

Title	Recovery and Rehabilitation of Dairy Sector in Bekâa Valley and Hermel-Akkar Uplands (Phase two)
Donor	UNDP Administered Donor Joint Trust Fund
Country	Lebanon
Implementing Agency	Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable recovery-rehabilitation and assistance to the livelihoods of 300 vulnerable livestock keepers in Central Bekâa Valley, North Akkar and Hermel-Akkar Highlands - Provide alternative income-generating activities to the poorest farmers with the highest level of socio-economic deprivation in Hermel-Akkar highlands and reduce their dependence on illicit crops.
Actual EOD	01 May 2009 - 30 Sep 2012
Project Duration	41 Months

Back to 2009: Why the project was formulated?

The 2006 hostilities which took place in south Lebanon, coupled with the absence of milk collection facilities and dairy producer organizations, had seriously impacted the productive capacity of dairy smallholders in Lebanon, including the Bekâa Valley and North Akkar, which are considered the dairy basin of the country.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) regional services, the total number of dairy cows had dropped from 25,000 heads to between 15,000 and 18,000 heads in the Bekâa Valley region as a result of the 2006 war and its aftermath. The future of the dairy industry sector was at stake.

To secure their survival in an increasingly difficult and harsh environment, the local population was returning to illicit income-generating activities after several years of eradication. The Hermel Uplands was a major area with a thriving cultivation of illicit crops, causing growing concern to the Government of Lebanon.

Interventions that could create alternative income opportunities and reduce the dependence on illicit crops were crucial to vulnerable smallholders in Hermel-Akkar Uplands. Improvement of small ruminants, mainly goats, grazing in the agro-ecological zones of those highlands, was the most appropriate opportunity for sustainable productive income-generating activity both in terms of the marketplace and of natural resources.

What did the project achieve?

Focusing on the improvement of the milk value chain in targeted areas, the project has contributed to revive a sector that was in deep crisis. The livelihood of farmers and processors, many of whom were part of the most vulnerable and poor groups of the society in the targeted areas, was improved with substantial results.

Interventions to upgrade the quality and the quantity of the milk produced were performed all along the milk value chain: collection, processing, transportation:

- 35 village primary milk collection centres were established and equipped with cooling centres (61 cooling tanks and milk testing laboratories to ensure the safety of the dairy produce);
- 370 single head electrical milking machines as well as 1200 stainless steel milk jars with filters were distributed among poor farmers, targeting mainly women-headed households;
- Small and medium dairy processing units with accessories (dairy processing tools) were distributed among 132 beneficiaries, and 13 women-headed families;
- 2000 farmers were trained to learn how to improve farm management practices and how to ensure milk hygiene. Training also put emphasis on the importance of the fodder crops;
- Veterinary drugs and vaccines were distributed among farmers particularly during time of outbreaks (Foot and Mouth Disease and then Lumpy Skin Disease outbreak);
- Farmers were also supported with disinfectant and on mastitis detecting tests.

Upgraded conditions all along the milk value chains, made it possible not only to increase the quantity of the milk produced, but also its quality and safety, allowing farmers to negotiate for higher prices.

A study carried out before and after the establishment of the centres clearly shows that the milk quality was greatly improved with less acidity, less bacteria (coliform bacteria were reduced by 83,4%) and more density.

As a result of these improvements, all actors of the milk value chain saw their revenue increased and their living standards improved.

The economic performance of farmers also benefited from windfalls, such as the provision, by the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, of insulated milk transportation trucks that greatly contributed to reduce the gap in the milk cycle (farm--collection centre--processing plants).

To strengthen the negotiation power of farmers, 30 Village Dairy Producers' Association were established. They currently cover 300 villages and 2900 farmers all over the Bekâa and Akkar areas.