

*Diagnosing the situation of Lebanese agriculture
in light of the current financial and economic crisis,
immediate solutions and a future vision*

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INTRODUCTION

The economic and financial crisis that Lebanon is enduring, revealed and clarified the fundamental and negative structural problems that we have long known and suffered from.

Although some still seem unaware of the horrendous size of the economic and social repercussions of the crisis, I believe that we are no longer in the era of managing the chronic problems of the agricultural sector resulting from bad governance and corrupt leaders. Rather, it has become necessary to address the effects of the crisis on both levels:

- The immediate situation of agriculture in Lebanon to save what is still possible,
- The medium to long-term food security of our people and environmental security of our country through a plan to develop a sustainable agriculture.

But first and before analysing the consequences of the crisis, I shall present the Lebanese Agriculture in a genuine and unique way. Unique and realistic because it will not repeat the often mentioned reasons for the failure of this vital sector, such as: the limited areas of agricultural land with its small holdings, the high labour cost, the high input costs, the high financing cost, the absence of a modern marketing structure that values the farmer's production, and others... Unique and realistic because it is based on CREAL's scientific model and "on-the-field" approach, which is based on:

1-The agro-food value chain considered as an integrated and indivisible entity:

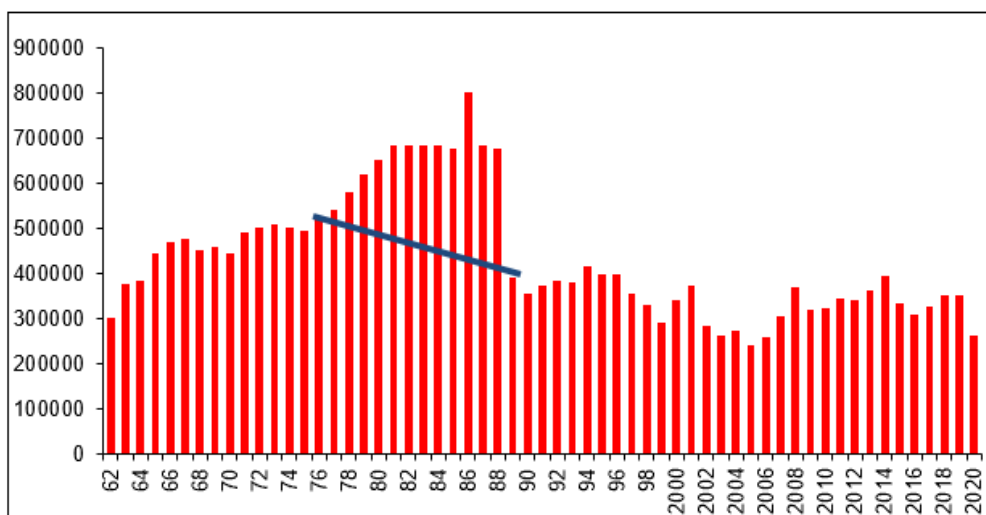


2- Credible data, updated annually since 1951 and which are presently the only source of agricultural statistics adopted by the Central Administration for Statistics, a Department at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Annex 1).

So, how does the Lebanese agricultural sector look like nowadays?

A- THE SITUATION OF LEBANON'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

One way to evaluate an economic sector is to study the evolution of its GDP:

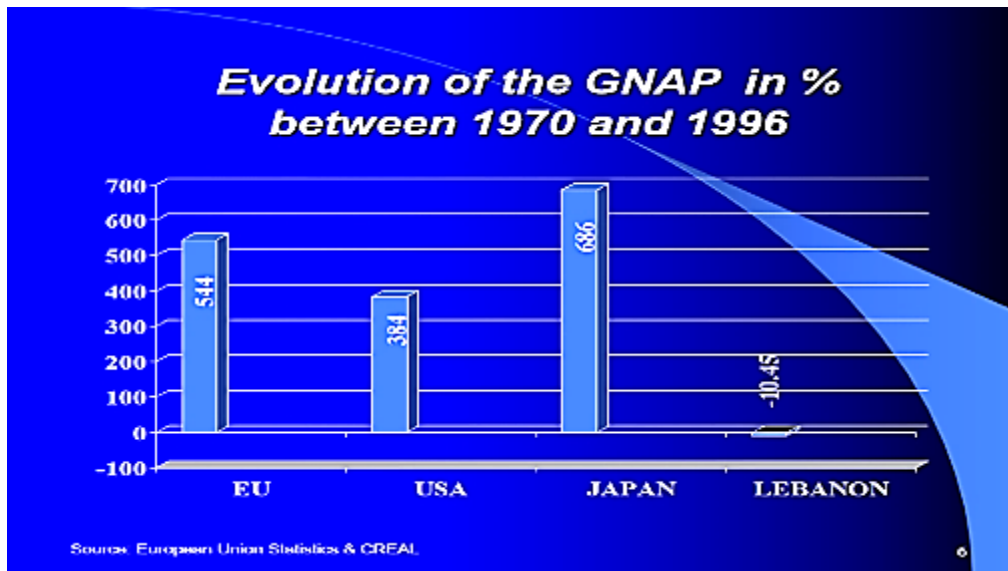


A quick read of the above histogram shows that:

- Between 1962 and 1966, the Gross National Agricultural Product (GNAP) of Lebanon increased by 48%, as a result of the wise policy applied in the field of development during the mandate of president Fouad Chehab (1958-1964), the only president who had a vision of a State that he built and ruled with committed people and through an Administration geared towards development and oriented towards the interest of the citizen,
- Between 1967 and 1975 year of the start of the war in Lebanon, Lebanon's GNAP entered a period of stagnation with the slow dismantling of State Institutions, which began in 1970,
- From 1975 till 1988, the agricultural sector was simply destroyed by the war, with the disruption of its marketing structure, while prohibited crops were thriving,
- Since 1989 until 2021, the Lebanese agriculture is agonizing.

B- A COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

How do we compare the situation of Lebanon with that of other countries?



While global agriculture witnessed a remarkable development, the Lebanese agriculture was dying.

So, how did things deteriorate so to reach the current and worsening national economic and financial crisis?

C- THE REASONS FOR THE DETERIORATION

1- At the public sector level



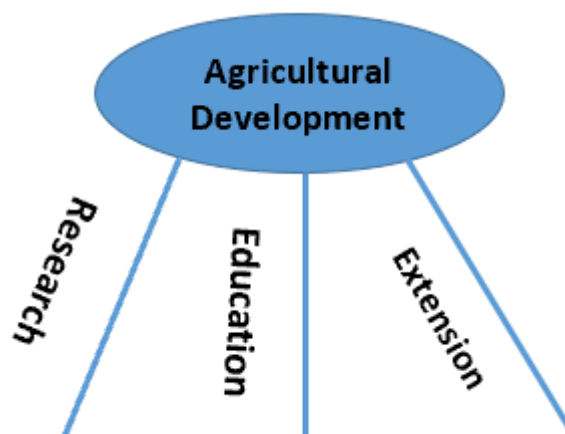
The basic task of the public service is to advise the agricultural producers (farmers, breeders, fishermen) and support them within their relationship with all other elements of the food chain helping and guiding and backing them to reach best quality and yields and highest income.

Analysing the Public sector intervention in the agriculture sector shows the following:

- Between 1967 and 1970, the slow transition in the behaviour of the public administration, from a Civil Service mentality to a “Self Service” mentality characterized by wide-scale corruption and embezzlement of public funds, created obstacles to the development of the agricultural economy and impeded the State's support that is constantly required for the sustainable growth of the Lebanese agriculture at both production and marketing levels,
- Between 1970 and 1975, we experienced the Institutionalization of bad governance by openly using official administrative positions to serve personal interests and appointing non-professionals to sensitive positions, resulting in wrong policies and in open and “legalized” thefts of public funds,
- Between 1975 and 1992, the Lebanese agriculture lived with the complete absence of a Public Administration, which was replaced by local militias that had little interest in agriculture. Farmers suffered from poor supply of inputs and were exploited by the wholesale markets controlled by the militias. The collapse of export market structures, which were controlled by non-Lebanese contractors, increased the decline in farmers’ revenues.
- Since 1992, the launching year of Lebanon’s reconstruction, and until today, in 2021, the Lebanese agriculture has been literally ignored by the State of Lebanon and even considered as unnecessary by certain political currents.

As a reminder, the three pillars of agricultural development are the following:

- Research, which had reached enviable levels of success before 1975, was destroyed by the war and, today, is sadly poor and inefficient in relation to international standards,
- Education, has a very low level at technical schools while agricultural colleges suffer from an imbalance between theory and practice, with a surprising absence of knowledge of the Lebanese agricultural economy,
- Extension: absent on the ground where it belongs, with very rare exceptions.



We have always heard the Ministers of Agriculture rightly complaining about the meagreness of their budget, which did not exceed 1% of the State budget during post war Lebanon’s reconstruction years. This dwarf budget size illustrated the government’s disregard for the Lebanese agriculture sector.

It is as if the Ministers of Agriculture had forgotten the equivalent of **one billion dollars** that has flowed into their Ministry since 1992 through grants and loans to hundreds of projects that have been implemented through them.

While writing this report, the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon is managing 12 projects of a value of Euro 3,630,000 - and US 89,000,000 -, which represents about 80 times the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture for 2021 at the rate of 20,000 pounds to the dollar.

Is it then reasonable for the Ministry of Agriculture to explain its extremely weak action and subsequent absence of results, by hiding behind its meagre budget?

The most dangerous issue is that no reflection of these billion dollars’ projects could be noticed at the level of the Gross National Agricultural Product during the past 30 years of Lebanon’s reconstruction.

We have all reasons to fear that the currently executed projects will catch up with the sterility of their predecessors.

And while the Lebanese government was chronically absent from performing its role in the agriculture sector, it surprised us during 2020 with a Program aiming at supporting the import of inputs for vegetal and animal production.

This program addressed commercial companies, most of which were financially distressed. It imposed a procedure that required double value of the purchased goods: importer had to prove having in his Lebanese pounds bank account the equivalent of the cost of imported goods at the rate of LBP 3,900. -, while he simultaneously had to transfer the total value of the goods to the foreign supplier in fresh dollars.

Furthermore, the subsidy procedure leads to losses if and when strictly applied, since a limited profit margin was imposed by the program and strict costly control administrative procedures were to apply. Not to forget the risks taken by the importer in the event that his subsidy file was rejected. No strict implementation of the Subsidies Program took place and major “manipulations” happened enriching traders, some of whom also benefited from smuggling quantities of subsidized inputs to Syria, where it was sold at multiple times their Lebanese price.

While the lack of transparency of transactions and the interference of nepotism led to anomalies at the level of the beneficiaries of the subsidy, a certain market confusion was created between the few farmers who benefited from the subsidy in part and those who did not.

We are also not surprised by a country that has no ability to control the smuggling of supplies into Lebanon by flooding our markets with fraudulent and prohibited pesticides and by so-called fertilizers that end to be just salt (NaCl).

So, how did things deteriorate so to reach the current and worsening national economic and financial crisis?

2- At the level of the international support

International support came through international organizations such as Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, UNDP, World Bank, etc., the European Union and bilateral support from countries such as France, Italy, Germany, USA, Netherlands, etc.

Few countries, if any, benefited from the sympathy of the international community as much as Lebanon benefited throughout the “reconstruction process”, all organizations and friendly countries were constantly supporting us.

So, what is the reason for the failure of this support to develop Lebanese agriculture?

Among the countries and unions that supported Lebanon, each had its own agenda. In return, we lacked experts within the Lebanese Administration, capable and/or willing to direct foreign support towards the interests of the country.

International organizations' projects were also designed by foreign experts who often had little or no knowledge of the complex Lebanese agriculture. Once again, they did not have Lebanese counterparts who would challenge their approach with sufficient skill to adapt their projects to Lebanese conditions.

The blame should not be placed on the Lebanese civil servants alone, knowing that among them there are excellent capable elements!

Since 1992, the successive governments of Reconstruction of Lebanon have lacked the basic elements for rebuilding agriculture in Lebanon. In addition, and in the absence of a reliable official database common to all parties working in the reconstruction program, implementation of the international community's projects has become as haphazard as it has been fruitless. No wonder, then, that hundreds of projects designed and funded by the international community to help rebuild Lebanese agriculture have failed to reach their development goal.

With 263 major projects implemented in Lebanon since 1992, worth \$285 million, €507 million, and LBP167 billion (at the rate of LBP1,500 to the US\$), we expected these projects to have a significant impact on agricultural GDP.

Unfortunately, that did not happen at all.

3- At the level of the NGOs

Non-Governmental Organizations are independent of any government, usually non-profit and active in humanitarian or social fields. Some of them might have a political colour.

The activity of foreign NGOs in the fields of agriculture and rural Lebanese communities began with the 1975 war and this activity fluctuated with the global interest in the socio-economic situation in Lebanon. Since 1992, these organizations have implemented hundreds of development projects.

So, why were the NGOs' projects results so limited in the agricultural and rural sectors?

The majority of the projects were designed independently of an integrated national Lebanese vision that would have included all the regional and sectoral components of agricultural development. This led to a reduction in the effectiveness of the projects, some of which came with negative results.

Severe administrative procedures imposed by the necessity of monitoring local teams and controlling their expenses led to delaying the implementation of projects, and sometimes even stopping it.

NGO's often contracted with non-professional contractors, which led to improper implementation.

But the most important reason was the absence of a national coordinating body, whose tasks should have been to integrate all the projects into a national plan with the aim of achieving the best coverage and maximum effectiveness.

In fact, each NGO had the freedom to determine the field of work in its chosen region as well as the freedom to design and implement its project in the way it considered best.

No wonder that in the absence of a wise, informed, and willing national authority to direct, coordinate, and supervise the implementation of NGO projects, the huge amount of effort, time and funding invested by NGOs (several hundreds of millions of US dollars) has not had a measurable development impact on the agricultural sector and on the rural community.

Note: NGOs are governed by a Lebanese law that was passed in the 1930s and has not been revised ever since. Its licenses are issued by the Ministry of Interior for security purposes only.

So how did things deteriorate so to reach the current and worsening national economic and financial crisis?

4- At the level of the private sector

a- Upstream of producing farmers/breeders

With the onset of the war in 1975, commercial companies importing agricultural inputs became the main factor in maintaining the agricultural sector: the doctor for diagnosis, the pharmacist for solutions, the hospital for emergencies, the bank for credit, the commercial companies secured it all.

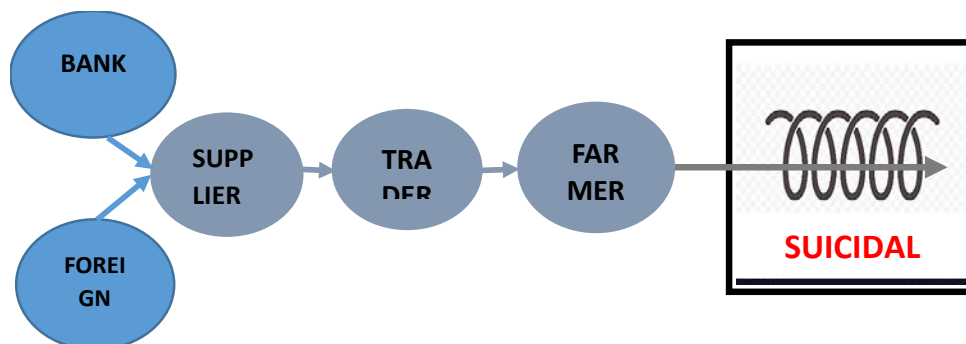
Meanwhile, the existing and acceptable laws and regulations did not apply to all operators in the sector. This led to fraudulent practices, but most dangerous and worrying is the uncontrolled smuggling inside the country of inputs often banned by law.

Unfortunately, agricultural inputs importers lacked cohesion and cooperation to avoid the disintegration of their profession and to prepare for the financial crisis of 2019. As a consequence of this crisis, the agricultural sector lost the major support for its sustainability.

The 2019 financial crisis brought a tragic end to the suicide spiral of agricultural credit secured by input importers.

All had started with the “boosting spring” promised by Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in the fall of 1992. This resulted in converting the cash sales system adopted by agricultural input companies during the 1975-1990 war into credit sales.

In the absence of a low-interest agricultural credit system, agricultural input importers provided working capital to retailers and farmers. Farmers’ poor financial management and low returns prevented them from settling their debts in full at the end of each agricultural campaign. This compelled input importer to yearly dangerously increase their credit lines to retailers and farmers: the suicide spiral.



Since all agricultural input sales were computed in US dollars, we estimated in October 2019 farmers’ debts to retailers at around \$80 million and retailers’ debts to banks and to importers at about \$60 million. Farmers, hard hit by successive bad crop seasons, were not able to repay the retailers, while the retailers were not able to repay the importers who, in turn, were not able to meet their obligations to banks and foreign suppliers.

As a result, the private sector financing system of the Lebanese agriculture collapsed, the agricultural credit chain was interrupted, and farmers were deprived of credit, which was mainly secured by agricultural inputs importer.

b- Downstream – Post harvest

Local wholesale markets that deal on consignment basis, always trade in Lebanese pounds, with deferred payment to farmers. Some wholesalers would give credit to farmers who settle with their crops. When, in October 2019, banks withheld loans from wholesalers, it created a liquidity vacuum with longer delays in payments to farmers, accompanied by some bankruptcies within wholesalers. This seriously affected the financial cycle of the food chain.

While the crippled wholesale system is still operating, it represents a major element of inefficiency and squandering of the marketing stage of Lebanese agricultural products.

The export channels, which were completely destroyed during the 1975 war, have not recovered and are operating erratically.

This represents the weakest link in the Lebanon food chain. A regretful situation since exports of agricultural products, together with exports of industry output, should be the main source of hard currency for Lebanon.

The financial failure of commercial companies and the chaos of wholesale markets seriously affect the agricultural production cycle.

Until a fixed foreign currency policy is determined by the monetary authorities, which allows importing supplies in the right conditions, and exporting Lebanese agricultural products in a way that achieves the best returns, and until the market of domestic input trade and of wholesale agricultural products is following an equitable system to all operators, the Lebanese agricultural sector shall experience a decrease in the volume of produced crops, a deterioration of crop quality, the maintaining of an increasingly ineffective marketing of crops, a decrease in farmer’s revenues but, above all, the increase of social unrest in the rural community and more rural exodus towards the misery belts around the Lebanese cities.

After this realistic and brief diagnosis of the state of the Lebanese agricultural sector, how does this sector look in numbers?

We will present for both vegetal and animal productions, the sharp and dangerous decline in the Gross National Agricultural Product (GNAP) for the year 2020 compared to its value in 2019 and 2015.

D- LEBANON'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN NUMBERS

Agricultural Production – Lebanon 2015-2020

| Evolution of Value of production 2015-2020 | | | | | | Vegetal Production |
|--|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 2020 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | |
| (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | |
| 736,872,000 | 1,113,005,000 | 1,122,440,900 | 918,020,000 | 855,850,000 | 969,810,000 | Total |
| -33% | -1% | +22% | +7% | -12% | | |

After the improvement in the output in 2018, due to the success of exports and the simultaneous rise in local prices, and after the stability of the output in 2019, a sharp decline of 33% was registered in 2020 despite the increase in the quantities produced for some crops in 2020, since the farmers gate prices were not adjusted to the exchange rate of the US\$/lira. This 33% drop between 2019 and 2020 reflects:

- A sharp decline in the value of field crops with a serious impact on food security,
- A decrease in the value of the fruit section due to the irregularity of the export process and its frugality,
- An unfortunate situation for olives, as their prices have not been adjusted to the exchange rate of the US\$/lira,
- A significant decrease in tobacco value, as its prices for farmers were not adjusted to match the depreciation of the lira,
- The trend of seriously declining vegetable output, which will get worse in 2021.

Agricultural Production – Lebanon 2015-2020

| Evolution of Value of Agricultural production in Lebanon 2015-2020 | | | | | | Animal Production |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 2020 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | |
| (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | (\$) | |
| 696,074,000 | 815,850,000 | 810,950,000 | 742,700,000 | 737,850,000 | 750,750,000 | Total animal production |
| -14% | +1% | +9% | +1% | -2% | | |

Despite the sharp decline in the yield of dairy products, fisheries and apiculture, the poultry output compensated for this decrease which finally did not much affect the animal production GNAP.

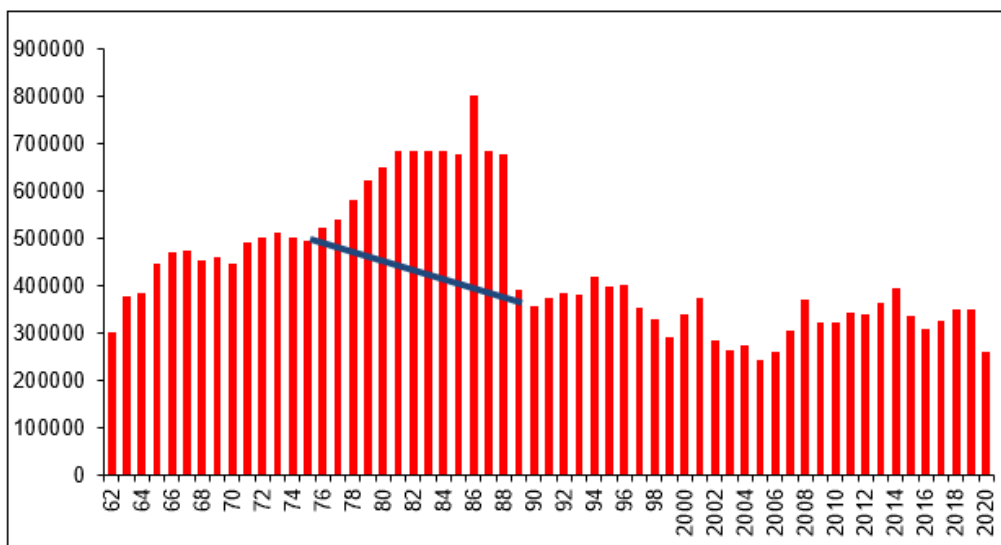
Comparing GNAP of animal productions between 2015 and 2020 shows:

- A very sharp decline in milk productions value,
- A sharp decline in meat output,
- The solidity and stability of the poultry sector despite the improper state policy towards it,
- An ongoing crisis in the fishing and fish farming sector,
- The instability of beekeeping experiencing a crisis at both production and marketing stages.

The GNAP, which has been stagnant since the end of the 1975-1990 war, has been affected since 2013 by the aggravation of the war in Syria and its negative repercussions on the Lebanese economy,

especially with the closure of the export road to our Gulf markets. It however experienced a dramatic decrease between 2019 and 2020 due to the current financial and economic crisis.

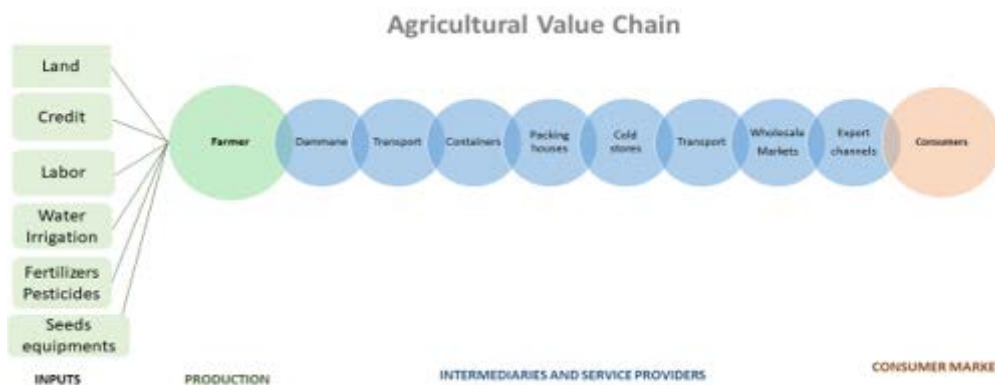
Evolution of the Lebanese agriculture during the past decades



During 2020, the agricultural sector suffered an incredible state of chaos in terms of inputs, as well as within all links of the agro-food value chain.

Despite the severe adverse conditions of 2020, the Lebanese Farmers Community proved to remain very flexible, trying to find survival solutions. This allowed the supply of domestic and export markets.

However, we have doubts about the ability of most farmers to keep finding temporary solutions to maintain their production, which might put many of them out of business while seriously affecting the agricultural sector.



If quick, realistic and practical measures are not taken to address the farmers’ problems, first at the level of production requirements, and then at the level of all activities that take place between the farmer and the consumer within the agro-food value chain, a large number of farmers will very soon be unable to continue production.

It is obvious that the reader expects solutions to address the crisis.

We consider that a correct diagnosis constitutes 90% of the solution to any problem.

As for the remaining 10%, it is embodied in a realistic action plan based on the available means with a timetable for implementation.

In order to address the current crisis in the agricultural sector, this action plan must be divided into two parts:

- An immediate emergency plan to save what could still be saved of the next agricultural season 2021-2022,

- A medium and long-term plan that deals first with the rural community and the corresponding agricultural economy which will ensure sustainable development for this community.

All this requires a political decision and professional and honest leaders.

E- AN IMMEDIATE CONTINGENCY PLAN

First: stop the bleeding!

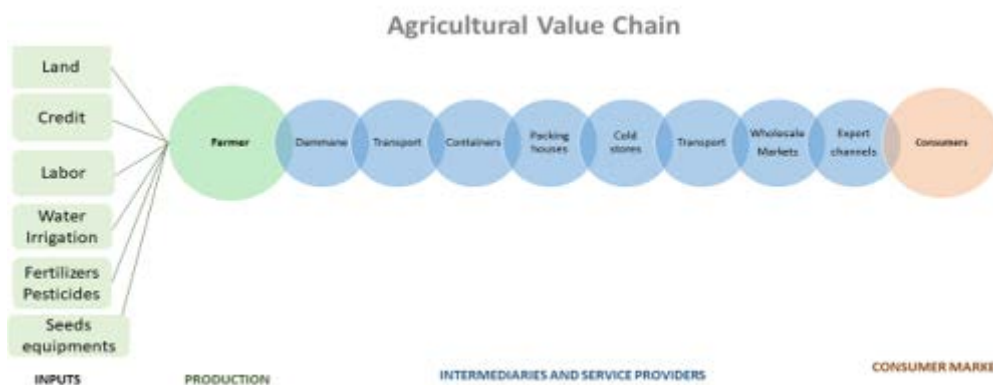
When a patient suffers from severe bleeding, doctors start by urgently acting to stop the bleeding by all available means. And only then they treat the chronic disease.

Otherwise, they expose the patient to inevitable death, and there is no need to treat his chronic disease after that.

The bleeding that aborted Lebanese agriculture since 1970 is mainly due to the behaviour of State officials, legislators, enforcers, and administrators.

And if we admit that the agricultural sector has the priority among other sectors in terms of a development vision combined with a realistic plan that can be implemented, and of a financial support and effective sustained backing, it became clear to us that State officials have always done the opposite. This led to the lethal haemorrhage suffered by the Lebanese agricultural sector, masked by plans that lack realism, and by misleading official statements and by attitudes that evade responsibility and accountability and that continuously blame others.

The links constituting the food chain that express the stages of the agricultural economy between the producer and the consumer require a knowledgeable, organized, controlling, capable, and resolute authority. Otherwise, the law of the jungle would prevail, and this is what Lebanese agriculture is experiencing today. It is in a state of clinical death. supervised by a team of ignorant doctors who are distracted by their personal interests.



Practically speaking, it means taking a political decision to immediately cancel dozens of sterile projects of the type that have yielded nothing during the three decades of counterfeit reconstruction years, and which the governing officials invoke to cover up their personal illicit activities.

And if we acknowledge the current meagre financial means of Lebanon, and while there is no room to go into details, following are the principles that should lead to the success of this rescue plan.

1- First: at the level of addressing the crisis

The immediate solution to save the Lebanese agriculture would be through establishment an emergency operations room whose main tasks are to redirect the investment of the current and expected foreign aid towards projects that address productive farmers supporting them to reactivate a feasible and upward agricultural activity.

This operation should group experts with field experience in Lebanese agronomics and economics fully independent of all political groups that exploited the State institutions and its budgets for their own private interests, headed by a person who is recognized for his integrity and deep knowledge of the affairs of the agricultural and rural sector and who has the skills to manage a work team to achieve its goals.

Mobilizing the skills that currently exist in the public sector (and among them are skilled and honourable specialists who have suffered from successive reconstruction governments and have not been able to unleash their energies), as well as hiring skilled persons of the private sector willing to contribute effectively to the success of this rescue operation

2- Second: at the operational level

Securing all agricultural quality inputs needed by the targeted crops, according to agronomical requirements, made available on time with a simple accurate and controlled distribution procedure to elected farmers.

Immediate activation and monitoring of agricultural product marketing channels (domestic wholesale markets and export circuits) in a way that guarantees a fair income for farmers and reduces waste resulting from the marketing system.

But foremost, stop wasting donations and loans in any project that is not in the immediate interest to restore a profitable agricultural production activity by capable farmers. Addressing poor farming communities will be simultaneous but shall require different supporting means.

F- A MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM PLAN

Facing this very bleak situation of the Lebanese agriculture and of its rural world, which in our opinion, constitutes a fundamental existential element of the Lebanese society, and in response to those who still doubt about the importance of the agricultural sector, claiming that it is not competitive, we believe it necessary to remind **the four missions of agriculture in Lebanon:** at the level of the Lebanese Society, at the level of the National Economy, at the level of Food security and at the level of the environment.

1- At the level of the Lebanese Society

In our technologically advanced world and compared to the industrial and service sectors, only a viable agriculture, optimizing land and sea exploitation, can aspire to establish a loving and loyal relationship between Lebanese citizens and their land.

Moreover, agriculture and its rural world are the two pillars of the Lebanese culture, preserving its heritage deeply entrenched in its land.

Finally, the rural community is still an inexhaustible source of active human citizens willing to work for the sake of the country.

2- At the National Economy level

If the Agricultural GDP does not exceed 4% of the Lebanese GDP of 2019, we should remind that the industrial and service activities that would not exist in the absence of an agricultural production, represent the equivalent of 8 to 10% of the national. This relatively small total of 12 to 14% related to agriculture and para-agriculture activities is the result of the Lebanese reconstruction governments neglecting (if not harming) the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors during 30 post-war years. The inevitability of revitalizing these two sectors will restore their contribution to the national GDP to the level of 25%, which confirms the importance of the agricultural sector within the national economy.

3- At the Food Security level

Since the disastrous famine of 1917, that killed half of the Lebanese population, the importance of food security has never emerged as it is today. The studies of CREAL indicate that if the agricultural sector is properly managed, Lebanon should enjoy a balanced agricultural trade balance. But the problem lies in the agro-food trade balance, i.e. manufactured foodstuffs, most of which are imported, where the deficit is equal to 80%. The revitalization of a once prosperous agro-food industry should substantially decrease this 80% deficit. This confirms the importance of the agriculture sector in ensuring food security.

4- At the Environment level

A developed agricultural sector, securing proper income allowing farmers, breeders and fishermen to live decently, would guarantee that these three categories of citizens, properly trained and empowered, become the best guardians of the Lebanese environment.

5- Setting up the medium and long-term plan

If we understand the four missions of the Lebanese agriculture and adopt them to build a balanced country between its rural and urban societies, both of which enjoy their own specificities within the Lebanese nation, and while we urgently would set and invigorate a contingency plan to save what could be saved from the 2021-2022 agricultural campaign, we must develop a framework complying with Lebanon's characteristics and aiming at reinventing the Lebanese agriculture, securing its sustainable development and leading it to build a thriving rural economy which would ensure a decent life for the rural population, contribute to supporting the national economy and ensure food and environment security.

The first step of the medium to long-term plan is to agree on the social options, i.e. what is the rural society that we want as a solid base for a developed Lebanon?

Accordingly, realistic economic options are drawn, i.e. what is the most effective economic model for the development of this rural society, which will also ensure food and environmental security for the country?

Based on the economic options, a medium-term development plan is drawn up that includes integrated projects to be implemented according to a clear timetable guaranteed by an "Agricultural Law" that will serve as the guiding framework for successive governments and to all departments of the Lebanese Administration.

Finally, an agricultural policy is drawn up that will be the guiding frame for ministries and departments to coordinate and monitor the implementation of projects and assess their impact.

All of the above medium to long-term plan can only be accomplished by starting with a political decision agreed upon by all the components of the country, and by professional and honest leaders who are ready to devote their activity and focus it exclusively to the service of Lebanon.

But this also requires knowledge. Lebanon, which had become a beacon of culture and knowledge, before the terrible war which destroyed it starting 1975, has suffered since the early seventies of last century from a rising level of ignorance adopted and even encouraged by the sassy and pretentious rulers of the 30 years' reconstruction era, until we became the country of ignorance, of denial and of imposing more ignorance.

What is demanded is a strong and refreshing awakening in terms of knowledge. This requires a serious effort that extends over several generations. This education and research mission falls on the shoulders of universities, vocational schools, research institutes, and unions.

If we determine what we want and what is good for our country, if we agree on appropriate social and economic options, supported by a medium-term plan that includes integrated projects within the framework of an agricultural law and we execute the projects according to a strict agricultural policy, then trust can be rebuilt.

After that, I can assure you that Lebanon will face no problem in securing the appropriate financial and networking support from its emigrates and from the rest of the world in order to put back the country on the path of development.

G- CONCLUSION

Unless we recognize that for the past fifty years our country has been set on a path of underdevelopment when it was exploited by a small group of ruthless warlords and opportunistic billionaires, while maintaining superficial manifestations of “culture and education”, we shall never be able to move in the opposite direction of exploitation and to stop the increasing level of ignorance among our people and we will never be able to build a developed country.

Lebanon is a very unique country in the Middle East. By its geographic location, through its climate, through its unique population mix, Lebanon has all the ingredients to succeed in achieving its development and returning to the forefront of nations. Because of its genuine components, our country has never reached the point of no return. Therefore, it is not too late to start the rebuilding workshop in Lebanon. It is our wish that all those with wisdom, knowledge, and skills cooperate to return Lebanon to the path of sustainable development.
