDING
AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD
SOLUTIONS UNDER
PROTRACTED FORCED
DISPLACEMENT**

**THE CASE OF REFUGEES
FROM HOMS IN LEBANON**



UNITED NATIONS
Beirut

© 2021 United Nations
All rights reserved worldwide

Photocopies and reproductions of excerpts are allowed with proper credits.

All queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), e-mail: publications-escwa@un.org

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Links contained in this publication are provided for the convenience of the reader and are correct at the time of issue. The United Nations takes no responsibility for the continued accuracy of that information or for the content of any external website.

References have, wherever possible, been verified.

Mention of commercial names and products does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.

References to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

United Nations publication issued by ESCWA, United Nations House, Riad El Solh Square, P.O. Box: 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon.

Website: www.unescwa.org

Photo Credits: © Elias Ghadban

Acknowledgments

3

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) published this study as part of a project titled “Guiding the restoration of conflict-sensitive agricultural livelihoods for Syrian refugees”.

The study was prepared by Jad Abou Arrage and Nour Azzi under the guidance and supervision of Elias Ghadban and Nour El Jundi from the Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster at ESCWA. Valuable support was provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) country

office in Beirut. The authors express their gratitude to all participants from international and national organizations who provided necessary information and facilitated the field survey and validation of recommendations.

The views expressed in this document are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of ESCWA.

This report or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations.



The main types of livelihood support for both Syrian refugees and Lebanese farmers entailed food-for-training, food-for-assets, cash-for-work/training, and the distribution of small equipment and tools. Training, cooperative management, marketing and technical support were geared towards production and post-harvest assistance for Lebanese farmers.



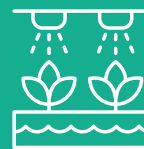
The majority of the projects targeted at least two livelihood assets, but discussions with different project implementers revealed that project design and choice of activities did not consider the integration of these assets and their complementarity with the agricultural development needs of Lebanese farmers.



Weak complementarities and synergies between agricultural livelihood projects targeting Syrian refugees and host communities, and the general agricultural development context in Lebanon need to be reconsidered.



Key informants were not able to provide quantifiable results and economic indicators related to positive impacts. This might be related to the absence of economic impact assessments performed at the end of the projects, specifically at the value chain level, to showcase changes in job creation, sales volume, value and quality.



While projects covered many value chains, their contributions were limited to either the production side by improving agricultural infrastructure (mainly irrigation) and practices, or market access (locally or internationally) for a few selected value chains (such as grapes, potatoes and processed food). Contributions to upgrading existing value chains and/or introducing innovative ones have been constrained, since none of the projects tackled a whole value chain in an integrated way.



Agricultural livelihood projects have supported Lebanese farmers and food producers in different forms. Most projects, especially those with a pure humanitarian aspect, have provided unstructured technical assistance, without proper targeting and profiling. By design, they do not aim to create long-term solutions in agriculture.



All focus group participants said that agricultural livelihood activities responded temporarily to their needs in terms of additional income through cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets initiatives. This helped secure part of their basic needs, including food.



The cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets participants comprise the most vulnerable refugees; they often do not have any source of income except for the UNHCR cash assistance card. Therefore, incentives paid to participate in food-for-training and food-for-assets programmes reinforce their food security.



When refugees were asked if they would be able to use their new skills to revive agricultural activities they were involved in before displacement, or initiate new agricultural activities once they voluntarily returned to the Syrian Arab Republic, 87 per cent said yes.



Skills development should be aligned with the potential for jobs in specific value chains, and should avoid cross-cutting issues.



Coordination both inside and between working groups deserves more attention so that complementary interventions target specific value chains with measurable impact.



New competitive value chains targeting promising markets should be explored as a win-win situation for both refugee and host community populations. Mobilizing the untapped potential of Lebanese food and agricultural production systems includes linking those sectors to the available labour force, drawing on both host communities and refugees.



Future interventions should create a balance between the five assets of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, and focus more on physical and financial assets less covered in previous interventions, especially when targeting Lebanese farmers.



Major shifts are needed in inter-agency coordination to bridge the humanitarian and development divide, and support livelihoods and economic opportunities more effectively. Essential steps include devising new approaches to livelihoods and economic opportunities by implementing joint development-humanitarian assessments, analyses, and multiyear planning and programming to achieve collective outcomes.

Key Messages

Executive Summary

7

This study contextualizes and defines the characteristics and nature of agricultural livelihood programmes targeting Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, and examines their contributions to improving sustainable livelihoods and providing solutions to these populations. Syrian refugees originating from Homs Governorate were selected as a population for this study because they represent a significant portion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (24 per cent of registered Syrian refugees, according to UNHCR data in June 2020). The study is a part of an initiative that prepared a strategy for restoring agricultural livelihoods in Homs and studied livelihood interventions with refugees from Homs in Jordan (16 per cent of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan originate from Homs, according to UNHCR data in June 2020). The overall objective is to understand how livelihood programming in a protracted regional forced migration crisis is addressing local needs, and equipping host communities and refugees with livelihood assets based

on their profiles and socio-economic contexts. It further looks at how these assets improve the efficiency and resilience of targeted value chains and agricultural systems. The initiative reinforces the multidimensional approaches of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework to develop durable solutions to the regional migration crisis.

The study covers the main projects implemented or initiated between 2017 and 2019 in Lebanon by national and international organizations, especially those characterized by a large budget and aimed at a direct impact on agricultural livelihoods and food security for refugees and host communities. The methodology consisted of a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyse primary and secondary data. Field work was conducted from May to June 2020, and focused on areas with the highest concentrations of Syrian refugees from Homs: Baalbeck, Akkar and North Lebanon districts, according to the latest data from

UNHCR.¹ Most primary data collection was conducted virtually through online calls or over the phone due to COVID-19 lockdown measures.

The desk review and primary data were analysed using both the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and the value chain approach. Both tools help understand the dynamics of livelihood programming for refugees in a protracted crisis.² Primary data were collected through 22 key informant interviews, 9 focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers and Syrian refugees from Homs, and a survey with 110 registered refugees who originate from Homs and have participated in agricultural livelihood projects.

The study results showed that agricultural livelihood interventions for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon between 2017 and 2019 cover all Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human) with various levels of support. A few projects worked on policies, institutions and processes. Interventions tended to be scattered at different points of the value chain, with the greatest support dedicated to the production phase, and targeting small farmers and women's cooperatives.

Physical capital: Projects involving physical capital worked, for instance, on building and rehabilitating irrigation canals, and opening and cleaning agricultural roads. Most projects were based on cash-for-work and food-for-assets modalities. Several projects supplied preliminary training sessions before starting implementation of physical work. These projects provided short-term employment for Syrian refugees and host communities.

Social capital: Most projects attempted to promote social cohesion between refugees and their host communities. Many people interviewed during the study mentioned how project activities introduced them to neighbours who became their friends, and how time in training or working sessions provided a break

from family tensions. The extent to which this social cohesion created room for economic cooperation was not captured by the study. Some projects supported women's cooperatives by linking them to local markets or by subsidizing seasonal labourers recruited among Syrian refugees.

Natural capital: Projects working on land reclamation, sustainable landscape management and reforestation were directly involved in building natural capital. Syrian refugees and host communities rehabilitated agricultural terraces, and planted and cleaned forests. Many Syrian refugees considered this short-term employment beneficial mainly for the cash incentive to cover their basic food needs. It did not provide new skills or knowledge to improve access to the job market in Lebanon or when they return to Homs. The disconnection and lack of complementarity between short-term income generation and skills improvement reflected the very limited socioeconomic benefits of such interventions for refugees. On the other hand, these projects increased the cultivated area for many Lebanese farmers and reduced fire risk in forests.

Human capital: Most interviewed Syrian refugees and host communities participated in at least one livelihood training or food-for-training programme. These comprised knowledge-sharing and skills transfers by experts on different agricultural production systems. Homs refugee trainees stated that most agricultural topics were quite interesting and new to them. But they relayed that most training programmes had more theoretical than practical sessions, and that the training, due to budget restrictions, was planned for short periods that did not help in gaining sufficient skills. This modality of skills development to access food in a protracted crisis has limited potential to facilitate short-term employment through a market system approach. It poses risks of organizations falling into a training-centred trap with weak linkages to the job market, since the main objective is to continue providing financial incentives to cover basic food needs.

1. UNHCR (2020). UNHCR Data-Sharing Agreement. Lebanon Country Office.

2. N. Nutz (2017). *A Guide to Market-based Livelihoods for Refugees*. ILO and UNHCR.
The Seep Network (2017) *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)*. Third edition.

Financial capital: All projects provided financial incentives for refugees and host community participants. Only a few offered small grants only to Lebanese participants. The survey as well as information provided by different project implementers showed that financial incentives through different modalities (food-for-training, food-for-assets, cash-for-work, livelihood training, etc.) are the main motivator for Syrian refugees to participate, rather than interest in training topics or new skills. The financial incentives are essential to cover the food gap, which appeared to be the main objective of many organizations. Such programming in a protracted crisis has limited potential for transitioning to market-based solutions.

Policies, institutions and processes: Under the Food Security Sector Working Group and Livelihoods Sector Working Group, a number of implementing organizations support different ministries, public institutions and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve labour and working conditions. Despite their efforts, the *chewich* or focal point in each refugee settlement has significant power to decide who works, when and where, and who joins project activities. This monopolization creates protection risks and undercuts working conditions, with the *chewich* taking a percentage of daily wages from those who end up employed. Before the Syrian crisis, the *chewich* used to manage the labour supply in various labour-intensive agricultural systems in Lebanon. This responsibility was extended to participation in project activities after the crisis began.

Value chain: Analysed projects worked on almost all agricultural value chains, depending on agro-ecological zones and primary production systems, with a focus on labour-intensive ones such as potato crops and greenhouse vegetables. Training sessions covered many topics, including plowing, grafting, cultivating, harvesting, packaging and traditional preserved food production known as *mounneh*. Only a few projects were able to establish linkages at all levels of value chains, from input supplies to the field/farmer to the market/consumer. There was little evidence of successful initiatives that developed value chains and generated long-term employment for both Syrian refugees and host communities. Training and short-term employment for assets building to cover food gaps, both dominant in livelihoods programming in the Syrian crisis, did not

play roles in developing value chains, neither through a skilled labour supply nor through the provision of essential services addressing value chain bottlenecks.

Overall analysis showed that emergency, short-term, humanitarian-focused agricultural livelihood projects are predominant in the response to the protracted displacement of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and lack linkages between training and job placement. There are significant gaps in long-term sustainable livelihood, employment and inclusive agricultural development interventions. Excessive livelihood training activities have resulted in some duplication on the regional and value chain levels, and overlaps among different implementers. Livelihood indicators, used at a national scale to monitor livelihood interventions, require some rationalization to better capture real short-, medium- and long-term impacts.

Despite two working groups implementing activities linked to the agriculture sector at the national level, the Food Security Sector Working Group and the Livelihoods Sector Working Group, it is not clear in the period under review (from 2017 to 2019) how the actions of various key actors were integrated and structured into a coherent, coordinated approach to project design, implementation and impact measurement. Secondary reviews and consultations showed that an updated coordination modality was established starting in 2020. Accordingly, an in-depth analysis covering the coordination mechanism is recommended.

Regarding factors that encourage or limit the ability of Homs refugees to get involved in agricultural activities after voluntarily returning to Homs with safety and dignity, focus group discussions and survey results showed that the most important encouraging factors are their agricultural background and the existence of large-scale agricultural lands in areas of origin. The most important barriers are damaged agricultural infrastructure (such as wells and irrigation canals), lost agricultural lands (burned/destroyed orchards and/or occupied lands), economic and financial challenges that might make the revival of production and/or new investments very difficult, and political instability. Syrian refugees in focus group discussions noted that reinforcing their knowledge about the production techniques of different value chains might help them in

the future even if they could not use this knowledge to find employment in Lebanon. This explains why Syrian refugees prefer to continue participating in current short-term employment and training-centred livelihood programmes to cover their basic food needs as they wait for new conditions to offer better solutions.

To prepare the ground for sustainable agricultural livelihood solutions benefiting Syrian refugees and their host communities amid the protracted crisis in Lebanon, as well as Syrians who decide to voluntarily return to Homs when the conditions become favourable, livelihood interventions can incorporate the following strategic objectives:

- **Value chain development:** Target and develop competitive value chains with both economic and food security potential, and work jointly to cover all phases of the value chain in an integrated and balanced way to increase productivity and facilitate access to markets. Selecting value chains with a competitive advantage in Lebanon and that can play an economic role in the main places of origin of Syrian refugees (Homs, Daraa and Aleppo, for instance) is encouraged.
- **Beneficiary selection:** Update and improve the profiling and selection procedures for beneficiaries to ensure inclusivity and improve efficiency.
- **Local production and local consumption:** Introduce local sourcing of agricultural and food products that

meet quality standards and are affordable to improve food security and increase income for farmers and women's cooperatives. Unions of cooperatives and the private sector in the downstream side of interventions (processing and post-harvest) should be supported to pull targeted value chains.

- **Partnership and coordination:** Encourage advocacy and institutional support especially for national organizations implementing livelihood projects, and ensure complementarities between humanitarian and development support. Improved coordination among relevant stakeholders should be established from project design through monitoring and evaluation.
- **Project timeline:** Balance short-term and long-term interventions to guarantee sustainability.
- **Systematic and harmonized approach:** Integrate the Sustainable Livelihood Framework into projects at the design and evaluation levels, and introduce economic impact assessments for large-scale projects to measure their efficiency.
- **Private sector engagement:** Adopt a market system approach that involves the private sector and encourages investments in import substitution and technological innovation.
- **Territorial development:** Introduce local and regional development mechanisms for specific territories and their agricultural value chains.

Content

11

Acknowledgments	3		
Key Messages	5		
Executive Summary	7		
Abbreviations	13		
Introduction	15		
01 Methodology	17		
A. Objective and approach	18		
B. Secondary review	18		
C. Primary review	20		
D. Data analysis and results	22		
E. Confidentiality and protection measures	22		
F. Challenges and limitations	23		
02 Analysis of Agricultural Livelihood Programming	25		
A. Description and analysis of the main programmes and interventions	26		
		B. Stakeholder perceptions: key informant interviews	29
		C. The perceptions of Lebanese farmers: focus group discussion results	44
		D. The perceptions of Syrian refugees from Homs: focus group discussion results	49
		E. The perceptions of refugees from Homs: survey results and analysis	55
		03 Policy Recommendations for Agricultural Livelihood Solutions in a Protracted Refugee Situation	67
		A. Short-term recommendations	68
		B. Long-term recommendations	70
		C. Short term versus long term – towards sustainability	71

List of Tables

Table 1.	Number and distribution of focus group discussions	20
Table 2.	Summary of food security and livelihood results, 2017-2019	26
Table 3.	Agricultural livelihood project links to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework	29
Table 4.	Headline outcomes of agricultural livelihood projects noted by key informants	34
Table 5.	Value chains covered by agricultural livelihood projects from 2017 to 2019	37
Table 6.	Recommendations for future agricultural livelihood project planning	40
Table 7.	Geographical distribution and numbers of participants in focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers	45
Table 8.	Critical challenges to agricultural livelihood activities perceived by Lebanese farmers	48
Table 9.	Recommendations for future agricultural livelihood activities proposed by Lebanese farmers	49
Table 10.	Geographical distribution and number of participants in focus group discussions with Syrian refugees from Homs	50
Table 11.	Agricultural, livelihood and food security needs/challenges of Syrian refugees from Homs	51
Table 12.	Livelihood factors encouraging a voluntary return to Syria and involvement in agricultural production	53
Table 13.	Livelihood barriers to voluntarily returning to Syria and getting involved in agricultural production	54
Table 14.	Recommended measures to support the reinvolved of Syrian refugees in agriculture when they voluntarily return to Syria	55
Table 15.	Reasons survey participants gave for moving from one area to another within Lebanon	58
Table 16.	Agricultural value chains in which Syrian refugees from Homs worked before displacement	60
Table 17.	Characteristics of livelihood training, cash-for-work, food-for-training or food-for-asset activities in which respondents participated	61
Table 18.	Willingness to voluntarily return to Syria and livelihood assets	64
Table 19.	Factors encouraging people to engage in agriculture after returning to Syria	64
Table 20.	Challenges and needed support to engage in agriculture after returning to Syria	65

List of Figures

Figure 1.	The Sustainable Livelihood Framework	18
Figure 2.	Agricultural value chain model	19
Figure 3.	International aid flows and stakeholders involved in agricultural livelihood projects	27
Figure 4.	Survey respondents by gender	56
Figure 5.	Survey respondents by age	56
Figure 6.	Survey respondents by marital status	56
Figure 7.	Survey respondents by education level	57
Figure 8.	Primary source of income of respondents prior to displacement	57
Figure 9.	Household members by age	59
Figure 10.	Refugees by shelter type	59
Figure 11.	Refugee perceptions of project impacts	61

Abbreviations

13

ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
LBP	Lebanese Pound
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

15

Since March 2011, Lebanon has faced a protracted refugee crisis. The country has the highest per capita rate of Syrian refugees in the world at around 30 per cent of the total Lebanese population.³ As of 31 August 2020, Lebanon hosted 879,598 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR,⁴ while the Government of Lebanon estimates the total number to be around 1.5 million.⁵

Despite the efforts of national and international organizations to mitigate the effects of the crisis on Syrian refugees and their host communities, the situation has not stabilized in many respects. According to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon in 2018 and 2019, about half of

refugee households live in extreme poverty, and 90 per cent experience some degree of food insecurity.⁶

Recent political instability, civil unrest and the events of October 2019, followed by severe economic and financial crises, the devaluation of the local currency and the COVID-19 pandemic, have further exacerbated the vulnerability of Syrian refugees and their host communities, especially in terms of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity. Against that backdrop, United Nations organizations and other stakeholders continue to explore how to integrate humanitarian and development responses in a more effective and sustainable way.

³ European Commission (2019). "European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations." https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/lebanon_2019-08-28.pdf.

⁴ See: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria

⁵ See: www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2020/09/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-Fact-Sheet-Sep-2020.pdf.

⁶ See: www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/12/VASyR-2019.pdf.

“Understanding agricultural livelihood solutions under protracted forced displacement: The case of refugees from Homs in Lebanon” is a case study that is part of the “Guiding the restoration of conflict-sensitive agricultural livelihoods for Syrian refugees” project. Policy recommendations proposed under this study will steer future agricultural livelihood interventions for host communities and Syrian refugees when they voluntarily decide to return to Syria, in particular to Homs, and take part in the agricultural livelihood restoration plan. This study is a pilot case, focusing on refugees from Homs who represent 24 per cent of total Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It analyses livelihood interventions from a sustainable perspective and value chain approach, seeking to identify strategies to replicate and tailor livelihood solutions for other refugee populations in protracted crises.

The study seeks to understand the characteristics of agricultural livelihood programmes targeting refugees from Homs and their host communities in Lebanon, and to examine their contributions to sustainable livelihoods. The study aims as well to understand perceptions of livelihood barriers to the voluntary return of refugees, with safety and dignity, to Homs; it looks at five agricultural livelihood assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human) in addition to related processes and institutional challenges.

The study starts by presenting its methodology (Section 01). It then provides an analysis of agricultural livelihood programmes implemented from 2017 to 2019 in Lebanon and synthesises the analysis of results (Section 02), and offers policy

recommendations for programming for both Syrian refugees and host communities (Section 03).

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of agricultural livelihood activities? What are their objectives and relevance to Syrian refugees and host communities?
- What is the role of livelihood interventions in facilitating skilled employment, reducing food insecurity and improving income-generation opportunities?
- How are agricultural livelihood programmes promoting sustainable livelihoods for both refugees and host communities while addressing the main challenges encountered?
- What are the variations in the livelihoods of farmers from Homs between the pre-conflict period and during their stay in Lebanon?
- What are the perceptions of livelihood barriers for refugees to voluntarily return to Homs with safety and dignity, across the five agriculture livelihood assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human), in addition to related processes and institutional challenges?
- What are the Lebanese host community observations regarding the integration of livelihood interventions for refugees in local economic development plans, and their complementarity with priorities for context-based agricultural development?
- What potential local and national livelihood initiatives might prepare the ground for sustainable local economic development benefiting both the Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees in the long term?

01

Methodology



A. Objective and approach

This study seeks to understand the characteristics of agricultural livelihood programmes targeting refugees from Homs and their host communities in Lebanon, and to examine their contribution to the sustainable livelihoods of target populations. The study will present the context, objectives and activities of such projects, and will highlight their responses to the needs of target beneficiaries in terms of facilitating skilled agricultural employment, reducing food insecurity and improving income. The study covers the main projects implemented or initiated from 2017

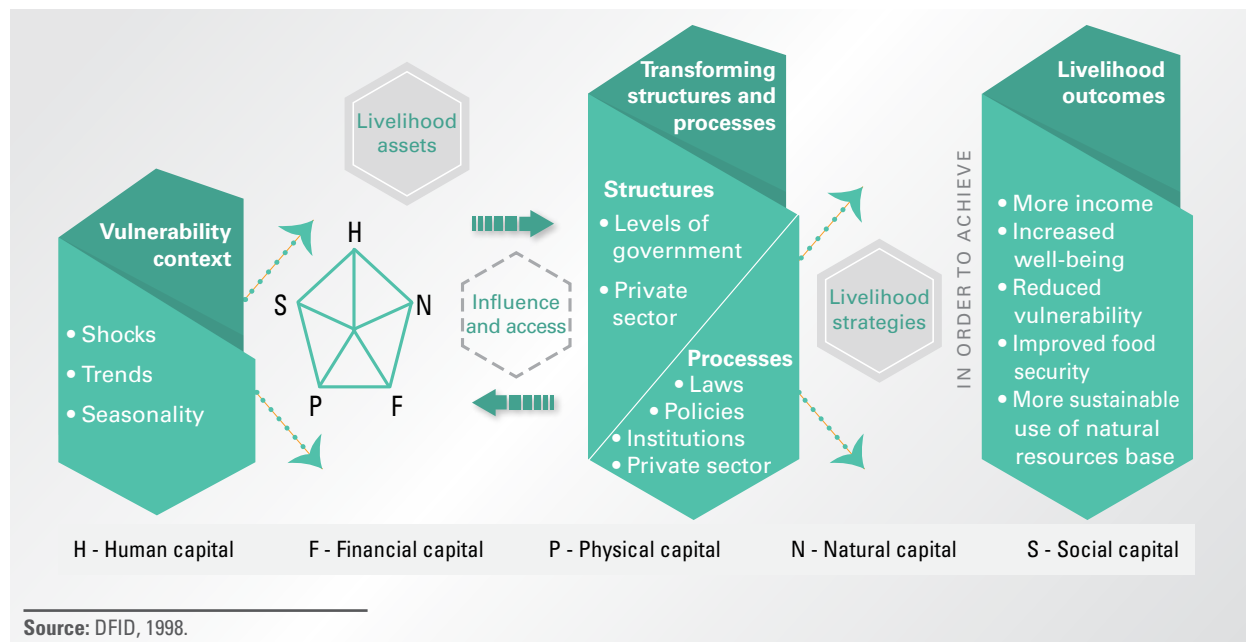
to 2019 in Lebanon. Its methodology consists of a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyse primary and secondary data. This approach combines quantitative (a survey) and qualitative (interviews and focus groups) data collection tools, which allows for the triangulation of results, and increases the reliability and consistency of the findings, with equal emphasis on both data forms. The findings were validated with the main stakeholders implementing agricultural livelihood interventions through a virtual consultation meeting held in November 2020.

B. Secondary review

The secondary review data were collected from available studies, assessments, evaluation reports, project documents and web portals. They depict the general context in which agricultural livelihood interventions are planned and implemented in Lebanon. The secondary review data were used to design the data collection tools of the primary review. The project components analysed in the secondary data review are

presented in an analytical framework to understand their integration in the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in terms of reducing vulnerability, contributing to improved livelihood assets, and transforming structures and processes to create an enabling environment (figure 1). This framework was used due to the protracted nature of the crisis, which necessitates a structural transition from humanitarian to tailored development solutions.

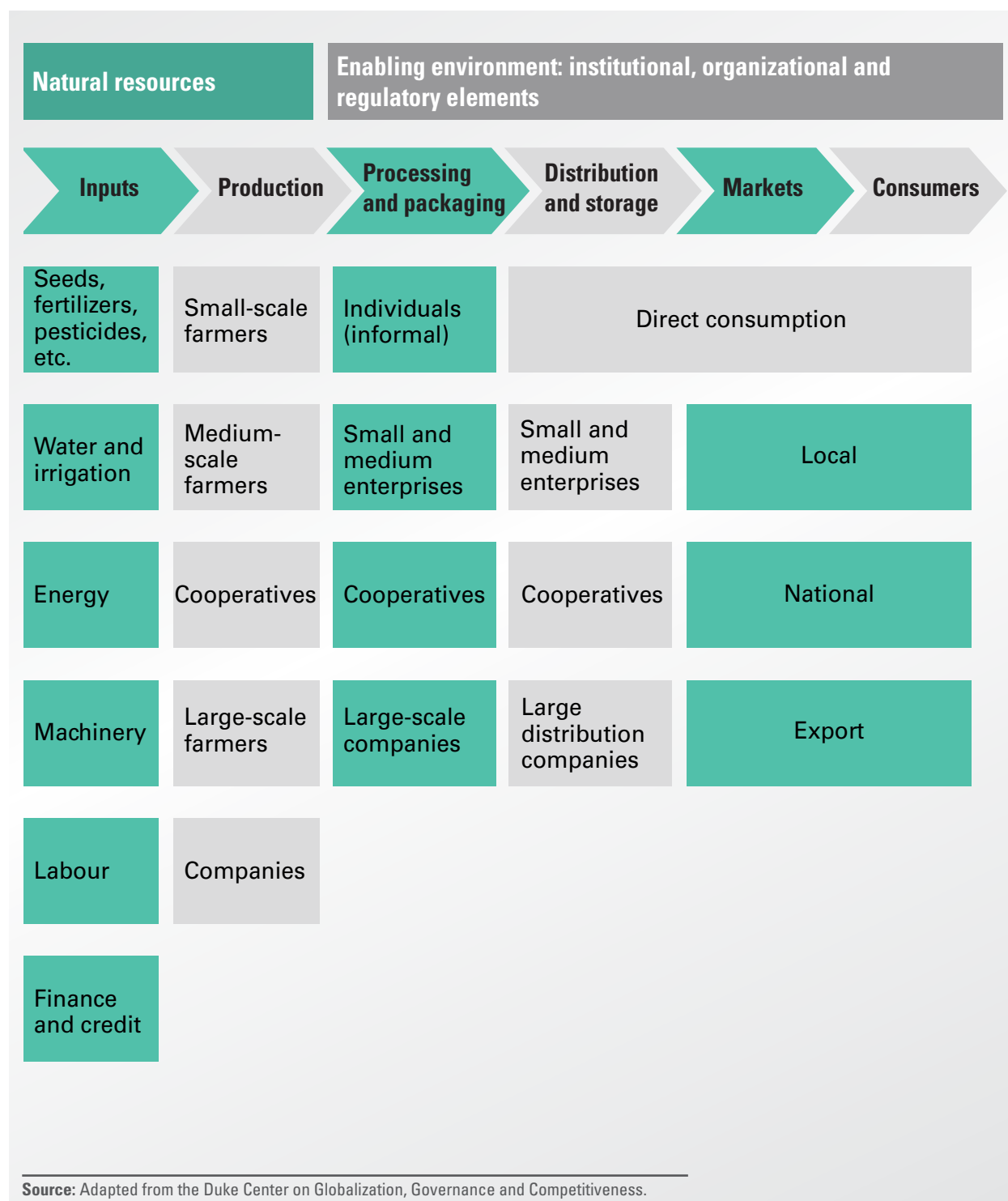
Figure 1. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework



Projects were also analysed from a market-driven value chain perspective to understand which value chains have been

included, which value chain nodes have been targeted, and how actors worked together across value chains (**figure 2**).

Figure 2. Agricultural value chain model



C. Primary review

The primary review data were collected at locations where large agricultural and livelihood projects took place between 2017 and 2019, with a focus on areas with a high concentration of refugees from Homs according to recent UNHCR data. The following quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect primary data: key informant interviews, focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers and Syrian refugees from Homs, and a survey among Homs refugees. The survey sample, the focus groups, the key informants and the observation sites were identified in coordination with ESCWA and other United Nations agencies (UNHCR and WFP). The design and organization of each method are described in the following sections, along with the tools used.

1. Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with 22 stakeholders distributed as follows:

- 1 public organization;
- 1 business association;
- 6 United Nations agencies;
- 7 Lebanese NGOs;
- 7 international NGOs.

All interviewed stakeholders were involved in agricultural livelihood interventions targeting Syrian refugees and their host communities.

A key informant interview guide, in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire, was used to discuss perceptions of the integration of livelihood

interventions targeting refugees in local economic development, the complementarity of interventions with priorities for context-based agricultural development, and how skilled refugee labourers are developing local agricultural value chains. All interviews were done through conference calls in May 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

2. Focus group discussions

Nine focus group discussions were held in June 2020 in regions with a high concentration of Syrian refugees from Homs based on UNHCR data. The discussions involved Syrian refugees from Homs and Lebanese farmers (**table 1**).

Two semi-structured questionnaires were used to guide the focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers and Homs refugees. Five focus group discussions with refugees sought to understand if agricultural livelihood projects improved access to food, income and long-term job opportunities, and enhanced their farming practices. Discussions also examined the relevance of targeted value chains to agriculture in Homs. In addition, they helped in understanding refugees' perceptions of barriers to their voluntary return to Syria, including livelihood and institutional challenges.

Four focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers aimed to understand perceptions of the integration of livelihood interventions targeting refugees in local economic development, the complementarity of interventions with priorities for agricultural development

Table 1. Number and distribution of focus group discussions

Region	Syrian refugees from Homs	Lebanese farmers
Akkar	3	2
Tal Abbas and Halba (agricultural plain)	2	1
Aidamoun (mountain area)	1	1
Baalbeck	2	2
Ras Baalbeck	1	1
Arsal	1	1
Total	5	4

in a given context, and how skilled refugee labourers are developing local agricultural value chains.

The location of focus group discussions and the selection of participants were coordinated with national NGOs in each area. Each discussion lasted one hour on average, with four to eight participants under the moderation of the lead consultant assisted by a note taker.

3. Survey of Homs refugees

The survey followed a proportional quota sampling method⁷ among Homs refugees who benefited from agricultural livelihood projects. The sample size was 110 respondents distributed in three main areas hosting the highest concentration of refugees from Homs. All respondents had participated in agricultural livelihood activities. They included 50 in Akkar, 50 in Baalbeck and 10 in Minieh-Dennieh. The survey sampling distribution was based on UNHCR data obtained through a data-sharing agreement with ESCWA and showing the distribution of Syrian refugees originating from Homs.

According to UNHCR, there were at least 215,959 Syrian refugees from Homs in June 2020, constituting around 24 per cent of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The majority are located in borderline areas of North Lebanon (Akkar at 31.2 per cent, Minieh-Dennieh at 12 per cent and Tripoli at 8.5 per cent) and the Beqaa valley (Baalbeck-Hermel at 16.6 per cent and Zahle at 11.3 per cent)⁸ where a large number had pre-conflict social and economic ties, and found the weather and environment similar to those of their cities and villages in Homs.

The following criteria were taken into consideration when selecting respondents:

- Respondents were formally registered with UNHCR;

- Only one respondent per family;
- Respondents participated in at least one project activity in the last three years;
- Respondents were at least 18 years old.

The survey was conducted in June 2020, with 30 surveys completed in the field and 90 through phone calls using lists provided by UNHCR and national NGOs in different regions. The survey questionnaire collected data on the socioeconomic profiles of respondents and the project activities in which they participated. The questionnaire aimed to shed light on pre-conflict technical and institutional agricultural challenges in Syria that might have been exacerbated during the conflict. It explored if these challenges, in particular the technical ones, were addressed in forced displacement agricultural livelihood programmes in Lebanon. Pre-conflict economic and social ties with Lebanon were identified. Livelihood changes for Syrian refugees were determined between the pre-conflict period and their current stay in Lebanon, specifically in terms of their involvement in new value chains, the acquisition of new skills and practices related to value chains in which they were already involved before displacement, and their exposure to new livelihood opportunities that might lead to income generation, improved food security and greater social stability.

The questionnaire captured refugees' perceptions of livelihood barriers to voluntarily returning to Homs across five agricultural livelihood assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human) as well as institutional challenges. For respondents not engaged in agriculture before displacement, the questionnaire tried to understand if they have taken steps to shift their livelihoods and how this might influence their voluntary return. The survey sought to track the impact of the Lebanese economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic on refugees' livelihoods, food security, etc.

⁷ Proportional quota sampling is a purposive sampling method. Known also as non-probability sampling, purposive methods are considered ascending methods, working up from individual cases to draw conclusions and generate idiographic knowledge. Most research studies with forced migrants employ some form of non-probability sampling (C. M. Sulaiman-Hill and S. Thompson (2011). "Sampling challenges in a study examining refugee resettlement." *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 11(2).

⁸ UNHCR data from June 2020.

D. Data analysis and results

Data analysis techniques for the survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions included:

- Conceptualizing, coding and categorizing information;
- Content analysis of collected data to identify and highlight notable results;
- Comparative analysis to examine relationships and results across different projects;
- Trend analysis to examine different project indicators and identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of activity results towards programme objectives;

- Authenticating conclusions by triangulating data from different sources;
- Validation of findings with the main stakeholders through a virtual consultation meeting in November 2020.

Based on the analysis of primary and secondary review data, the study proposes local and national livelihood initiatives that help prepare the ground for sustainable local economic development benefitting both host community and refugee populations over the long term.

E. Confidentiality and protection measures

Primary data collected for this study were subject to strict privacy and confidentiality requirements. Data presentation was designed to avoid anything that might jeopardize safety or lead to a violation of the human rights of individuals and their family members. Data collected from individuals will not be published or released in any form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed or inferred.

Data confidentiality was preserved by ensuring that the risk of direct or indirect identification of individuals or disclosure was managed by agreed rules such as de-identification (modifying data by removing any identifiers) or anonymization (removing or altering information or collapsing detail to ensure that no person or organization is likely to be identified in the data, outside a few organizations that requested an indication of their contributions). Laws supporting data collection and the release of information on refugees were respected. To ensure data privacy and confidentiality, the following principles and guidelines were adopted:

- Principle 6 of the United Nations' Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which states that "individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes";⁹
- Clauses 4.5 and 4.6 of the International Statistical Institute's Declaration on Professional Ethics, which require statisticians to keep identities and records confidential, whether or not confidentiality has been explicitly pledged, and to take appropriate measures to prevent the disclosure or inference of identities;¹⁰
- Principle 5 of The European Statistics Code of Practice adopted by the Statistical 163 Programme Committee on 24 February 2005, which states that "the privacy of data providers, and the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes, must be absolutely guaranteed".¹¹

Survey interviews with women respondents were conducted by a professional woman to respect cultural sensitivities.

9 United Nations (2014). Fundamental principles of official statistics. Economic and Social Council resolution resolution 2013/21. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-Rev2013-E.pdf>.

10 United Nations Statistics Division (1985). Declaration on Professional Ethics. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/docViewer.aspx?docID=93#start>.

11 Eurostat (2017). European Statistics Code of Practice: For the National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat. Adopted by the European Statistical System Committee. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/8971242/KS-02-18-142-EN-N.pdf/e7f85f07-91db-4312-8118-f729c75878c7?t=1528447068000>.

F. Challenges and limitations

This study faced several challenges and limitations, including lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This moved the key informant interviews from live to virtual, and the majority of survey questionnaires were filled over phone calls. Once the lockdown was lifted, focus group discussions and some surveys were conducted in June 2020 in Tripoli, Akkar, Arsal, Ras Baalbeck and Qaa. The research team was not able to increase the number of groups essential to triangulate the data.

Convincing Lebanese farmers and Syrian refugees to meet in person to answer the research questions was very difficult and is considered a limiting factor in the study. Another limitation was finding the contact information of Syrian refugees from Homs who have participated in agricultural livelihood programmes. Coordinators on the ground shared contacts of people they knew coming from Syria, but constraints in finding people from Homs in particular

who have participated in agricultural livelihood projects led to some delays in data collection.

In general, the people interviewed were very cooperative and willing to share information, but bias always pertains since some might be reaffirming positive outcomes of projects in order to participate in future initiatives or gain financial incentives. To address this challenge, the interviewer assured the interviewees that the data collected were only for research purposes for ESCWA and would not be relayed in any way to the implementing organizations.

During the consultation meeting to validate the study in November 2020, participants pointed to the absence of donor perspectives as a limitation. The research team, however, considered that the nature of programming by the main United Nations organizations and international NGOs reflects donor strategies for livelihood support under protracted forced displacement.



02

Analysis of Agricultural Livelihood Programming



A. Description and analysis of the main programmes and interventions

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan includes agricultural initiatives under two sectors: food security and livelihoods.

For food security, including agriculture, there are two overarching objectives: reducing food insecurity and improving the resilience of the agriculture sector to the impact of the Syrian crisis. Related projects and activities are coordinated through the Food Security Sector Working Group, led by the Ministry of Agriculture, with WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

In the livelihoods sector, the aim is to move from alleviating the socioeconomic shocks of the Syrian

crisis on the most vulnerable groups, especially youth and women, towards more long-term recovery and stabilization. This objective hinges on improving access to income and employment, while ensuring decent work conditions. Projects and activities are coordinated through the Livelihoods Sector Working Group led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Trade.

According to end-of-year dashboards, the food security and agriculture sector received \$189 million¹² from 2017 to 2019, while the livelihoods sector received \$223 million. The main results achieved by both sectors are summarized in **table 2**.

Table 2. Summary of food security and livelihood results, 2017-2019

Food security sector	2017	2018	2019	Total
Received budget (in millions of dollars)	52	63	74	189
Number of partners	35	42	34	111
Number of farmers supported to promote sustainable agriculture and livestock production, energy and water conservation technologies, post-harvest management, reduced food losses, and monitoring of plant and animal diseases	5,120	3,124	1,080	9,324
Number of people supported for employment in agriculture	3,797	N/A	N/A	3,797
Number of individuals supported for seasonal agricultural labour/casual labour	7,526	11,072	11,153	29,751
Number of youth supported with employability skills training in agricultural fields	N/A	2,269	1,960	4,229
Number of individuals supported with nutritional practices (trained plus gardens)	5,783	5,573	9,551	20,907
Number of households with increased agricultural livelihood opportunities	N/A	3,034	2,932	5,966
Number of beneficiaries supported in improved food safety and quality	N/A	5,573	9,451	15,024
Livelihoods sector	2017	2018	2019	Total
Received budget (in millions of dollars)	64	66	93	223
Number of partners	40	56	60	156
Number of entrepreneurs who benefitted from business management training	4,040	2,114	1,878	8,032
Number of micro-, small and medium enterprises/cooperatives supported through cash and in-kind grants	1,688	587	631	2,906
Number of targeted vulnerable persons enrolled in public works projects	6,529	10,819	17,433	34,781
Number of individuals benefitting from market-based skills training	36,410	24,093	17,370	77,873
Number of people benefitting from internships, on-the-job training or apprenticeship programmes	5,856	2,913	4,817	13,586
Number of value chains valorized and/or being upgraded	9	0	36	45
Total number of jobs created/maintained	2,305	2,365	4,283	8,953
Total received budget for food security and agricultural livelihoods (in millions of US dollars)	116	129	167	412

Source: Lebanon Crisis Response Plan working groups, 2019.

¹² Excluding e-cards and food vouchers.

Between 2017 and 2019, 78 national and international organizations were involved in food security and agricultural livelihood projects targeting Syrian refugees and their host communities. These stakeholders were as follows:

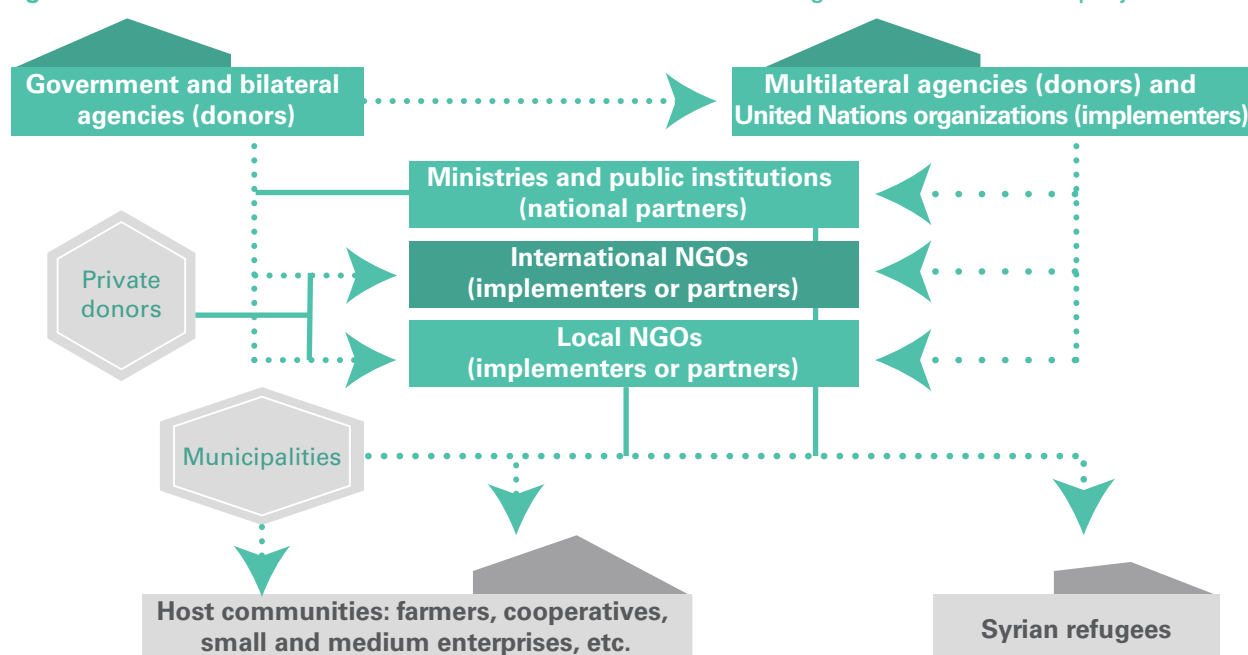
- More than 12 donors:
 - Bilateral: Governments of Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland and the United States of America;
 - Multilateral: European Union, World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development;
 - Several private organizations and foundations.
- 67 implementing agencies and partners distributed as follows:
 - 6 United Nations agencies: UNDP, WFP, FAO, International Labour Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Children's Fund;
 - 28 international NGOs;
 - 25 national NGOs;
 - 4 ministries: Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour;
 - 1 national agricultural development agency: Green Plan;

- 1 Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Zahle and the Beqaa;
- 1 national research centre: the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute;
- 1 international research centre: the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas.

Figure 3 shows the international aid flows and relationships among donors, implementing organizations, partners and beneficiaries. Funding was mainly received through governmental and bilateral agencies or multilateral agencies, which establish partnerships with national ministries and public institutions. United Nations organizations implement projects in partnership with ministries, international NGOs working on the national or regional level, and national NGOs working on the regional and local levels. International and national NGOs are also direct implementers. Some private donors and foundations provide them with direct funding. At the beneficiary level, the majority of projects targeted both host communities (farmers, cooperatives, etc.) and Syrian refugees. Some projects targeted municipalities.

The majority of projects, around 80 per cent, were implemented by international organizations in

Figure 3. International aid flows and stakeholders involved in agricultural livelihood projects



Source: Authors.

partnership with one of many local partners. Twenty per cent were implemented directly by national NGOs. On average, project duration was two years, with a total budget per project ranging between \$160,000 and \$15 million, depending on the objectives, length and geographical coverage. The main types of livelihood support for both Syrian refugees and Lebanese farmers entailed food-for-training, food-for-assets, cash-for-work/training, and the distribution of small equipment and tools. Training, cooperative management, marketing and technical support were geared towards production and post-harvest assistance for Lebanese farmers. The types of support provided were distributed as follows:

- 67 per cent entailed food-for-training or livelihood training activities, where the training content covered multiple agricultural practices such as organic agriculture, plowing and irrigation as well as food production systems, such as making *mounneh* or soap. Most trainings were theoretical, with participants attending three to six hours a day. Only a few provided practical sessions in fields and/or factories and restaurants (mainly linked to food production);
- 26 per cent involved food-for-assets or asset creation activities, including construction and rehabilitation of irrigation canals, storm water drainage canals and agricultural roads as well as forest thinning and clearing, reforestation, and the building and clearing of hiking trails;
- 26 per cent targeted cooperative management and production;
- 26 per cent comprised marketing and market linkages;
- 26 per cent entailed technical support to production systems, sometimes complemented by food-for-training and livelihood training activities;
- 15 per cent provided small grants.

Several agricultural value chains were targeted from different perspectives and at different levels (from inputs to production, processing and packaging, distribution and storage, and markets and consumers) with an intent to focus on those that are labour intensive and ensure employment opportunities for Syrian refugees. Examples included potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, beans, wheat, barley, greenhouse production, olives, almonds, figs and pomegranates, among others. Some innovative

value chains were introduced, such as herbs, berries and climate-smart fruits and vegetables. The wide variety of value chains targeted by different projects, however, showed almost no focus on the choice of crops and production systems, and many value chains were not labour intensive, such as wheat, barley, almonds and figs. Around 50 per cent of the projects targeted North Lebanon and/or the Beqaa region; the other 50 per cent worked on the national level.

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of interventions and their links with livelihood assets and policies, institutions and processes. Projects covered all Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets with different levels of support. Financial assets held first place, with 81 per cent of analysed projects targeting this aspect. Monetary compensation and incentives were provided to Syrian refugees under the cash-for-work, livelihood trainings, food-for-training and food-for-assets modalities, with the objective of complementing primary assistance and helping refugees meet food and other basic needs. This support was consumed and not used as an asset to generate income at the individual or household level, however, and thus played a minimal role in refugees' potential self-reliance under protracted displacement.

Financial assets were followed by human assets covered by different forms of training, knowledge and skills transfer (targeted by 67 per cent of projects) and physical assets through improvements mainly in agricultural infrastructure (targeted by 63 per cent of projects). Social assets targeted by 63 per cent of projects were indirectly influenced by the Lebanese Government since it requested that all projects apply a 50/50 Lebanese/Syrian ratio, and provide direct support to Lebanese farmers and cooperatives. Natural assets-related projects were minimal at 22 per cent. They included reforestation and land reclamation activities. In general, the majority of the projects targeted at least two livelihood assets, but discussions with different project implementers revealed that project design and choice of activities did not consider the integration of these assets and their complementarity with the agricultural development needs of Lebanese farmers.

Table 3. Agricultural livelihood project links to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

	Social	Human	Natural	Physical	Financial	Policies, institutions and processes
Percentage of projects targeting framework assets	63%	67%	22%	63%	81%	41%
Intervention characteristics	Support to cooperatives Promotion of social cohesion between refugees and host communities Linkages between humanitarian and development stakeholders	Training sessions Vocational training programmes Knowledge and skills transfer	Land reclamation Sustainable landscape management Reforestation	Irrigation canal building and rehabilitation Agricultural roads Asset distribution	Financial incentives for cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets participants Market access facilitation and support in produce sales Grants	Support for different ministries and public institutions Support for national NGOs Labour and working conditions improvement

B. Stakeholder perceptions: key informant interviews

The objective of the key informant interviews was to understand the perceptions of key national and international stakeholders on the integration of livelihood interventions targeting Syrian refugees in local economic development, and their complementarity with priorities for context-based agricultural development. The interviews sought observations on how skilled agricultural labour supplied by the refugees helps develop local value chains and enhance short- and long-term economic opportunities, and how targeted interventions equip refugees with skills that might facilitate their voluntary and safe return to Syria.

The interviews collected information from 22 key informants representing 21 organizations, including one public institution, seven national NGOs, seven international NGOs, five United Nations agencies and one business association.

Due to COVID-19 safety measures, all interviews were conducted via conference calls in May 2020, with the call duration ranging between 40 and 70 minutes. An interview guide was used to ask a set of open-ended questions covering the following topics: project complementarities with context-

based agricultural development, contribution to local economic development, value chain development and recommendations. After data transcription and coding, interview results were analysed using qualitative data techniques based on content and trend analysis to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) among different organizations working on agricultural livelihoods.

1. Level of involvement in agricultural and livelihood activities

All organizations participating in the interviews were members of at least one of two working groups: the Food Security Sector Working Group and the Livelihoods Sector Working Group. Working groups coordinate activities within each sector and among sectors, and conduct meetings at the national as well as field level through decentralized regional working groups.

According to seven key informants (30 per cent of respondents) representing national and international NGOs, the meetings of both working groups from

2017 to 2019 were mainly organized for detailed information-sharing about ongoing or implemented activities, and project advancement. These respondents recommended structuring the coordination process to ensure more effective planning among different national and international NGOs working in the same area and targeting sometimes the same group of beneficiaries. Better coordination is necessary to avoid overlap and increase coverage.

At the programme and project design level, national and international NGOs are rarely involved in the planning and setting of the objectives of projects they implement. They follow general objectives determined by donors and try to adapt activities accordingly, which sometimes hinders their ability to combine development and humanitarian objectives. To access international funds, most national NGOs who used to work in development before the Syrian crisis shifted their programmes to focus on relief for Syrian refugees. Partnering with international NGOs has facilitated this process.

The majority of organizations (16) assist smallholder farmers in host communities. They maintain that Syrian refugees will benefit indirectly from their interventions since agricultural labour is highly dependent on Syrians. Nine of the national and international NGOs focus on supporting women's cooperatives. Eleven are trying to reinforce local market linkages by connecting farmers to food processors and/or final consumers, while only six are working on developing export markets through improving the quality of products, facilitating international market access, and ensuring direct sale channels on the local market, such as contracts with supermarkets for fresh and processed produce.

Nine organizations work on decreasing social tensions and peacebuilding, including through training young people and women in areas with a high risk of conflict to initiate social and economic development initiatives that encompass agricultural livelihood activities. As an example, two organizations integrated women Syrian refugees and members of Lebanese women's cooperatives in trainings on hygiene, improved processing techniques and governance of production structures. The approach decreased social tensions. While these gains were not evident at first, communities were able to work together in the end, with a win-win situation for both.

The Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme targets mainly municipalities. Its livelihood interventions are based on a three-pillar approach: short-term cash-for-work, medium-term training for employment for youth and women based on market and value chain assessments, and long-term support for local economic development through municipalities and public institutions.

One international organization aims to improve the working conditions of agricultural labour. Its innovative intervention entails supporting small and medium enterprises through a two-prong market development approach:

- a. PUSH interventions that help small and medium enterprises develop capacities and access finance;
- b. PULL interventions that look at the market and specific value chains by connecting the different stakeholders to affordable inputs, facilitating links and raising the level of competitiveness in the concerned sector.

FAO planned to coordinate a skills gap analysis to understand how interventions in Lebanon can help Syrian refugees once the situation allows for their voluntarily return, but this was postponed because of several constraints, including safety and security issues in Syria.

The majority of analysed projects implement agricultural-related cash-for-work, livelihood training, food-for-training and food-for-assets activities. These modalities cover the financial and human capital aspects of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework through monetary incentives to participate in training sessions or asset rehabilitation, as well as through knowledge and skills transfers. Both national and international organizations included such activities. This matches the findings of the secondary review.

While most international and national NGOs implement short-term interventions driven mainly by donors' requirements, and focus on labour-intensive projects with a limited long-term vision, four out of the seven national NGOs have their own clear vision, mostly related to territorial and community-based development plans. These groups have comprehensive agricultural development strategies

based on the needs and challenges of the farmers in the areas where they operate. They provide services that are not necessarily linked to specific projects but cut across several value chains. By integrating projects in their general strategies, they reinforce their services and scale up activities, and ensure continuity beyond project time frames.

National NGOs often have deep roots in local communities and enjoy high levels of credibility based on longer term commitment. International NGOs are not always as concerned with what occurs at the local level given their short-term interventions and limited funding. This difference influences the sustainability of interventions, and the continuity of services and activities. The provision of inputs (seedlings and compost) to farmers at fair prices is an example of services still provided by national NGOs after the closure of projects that initiated or supported them. National NGOs should be more empowered and involved in project design and implementation to ensure sustainability and maximum benefits to local communities.

In terms of value chain support, most national and international NGOs support at least three value chains, depending on their area of intervention, while the majority of United Nations organizations do not focus on specific value chains and work on sector development. Some of the latter have recently started to target specific value chains that offer strong competitive advantages and are considered climate smart in Lebanon.

Different stakeholders and key informant interviews revealed that an organization's level of involvement depends on its profile, interests and objectives. Regardless of the type of activities, or targeted beneficiaries and value chains, international organizations tend to work on short-term emergency support, whereas national organizations aim for medium- and long-term development.

In terms of the Food Security Sector Working Group and Livelihoods Sector Working Group, both might implement similar agricultural livelihood initiatives for the same refugees over different time frames, suggesting a need for more coherency and coordination.

2. Project complementarities with context-based agricultural development

Despite the alignment of agricultural livelihood projects with Lebanon Crisis Response Plan objectives and the national agricultural strategy, most key informants pointed to weak complementarities and synergies between projects targeting host communities and Syrian refugees, and the general context for agricultural development. They suggested reconsidering these issues in future planning. Informants pointed to the following reasons for the lack of complementarity.

Lack of knowledge of the local context: Projects are mainly designed by development consultants (sometimes international) and organizations without deep knowledge of Lebanese agriculture, or social or market dynamics. The real needs and priorities of Lebanese farmers and producers are thus not always properly targeted, especially when projects have a short-term humanitarian approach and limited budgets. The cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets modalities are sometimes used as a standard approach in humanitarian and livelihood support, regardless of the specific needs and profiles of Syrian refugees and/or host communities.

Prevalence of short-term interventions: The emergency and relief aspects of short-term projects (between 6 and 18 months in duration) coupled with the need to report on high numbers of beneficiaries can hinder the quality of assistance, yielding limited impacts mainly covering food gaps. This is a weakness because the crisis in Lebanon is protracted. Livelihood solutions should aim to solve core challenges in agriculture to make a more sustainable difference.

Strategic gap between national and international NGOs: Donors and implementing organizations working in the same sector have the same general objectives, but different profiles, mandates and agendas. There are gaps between national and grass-roots NGOs with long-term development objectives, and international NGOs that implement mainly short-term emergency and humanitarian projects at the national level even in a protracted situation. Projects generally cannot tackle the core challenges of the agriculture sector, except for projects where

international organizations have partnered with strong national NGOs with a clear vision for the sector and the regions where they work. International organizations, however, cannot always find credible and professional local partners to whom they can hand over project assets and activities. This hinders the sustainability and scope of their interventions.

Obsolete agricultural infrastructure and weak extension services: The lack of coordinated and leveraged investment in agricultural infrastructure combines with weak and underfunded public extension services that do not respond to the core problems of farmers. There are also growing challenges from rising costs of agricultural inputs, water scarcity and other climate change impacts, and pest infestations.

Unstructured value chain support: Interventions related to value chains and market systems are scattered and poorly linked. They often assign high importance to technical aspects at the production level and neglect the post-production and market phases, which suffer the most from an inadequate enabling environment.

Two stakeholders who play a major role at the strategic level stated that weak linkages between interventions implemented under the Food Security Sector Working Group and the Livelihoods Sector Working Group, and the predominantly informative nature of the meetings they hold, limit their potential to contribute to national agricultural development efforts and to be integrated with other agricultural interventions. This is especially the case when the Food Security Sector Working Group is not properly informed about livelihoods projects involving agricultural activities.

In summary, weak complementarities and synergies between agricultural livelihood projects targeting Syrian refugees and host communities, and the general agricultural development context in Lebanon need to be reconsidered. The reasons for this disconnect comprise lack of knowledge of the local context, the prevalence of short-term interventions, a strategic gap between national and international organizations, obsolete agricultural infrastructure and weak extension services, and unstructured value chain support.

3. Project contributions to an enabling environment for the agriculture sector

Among all international organizations, only one regularly includes institutional and enabling environment dimensions in its projects by working on all levels of value chains. This organization considers it challenging to achieve impactful results in Lebanon due to:

- Structural institutional barriers;
- An obsolete legislative framework;
- Weak governance of public institutions;
- An unstable political and economic situation;
- Complex and changing sociopolitical dynamics;
- The absence of cross-sectoral governmental strategies and actions that support the agriculture sector.

Among interviewees from national and international NGOs, the majority described a gap at the project design level in terms of improving the enabling environment. This is due to several limitations, starting from intended objectives focusing mainly on addressing urgent basic needs for refugees and host communities, and ending with low budgets mainly for humanitarian interventions. Two interviewees from international organizations mentioned that livelihood activities in crises do not necessarily prioritize sectoral policy reforms, but focus on direct support to the most vulnerable people, stabilization and/or short-term job creation.

This approach is mainly applicable to short-term crises or emergency situations, however, the protracted Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, which is about to step into its tenth year, entails complex structural problems for the agriculture sector and severe economic challenges. A different approach needs to factor in long-term development and change processes to yield sustainable results. Two key informants said that linking food-for-assets or assets-creation interventions and land reclamation projects to the national agricultural strategy could bolster the enabling environment for agriculture as well as productivity and food security.

4. Headline outcomes and achievements of agricultural livelihood activities

Table 4 presents headline outcomes in agricultural livelihood activities mentioned by key informants.

The outcomes are presented according to the stakeholders who mentioned them, and classified based on Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets, the institutional context and the value chain model.

Among the five livelihood assets, social capital holds the most important place in terms of achieved outcomes, followed by human and natural capital, which have a moderate importance. Physical and financial capital are the least covered. Only three headline outcomes tackle the institutional level. These are related to the reinforcement of the agriculture sector in a comprehensive way through better regional landscape management strategies in the Shouf area, the creation of economic development clusters connecting different municipalities, and the increased capacity of national NGOs to respond to the Syrian crisis.

As for value chains, the majority of headline outcomes fall under improvement in production techniques. A few are related to input supplies and access to markets. Post-harvest/processing is the least important. This explains the low sustainability of interventions, since post-harvest and marketing support for small farmers are key factors for the success of a value chain. Many farmers benefiting from agricultural livelihood projects either find themselves with the potential for improved products but no market output, or with a new market that either cannot reach the products (logistics issues) and/or with not enough products to export/sell.

Social, natural and human assets are most emphasized in various interventions. There is also a clear emphasis on interventions at the production phase of the value chain. Gaps among Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets are mainly related to the cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets modalities of the majority of interventions. The lack of integration between assets and value chain phases renders outcomes short-lived after projects end.

5. Positive impacts on local economic development

Most key informants stated that agricultural livelihood projects targeting host communities and Syrian refugees contribute to a certain extent to local economic development. The economic returns are related to:

- Creation of seasonal, part-time and sometimes permanent jobs for both Lebanese and Syrians;

- Increased volume of sales for some farmers and cooperatives (e.g., women's cooperatives are able to create proper branding and improve their market linkages);
- Increased value of sales due to the improved quality of final products;
- Increased income for farmers who participated in land reclamation activities;
- Reduced production costs related to the improved supply of local seedlings and/or local compost, and the proximity of local suppliers;
- Induced economic impacts from new investments by farmers or small and medium enterprises in advancing their agricultural or food-processing techniques, based on what they learned from the projects.

Key informants were not able to provide quantifiable results and economic indicators related to the positive impacts, however. This might be related to the absence of economic impact assessments performed after the end of the projects, specifically, at the value chain level to showcase changes in job creation, sales volume, value and quality. This lack of information is also related to the emergency and short-term aspect of most projects, and to a trend among the majority of national and international NGOs to implement a wide variety of projects during short periods driven by donor agendas. They are compelled to report on high numbers of beneficiaries, rather than tackling the real needs and challenges of the agriculture sector in the long term. A few respondents described financial limitations in conducting economic impact assessments.

Agricultural livelihood projects, even when implemented in an emergency context, can have positive impacts on local economic development. These can occur through the creation of seasonal and to a lesser extent permanent job opportunities, and the increased volume of sales when solid market linkages are established through a market system approach thus increasing income for farmers. In addition, positive impacts can be achieved by reducing production costs through improving agricultural practices and upgrading agricultural infrastructure. These outcomes are difficult to quantify, however, without economic impact assessments at the project design and evaluation stages.

Table 4. Headline outcomes of agricultural livelihood projects noted by key informants

Stakeholders	Headline outcomes and achievements	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
United Nations and international NGOs	Involvement of women from both communities (Syrians and Lebanese) in agricultural training and practices			X	X				X	X	
	Introduction of new crop varieties in some projects					X		X	X		
	Increased cultivated area and higher crop productivity through land reclamation, which also led to better and more sustainable soil and land management practices					X			X		
	Physical rehabilitation of nine agricultural technical schools		X				X				
	Increased awareness among farmers of how they can be resilient to different types of crises and shocks				X						
	The initiation of the regional cluster approach, which will benefit the whole local economy, especially when integration and synergy are ensured among economic sectors			X			X				
	The water ponds and hill lakes executed under a food-for-asset modality improved access to water, which resulted in increased productivity and the introduction of high value added crops and new varieties		X			X			X		

Stakeholders	Headline outcomes and achievements	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
National NGOs	Many women's cooperatives all over Lebanon were able to improve their branding and commercial operations, which facilitated their market access and increased sales	X		X							X
	Creation of seasonal and fixed job opportunities for Syrians and Lebanese in women's cooperatives that produce traditional preserved food or <i>mounneh</i>	X		X							
	Creation of linkages between farmers and women's cooperatives to facilitate sales of crops used in processing			X						X	X
	Increased capacity of national NGOs to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on local communities				X		X				
	Local sourcing of agricultural and food produce, and its distribution to vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian families			X							
	Adoption of new agricultural techniques, especially soil management and use of substrates				X	X			X		
	Establishment of a self-sustaining nursery providing seedlings and other services to farmers in North Beqaa		X			X	X	X			
	Reinforcement of the existing sustainable landscape management strategy in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve villages, and integration of refugee-related projects in the territorial development strategy					X	X				
	Creation of a community farm that became a reference or "one-stop shop" for farmers and consumers in the Baalbeck area			X					X		
	Increased production of local compost and its sales at a fair cost to farmers					X		X			

Stakeholders	Headline outcomes and achievements	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
National and international NGOs	Improved agricultural practices and increased awareness of environmental issues in farming				X				X		
	A comprehensive agricultural service centre in North Beqaa that introduced smart agriculture and adaptation to climate change, established demo plots and created a self-sustaining seedling nursery		X		X		X	X	X		
	Creation of fair linkages among farmers, traders and consumers through the fair trade model introduced by a national NGO			X							X
	Benefits from the emergency and relief support for refugees to scale up the productivity of value chains that require intensive labour, such as greenhouses, potatoes and open field vegetables					X			X		
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural	Institutional	Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
	Total	2	3	8	6	7	6	4	9	2	3

6. Contributions to upgrading existing value chains and/or introducing innovative value chains

National and international organizations agree that Syrian labour (whether by refugees or otherwise) plays an essential role in the development and scaling up of agricultural value chains in Lebanon. Syrian labourers enhance productivity in labour-intensive value chains such as open field crops and greenhouse vegetable production, which historically in Lebanon have depended on Syrian labour. Refugees show increasing interest in working in forestry-related jobs due to greater funding in this sector and a higher demand for daily workers. Nature reserves and some municipalities are interested in improving forest management and increasing forest-related economic activities, such as the production of compost from wood waste generated by forest cleaning and pruning.

Two key informants representing two international NGOs suggested that free labour for farmers can

be ensured through cash-for-work modalities. This can help farmers reduce their production costs and increase their production volumes in light of the severe economic crisis in Lebanon. Since in a normal situation this can distort the agricultural labour market, it is worth looking into how to pursue free labour without creating dependency on it. One key informant representing a national NGO said that a significant number of young Syrian refugees (16 to 25 years old) are not interested in working in sectors formally allowed by Lebanese legislation (agriculture, construction and the environment). They tend to look more for opportunities in the services sector (e.g., food and beverages, restaurants, nursing, trade, etc.) in which they are not legally allowed to work.

In terms of the value chain approach, depending on the strategies and objectives of donors and implementing partners, some projects are very generic, such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and land reclamation projects that do not focus on any specific value chain. Other projects focus on

one or many value chains. Key informants from an international organization mentioned that prior to 2019, the selection of value chains was left to project partners, and no specific justification was required.

One of the main international organizations working on agricultural livelihood projects, however, has now instituted a preliminary value chain assessment and field validation study that applicants must complete to obtain project grants. This approach was initiated late in 2019 and adopted in 2020.

Many informants from national and international NGOs pointed out that regardless of the selected value chains, there is a need to increase cultivated area and production volume based on a market system approach. Due to the economic recession and COVID-19 crisis, a reassessment of agricultural value chains is needed, especially in terms of their contributions to food security, resilience to shocks and ability to help in substituting for imports. The most important value chains covered by agricultural livelihood interventions in the last three years are presented in **table 5**.

While projects covered many value chains, their contributions were limited to either the production side by improving agricultural infrastructure (mainly irrigation) and practices, or market access (locally or internationally) for a few selected value chains (such as grapes, potatoes and processed food).

Contributions to upgrading existing value chains and/or introducing innovative ones have been constrained, since none of the projects tackled a whole value chain in an integrated way. This gap can be explained by limited governmental support and guidance, short project periods and an emergency focus, the lack of involvement of project participants and/or local implementers in project design, missing or out-of-date value chain assessments, limited reliance on the market system approach, and lack of coordination and consolidation among different value chain stakeholders, which results in missing information on how to improve the value chain, among other issues.

7. Critical challenges and lessons learned from agricultural livelihood activities

Key informants representing international NGOs and United Nations organizations identified the following critical challenges and lessons from agricultural livelihood activities targeting host communities and Syrian refugees.

a. Challenges

- Unfavourable legal framework imposed on Syrian refugees and non-flexible work permits; refugees can work only in construction, agriculture and environment-related jobs;
- National bureaucratic procedures and lack of decision-making by ministries;

Table 5. Value chains covered by agricultural livelihood projects from 2017 to 2019

Horticulture	Animal	Food processing	Non-food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-field vegetables: potatoes and leafy greens • Greenhouse vegetables • Fruit trees: cherries, apricots, apples, avocados • Aromatic plants and herbs • Table grapes • Cut roses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beekeeping • Egg-laying chickens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional preserves or <i>mounneh</i> • Dairy products • Olive oil • Freekeh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry

- Severe economic crisis facing Lebanon;
- Lebanese farmers providing unfair wages to Syrian workers, in particular women, due to the informal aspect of the sector;
- Shortages of resources for some municipalities and unions of municipalities so they cannot pursue work on different projects;
- No commitment from farmers to abide by new techniques and practices (especially environmentally friendly ones);
- High competition among NGOs for beneficiaries because of the concentration of Syrian refugees in “hot spots” where all NGOs seek to work to justify projects and funding;
- Absence of in-depth assessments of opportunities in value chain projects;
- Deteriorating safety and decent work conditions at workplaces for both Lebanese and Syrians;
- Limited funding for livelihood assistance, which is among the least funded of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan sectors;
- Ensuring linkages between vocational training students and the job market;
- Finding the balance between partners that are technically knowledgeable on the ground and the humanitarian side of projects;
- Limited number of reliable and professional national organizations that can match the managerial and implementation requirements of international organizations and donors.

b. Lessons learned

- Partnerships between international and national organizations can improve project efficiency. National organizations are well connected on a local level and can deliver fast, impactful results with minimal resources. International organizations can bring expertise especially in scaling up interventions and meeting donor requirements;
- In-depth needs assessments and value chain studies should be conducted before or during project design;
- More effective networking among international organizations would help avoid overlaps, integrate different interventions in a harmonized framework (such as the Sustainable Livelihood Framework) and optimize results.

According to key informants representing national NGOs, the challenges and lessons learned are as follows.

c. Challenges

- Tension and feeling of competition between Lebanese and Syrian refugees;
- Scaling up alternative farming (e.g., permaculture, hydroponic, etc.) is not yet feasible;
- Presence of “ghost” cooperatives with the sole objective of receiving aid without being as productive as they should be;
- Limited number of national NGOs with local and regional agricultural development strategies, and that can integrate externally funded projects with short-term aspects in a comprehensive long-term plan focusing on a geographical area or specific value chain;
- Difficulty in dealing with bureaucratic work related to monetary compensation under humanitarian projects; for instance, some participants had no previous experience with using credit cards.

d. Lessons learned

- Fruit tree farmers are more sensitive to the crisis, and have less flexibility to adapt and cope with challenges;
- Fruit production does not match international quality requirements, which hinders export opportunities;
- The duration of cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets activities should be extended to allow better knowledge transfer, and guarantee more balance between theoretical and practical sessions;
- Some participants are illiterate or have little capacity to concentrate and follow classical training methods; they should be allowed enough time to assimilate new information, which should also be tailored to their needs.

The following challenges and lessons were mentioned by national and international organizations.

e. Challenges

- There are challenges in convincing municipalities of the merits of livelihood and agricultural projects, especially when Syrian refugees are involved;
- It is difficult to reach some beneficiary groups (some Syrian refugees are constantly on the move), and selection criteria are inconsistent (there is no baseline list for Lebanese farmers and producers that can be provided by any local or national governmental or non-governmental entity); A large number of beneficiaries attend livelihood training

and food-for-training activities to get paid to cover their basic needs and not out of interest. The selection criteria for beneficiaries for cash-for-work and food-for training projects take into consideration their vulnerability level without considering their background or interest in the training topic;

- Cooperation is weak among ministries, NGOs, donors, and the Food Security Sector Working Group and Livelihoods Sector Working Group;
- Farmers' challenges include smuggling of goods, limited respect for the agricultural calendar and difficulty accessing finance.

f. Lessons learned

- The short-term aspect of projects reduces their impacts on agriculture;
- Projects targeting large numbers of beneficiaries without consistent training do not lead to real economic impact;
- Cash-for-work projects do not take sustainability into consideration.

Based on the findings in this section, most agricultural livelihood projects were implemented as food-for-training, food-for assets or cash-for-work activities focusing on short-term interventions. The projects were not able to provide tangible complementarities to agricultural development based on the broader context. Short project duration was mainly due to donors/implementing organizations aiming to reach many beneficiaries and cover a wider region, signifying a greater impact. This was justified to cover basic needs (mainly food) that are still the ultimate objectives of livelihood interventions in a protracted crisis. These interventions made little to no contribution to an enabling environment for agriculture since very few addressed value chain bottlenecks for various stakeholders.

Some headline outcomes and achievements characterized by a large number of beneficiaries fostered social cohesion between Lebanese and Syrian communities. To some extent, this was already established intrinsically within the communities, since they are neighbours who used to visit each other before the conflict. Some even had family relations through intermarriages. Discrepancies between communities have been mainly seen in big cities where no prior relationships existed, and host

communities have been afraid that Syrian refugees will replace them in the workforce.

Different interventions had a positive impact on local economic development by creating short-term income-generating activities for Syrian refugees and their host communities, and providing both with technical support and assets to improve production. No economic impact assessments were conducted to quantify such impacts, however. The only way this study was able to identify such outcomes was through discussions with different implementers and project participants.

Since projects did not work on value chains as a whole, and only focused on short-term interventions providing technical assistance and support, they made little contribution to upgrading existing value chains and/or introducing innovative ones. Value chain assessments should be conducted prior to project creation to understand needs, stakeholders and challenges. Finally, many challenges stem from the lack of cooperation among different entities (Governments, national and international organizations, donors, etc.). These include the difficulty in reaching some Syrian refugees and/or farmers, since no baseline list is available for either. Each organization has its own list of beneficiaries in each region, and this is not shared with anyone. A lack of transparency among organizations is another obstacle, as are the short-term aspect of projects and the targeting of large numbers of beneficiaries leading to no tangible impact on the agriculture sector and a lack of sustainability. Many beneficiaries participate not out of interest but for monetary compensation.

8. Recommendations for new activities in agricultural livelihood project planning

Table 6 presents all recommendations mentioned by key informants and classified based on the Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets, the institutional context and the value chain model.

Among the five livelihood assets, social capital holds the most important place in terms of recommendations, followed by the financial and human dimensions with moderate importance. Physical capital is the least mentioned asset, and natural capital has no recommendations.

Table 6. Recommendations for future agricultural livelihood project planning

Stakeholders	Recommendations	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
United Nations organizations and international NGOs	Establish a registry of farmers to facilitate beneficiary selection						X				
	Integrate a dimension of social cohesion between Lebanese and Syrians in future agricultural projects			X							
	Integrate social and vulnerability aspects in Ministry of Agriculture strategies						X				
	Introduce new technologies to reduce the use of inputs		X					X			
	Substitute imports with local produce, and promote exports without compromising the availability of food in local markets	X									X
	Support efficient and productive cooperatives			X	X		X				
	Establish good communications between the Ministry of Agriculture and different stakeholders						X				
	Extend the time frame of projects to provide more qualified skills						X				
	Introduce contract farming between investors (the landowner, the farmers) and workers (the field expert and agricultural entrepreneur) who take a percentage of production	X		X							
	Increase the Green Plan budget and improve its management	X					X				
	Introduce policy and institutional changes to have a better impact on the agriculture sector						X				
	Invest in the private sector and small and medium enterprises with strong technical guidance to build more resilience in a context like Lebanon	X			X						

Stakeholders	Recommendations	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
	Balance vocational training and job creation in projects to ensure maximum benefit from the intervention – for example, some projects provide training on making <i>mounneh</i> , but do not make links to cooperatives where beneficiaries can apply what is learned	X			X				X	X	
	TVET projects should not be paid since beneficiaries are attending not out of interest but for the monetary incentive	X			X						
	Introduce artificial intelligence to improve some levels of the value chain such as processing and production		X					X	X	X	
	Penalize organizations not following Lebanese regulations						X				
National NGOs	Involve ministries in project design and implementation to ensure bigger impacts on the sector						X				
	Implement product diversification in agriculture								X		
	Start with small-scale producers and help them achieve self-sufficiency before moving to the market			X				X	X		
	Use local sourcing of food and agricultural produce when distributing food parcels to vulnerable Lebanese and Syrians			X							X
	Shift from microagricultural projects to macro projects to influence the enabling environment						X				
	Create more linkages between the agricultural and industrial sectors to substitute for imports			X							X
	Create solid linkages between farmers and Syrian labour, whether they are refugees or not			X							
	Explore the potential of crop insurance	X									

Stakeholders	Recommendations	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
United Nations organizations, international NGOs and national NGOs	Promote local seeds and seedlings, compost and bio-pesticide production to help farmers reduce the cost of inputs and respond to the growing demand for land cultivation, for self-sufficiency as well as for commercial production		X					X			
	Focus on partnering with national organization with clear strategies to ensure the viability and sustainability of projects after they end			X			X				
	Inject direct financial support to farmers	X									
	Use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for sustainable development momentum and land reclamation, especially through outreach to young people; this requires higher-level coordination to ensure impactful interventions						X				
	Improve quality control in general, and organic certification in particular, and make it affordable for farmers and consumers				X				X	X	X
	Work with Lebanese national NGOs to ensure better implementation and sustainability			X	X						
	Link humanitarian and development interventions to existing productive entities or to creating productive entities, and provide training to generate jobs and ensure sustainability			X	X						
	Target all phases of value chains, and focus on marketing and quality gaps							X	X	X	X
	Reduce donor limitations and give more flexibility to implementing organizations						X				
	Explore the legal aspects of establishing cooperatives in Syria and providing support to refugees before they return			X			X				
	Improve coordination between organizations to focus on policy changes and work on selected value chains						X				

Stakeholders	Recommendations	Livelihood assets					Institutional	Value chain nodes			
		Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural		Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
	Projects should work on training content and quality rather than focusing mainly on the number of trained people and beneficiaries				X		X				
	Support import substitution and domestic markets, which are as important as export promotion, and work on product varieties that support import substitution and national sovereignty								X	X	X
	Promote non-conventional and alternative agriculture, like conservation agriculture, along with value chains that are not heavily dependent on pesticides and fertilizers							X	X		
	Include the dimension of the voluntary return of Syrian refugees when planning new projects						X				
	Look for varieties suitable for export and food processing on the local market								X	X	X
	Shift from conventional agriculture to organic and permaculture, emphasizing good quality and branding, and sales in niche markets								X		X
	Total	Financial	Physical	Social	Human	Natural	Institutional	Input supply	Production techniques	Post-harvest and processing	Access to markets
		6	3	11	5	0	14	5	8	4	8

An important number of recommendations fall under the institutional context, with a focus on improving and upgrading the legal frameworks of the agriculture sector at the levels of farmers, cooperatives and the ministry of agriculture, and on reinforcing the coordination framework for all stakeholders in agricultural development projects. Regarding the value chain model, the most important recommendations are equally distributed between production techniques and access to markets, followed by input supplies and post-harvest/processing with moderate importance.

Overall, the recommendations are similar among United Nations organizations and international NGOs, and national NGOs. The institutional aspect had the highest number of recommendations, which shows the great need to improve the general context in which projects

are designed and implemented, especially in terms of national policies, legal frameworks, and partnership and cooperation mechanisms.

At the Sustainable Livelihood Framework level, social capital had the highest number of recommendations, even though it was the major outcome listed in **table 4**. This is an indirect objective, because implementers consider that supporting both communities in various ways will eventually foster social cohesion. Prioritizing human and financial assets keeps implementers within the same circle of requested short-term, rapid, quantifiable impacts, justifying humanitarian interventions covering access to basic needs, in particular, the food gap. The reluctance of key implementers to upgrade the modality of interventions under a protracted situation deserves more discussion to find midway solutions preventing a humanitarian crisis trap.

As for the value chain approach recommendations, there is a balance between the upstream level (input supply and production techniques) and the downstream level (post-harvest and marketing). This shows that most stakeholders are aware of the importance of integrating different phases of value chains in their future programmes. At this point in time, with Lebanon

facing political and economic unrest, there is a clear willingness to shift from humanitarian to development interventions with longer-term impacts, and that relies on working with local stakeholders on improving value chains and the agriculture sector as a whole. This way of thinking will not only have an impact on specific value chains but on the whole economy.

C. The perceptions of Lebanese farmers: focus group discussion results

The focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers sought to understand their perceptions around the complementarity of agricultural livelihood projects with local agricultural development needs, the contributions of projects to economic development, the contributions of Syrian refugee labour to value chain development and the critical challenges encountered in implemented projects. Sessions aimed to understand the headline achievements of projects and impacts in terms of increased productivity and the resilience of local food systems, and drew forward recommendations for future programming. The groups were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire and lasted on average 60 minutes. They were conducted in the areas where refugees from Homs are concentrated.

Table 7 presents a synthesis of information from four focus groups. Women were not represented in the Lebanese farmer groups, since farming is dominated by men. This constitutes a limitation to understanding gender dimensions.

After data transcription and coding, results of the discussions were analysed using qualitative data techniques based on content and trend analysis to identify patterns of convergence or divergence.

1. Project complementarities with context-based agricultural development

Agricultural livelihood projects implemented in the framework of the Syrian refugee crisis and targeting host communities have supported Lebanese farmers and food producers under different forms and mechanisms. Projects have worked with individual

farmers and food producers and/or cooperatives (mainly women-led cooperatives). Focusing mainly on human and physical livelihood assets, projects have provided mostly technical assistance (theoretical and field training on different agricultural practices, including pruning, grafting, harvesting, soil management and pest management) and equipment (mainly irrigation pipes, beehives and beekeeping kits, and pruning/grafting kits for individual farmers, as well as food-processing equipment for women's cooperatives). Some projects have specialized in one or several value chains, while others have worked on cross-cutting themes such as input supplies, irrigation, mechanization, quality control and access to markets.

All farmers in the discussions had received training on one or many of the following topics: greenhouse production techniques, vegetable and fruit tree production, seed extraction and preservation, climate smart farming, olive production, pesticide application and pest management. Most farmers said that the majority of projects did not respond to the complex needs of farmers and the multiple challenges of the agriculture sector. Technical assistance topics were selected by project implementers without taking into consideration:

- The profiles of farmers/beneficiaries: No assessments of participants were conducted prior to project implementation to know their interests, needs and capacity to implement practices and lessons shared during the project;
- The production scale and characteristics: Experienced farmers, new farmers, small farmers and medium-scale farmers were offered the same "standard" training session;

Table 7. Geographical distribution and numbers of participants in focus group discussions with Lebanese farmers

Focus group locations	Date	Number of participants		
		Male	Female	Total
Akkar Governorate				
Aidamoun Municipality	3 June 2020	5	0	5
Tal Abbas Cooperative/seedling nursery	3 June 2020	5	0	5
Baalbeck District				
Qaa Cooperative	5 June 2020	4	0	4
Arsal Agricultural Cooperative	5 June 2020	6	0	6
Total		20	0	20

- The local and territorial development needs of the target region: Some projects replicated the same training sessions across Lebanon without considering local needs and environment.

Some farmers stated that projects did not build on previous interventions and/or did not complement ongoing projects in the same area. Sometimes they overlapped and provided the same training topics and/or focused on the same value chains. Farmers did find asset distribution (irrigation pipes, pruning/grafting kits, spraying kits, etc.) and some topics in training sessions to be very useful in improving the quantity and quality of their products. These improvements were mainly seen at the pruning and pest management level for fruit trees, and packaging/grading for greenhouse vegetables. In addition, the production of high-quality organic compost has great potential and would help farmers in reducing production costs, especially under the current financial crisis. Such production needs to be done by a local or regional service provider or in a cooperative manner among farmers to be profitable and efficient. Further, an economic impact assessment is needed to calculate the monetary benefits of all of these measures, and improvements in quantity and quality.

Few projects offered tangible sustainable solutions or could continue providing different forms of support to the farmers. Those that do are usually implemented by grass-roots NGOs that do not leave the intervention area once the project ends.

They have clear development plans and strategies, and work on creating self-sustaining permanent centres that provide extension services and/or some agricultural inputs at fair prices, as in creating a specialized nursery for supplying seedlings. This long-term development approach does not always fit with the mandate and strategy of many international and national NGOs, however. This is because they usually address donors' priorities and designs, and implement short-term emergency projects targeting a high number of beneficiaries. In some areas, it is difficult to find a professional national partner that can manage a service centre once the project ends, so some international NGOs resort to limited development interventions to reduce risks of failure in exit strategies.

Amid the Lebanese financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, both Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees are facing a severe deterioration in purchasing power and increasing unemployment rates. This situation has pushed many citizens to return to agriculture, mostly in small-scale and home gardens to grow fresh vegetables and produce *mouneh*. For their part, Lebanese farmers face tremendous challenges due to the devaluation of the local currency and the drastic increase in the cost of agricultural inputs, including seedlings, fertilizers and pesticides, reaching around 200 per cent in July 2020. This has forced many farmers to decrease cultivated area (lower plant density on the same total cultivated area)

and/or cut down on labour (number of workers and/or working hours) to reduce the costs of production.

In summary, agricultural livelihood projects have supported Lebanese farmers and food producers in different forms. Most projects, especially those with a pure humanitarian aspect, have provided unstructured technical assistance, without proper targeting and profiling. By design, they do not aim to create long-term solutions in agriculture. With the current economic situation, the sector is at risk of falling apart, and many farmers have reduced their planting area or stopped planting all together due to their inability to pay for agricultural inputs. Many have already incurred significant debt. With multiple and complex crises facing the Lebanese agricultural sector, support should focus on engaging more professional grass-roots organizations to provide context-based solutions to value chain challenges through a collective asset management approach.

2. Project contributions to local economic development

The Lebanese farmers stated that agricultural livelihood projects have positive impacts in general, but need to improve to yield sustainable and tangible results. They measure project contributions to economic development through the reduced cost of production and the increased volume and value of sales. While technical assistance and training sessions are beneficial, these cannot lead to measurable economic impacts in the short and medium terms when they are provided alone. They need to be complemented by input supplies, measures to expand market access, and/or sales/production services to reduce production costs and generate increased income.

Three headline outcomes were mentioned. First, the nurseries managed by grass-roots organizations reduced input costs by 40 per cent, since they helped grow more robust seedlings and eliminate transportation costs. Second, the refrigerator and cooling facility in Qaa helped farmers store their produce and secure better market prices. Third, training provided on planting and seed selection was helpful and might reduce production costs in the coming years through the seasonal production of required seeds, which Lebanon

otherwise mainly imports. These headlines are specific to successful interventions and do not represent general outcomes from agricultural livelihood interventions targeting refugees and host communities.

The weaknesses of projects in terms of economic development arise from:

- a. The absence of community-scale interventions that benefit all community members, for example, through cooperatives providing machines that can benefit the whole agricultural community. Only direct beneficiaries and individuals receive technical assistance and assets, and might not use them properly;
- b. Most projects are influenced by the emergency/humanitarian aspect, and are designed to respond to the immediate and temporary needs of large numbers of Syrian refugees and host community members, without taking into consideration the medium- and long-term development needs of the agriculture sector. Without economic impact assessments, project contributions to sectoral improvements cannot be measured in a protracted refugee crisis.

To address these weaknesses, interventions should consider, in addition to cross-cutting sectoral needs, the requirements and aspirations of farmers across value chains. This should take place before project design. The needs of small farmers and end consumers should be at the core of future interventions since they are the most affected by economic and political changes. The involvement of grass-roots organizations and reliable cooperatives in project implementation instils a sense of ownership, which can improve the sustainability of project achievements beyond the funding lifetime. Additional capacity-building for such organizations on assets management under a well-structured sustainability plan would develop social and institutional capital contributing to local economic development over the medium and long term.

3. Syrian refugee skilled labour contributions to the development of local value chains

Syrian skilled labour is indispensable to Lebanese agriculture, contributing to plowing, planting, weeding, harvesting and packaging. That was the unanimous conclusion of focus group participants. High production

costs, however, have negatively affected both Lebanese farmers (production) and the Syrian labour force (employment opportunities and income). In general, refugees from the city of Homs lack knowledge of agricultural practices, whereas those from rural districts in the governorate are familiar with many agricultural practices and value chains. They are open to learning more, and it is easy to work with them in the field. Some Lebanese farmers pointed out that after the Syrian crisis, some Syrian agricultural labourers who used to live and work in Lebanon registered as refugees to obtain legal protection from mandated international organizations. They are now benefiting from international aid in addition to income from work in agriculture. These workers used to return to Syria in the off-season, but after the crisis, they began residing permanently in Lebanon. Some brought their families. The financial aid they receive helps them compensate for the high cost of living in Lebanon compared to Syria.

According to focus group participants, it is difficult to know if training sessions are improving the skills of Syrian refugees for the following reasons:

- a. The majority of trained refugees are not recruited to work in agriculture;
- b. Those who find seasonal jobs do not necessarily work in the same value chains and/or practice what they learned;
- c. Organizations that provide training do not conduct monitoring and evaluation to understand how trained refugees are applying what they learned, if a job opportunity was found.

In terms of the contribution of these labourers in developing local value chains, farmers stressed that projects should focus on supporting agricultural systems to improve production and ensure better incomes, which will consequently allow Lebanese farmers to hire more Syrian workers (whether they are refugees or not) or at least sustain their jobs during the economic crisis. They added that refugees who attend livelihood training and food-for-training activities are not always interested in agriculture. They attend most probably to receive the financial incentive, which has a positive impact on their food security. This aid system based on financial incentives has reduced refugee interest in finding jobs in agriculture, and becoming active contributors to agricultural and food

production systems. Since they can get only 40 to 60 hours per month of training with one NGO, many have found themselves moving from one project to the next to ensure continuous income. Integrating them in local food production systems as skilled labour would help them secure a stable income and aid Lebanese farmers in scaling up production.

Lebanese farmers stated that only a few Syrian refugees arriving after the conflict are involved in labour; most rely on United Nations monthly stipends and projects as income-generating activities (food-for-assets, food-for-training and cash-for-work). This is a misconception, since according to UNHCR vulnerability assessments of Syrian refugees, a large number of registered refugees are deriving substantial shares of their income from working in agriculture and construction. Lebanese farmers also maintained that training for Syrian refugees does not necessarily cover missing expertise. No linkages have been established between trained Syrian refugees and farmers. For Syrian refugees to contribute to the development of local value chains, projects should support the whole production system, which will have a positive impact on income for farmers and allow them to hire more Syrian workers. This might require Syrian refugees to develop additional skills to answer the specific needs of value chains.

4. Contributions to upgrading existing value chains and introducing innovative value chains

The introduction of the value chain approach to agricultural livelihood projects targeting Lebanese farmers and Syrian refugees is relatively new. Only in early 2019 did some international and national organizations start to design interventions based on preliminary value chain studies. It is still early to analyse the contributions of these projects to upgrading/upscaling existing value chains and/or introducing innovative value chains, as such changes need between three to five years to be observed and documented, from both production and marketing perspectives.

According to the focus group participants, some interventions introduced in the last two years involving new fruit and vegetable varieties (e.g., potatoes,

avocados and seedless table grapes) will provide higher productivity and better marketability on the national and international levels. Validation will require at least three to five years, especially for fruit trees. Some improved post-harvest (cooling and packaging) and food processing (recipe standardization and quality control) techniques will help farmers enter new markets with higher prices. The introduction of new technologies, however, might also increase the production cost when maintenance of new equipment is needed. The main value chains targeted by projects in which Lebanese farmers participated are pomegranates, table grapes, olives, apricots, avocados, jams and vegetables (open field and greenhouses).

5. Critical challenges and lessons learned from agricultural livelihood activities

When asked about critical challenges and lessons learned from agricultural livelihood activities, the Lebanese farmers referred to the general problems of the agriculture sector (**table 8**). Many expressed concern about national constraints on agriculture as much more important for them than the challenges of specific projects. Farmers tended to look at development projects only in terms of their results

or impacts without considering the whole process of change incurred by them.

Critical challenges vary from the social, natural, human, financial and institutional angles. Some challenges pertain to the agriculture sector as a whole and affect the enabling environment for project activities. These include the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, market competition with foreign products and the dominance of middlepersons in the wholesale market. Addressing challenges at a project level requires understanding the local social dynamics, improving cooperation mechanisms, improving beneficiary selection and facilitating market access. All of these elements will indirectly improve the agriculture sector as a whole.

6. Recommendations for new activities in agricultural livelihood projects

Farmers in the focus group discussions proposed several recommendations for new activities and future planning, as in **table 9**. The table showcases aspirations for future projects and the sector as a whole, and indicates current needs largely matching new priorities in the 2020-2025 strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Table 8. Critical challenges to agricultural livelihood activities perceived by Lebanese farmers

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient understanding of local social dynamics Weak cooperation among development organizations Lack of trust between international NGOs and farmers due to previous unsuccessful experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic agriculture is not possible in Lebanon due to the land size and land proximity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate selection of beneficiaries, especially those who come to training sessions not out of interest but for the monetary incentive Mixing beginner farmers with experienced farmers in the same training sessions Some farmers are not open to the advice of agricultural engineers and experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market access is difficult, and pricing is not fair for the farmer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to comply with the Ministry of Agriculture's criteria for distribution of pesticides and fertilizers

Table 9. Recommendations for future agricultural livelihood activities proposed by Lebanese farmers

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish post-harvest units for aromatic plants and diversify their production Establish processing units for <i>mounneh</i> production Establish nurseries in village clusters that can produce quality and affordable seeds and create job opportunities Install solar panels to reduce energy costs in processing and energy supply units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish efficient cooperatives and improve cooperative by-laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify farm products to reduce market shocks and protect agrobiodiversity Introduce new value chains like aromatic and medicinal plants Reinforce Lebanese sheep and goat herds Reinforce the production and use of organic manure where possible to overcome the increase in prices of imported fertilizers (paid in US dollars) Support farmers with agricultural inputs (seedlings and organic manure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training on how to extract seeds and replant the next season, production of wood pellets from olive oil waste, improved packaging, and how to increase productivity and reduce production costs (field trainings, not theoretical) Encourage farmers to be open to advice from experts, agricultural engineers and extension services Provide awareness on composting Provide capacity-building to guide farmers on what to grow, and when (all farmers in Akkar plain grow the same crops) Regain youth interest in agricultural activities especially with current high levels of unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support marketing and access to markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce and improve the governance of the Ministry of Agriculture Increase the ministry's budget and provide financial support to farmers to cope with the economic crisis and keep producing Implement projects with national NGOs involved with communities and more aware of the Lebanese context Coordinate with cooperatives and municipalities to achieve long-term impacts on a community level; cooperatives should specify prices, promote seasonal crops, and guide each farmer on what to grow and in what quantity Establish a specific unit to follow up on the work

D. The perceptions of Syrian refugees from Homs: focus group discussion results

The focus group discussions with Syrian refugees sought to understand their level of involvement in agricultural livelihood projects in Lebanon, how these projects respond to their needs and increase their access to skilled employment, and if the projects will facilitate their inclusion and reintegration in agricultural value chains in Syria when they voluntarily decide to return. The groups were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire; sessions lasted on average 60 minutes. **Table 10** presents a synthesis of the information collected from five discussions.

The focus groups were organized with local entities in selected villages. It was not easy to ensure equal participation of male and female refugees who took part in agricultural livelihood projects due to the absence of baseline information, especially on the gender distribution of project participants. After data transcription and coding, focus group discussion results were analysed using qualitative data techniques based on content and trend analysis to identify patterns of convergence or divergence across different groups.

Table 10. Geographical distribution and number of participants in focus group discussions with Syrian refugees from Homs

Focus group locations	Date	Number of participants		
		Male	Female	Total
Akkar Governorate				
Aidamoun Municipality	3 June 2020	6	0	6
Tal Abbas seedling nursery	3 June 2020	0	5	5
Halba Syrian Refugee Camp	16 June 2020	4	1	5
Baalbeck District				
Ras Baalback – agricultural demonstration plot	5 June 2020	3	0	3
Arsal Agricultural Cooperative	5 June 2020	4	1	5
Total		17	7	24

1. Project relevance and responsiveness to the needs of Syrian refugees

The majority of Syrian refugees from Homs who participated in the focus groups were involved in agricultural activities in Syria, as farmers, livestock herders or agricultural workers. Seven out of the 24 participants were not involved in agriculture prior to displacement, and were mainly public sector employees or involved in trade-related activities. They had learned some agricultural practices during their stay in Lebanon, especially since most settled in agricultural areas where some had the chance to work as seasonal labour. Participants noted that the Homs region is an agricultural area, and that the Lebanese and Syrian climate and soil types are very similar, which explains similarities in seasonal production. The agriculture sector in Syria was heavily subsidized by the Government, which used to distribute all inputs for several strategic crops like wheat and forage crops, and guaranteed that it would buy the harvest from farmers.

One of the Syrian refugees said that ahead of the Syrian crisis, around the 2000s, farmers in Syria used to only grow vegetable and grain (corn, wheat, etc.). As farming improved, they opted for fruit tree production (not subsidized by the Government), which was more profitable and required less field work. One of the major differences in agricultural practices between Lebanon and Syria, according to another participant, is the minimal use of fertilizers and pesticides in Syria due

to high costs when procured from private suppliers, compared to excessive use in Lebanon and free market dynamics for these inputs.

Agricultural, livelihood and food security needs of Syrian refugees from Homs are listed in **table 11**, as defined by focus group participants. Focus group participants largely referred to sectoral needs rather than technical ones. This can be explained by the fact that farmers in Syria mainly have know-how, and want infrastructure and financial support when they decide to voluntarily return home.

Refugees are selected to participate in agricultural livelihood projects based on United Nations vulnerability assessments, which do not consider previous agricultural and food production experience and/or education. This selection process is followed by all national and international NGOs that implement cash-for-work, food-for-training or food-for-assets activities. Groups of refugees participating in livelihood training, asset creation, food-for-training and food-for-assets initiatives can be very heterogeneous, where experienced farmers and/or agricultural workers are mixed with refugees who might never have worked in this area. One focus group participant mentioned that training content can be very useful for inexperienced refugees but not for experienced ones.

The cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets participants are among the most vulnerable

Table 11. Agricultural, livelihood and food security needs/challenges of Syrian refugees from Homs

Pre-conflict	Post-conflict 2018-2019
<p>1. Agricultural needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult access to water due to unfair distribution between coastal areas and Homs rural areas since the mid-2000s; water rationing favoured greenhouse plantations and cities compared to open fields Increasing prices of agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizers) for fruit production <p>2. Livelihood needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deteriorating economic situation in Syria and not enough opportunities for jobs and income-generating activities 	<p>1. Agricultural needs in Lebanon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scarce water resources High cost of energy used in irrigation, and scarce fuel resources for pumps since October 2019 High prices of agricultural inputs, for example, the price of a 25 kilogram bag of fertilizer was 75,000 Lebanese pounds (LBP) before 2019, but sold for 200,000 LBP by mid-2020, a 167 per cent increase <p>2. Livelihood needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of work opportunities in agriculture as many Lebanese farmers are reducing the number of workers due to economic crisis Young Syrians between 18 and 25 years old are not interested in agriculture anymore; they are looking for opportunities in services, but Lebanese laws and regulations are an obstacle Decrease in working hours due to the economic situation <p>3. Food security needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to increase the food card value to match the Lebanese currency devaluation and increasing inflation Facilitating access to and use of agricultural lands near their settlements or rented houses would help them produce for self-sufficiency

refugees; they often do not have any source of income except for the UNHCR cash assistance card. Therefore, incentives paid to participate in food-for-training and food-for-assets programme reinforce their food security. The benefit is temporary as the majority of refugees in the focus groups lacked the ability and/or interest to pursue permanent or seasonal jobs after participating in training programmes.

According to one participant, at the household level, only one family member, usually a woman, normally has access to permanent or seasonal job opportunities. Other members cannot work because they are elderly or children. Employers prefer hiring women as they earn lower wage than men. Given the economic situation and COVID-19 pandemic, with many farmers reducing working hours and/or workers, opportunities for Syrians in agriculture are further diminishing. One participant reported that the farmer for whom he works has started reducing the use of chemicals,

is not able to irrigate properly because of increasing production costs and is cutting working hours.

The agricultural livelihood projects provided the Syrian refugees mainly with technical assistance, and equipment in a few cases (like soap-making utensils and drip irrigation pipes). Some projects specialized in one or several value chains such as organic agriculture, pickle and cheese-making, seeds and seedling production, fruit tree production, vegetable production in greenhouses and planting in upcycled objects (plastic bottles, unused containers, etc.). One focus group participant shared that during one project inception phase, brainstorming sessions on sectors that women wanted to work in (not limited to agriculture) were conducted. With the COVID-19 lockdown, the organization switched to agriculture only, but then given the lack of water in the project area (Arsal), the project was cancelled. Focus group participants singled out the methodology of

this project as being very much appreciated since it entailed involving training participants in choices about the direction of support. They stressed that it was the only time they were asked what they wanted to do and about their expectations from the project. Conferring with participants and reinforcing knowledge about the production techniques of different value chains might help in the future, since they have not been able to find employment opportunities with what they have learned so far in Lebanon.

Most training sessions were theoretical. Focus group participants said they do not have access to agricultural lands or production resources in Lebanon to practice and apply what they learned. They will have to wait until they go back to Syria, assuming access to land and water there. Focus group participants in training on greenhouse production pointed out that this topic is not relevant to Homs where there are no greenhouses. Therefore, the training on greenhouses has little use without investment in this system of production, unless they go to work elsewhere. Other training topics were more interesting, like composting from organic waste, growing seedlings from seeds and home gardening. Many focus group participants considered these small practices and skills beneficial, since they can put them into practice in Lebanon if they have access to resources as well as when they voluntarily return to Syria.

In general, projects implemented from 2017 to 2019 were relevant to Syrian refugees but not all responded to their specific needs. The refugees explained that everything they learned might be used one day and nothing will be lost, although this response may be skewed by the desire for monetary compensation from the trainings. It may not fully reflect actual interest in the topics. Topics that stood out as useful in their daily lives in Lebanon and Syria are not necessarily income-generating activities, such as composting, seedling production and home gardening. It is important to reflect on refugee needs before embarking on trainings that might not be used in Lebanon or Syria.

2. Project effectiveness and headline outcomes

According to the focus group participants, headline outcomes of agricultural livelihood activities are:

- Introduction of new topics and increases in knowledge, but without practical sessions in most projects;
- Projects instilled a desire to venture into agriculture, but only on a small scale in home gardens or on balconies;
- Training benefits and practices were limited to household consumption, especially for people able to practice what they learned from *mouneh* production or agricultural practices inside their settlement when possible, or in rented home gardens when available;
- One organization provided a one-month paid internship after the training, which insured income for participants.

All focus group participants said that agricultural livelihood activities responded temporarily to their needs in terms of additional income through cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets initiatives. This helped secure part of their basic needs, including for food. In fact, this is the main objective of such programmes. Training sessions on different agricultural livelihood practices ensured additional income to support food security and housing or tent rental fees during the short project period of four to six weeks, but did not provide job opportunities or facilitate access to skilled short-term employment. In some projects related to food processing, a one-month paid internship was ensured, but the employer was not able to pay interns once the funding ended. This suggests that the employer accepted the interns because the fees were paid and not out of an interest in employing skilled workers. The only tangible benefit came from a few participants settled in housing units with access to very small plots or gardens to grow some vegetables. In this case, they applied what they learned about small garden design, soil preservation, composting and production of organic vegetables on a very small scale for self-sufficiency, if even that. A large number used to do this in Syria and sometimes in a larger area that was enough to provide fresh vegetables for household consumption.

One participant who was a coppersmith in Homs and not engaged in any agricultural activities was working as an agricultural labourer in Lebanon. When he moved to Lebanon seven years ago, he learned farming practices and worked in agriculture, as it was the only available job. The agricultural livelihood activities

improved his knowledge especially on olive production, and he stated that he did not previously grow food next to his house but he has started doing so due to food price inflation. He stated that when he returns to Homs, he will work in agriculture and not as a coppersmith since he has come to love agricultural activities and is very attached to the land. He currently works for a Lebanese woman who owns a potato field and gets paid 30,000 LBP per day. Given increasing food prices and pressures on his household food security, he may stop renting his house and rent a small field instead where he can grow basic food for home consumption, sell the extra produce if any and build a tent to live in.

Agricultural livelihood headline outcomes for refugees have included learning new topics and increasing know-how; cultivating their desire to venture into gardening; and teaching them how to make and improve *mouneh*, among other agricultural practices. Most projects increased beneficiaries' monthly incomes with monetary incentives and cash-for-work. No temporary or permanent employment opportunities have been provided beyond projects, however. Almost 10 years into the Syrian conflict, refugees still rely on international aid and project support. This dependency has not only exhausted

humanitarian aid, but also limits tangible solutions to a protracted crisis. It has a significant impact on agriculture, which has relied on Syrian labour, and is the core driver of local economic development in rural areas where the majority of refugees are settled, in addition to its primary role in ensuring food security for both host communities and refugees.

3. Livelihood factors encouraging and limiting voluntary return to Syria

Livelihood factors that would encourage refugees to voluntarily return to Syria with safety and dignity and take part in agricultural production and related activities are presented in **table 12**, as defined by focus group participants.

Livelihood barriers to voluntarily returning to Syria and getting involved in agricultural production and related activities are presented in **table 13**, as defined by focus group participants.

Livelihood factors encouraging and limiting the voluntary return of Syrian refugees indicate the opportunities from agriculture in Syria. With access

Table 12. Livelihood factors encouraging a voluntary return to Syria and involvement in agricultural production

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to agricultural machinery • People who owned shops will go back if they can restore destroyed assets or access those now occupied by other people in Syria • Availability of advanced agricultural technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will be encouraged to go back to live with their family, in their own country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who owned agricultural lands will go back if they can restore what was destroyed or access lands occupied by other people in Syria • Fair distribution of water between greenhouse and open field production, and between cities and rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have the know-how to work in agriculture; some acquired it in Lebanon • Agricultural know-how should be part of the culture • Presence of skilled agricultural engineers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of farming in Syria is cheaper than in Lebanon • Syria is a big market where all agricultural products and grades can be sold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture sector is subsidized in Syria

Table 13. Livelihood barriers to voluntarily returning to Syria and getting involved in agricultural production

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of basic services like electricity and energy Destroyed homes Lack of access to agricultural inputs Difficulty in rehabilitating wells and irrigation canals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are emotionally affected by the conflict, and lost relatives or parents; they are afraid for their safety if they go back to Syria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In many orchards trees have been cut or burned Water is not available or fairly distributed Land ownership issues and occupied lands by other communities in Syria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment is not guaranteed An increase in commodity prices The financial crisis in Syria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political instability and security Government used to tell farmers what to grow and would buy it from them; farmers cannot get the prices they want

to their land and fair water distribution, many refugees would be excited to go back and venture into the sector, provide for their families and rebuild. Others will not return mainly because of political and economic instability and their lack of access to land. A human asset – their know-how – was not mentioned as a barrier for return, since the majority were already involved in agricultural production (either as farmers or by acquiring new agricultural skills in Lebanon) and have sufficient skill to revive their activity once they return. Other refugees who were not involved in agriculture before displacement are willing to practice farming for household consumption only. They will not need the advanced knowledge required for commercial large-scale farming operations. In both cases, the most important factor for all refugees is political stability and security.

4. Recommendations for future agricultural livelihood interventions

The projects/activities recommended by focus group participants were as follows.

- Syrian refugees should not be limited to working in agriculture, construction and environment-related jobs in Lebanon since these sectors cannot provide employment opportunities to all refugees, and not all of them (especially youth) are interested in these sectors. This issue links to the position of the Government of Lebanon towards refugees and the level of their integration in the national economy.

- Project time frames and training duration and frequency should be extended and include more practical sessions.
- Projects should include tailored activities to connect trainees to the labour market so they can search for permanent or seasonal jobs.
- The profile/interests of potential beneficiaries should be considered, beyond their level of vulnerability and interest in monetary incentives. This can be done by having brainstorming sessions with participants to discuss their challenges, needs and interests.

Focus group participants recommended measures to support their return to Homs and their reinvolvement in agricultural livelihoods as shown in **table 14**.

According to focus group participants, amid the current economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, some Syrian families without any family member working have taken on extensive debt, and then had to go back to Syria. Other families with at least one family member working do not see themselves going back soon since the economic situation is also deteriorating there. Despite the very difficult situation in Lebanon, they still have United Nations support through the food card.

In summary, the recommended steps to support the reinvolvement of Syrian refugees in agricultural production when they voluntarily return to Syria involve physical, social, natural, human and financial assets. Measures include providing support in Syria in terms of a supply of inputs, improved agricultural

Table 14. Recommended measures to support the reinvolvedment of Syrian refugees in agriculture when they voluntarily return to Syria

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support supply of inputs at reduced prices for seeds, seedlings, fertilizers, etc. • Improve agricultural mechanization and introduce new technologies to increase productivity • Rehabilitate wells and irrigation canals • Install solar panels to cut diesel costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee safety and security, and reduce social tension among communities who stayed in Syria and those who left during the conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to water and fair distribution of resources • Ensure access to lands destroyed during the conflict and help farmers replant orchards • Revitalize the sheep herd and support livestock production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide practical training on fruit and vegetable production using more advanced methods and with a focus on technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide seed money funding to rebuild destroyed physical assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

mechanization, the rehabilitation of wells and installation of solar panels to decrease energy costs, ensuring safety and security, ensuring access to water and land, revitalization of the sheep herd and support to livestock production, provision of practical and more advanced trainings to introduce innovative practices,

and provision of seed money. In Lebanon, human assets can be the most efficient investment to improve skills and upgrade the knowledge of refugees who would like to revive traditional agricultural activities or launch new ones after they return home. Remaining assets can be tackled after the return to Syria.

E. The perceptions of refugees from Homs: survey results and analysis

The survey of Syrian refugees from Homs sought to understand the socioeconomic profile of respondents and the projects they participated in. The survey shed light on pre-conflict technical and institutional challenges in agriculture in Syria, and probed whether these challenges, mainly technical, were addressed in livelihood initiatives in Lebanon. The survey identified pre-conflict economic and social ties between Syrians and Lebanese, and determined variations in their livelihoods between the pre-conflict period and during their stay in Lebanon. More specifically, it looked at their involvement in new value chains, their acquisition of different skills and practices related to value chains in which they were involved in Syria, and new livelihood opportunities they found.

The questionnaire explored perceptions of livelihood barriers to the voluntary return of refugees to Homs or Syria in general across the five agricultural livelihood assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human) as well as institutional challenges.

The surveys were guided by a questionnaire. Each survey took 24 minutes on average. In June 2020, 20 surveys took place in the field and 90 through phone calls (due to COVID-19 lockdown measures) using a contact list provided by UNHCR (through a data-sharing agreement with ESCWA), and a list from NGOs and cooperatives. The following synthesis includes information from all 110 surveys. The sample was allotted proportionally according to the distribution

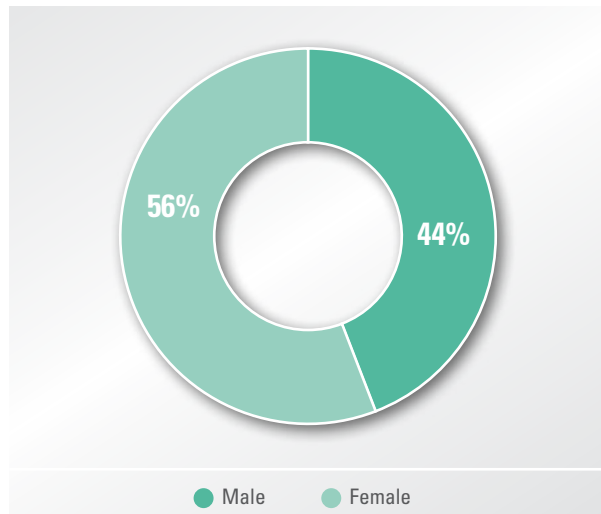
of Homs refugees in different Lebanese regions, as provided by UNHCR: 50 respondents lived in Akkar, 50 in Baalbeck and 10 in Minieh-Dennieh.

1. Demographics

a. Gender

The gender distribution of the surveyed sample was slightly skewed towards women; 44 per cent of respondents were males and 56 per cent were females. This is similar to the general gender composition of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (**figure 4**).

Figure 4. Survey respondents by gender



b. Age and marital status

The two main age clusters of respondents were young adults aged between 18 and 35 years (43 per cent) and middle-aged adults between 36 and 55 years (48 per cent). The majority were married (86 per cent). See **figures 5** and **6**.

c. Education level

Among the respondents, 92 per cent were educated, with 21 per cent holding a primary school degree, 49 per cent a secondary school degree, 10 per cent a university degree and 12 per cent a technical degree.

Figure 5. Survey respondents by age

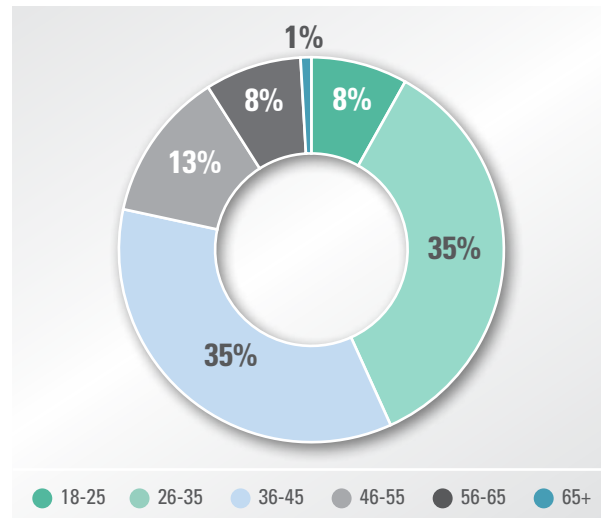
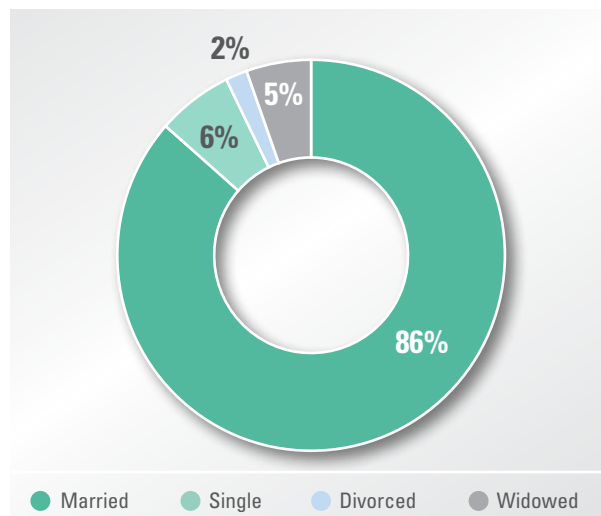


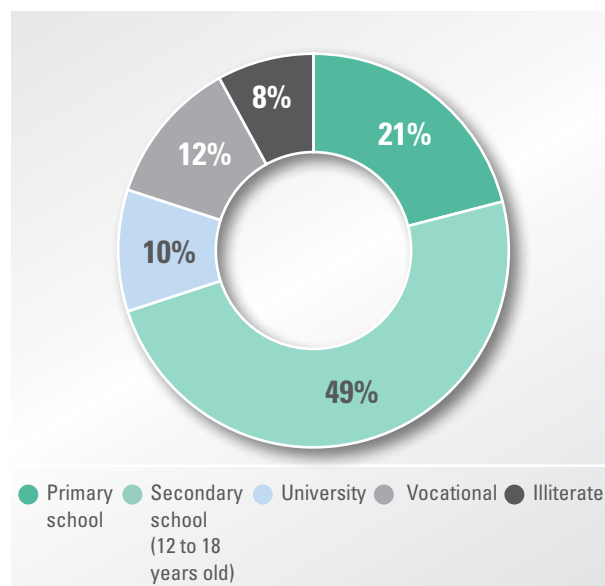
Figure 6. Survey respondents by marital status



Only 8 per cent were illiterate (**figure 7**). The small percentage of refugees holding a university degree suggests that respondents are mainly from rural areas, and involved in one way or another in agricultural and non-agricultural rural activities.

d. Occupation and source of income in Syria before displacement

Of the respondents, 14 per cent were students, 23 per cent were unemployed (of whom 92 per cent were women performing unpaid care work at home),

Figure 7. Survey respondents by education level

and 63 per cent had one or many sources of income. The last were distributed as follows: 49 per cent had one source of income, 13 per cent had two sources and 2 per cent had three sources. The main sources of income were agriculture (36 per cent were farmers and 6 per cent agricultural workers) and employment/non-agricultural jobs (16 per cent in the private sector and 13 per cent in the public sector). The remaining 29 per cent had education, construction, services and businesses as a primary source of income (**figure 8**).

2. Displacement characteristics

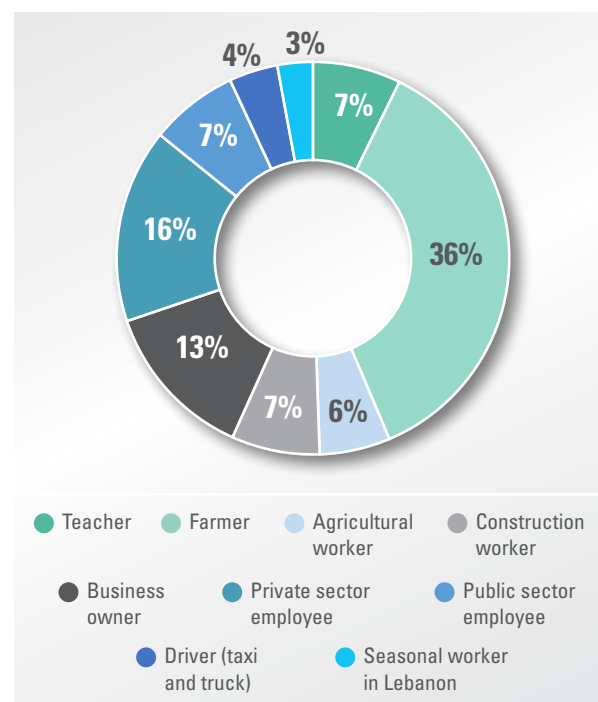
a. Year of displacement

Among the respondents, 82 per cent fled to Lebanon between 2011 and 2013, and have been staying there for seven to nine years.

b. Movement within Lebanon

Participants who moved within Lebanon once or twice from the time they first settled there constituted 39 per cent of total respondents. The top three reasons for moving from one area to another were:

- Moving to regions where other family members and relatives live, including women who moved from their parents' area to places where their husbands and/or in-laws live (30 per cent);

Figure 8. Primary source of income of respondents prior to displacement

- Issues with housing unit owners and informal settlement landlords, either because the latter asked for higher prices or wanted to reclaim their house/land (30 per cent);
- Moving to regions offering more/better work opportunities (23 per cent).

Other reasons were related to weather conditions, expensive living conditions, security and personal issues (**table 15**).

c. Native cities/villages

Homs Governorate is divided into seven different districts: Homs, Tal Kalakh, Al Qusair, Al Rastan, Tadmur, Al Mukharram and Taldou. All respondents who participated in the survey were originally from the three districts that have borders with Lebanon: Homs, Tal Kalakh and Al Qusair. The majority fled the cities of Homs and Al Qusair (36 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively), followed by 14 per cent who came from Tal Kalakh district villages (or Rif Tal Kalakh), 10 per cent from Homs district rural villages (Rif Homs) and 10 per cent from Al Qusair district rural villages (Rif Al Qusair).

Table 15. Reasons survey participants gave for moving from one area to another within Lebanon

Reasons for moving and/or living where they are	Count	Percentage
Family members live in the region they moved to, or they got married and moved to the husband's area	14	30%
Rent issues (high prices, landlord wants the house)	14	30%
Work opportunities are better	11	23%
Weather suited them better, it was similar to where they lived in Syria	4	9%
Family issues (between the couple and/or with in-laws)	2	4%
Cost of living was expensive	2	4%
The tents were removed, the people were forced to move	2	4%
Security reasons	1	2%
Services present, such as a hospital (closer)	1	2%
Aid opportunities were not very available	1	2%

Respondents who came from rural areas and villages in Homs represented 34 per cent of the total number.

3. Household characteristics

a. Composition, gender and age distribution

The average number of household members was 5.8, with 3 females and 2.8 males. The average number of dependents per household was 4. More than a third of household members were children below 12 years old (35 per cent), 16 per cent were adolescents aged 13 to 18, 26 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 35, 18 per cent were middle-aged adults aged 36 to 55, and 5 per cent were above age 56 (**figure 9**).

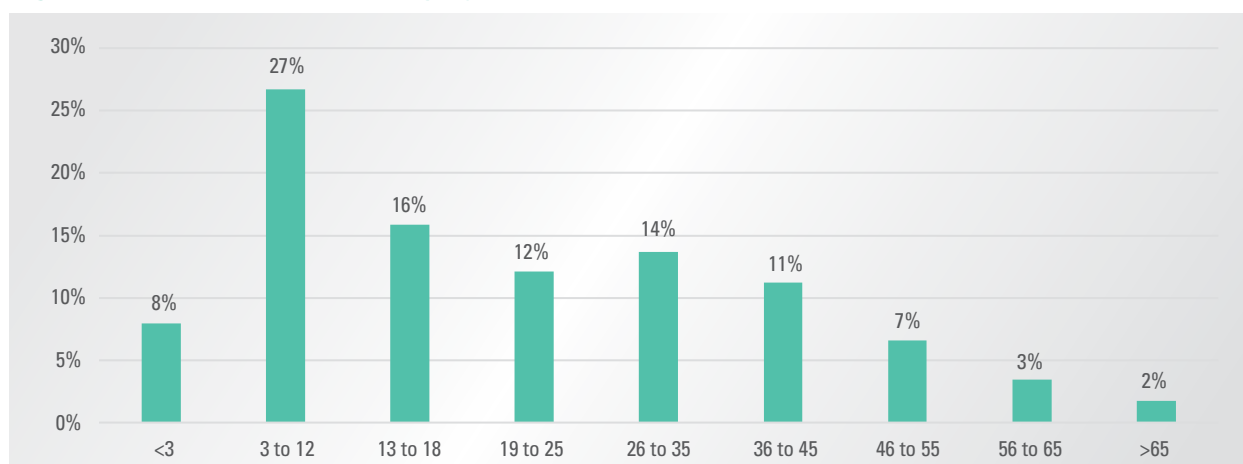
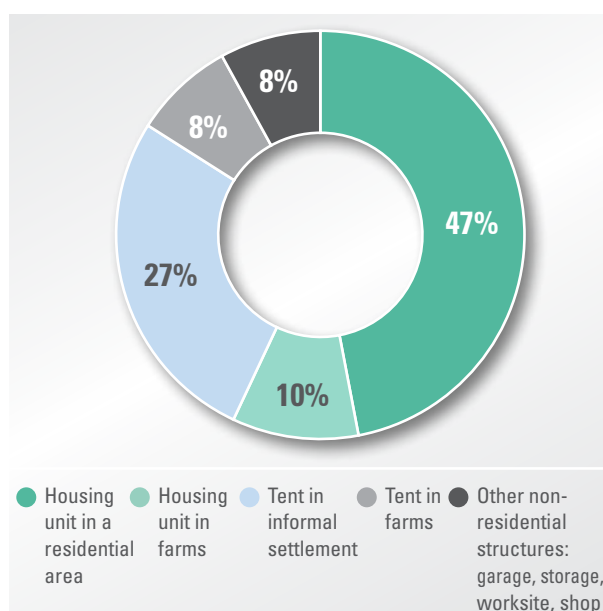
b. Shelter type

More than half of the participants (57 per cent) lived in housing units (47 per cent of units were in residential areas and 10 per cent in farmland areas), followed by 35 per cent in tents (27 per cent in informal settlements and 8 per cent in farmland areas), and 8 per cent in other non-residential structures such as garages and storage areas. Eighteen per cent lived in farmland areas (**figure 10**), making it easier to access and cultivate land. For some, in compensation for the rent, the landowner asks the household to work the land to produce crops to sell or supply to the landowner.

c. Household income sources in Lebanon

Among the respondents' households, 28 per cent rely on one source of income (United Nations support), 54 per cent have two sources of income (United Nations support plus one other source) and 18 per cent have three sources of income (United Nations support plus two other sources). In addition to United Nations financial assistance delivered to all refugee households registered with UNHCR, 57 per cent of the respondents stated that their households find additional income from seasonal employment in agriculture; 45 per cent have additional income from the construction/industrial sectors, working as mechanics, wood workers and smiths; and only 7 per cent generate additional income from permanent employment in the services sector as salespersons, chefs and gardeners.

The participants explained that due to the economic crisis, the food card amount per person provided by WFP increased from 45,000 LBP per person in May 2020 to 50,000 LBP per person in June 2020, and 70,000 LBP in July 2020. Additionally, in the winter and during the COVID-19 pandemic and the collapse of the Lebanese economy, some families received an extra 260,000 to 560,000 LBP to pay their water and energy bills. Some participants said that they rely heavily on the food card given the current lack of work opportunities due to the economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared that "without the help of the United

Figure 9. Household members by age**Figure 10.** Refugees by shelter type

Nations we wouldn't have survived, our situation would have been really bad". Many noted that they will work at this point in anything they can get their hands on.

4. The involvement of respondents in agriculture/food production in Syria before displacement

Before displacement from Syria, 42 per cent of respondents were involved in medium- and large-

scale commercial farming/food production activities, 25 per cent were involved in very small-scale farming activities for household consumption, and 33 per cent did not have any involvement in farming/food production activities. Of the people involved in agriculture/food production, 70 per cent were farmers and 30 per cent were workers in agriculture.

Table 16 presents the agricultural value chains in which respondents were involved in Syria.

Respondents described several major agricultural challenges faced before displacement along the different value chains:

- **Input supplies:** quality and availability of some inputs like fertilizers and pesticides, and increasing prices, especially for fruit trees;
- **Infrastructure and equipment:** deterioration of irrigation canals;
- **Access to resources:** challenges in finding pasture land for livestock, unfair distribution of water for irrigation and limited diesel availability for machinery;
- **Agricultural practices:** lack of knowledge in dealing with pest management and control, basic and old post-harvesting techniques and lack of knowledge in beekeeping;
- **Marketing level:** price fluctuations, competition and lack of diversification, distance and transportation cost from the farm to wholesale markets in the same area or in other governorates, difficult access to export markets for some crops like fruits;
- **Institutional:** the absence of flexibility in planting choices if farmers wanted Government support.

Table 16. Agricultural value chains in which Syrian refugees from Homs worked before displacement

Horticulture	Animal	Food processing	Other
Open field: potatoes, eggplants, onions, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, parsley, mint, watermelons, pumpkins, cabbage, lettuce, okra, strawberries, Jew’s mallow	Beekeeping	Traditional preserves, <i>mouneh</i>	Cotton
Fruit trees: cherries, apricots, apples, plums, pomegranates, figs, pistachio, walnuts	Livestock: cows, sheep and goats	Dairy products	Tobacco
Corn, soya, wheat and barley	Aquaculture	Olive oil	
Table grapes			

Participants' ties to Lebanon before the Syrian crisis

Ahead of the Syrian crisis, 18 out of 110 respondents (16 per cent) had ties to Lebanon. Ten respondents were involved in activities outside agriculture/food production, in construction and woodwork, and eight had direct involvement in agricultural/food production activities, mostly the trade of agricultural inputs/products and seasonal labour in Lebanon. One respondent said that many Syrian farmers used to sell apricots to friends in Lebanon since the Ajami variety is in high demand. Others used to sell olive oil and honey to Lebanon

5. Participation of Syrian refugees from Homs in agricultural/livelihood programmes in Lebanon

All respondents had joined agricultural livelihood programmes in Lebanon offering livelihood training, asset creation, food-for-training or food-for-assets activities. The majority of respondents had participated in one livelihood training or food-for-training activity in the last three years (74 per cent); 21 per cent had participated in one asset creation or food-for-assets activity; 2 per cent had participated in two different food-for-assets activities; and 4 per cent had participated in one food-for-assets and one food-for-training activity. Among respondents who participated in livelihood training or food-for-training activities, only 2 per cent mentioned that

they received small agricultural tool kits. Around 40 per cent of the respondents said they used to know and/or practice some activities related to the training topics before they migrated to Lebanon.

Table 17 presents the characteristics of the cash-for-work, food-for-training or food-for-asset activities in which survey respondents participated in the last three years. **Figure 11** summarizes perceptions of respondents on project activities.

Relevance: According to the majority of the respondents (82 per cent), the agricultural livelihood projects they participated in were relevant to them since they come from agricultural areas. Those with access to a land/garden and some tools/equipment were able to apply what they learned, such as for home gardening, production of food preserves, composting and soap-making. Refugees with no access to resources and work opportunities in agriculture, however, said that not all training topics were relevant since they were not able to apply what they learned. They noted that greenhouse production techniques and berry cultivation, for instance, do not exist where they used to live in Syria. Relevance is also an issue in terms of assets distributed. Respondents described how at the end of one training, the project gave out drip irrigation pipes without a pump. Participants gave the pipes to farmers who might use them.

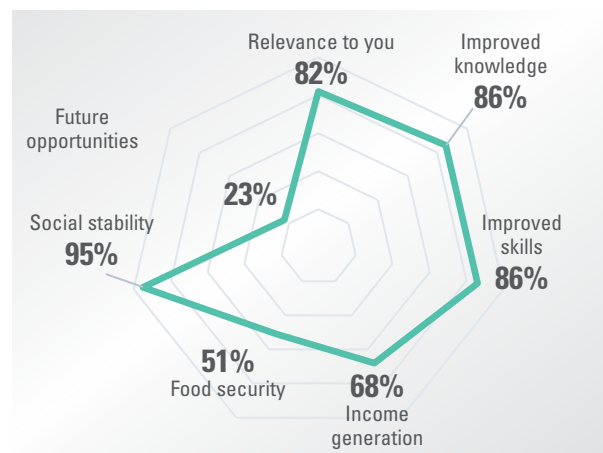
Improved knowledge: Of the respondents, 86 per cent said that the trainings improved their knowledge in general. Training topics listed as interesting were making compost, soap and cheese, and subjects

Table 17. Characteristics of livelihood training, cash-for-work, food-for-training or food-for-asset activities in which respondents participated

Characteristic	Training and food-for-training	Asset creation and food-for-assets
Training topics/assets and field work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenhouse and open field practices: composting, soil preparation, seedling production, grafting, pruning, organic agriculture, pest management, drip irrigation, fertilization, hydroponics Value chains and crops: aromatic plants, apples, tomatoes, grapes, peppers, leafy greens, cucumbers, eggplants, zucchini, melons, berries, livestock, cut roses, beekeeping Food production: fruit drying, carob and pomegranate molasses, pickles, jams, tomato paste, grape leaves, cheese Fruit and vegetable packaging Soap production Agriculture marketing Entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of irrigation canals Cleaning of irrigation canals Installation of irrigation systems Weeding in agricultural fields Fruit tree cultivation Reforestation and forest thinning Cleaning hiking trails
Duration and frequency of the activity	1 to 2 months 8 to 12 days per month 4 to 5 hours per day	2 to 4 months 10 to 20 days per month 6 to 8 hours per day
Average incentive paid per person	5,000 LBP per hour	5,000 LBP per hour

beyond agriculture like tapestry making, and fire extinction and prevention measures. Many respondents stated that training duration was short. One woman explained that her husband participated in a training on smart agriculture, vertical cultivation and drip irrigation for seven days, not enough time to go into detail on any of these topics. Additionally, survey

participants said that usually organizations reach out to the *chewich* (community manager) who can influence the selection of beneficiaries, whether they have an interest in the training topics or not. Some respondents mentioned that none of the implementing organizations asked them prior to the training about their interest in the proposed topics, their basic knowledge or their previous expertise. One participant noted that he used to work in wood back in Syria but the project he participated in did not take him for his expertise. They hired someone else to do woodworking while he built an irrigation canal. In future planning, implementing organizations should conduct brainstorming sessions with the participants on the training topics and include more in-depth trainings with practical sessions.

Figure 11. Refugee perceptions of project impacts

Improved skills: Among respondents, 86 per cent reported that they improved their skills in general, especially in beekeeping, soap-making, *mouneh* production, growing seedlings from seeds, and seed extraction and preservation. One respondent indicated that he might not benefit from the training now, since he does not own land in Lebanon, but

will probably use what he has learned when he returns to Syria. Others relayed that there were no practical sessions and work opportunities to apply new skills, so new information may be forgotten.

Income generation: Even though all participants were paid to join training, asset creation, food-for-training or food-for-assets activities, only 68 per cent found that the projects contributed to improving their income, especially during the project period, where they received 5,000 LBP per hour attended. Refugees do not seem to differentiate between cash-for-work (training and asset creation), food-for-training and food-for-assets activities; they consider compensation related to any modality as income generation. As for opportunities after activities end, one respondent mentioned that he had high hopes of finding work. However, it was not possible due to the lack of opportunities, either because businesses were not hiring or the training was not relevant. For example, a participant mentioned that he received training on greenhouses yet it was not relevant to the area he lives in where open field production is dominant.

Food security: Only half of the participants (51 per cent) found that cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets activities improved their food security. For some respondents, the training incentive complemented financial support through United Nations cards and allowed them to buy food items for a temporary period. Those with access to small gardens or land next to their housing units and settlements were able to grow some vegetables and herbs, but this did not cover their vegetable needs because the production volume was very small.

Social stability: The large majority of respondents (95 per cent) found the cash-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-assets activities very useful for improving social stability inside the refugee community, and between refugees and host communities. Some women in livelihood training and food-for-training activities mentioned that the training improved their well-being in general, and gave them the opportunity to get outside the settlements and reduce household tensions. A few respondents reported that they had heard some negative comments from Lebanese participants in some trainings.

Future opportunities: Of the respondents, 23 per cent found that projects provided future work opportunities in terms of seasonal agricultural jobs, but they were not able to pursue these due to the severe crises in Lebanon. Some were able to make soap at home for a while and sell it, but now with the increase in prices for inputs, they are not able to continue production. Others indicated that there was no continuity after they received the training, since they were not able to apply what they learned, and the implementing organization did not help them find work opportunities. One participant found work after the training and used what she learned but faced protection risks that made her stop working. She explained that to earn money she will wait for other training and food-for-training programmes.

When asked if they will be able to use new skills to revive agricultural activities they were involved in before displacement, or initiate new agricultural activities once they voluntarily return to Syria, 87 per cent said yes. Those who will go back to agriculture said that they will do so to provide healthy produce for their family from their own land, and to revive their lands. They noted that agriculture is their profession, and the trainings in Lebanon will hopefully help improve agriculture in Syria. For those who will not go back to pursue agriculture, they report that this is because they need to invest in rebuilding their destroyed homes first, and prefer to open a business, such as for electrical and construction work, which in their opinion provides higher income. They said they would plant only for household use and not to generate income. They also underlined that they would need investment to work in agriculture, and this might not be available. Some stated that they do not have enough knowledge to venture into agriculture.

The Syrian refugees are very patriotic and would like to go back to their country whenever the security and political situation settles down. Many stressed that their sole desire is to return and rebuild their own country. Others wanted to go back to familiar places and be with family members still living in Syria. They will take whatever they learned in Lebanon to apply in Syria. Others are not willing to return due to security issues and fear.

6. The impact of the Lebanese economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic on Syrian refugees

According to survey respondents, challenges faced during the latest economic crisis in Lebanon are mainly related to the deterioration of purchasing power and the inability to buy enough food and other necessary supplies with financial assistance provided by United Nations organizations. While food prices are increasing dramatically, wages for those still working remain the same at 15,000 to 25,000 LBP per day. Most families are accumulating debt and witnessing the depletion of their savings. In some areas, housing rental costs are also increasing. Some respondents said that poverty will increase.

Respondents are adopting negative coping mechanisms. One respondent mentioned being obliged to sell furniture to buy food. Others shared that they removed their children from school to work and help in providing additional income. Employment is an issue since only one to two family members at most are working, and even that low level is achieved by only a few households. Lebanese farmers are decreasing the number of Syrian workers to reduce production costs. Most respondents rely on United Nations assistance and international NGO support, but maintained that the aid provided is not enough, with the food card value often spent within 10 days. Most respondents have decreased their dietary quality and quantity. Some have eliminated foods such as cheese, meat, fruits, candy and even vegetables given price increases during Ramadan.

Respondents said they are buying only essentials like bread, sugar, burghul and potato. Some households are eating one meal per day. One respondent said that she asked her children to choose breakfast or lunch. A few pointed out that they have started sharing food and eating together with neighbours and family members to decrease costs. Others are partially relying on what they grow near their housing unit. People's psyche and emotions are affected by constant stress, leading to outbursts of temper and depression, and affecting household stability.

Lebanese economic crisis in numbers as described by survey respondents (May to June 2020)

1 kg of tomato: 1,500 → 4,000 LBP (+166%).

1 kg of bean: 2,000 → 6,000 LBP (+200%).

1 gallon of vegetable oil: 9,000 → 29,000 LBP (+241%).

25 kg of sugar: 30,000 → 65,000 LBP (+71%).

1 kg of burghul: 1,000 → 4,000 LBP (+300%).

1 kg of rice: 1,500 → 8,000 LBP (+433%).

1 maté box: 1,750 → 6,000 LBP (241%).

1 diaper bag: 8,500 → 25,000 LBP (+194%).

Tent rental: 25,000 → 40,000 LBP per month (+60%)

Almost all respondents stayed in their settlement and houses during the COVID-19 lockdown. Many lost work due to business closures, and reduced or completely blocked mobility. People reported feeling scared and anxious, and some respondents witnessed increased tensions at home. Since all family members are at home all the time, children are bored, and parents are annoyed. Some parents take out their frustration on their children.

7. Willingness to voluntarily return to Syria

According to 68 per cent of the respondents, if the situation in Syria allows, they will return in the near future. **Table 18** summarizes the reasons/conditions why some respondents will return, and why others have not decided yet, based on livelihood assets. One survey participant refrained from answering this question since she explained that she will abide by her husband's decision to move or not.

8. Intentions to engage in agricultural activities after returning to Syria

Table 19 features the factors that might encourage respondents to take part in agricultural livelihood activities when they return to Syria. These factors contradict some of the rationales in table 18, which may be due to some perceptions being based on pre-conflict images of Syria.

Challenges in the agriculture sector and the support respondents say they will need to overcome these are presented in **table 20**.

Table 18. Willingness to voluntarily return to Syria and livelihood assets

Reasons/conditions of those willing to return	Reasons of those not willing to return
PHYSICAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to rebuild destroyed homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destroyed homes Destroyed infrastructure
NATURAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to use their lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destroyed lands and plantations Destroyed irrigation infrastructure
HUMAN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reunite with family members and relatives who stayed in Syria Resume the pre-crisis profession Heavy labour in Lebanon is affecting their health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traumatized and emotionally drained from the Syrian conflict
FINANCIAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economic situation in Lebanon and in Syria is now the same, so it is better to return to Syria Some families acquired a lot of debt in Lebanon and cannot survive anymore with the economic crisis Lebanon is facing No future for them in Lebanon, no work opportunities Avoid paying rent since they will be living in their own houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economic situation in Syria is really bad, with prices on the rise and few work opportunities, so poverty is increasing No capital/investment to rebuild from zero There is no United Nations assistance or any international NGO support in Syria
SOCIAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the community and family went back, they will be encouraged to go back, as this will in a way guarantee their safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have no family or friends in Syria anymore, all are abroad, so they prefer emigrating to foreign countries Some are used to living in Lebanon, they have friends and family there, and prefer to stay with them
INSTITUTIONAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If security and safety are guaranteed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The men have to go back and join the Army There is no safety and/or security Some household members are sought by the Syrian Government

Table 19. Factors encouraging people to engage in agriculture after returning to Syria

Physical	Social	Natural	Human	Financial	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything is available in Syria They will go back to their home and their assets Availability of agricultural inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family members are still in Syria Syrian people can move freely in their own country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of lands Water availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They would like to cultivate and eat from their own land Many participants have the basic know-how to venture into the agriculture sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of financial support Agriculture can be profitable for some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Syrian Government supports agriculture

Table 20. Challenges and needed support to engage in agriculture after returning to Syria

	Challenges	Support
PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assets they owned have been destroyed and/or stolen (home, water pump, tractors) No diesel available for water pumps and electricity Lack of availability of agricultural inputs and beekeeping material to start working in agriculture Destroyed irrigation infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure energy supply needed for agricultural work Install solar energy panels for wells and irrigation pumps Supply of agricultural equipment and inputs Rehabilitate irrigation canals
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective and community work does not exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage collective work, and rebuild social cohesion and trust
NATURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water availability Previous cultivations have been removed and/or people are occupying their land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated water well Ensure smooth transitions between people now using land and landowners coming back
HUMAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of know-how in advanced agricultural practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver more training on vegetable production and agriculture in general, and ensure that illiterate people are given the time and attention needed to acquire necessary skills
FINANCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General economic challenges in Syria Lack of savings and money to relaunch activities Transportation costs from the farm to the wholesale market are high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed money to support relaunching agricultural production Support in marketing agriculture produce and establishing wholesale markets closer to villages
INSTITUTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corrupt system in Syria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing organizations and farmers' cooperatives Ensure farmers have the freedom to choose what they produce International organizations should follow up with people directly and not with local institutions and/or implementers, letting people share their needs so donors can implement more targeted projects



03

Policy Recommendations for Agricultural Livelihood Solutions in a Protracted Refugee Situation



This study provides tailored policy recommendations for developing sustainable agriculture and livelihood projects to benefit Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon. These also apply to Syrians who voluntarily return to Homs Governorate when

conditions become favourable. The recommendations could help humanitarian and development organizations plan future interventions more systematically, in the short and long term.

A. Short-term recommendations

1. Tailor skills development and knowledge transfer

To ensure an efficient transfer of skills and knowledge, the duration of livelihood training and food-for-training activities should not be limited to 40 hours or 7 days of training per month per trainee. The duration and frequency (number of training days per week) should be determined according to the topic and the time needed for technical experts to deliver high-quality training that balances theoretical and practical sessions (50/50). Moreover, the training programme in a given period should be limited to one topic to allow optimum assimilation of knowledge by trainees. Increasing on-the-job training might open potential opportunities for trainees to be exposed to the labour market. Conducting preliminary brainstorming/consultation/validation sessions with a sample of potential trainees should guide the selection of topics and the design of tailored training programmes. Skills development should be aligned with the potential for jobs in specific value chains, and should avoid cross-cutting issues.

2. Beneficiary inclusion, profiling and selection procedures

Broadly, the Lebanese Government and the international community have obligations to support the economic well-being of targeted populations, in line with human rights principles. Different implementing organizations and donors should set up programmes encouraging potential employers of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese to comply with Lebanon's Occupational Health and Safety legislation, and engage in community-based decent work activities. In projects for Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities, participants should

be included in the design and evaluation phases. More interventions should harmonize and standardize systems for selecting beneficiaries by considering their profile and background (demographics, place of origin and livelihood potential, agriculture background, level of knowledge, participation in previous projects etc.). They should not rely mainly on criteria of vulnerability and/or on the *chewich* in deciding who will participate. Inclusion based on vulnerability is essential to cover the food gap but does not offer a phase-out solution towards temporary or permanent employment. Agricultural livelihood projects should prioritize refugees from agricultural areas in Syria, whether they were involved in agriculture or not before displacement, to guarantee relevance to the Syrian context. Finally, programmes should adopt an inclusive approach that involves both refugees and host communities to prevent parallel programming and decrease tensions between communities, while also providing opportunities for refugees to form networks and social capital outside their communities.

3. Improve coordination mechanisms

Projects fall under the two working groups on food security and livelihoods. The very broad scope of work on livelihoods, however, results in a large number of agricultural projects that are not properly reported or coordinated with those of the food security working group. Several projects intended to promote small and medium enterprises or value chain development implement agricultural activities with a direct impact on food security for host communities and Syrian refugees. Coordination both inside and between working groups deserves more attention so that complementary interventions target specific value chains with measurable impacts.

Both working groups should ensure continuous and dynamic alignment between livelihood and economic opportunity strategies, and national plans and priorities. They should establish agreed workplans and operational procedures; set up effective methods of linking different sectors, such as protection, education and many others; improve implementing mechanisms, and establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks to improve coordination and better visualize future measures, both for internal and external partners; and assure relevant and specifically designated human resources to attend and contribute to the working groups. The Ministry of Agriculture should have an active role in the livelihoods working group, beyond its limited participation in the steering committee, so it can provide inputs on prioritizing interventions, especially in value chain selection. Strategic coordination should be promoted between international organizations in Lebanon and Syria on skills needed for restoring agriculture in Syria, and on which value chains should be scaled up to benefit host communities and local agricultural systems.

4. Establish solid partnerships and empower grass-roots organizations

International organizations should work on establishing more solid partnerships with national grass-roots organizations. A partner relationship rather than a contractor/subcontractor or service provider relationship will help in building the capacity of national organizations, especially in terms of project design, management and evaluation. Other technical support for national organizations can cover human resources and financial management. A profile of national organizations working on agricultural livelihoods should be developed, and a capacity-building programme supporting them to plan tailored solutions across value chains is highly encouraged. Grass-roots organizations should be supported to plan and manage collective assets directly related to the efficiency and resilience of the main production systems.

5. Adopt local sourcing

The international organizations working on humanitarian aid can assist refugees and ensure their

food security through new modalities by supporting and buying needed produce from Lebanese women's cooperatives and small farmers, when available. This can create a win-win situation for both the implementing agency (since it will be able to provide food to people in need) and for the local community (since it will be able to sell its produce). Supporting Lebanese farmers and producers will positively affect Syrian agricultural workers whether they are refugees or not.

6. Conduct economic impact assessments

Despite the short-term emergency aspect of the majority of projects targeting Syrian refugees and their host communities, economic impact assessments, whether at the sector or regional level, should be conducted. This is particularly warranted when projects target a specific value chain and/or involve marketing components. Analysing the medium economic value of dominant livelihoods programmes will help define the long-term impacts on local economies. Cost-benefit assessments can be done to measure the efficiency of projects and the budget/results ratio. For example, it would be interesting to measure how much it costs for each job created/maintained in the agriculture sector, and to calculate the medium return on investment for cash-for-work compared to food-for-training.

7. Balancing Sustainable Livelihood Framework assets

Future interventions should create a balance between the five assets of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, and give more attention and focus to physical and financial assets less covered in previous interventions, especially when targeting Lebanese farmers. This calls for reinforcing coordination between the food security and livelihood sector working groups. Such a balance will reinforce the development aspects of the projects in addition to their humanitarian dimensions. Expanding and diversifying asset-creation and food-for-assets activities to include additional agricultural rehabilitation and ecological restoration works would promote this balance. Involving reliable national organizations can help sustain physical assets after project completion.

B. Long-term recommendations

1. Institutional support and advocacy

Since Lebanon finds itself in a difficult political situation, different organizations should work carefully and closely together to avoid opposition from the Government. An important element entails developing the capacities of Lebanese government organizations and national systems (e.g., the Green Plan, the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute, the General Directorate of Cooperatives, etc.) to offer public services to all. Other factors involve prescribing and constructing a more agreeable policy environment, and providing evidence-based reports on the current economic situation and the contributions of Syrian refugees to local economic development. This can help abate some of the obstacles that Syrian refugees face.

2. Complementarities between humanitarian support and development dimensions

Major shifts are needed in interagency coordination to bridge the humanitarian and development divide, and more effectively support livelihoods and economic opportunities. Essential steps include devising new approaches to livelihoods and economic opportunities by implementing joint development-humanitarian assessments, analyses, and multiyear planning and programming to achieve collective outcomes. Reinforcing the collaboration of multiple stakeholders will be required, along with building capacities among national and local governments to enhance and harmonize data and evidence on jobs and livelihoods. Lessons from the ongoing humanitarian response in terms of management and coordination should be applied within national service delivery systems. A complementarity between the humanitarian and development dimensions will support long-term income-generating activities with benefits for individuals and the economy as a whole, particularly when national and local governments and entities are involved.

3. Regional development: local economic development and integrated territorial investments

Advocacy for local economic development and integrated territorial investments should focus on regions hosting large numbers of refugees. The Lebanese Government and different response stakeholders could implement these approaches by empowering cooperatives and national NGOs, towards unleashing potential to create economic growth, strengthen supply chains and market access, attract private investment, stimulate public-private partnerships, generate sustainable job opportunities and reinforce social inclusion.

4. Market system approach and competitive value chains

New competitive value chains targeting promising markets should be explored as a win-win situation for both refugee and host community populations. Mobilizing the untapped potential of Lebanon's food and agricultural production systems includes linking these sectors to the available labour force, drawing on both host communities and refugees. Investing in organic agriculture and/or innovative sustainable agriculture could concurrently create job opportunities and advance Lebanon's pledge to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More work should be done to create linkages along value chains by uniting different intervention types. As an example, establishing ties between grants and business development and services could be key to opening sustainable livelihood opportunities for host communities in Lebanon and for refugees after their voluntary return to Syria. In fact, joining businesses, activities and interventions could help distribute risks, enhance sustainability, expand opportunities and grow the social investment of beneficiaries. This would also encourage the circulation of capital among local communities.

Additionally, interventions can help compensate for stresses on natural resources and other inputs. They could, for instance, focus on drought-tolerant value chains such as almonds and olives that are already well established in both regions, but need better mechanization and market improvement. Value chain assessments prior to designing interventions are needed. One potential area of focus might involve climate-smart value chains in Lebanon and Syria that have a competitive export market advantage and are not invasive in terms of local cultures.

5. Private sector involvement and investment for import substitution/export promotion

Support for private sector job creation should involve both supply and demand sides. As an example, recognizing and executing marketable infrastructure projects (such as the establishment of refrigerator facilities, packing and sorting warehouses, and fruit and vegetable nurseries) in areas of need can appeal

to international and local donors, and create job opportunities for skilled and non-skilled people.

6. Integrate the Sustainable Livelihood Framework into livelihood projects

To be effective, interventions for livelihoods and economic opportunities should avoid the potential pitfall of unintentionally harming individuals, communities, societies, the environment or the economy. For example, such a situation can occur when international organizations compete for local staff, altering private sector wage levels and slowing the recovery of government institutions. To build and sustain livelihoods while avoiding such concerns, livelihood projects should integrate the Sustainable Livelihood Framework or similar integrated frameworks. These can underpin more comprehensive interventions that combine different assets (human, social, natural, physical, financial and political). Some assets fall into multiple categories depending on how they contribute to a livelihood.

C. Short term versus long term – towards sustainability

Designing and implementing livelihood and agricultural activities with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives helps convert initial emergency interventions into medium- to long-term economic growth, and comprehensive and sustainable development. Short-term interventions back urgent needs and help stabilize livelihoods. Medium-term responses usually improve local economies, employment generation and income creation. Long-term interventions aim at integrated and comprehensive economic growth by empowering national systems and policies essential to sustain short- and medium-term responses. Currently, a wide variety of scattered projects are driven by donors to report on high numbers of beneficiaries during short periods, rather than tackling the real needs and challenges of the agriculture sector in the long term.

Sustainable interventions call for national and local ownership (national NGOs, municipalities and cooperatives), the development of stakeholder

capacities, and the complementarity of short-term interventions and long-term goals until sustainable local and national systems are set and running. An integration of short- and long-term necessities of the target population can be realized through partnerships with government and private sector actors, and through promoting self-reliance as essential to sustain the achievements and opportunities opened by livelihood interventions. Progress can come from connecting short-term employment to infrastructure development for long-term job creation, or in agriculture, from linking agricultural workers to farmers for long-term employment.

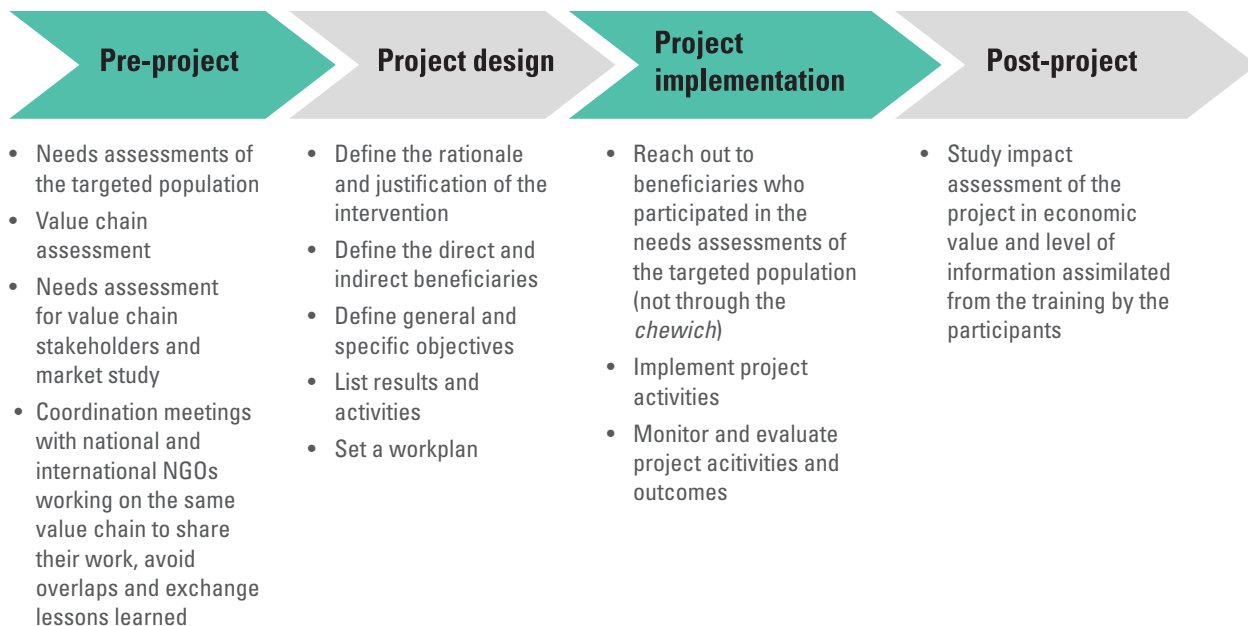
Practical ways forward can be to create an online platform where all participants in agricultural livelihood projects can be linked to potential businesses that need their expertise. Another option could be to distribute certificates for completed trainings, and explore the possibility of validation

by the Syrian Government and institutions, which would allow Syrian refugees to practice what they learned when they voluntarily return to Syria.

Programmes that provide vocational and skills training with nearly non-existent employment prospects should be discontinued. Livelihood projects need to guarantee that their outcomes are sustainable and compatible with the SDGs while

abiding by humanitarian principles. The sustainability of interventions will guarantee long-term income generation and stability by removing the uncertainty arising from participating in short-term interventions.

Taking into consideration all of the above recommendations, a four-phase project timeline for future interventions targeting agricultural livelihoods for host communities and Syrian refugees could be as follows.





Lebanon has the highest per capita rate of Syrian refugees in the world at around 30 per cent of the total Lebanese population. As at 31 August 2020, Lebanon hosted 879,598 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, but the Government of Lebanon estimates the total number to be around 1.5 million. According to UNHCR, around 215,959 Syrian refugees from Homs lived in Lebanon in June 2020, constituting around 24 per cent of total registered Syrian refugees in the country. The present study aims to understand the characteristics and nature of agricultural livelihood programmes targeting refugees from Homs and their host communities in Lebanon, and examines their contributions to sustainable livelihoods. Overall analysis showed that emergency, short-term, humanitarian-focused agricultural livelihood projects are predominant in the response to the protracted displacement of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and lack linkages between training and job placement. There are significant gaps in long-term sustainable livelihood, employment and inclusive agricultural development interventions.

Excessive livelihood training activities have resulted in some duplication on the regional and value chain levels, and overlap among different implementers. Most agriculture projects still have a humanitarian face after 10 years of forced displacement, leaving little room for sustainable livelihoods and temporary economic integration or resilience-building in host communities. This is mainly the result of short-term relief funding and donors' priorities, which continue to cover household basic needs, notably access to food. Refugees are still highly dependent on humanitarian assistance with no foreseen durable solutions, and extremely vulnerable to shocks. To prepare the ground for sustainable agricultural livelihood solutions benefiting Syrian refugees and their host communities amid the protracted crisis in Lebanon, as well as Syrians who decide to voluntarily return to Homs when the conditions become favourable, livelihood interventions can incorporate the following strategic objectives: prioritizing value chain development; structuring beneficiary selection; supporting local production and local consumption; encouraging partnership and coordination; rethinking project timelines; supporting a systematic and harmonized approach to livelihood development; enhancing private sector engagement; and promoting territorial development.