



THE IMPACT OF THE SYRIA CRISIS ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS IN LEBANON

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About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH's mission is to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter @REACH_info.

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, more than 1.1 million Syrians have sought refuge from war and violence in Lebanon, a number which represents more than a quarter of the total population of Lebanon.¹ These refugees are living in the poorest sections of Lebanese communities and in some cases outnumbering host communities. The large number of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon can be attributed to the long-standing cultural, economic, political, social/kinship ties between the two countries; and in addition the long, and mostly porous border separating the two countries. Additionally, Lebanon hosts approximately 17,000 Lebanese returnees² and 53,000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS).³

The influx of such high numbers of displaced persons has had a serious impact on the political and socio-economic situation of the country contributing to increased instability throughout Lebanon. While the situation and needs of displaced Syrians have been examined and assessed in depth over the last few years, the impact of the Syria crisis on host communities, and specifically Lebanese, has yet to be examined in detail.

Displaced populations are competing with Lebanese citizens for jobs, markets, access to public services and infrastructure, in particular for already scarce and fragile natural resources such as land, water and forests. In parallel, rents are increasing, jobs are harder to find and public services are overburdened. The fact that the labour market absorption capacity of the country is diminishing rapidly is of particular concern in areas in which some of the most economically marginalised and vulnerable Lebanese communities reside. Increased competition between local workers and displaced populations could result in reduced household incomes amongst host communities. Decreases in wages and increases in expenditures are also potential threats to the food security situation of host communities. These issues will likely push poor and very poor households of the host communities into asset depletion, poverty, increased vulnerability to future shocks, and ultimately affecting relations with displaced Syrians.

The impact of the crisis on Lebanon's rural economy and agricultural sector is another concern. Although the role of agriculture in the national economy is declining in relative terms, it still plays an important role in the rural economy and has a significant impact on rural livelihoods. In 2011, agriculture accounted for 4% of Lebanon's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employed 6% of the labour force (2009) with wide regional variations (up to 25%), and accounted for 15% of total exports and imports in 2012. Moreover, as far as the geographical areas most affected by the Syrian Crisis are concerned i.e. Northern Lebanon and the Bekaa agriculture contribute up to 80% of the local GDP. However, there is little information available on how rural communities are coping and on how the agricultural sector is affected, in terms of both livelihood generation and food production.

Therefore, it was crucial to collect reliable quantitative information on the livelihood and food security situation of host communities to enable the Government of Lebanon (GoL), United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors to implement efficient and effective food security and livelihoods programming in Lebanon.

¹[UNHCR data portal](#) (Last accessed on 1 November 2014).

²IOM, The Situation and Needs of Lebanese Returnees from Syria (December 2013).

³[UNRWA website](#) (Last accessed on 1 November 2014).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), in partnership with REACH conducted the Lebanon Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment, aiming at filling this information gap. This national level assessment was launched in August 2014. In parallel, a secondary data review was conducted to serve as baseline information: its key findings are outlined in the present report. This secondary data review collates the most up to date available information on the agriculture, food security and livelihoods (with a focus on rural livelihoods) situation of host communities in Lebanon and reveals the lack of quantitative information on these topics.

List of Acronyms

AHZ	Agricultural Homogenous Zones
AOGs	Armed Opposition Groups
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
EMMA	Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Lebanon
IAMP	Inter Agency Mapping Platform
ILO	International Labour Organization
IS	Informal Settlements
LBP	Lebanese Pound
MCM	Million Cubic Meter
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
RRP6	Regional Response Plan 6
TADs	Transboundary Animal Diseases
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WW	Waste Water

Geographical Classifications

Operational Area	<p>Refers to UNHCR regional operational areas in Lebanon. There are five UNHCR sub-office regions in Lebanon: Akkar, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon/Beirut, Tripoli T5 and South.</p> <p>The operational area of Akkar coincides with the governorate of Akkar, and the operational area of Bekaa comprises the districts of Baalbek, El Hermel, Rachaya, West Bekaa and Zahle. However, the operational area of Mount Lebanon/Beirut includes the governorates of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Tripoli T5 operational area refers to the districts of Tripoli, Batroun, Bcharre, El Minieh-Dennieh, Koura and Zgharta. The South operational area includes the governorates of South and El Nabatieh.</p>
Governorate/ <i>Mohafazat</i>	<p>Largest administrative division below the national level. Lebanon has eight governorates: Bekaa, Baalbek / Hermel, Beirut, El Nabatieh, Mount Lebanon, North, Akkar and South.</p>
District/<i>Caza</i>	<p>Second largest administrative division below the national level. Each governorate is divided into districts or <i>cazas</i>. Lebanon has 26 districts.</p>

Cadastre/ Cadastral zone	Geographic classification which are below the level of district/ <i>caza</i> . Cadastral is not an administrative division and is used solely by humanitarian practitioners in Lebanon. Cadastrals may encompass one or more contiguous villages/neighbourhoods.
Municipality	Smallest administrative division in Lebanon. Municipalities serve rural and urban areas. There are 1025 municipalities in Lebanon.

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INTRODUCTION

As per the latest available registration data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1,122,745 Syrians are currently registered as refugees with UNHCR in Lebanon; a number which represents more than a quarter of the total population of Lebanon.⁴ These displaced populations are living in the poorest sections of Lebanese communities, and in some cases outnumbering local citizens.. The large number of Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon can be attributed to the long standing cultural, economic and political ties between the two countries; and, in addition, the vast and mostly unsecured border separating the two countries. Additionally, according to the latest available figures Lebanon hosts approximately 17,000 Lebanese returnees⁵ and 53,000 PRS.⁶

Despite the large number of displaced persons in the country, no large official camps have been established to cope with the massive influx of displaced Syrians, as a result of a long-standing GoL policy. Due to a lack of alternatives, the majority of displaced populations are at present settling in host communities; a situation that will continue for the foreseeable future. This is likely to contribute to increased instability throughout Lebanon as displaced population are competing with Lebanese citizens for jobs, access to public services and infrastructure, in particular for already scarce and fragile natural resources such as land, water and forests.

With the continuing influx of displaced Syrians into Lebanon, **the labour market absorption capacity of the country is rapidly diminishing**, particularly in the areas where some of the most economically marginalised and vulnerable Lebanese communities reside. Increased competition between local workers and displaced Syrians has likely resulted in reduced household incomes amongst host communities.

The Syria crisis is also affecting food availability due to an increased demand for food and reduced food imports from Syria.⁷

The agricultural sector is also threatened, in terms of both livelihood opportunities and food production capacity. Although the role of agriculture in the national economy is declining in relative terms, it still plays an important role in the rural economy and has a significant impact on rural livelihoods. As far as the geographical areas most affected by the Syrian Crisis are concerned — i.e. Northern Lebanon and the Bekaa — agriculture is contributing up to 80% of the local GDP in some areas. The economic repercussions and the unstable security situation have particularly impacted the agricultural economy and its food production capacities, especially in the most affected geographical areas of Northern and Eastern Lebanon — and even more in the border areas of Hermel, Baalbeck and Akkar where many farmers cannot even access their agricultural land. Farmers, who have traditionally relied on agricultural inputs and services at subsidised/cheaper rates from Syria, now face a skyrocketing increase in input/production costs and are struggling in keeping up production. Furthermore, following the severe drought in 2014, many farmers and pastoralists have reduced the size of their livestock herds due to escalating feed prices and lack of natural grazing resources. .

This is why the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6) includes among its objectives short term support to Lebanese host communities: “Reinforce the resilience of host communities, through support to basic

⁴[UNHCR data portal](#) (Last accessed on 1 November 2014).

⁵IOM, note 2 *supra*

⁶[UNRWA website](#) (Last accessed on 1 November 2014).

⁷WFP, Syrian Refugees and Food Insecurity in Lebanon, Secondary Literature and Data Desk Review (March 2013).

services benefiting both host populations and refugees in urban and rural areas in the immediate term, increasing awareness of, equitable access to, and the quality of such services.”⁸

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) formulated a Plan of Action (PoA) for 2014-2018 for agriculture and food security programme, which is part of FAO Sub regional Strategy “Resilient Livelihoods for Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security in Areas Affected by the Syria Crisis”. This PoA feeds into the Stabilization Plan led by the World Bank and aligns with existing regional frameworks addressing the Syria crisis, such as the RRP6.

In August 2014, REACH was contracted by FAO to conduct a national level assessment on the food security and livelihoods situation of Lebanese host communities. This **Food Security and Livelihoods assessment** aims to provide humanitarian and development actors with baseline information in order to establish a comprehensive strategy for food security and livelihoods interventions targeting host communities. It also aims to allow the Ministry of Agriculture to better understand the impact of short and medium term interventions conducted in support of Lebanese host communities. In addition, collected data will allow for the creation of information products that will serve as an advocacy tool when humanitarian and development actors approach donors for funds to conduct host community food security and livelihoods interventions.

In parallel of this assessment, secondary data currently available on the impact of the Syria crisis on food security, agriculture and livelihoods in Lebanon — with a special focus on Lebanese host communities — was collated. Available secondary data was collected by REACH through humanitarian / development coordination platforms, FAO, the MoA, and the interagency data sharing platform. The present report outlines the key findings of this secondary data review.

⁸ UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Plan 6: Strategic Overview (2014)

FINDINGS

Livelihoods

This section presents the main information available on livelihoods, and the impact that the Syria crisis has had on the labour market in Lebanon. The main findings from the secondary data analysis on these topics are:

- The main employment sectors in Lebanon are **services, financial intermediation, insurance and trade**.
- **The informal economy is estimated to contribute 30% of GDP** and is characterized by low wages and weak social protection.
- Based on a 2013 ILO survey, the Syrian refugee labour force 15 years and above is estimated at about 239,700 in mid-2014, accounting for about 14 per cent of Lebanon's total labour force
- with a particular impact on the employment opportunities of Lebanese women, youth and unskilled workers.
- Reports found that **competition between Lebanese workers and Syrian workers is high**, as Syrians work for lower salaries, longer hours and without social security benefits.
- **The tourism/hospitality, real estate and agriculture sectors** have been particularly affected by the Syria crisis.

Overview of Employment in Lebanon

According to the Multi Sector Needs Analysis (MSNA) Phase One report⁹, **the main employment sectors in Lebanon are: services; financial intermediation; insurance and trade**. The informal economy (the segment of an economy that is not taxed) is estimated to contribute 30% of GDP. The MSNA highlighted that an estimated 40% of employees work in the informal sector, which is characterised by low wages and weak social protection.

The Lebanese labour market is characterised by an underrepresentation of women and youth.

Indeed, in 2011, only 24% of women were economically active, while 70% of men were. Child bearing, cultural practices and household responsibilities can explain women's low activity rates. Lebanese youth below the age of 25 years also suffer from weak integration into the labour market. In 2010, an estimated 23% of the youth was unemployed, compared to 9% of the total population.¹⁰

In terms of income, a 2011 Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) Labour Market Study¹¹ among 4,000 households showed that the average monthly wage in the formal sector ranges from 288,000 LPB (USD 190) in the agricultural sector to 965,000 LPB (USD 640) in the transport, post and telecom sector. However, a large part of the economic activities take place in the informal sector and as a result, these findings are not a reflection of all wages in Lebanon.

In a 2012 decree¹², the minimum monthly wage was set at LBP 675,000 (USD 450) and the minimum daily wage at LBP 30,000 (USD 20). However, not everyone is covered by this decree: migrant workers fall outside minimum wage regulations. Differences in salaries paid to men and women have been reported. During the 2011 CAS Labour Market study, females' median monthly

⁹ UNHCR, Inter Agency Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) Phase One Report: Secondary Data Review and Analysis (May 2014)

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹CAS, The Labour Market in Lebanon (October 2011)

¹²Decree number 7426 dated 25 January 2012

salary was found to be 50,000 LBP lower than their males' counterpart¹³. Regional disparities with regard to salaries were also noticed; Beirut was ranked with higher salaries in general for both women and men, while average salaries were generally lower in the South.¹⁴

Impact of the Syria Crisis on the Labour Market

Impact on Employment

In September 2013, the World Bank projected that 1.3 million displaced Syrians would have entered Lebanon by the end of 2013¹⁵. As a result of this influx, the World Bank expected a 30 to 50% increase in labour supply, which would have a particular impact the employment opportunities for Lebanese women, youth and unskilled workers. The overall unemployment rate was projected to increase by up to 10% points. An additional 220,000-324,000 Lebanese, primarily unskilled youth, were expected to become unemployed, thus doubling the unemployment rate to over 20%. . In contrast to the World Bank estimates, projections, the ILO estimated the Syrian refugee labour force 15 years and above estimated at about 239,700 in mid-2014, accounting for about 14 per cent of Lebanon's total labour force¹⁶. Of these, an estimated 160,500 were employed, equal to about one in ten of all employed persons in the country.

A noticeable consequence of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese labour market is the increased competition for jobs. Indeed, the competition between Lebanese workers and Syrian workers is high in certain sub-sectors and job categories, as Syrians generally work for lower salaries, longer hours and without social security benefits. Additionally, the crisis in Syria and the influx of displaced Syrians are perceived to have caused a decrease in income.¹⁷ This is leading to increased hostility between the two communities. However, a part of the host communities – primarily landlords, owners of enterprises and other members of the Lebanese middle to upper class – are actually benefitting from the influx, as Lebanese employers are able to hire low wage Syrian labour.¹⁸

Affected Sectors

The crisis in Syria and instability in Lebanon has affected economic performance, particularly in three sectors: tourism/hospitality, real estate and the agricultural sector.

Firstly, the tourism and hospitality industries have been significantly affected by the regional turmoil, as many Arab tourists who used to travel to Lebanon through Syria have avoided coming to Lebanon altogether.¹⁹ In addition, visitors from other parts of the world are also hesitant to travel to Lebanon, as they perceive the country as unsafe. This has resulted in a total tourism decrease of 17% over the period 2011-2012.²⁰

Secondly, as highlighted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the real estate sector has also been negatively affected by the Syrian crisis. Indeed, the unstable security situation has pushed residents and investors to adopt a wait-and-see attitude and reconsider their investment needs.²¹ As a result, the property market activity has reduced significantly, with the total number of sales transactions decreasing by 7% in the first half of 2013, and the demand for residential lodgings

¹³UNHCR, note 10 *supra*

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵World Bank, Lebanon - Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict (September 2013)

¹⁶ International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, Assessment of The Impact of Syrian Refugees In Lebanon and Their Employment Profile (2013)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸UNHCR, note 10 *supra*

¹⁹ International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, note 17 *supra*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

being concentrated in smaller, more affordable apartments, usually in the form of rent. This has put upward pressure on rents and has increased prices enormously, given the lack of housing supply.²²

Finally, the agriculture sector, particularly the export-oriented fruit and vegetable sub-sector, has been severely impacted by the loss of overland export routes to the Gulf countries and to Iraq through Syria. In addition, farmers are affected by imports of cheaper products from Syria, particularly eggs during peak season production.²³ The costs of agricultural inputs have increased as before the crisis a number of Lebanese farmers close to the borders benefited from lower priced imports or subsidised Syrian inputs through smuggling. In addition, FAO highlights that the influx of displaced Syrians in large numbers has result in accelerated degradation of forest and water resources, in particular for rural communities of northern Lebanon and irrigated farmers in Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.²⁴ The subsequent sections on food security and agriculture further explore the available information on the impact of the Syria crisis on food production (section on Food Security) and agricultural livelihoods (section on Agriculture). On the other hand, the substantial increase in the demand for food due to the influx of the displaced Syrians is having a positive impact on profitability of agricultural commodities aimed for the domestic market, including dairy, poultry and vegetables. Moreover, the increased availability of agricultural labour has also contributed to maintaining relatively low labour costs for Lebanese farmers.

²² Ibid.

²³ UNHCR, note 10 *supra*

²⁴ Ibid.

Food Security

As defined in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO World Food Summit, 1996). Intrinsic to this definition are the four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability of supply. This section presents the main information available on the impact of the Syria crisis on these pillars. The main findings from the secondary data analysis on these topics are:

- **Availability:** The agricultural supply chain has been disrupted due to several factors (change in trade patterns, farmers having problems accessing their lands, increase in agricultural input prices...) As a result, several crop and livestock production activities are affected, therefore affecting food availability in addition to the disruption of food imports
- **Access:** The Syria crisis is increasing the vulnerability of host communities due to rising unemployment and decreasing wages. As a result, economic access to food could be compromised. Host communities are therefore resorting to food and asset based coping strategies, such as relying on personal / family savings, increasing their debt, or reducing the number / size of meals eaten by day.
- **Utilisation:** Overall, the secondary data review revealed a lack of information on food utilisation (changes in nutrition, dietary consumption...) of Lebanese host communities. However, reports reveal that food safety is a major concern in Lebanon.
- **Stability of supply:** Volatility in domestic food prices and the unstable security situation of the country are factors negatively affecting the stability of supply.

Food Availability

Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.²⁵ Before the crisis, Syria's neighbouring countries were relatively food secure in terms of "food availability". Available secondary data shows that the Syria crisis is disrupting the agricultural supply chain, and therefore threatening availability. The agricultural supply chain is affected on several levels: trade patterns are changing; farmers are having problems with access and availability of land; the cost of agricultural inputs is increasing; and livestock raisers are facing challenges of their own.

Changing Trade Patterns

Before the crisis, Syria had a unique position as a trade hub in the Middle East, being a port of access to Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Russia and Turkey for Middle Eastern countries and vice versa. Syria was a major trading partner for all its neighbouring countries. For example, Lebanon used to ship around 20% of its agricultural exports to Syria. However, **the crisis has disrupted agriculture and food trade in the region**, with negative consequences on producers and other stakeholders along the agriculture and food commodity chains. As mentioned earlier, Lebanon was traditionally a net food importer from Syria. However, the country posted its first food trade surplus with Syria in 2012.²⁶

According to FAO, four major developments in agricultural trade flows were observed in neighbouring countries in 2011 and 2012: First, there has been a decline in total agricultural trade; second, bilateral agricultural trade with Syria and in transit trade through Syria has

²⁵ FAO Food Security Information for Action, An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security - Practical guides (2008)

²⁶ World Bank, note 16 *supra*

considerably dropped; third, there has been a significant change in trading routes in the region; finally, informal trade across the borders with Syria has increased.²⁷

Problems of Access and Availability of Land

Lebanon's agricultural production has been affected by the poor security situation and conflicts in the areas bordering Syria. Some Lebanese border communities cannot always access their farmland or move freely during important stages of crop development and harvest.²⁸ This has resulted in some farmers having to abandon or sell their land, or relocate internally in Akkar notably in Wadi Khaled and Bekaa towns like Aarsal and Tfail. In El Qaa, for example, a remote area of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley near the Syrian border, local farmers say that many have abandoned their farms, in some cases leaving their equipment and running when they see Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) approaching.²⁹

A 2012 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rapid assessment of the impact of the Syria crisis on the socio-economic economic situation in North and Bekaa also found that landmines on the Lebanese-Syrian borders were depriving Lebanese from accessing their agricultural lands and grazing fields.³⁰

The assessment warned that "as the number of displaced Syrians continues to rise, further Informal Settlements (IS) growth will inevitably encroach on agricultural lands and put those lands temporarily out of production³¹. However, it should be noted that most of the land where IS are established is rented from private Lebanese landowners thus providing a new source of revenues for these individuals.

The growing number of IS) is also affecting land use, as displaced Syrians who live in IS occupy more land than those who live outside IS.³² Inter-Agency Mapping Platform (IAMP) data found that the largest concentration of IS are located in Bekaa (834 IS) followed by the North (481), which represent Lebanon's largest agriculture regions (see Map 1 below).

²⁷ Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), Impact of the conflict on Syrian economy and livelihoods (July 2013).

²⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Agriculture Livelihoods and Food Security Impact Assessment and Response Plan for the Syria Crisis in the Neighbouring Countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (March 2013).

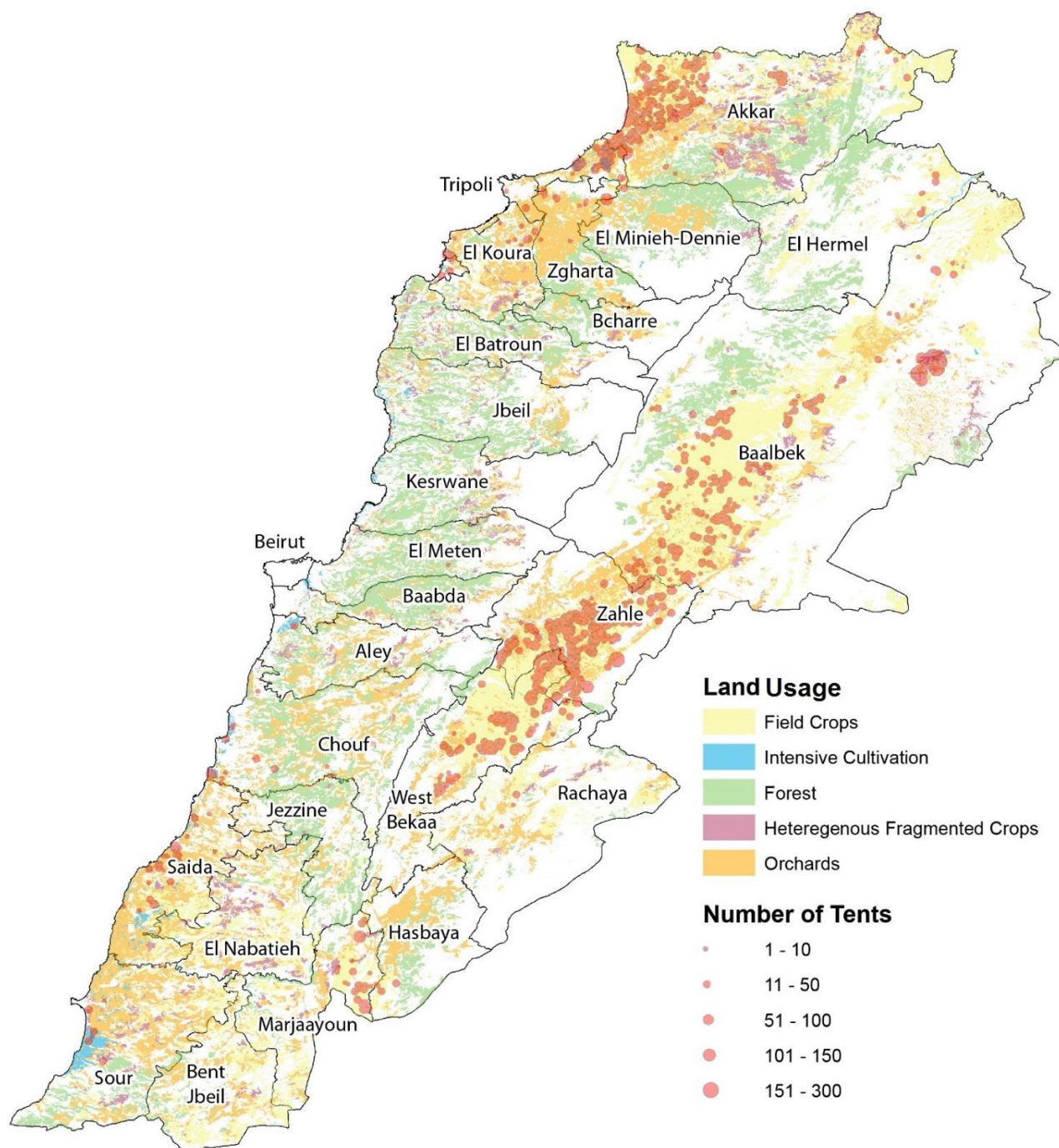
²⁹ IRIN News, [Syria crisis puts Lebanese farmers at risk](#) (June 2013).

³⁰ UNDP, Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Crisis on Socio-Economic situation in North and Bekaa (2012).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Oxfam, Survey on the Livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (2013).

Map 1: Distribution of Informal Settlements on Agricultural Areas in Lebanon³³



³³ Informal Settlements – Interagency Mapping Platform, Land Usage – Ministry of Agriculture

Increased Cost of Agricultural Inputs

The Syrian crisis has had a major impact on imports of agricultural inputs and their cost. Before the crisis, Lebanese farmers, particularly in the border regions, used to treat their crops with Syrian products that they had bought through informal trade or “smuggling” routes. Indeed, Syrian products were cheaper as a result of heavy subsidies by the Syrian government. Because of the crisis, Lebanese farmers reported that their production costs have increased, as they have been forced to buy more expensive Lebanese or imported products.³⁴

For example, in the Bekaa Valley and Northern Lebanon, most agricultural inputs — such as veterinary medicines, pesticides, seeds, fertilizers, forage, medications for beekeeping, — used to be imported at low prices from Syria. Due to the conflict within Syria and the border insecurity situation, the flow of these agricultural inputs has been disrupted. This has resulted in significant shortages in areas like Akkar and Hermel, forcing farmers to look for alternative sources of inputs at much higher costs.

Challenges to Livestock Production

Lebanese herders face enormous obstacles that are threatening their livestock production. Firstly, feed supplies are decreasing while market prices for roughage and concentrate are increasing. For example, the price of animal feed, previously purchased at lower prices through informal trade or smuggling from Syria, has almost doubled.

Secondly, veterinary visits and drug supply costs are also increasing, compounded by shortages in veterinary services. The crisis has caused a breakdown of field veterinary services, such as animal disease surveillance, vaccination programmes and quarantine facilities in Syria³⁵. Livestock vaccination programs against Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (TADs) and zoonoses have been put to a halt for the last year and a half in Syria³⁶. Consequently, unvaccinated animals are now entering the Lebanese territory and mixing with its livestock, as displaced Syrians fleeing across the porous border arrive with their herds. The number of animals estimated to have crossed from Syria into Lebanon since the crisis began is equivalent to roughly 10% of Lebanon’s dairy cattle and 30% of its small ruminants. This represents a significant health concern, both for Lebanese citizens in affected areas and livestock.

All of the above factors have forced many smallholder farmers to sell a portion of their animals, in most cases at about 40-50% of their normal market price³⁷.

Depleting Natural Resources

Before the Syrian crisis, Lebanon’s water resources provided the country with a comparative advantage vis-à-vis its neighbouring countries. Figure 1 below, from the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), provides an indication of the repartition of water consumption across the different sectors as of 2010.

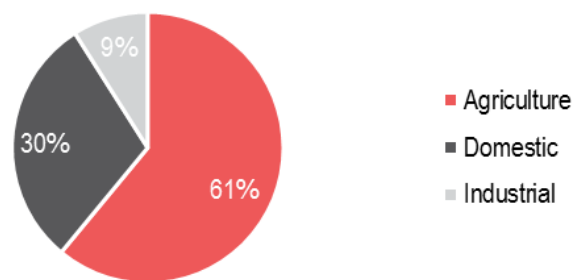
³⁴ FAO, Lebanon - Plan of Action for Resilient Livelihoods (2014-2018): Addressing the Impacts of the Syria Crisis & Food Security Response and Stabilization of Rural Livelihoods

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ K. Shaheen, ‘[Syria security breakdown fueling diseases among livestock](#)’ (8 November 2013), accessed November 2014

³⁷ FAO, note 36 *supra*

Figure 1: Water consumption across different sectors (MoEW 2010)



However, with the crisis, this resource is being put under strain due to an increase in demand. Indeed, according to FAO, there is evidence of natural resource depletion, water pollution, land degradation and the habitat destruction of indigenous fauna and flora especially in those areas where large displaced settlements are established such as the northern coast of Akkar. Displaced population's livestock is depleting the already degraded rangelands of northern Bekaa. In addition, the influx of displaced people stimulates a higher demand for fuel wood, particularly in winter. There has been a deterioration of both potable and irrigation water quality. Furthermore, the amount of water used has increased due to both the consumption by displaced population and the Lebanese growers trying to meet higher local demand for food commodities.

According to a report by Blominvest Bank, water demand was expected to surge to around 43-70 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) by the end of 2014. This constitutes an average of 8-12 per cent increase of the national water demand. Different regions were starting to show drops between 1 and 20 meters in groundwater levels of several wells and it was determined that Bekaa was the most overstressed region on the increase of national water demand.³⁸ In a country where farmers still use highly inefficient irrigation techniques — such as flood irrigation methods fed by open water channels — the depletion of water resources is a threat to agricultural production³⁹.

The Blominvest Bank Report also highlighted that Waste Water (WW) management was another urgent issue that needed to be addressed, as levels of WW were getting higher along with the increasing number of displaced populations. The main consequence of untreated WW is an increase in pollution levels which will likely lead to the contamination of agricultural crops, fish and wildlife populations.

Access to Food

Access to food is defined as having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. It includes physical and economic access to food. The secondary data review found that the Syria crisis is threatening Lebanese host communities' economic access to food due to increasing poverty, unemployment, competition for jobs and decreasing wages.

Vulnerable Lebanese Host Communities

At present, due to a long standing GoL policy, the majority of populations displaced from Syria are located outside official camps⁴⁰, and are therefore hosted by communities themselves. With this in mind, Lebanese host communities are being put under direct pressure as a result of the Syria crisis.

³⁸ Blominvest Bank, Syrians' Misery Burdens the Precarious Environmental State of Lebanon (October 2014).

³⁹ MoE/EU/UNDP, Lebanon Environmental Assessment of the Syrian Conflict and Priority Interventions (2014).

⁴⁰ Although many Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) have moved into official UNRWA refugee camps.

Specifically, Lebanese host communities are experiencing an increased cost of shelter, insufficiency of available household resources to meet needs, and increased competition in the labour market.⁴¹ Although the precise impact of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanese host communities has not yet been examined, the Syrian conflict is, according to the World Bank⁴², expected to force an additional 170 000 Lebanese individuals into poverty and increase the vulnerability of the existing poor community⁴³ by the end of 2014.⁴⁴

This will compromise this portion of the population's economic access to food. Moreover, small-scale farmers and herders across Lebanon — particularly in North and the Bekaa — are among the most vulnerable groups. The absence of effective social safety nets further contributes to the vulnerability of the population affected by the Syrian crisis.

Increasing Competition and Unemployment

Prior to the Syria crisis, labour market conditions in Lebanon were already unfavourable, as it was plagued by numerous challenges such as high unemployment rates, mismatches between labour supply and demand, and a prevalence of both low quality and low-productivity jobs.⁴⁵

The aforementioned livelihood challenges are being accentuated by the Syria crisis and may result in a higher proportion of Lebanese population being forced into situations of poverty and vulnerability. On the one hand, this has helped a few productive sectors such as construction and large-scale agriculture (with their lower salary demands), but on the other hand, it has created a displacement of traditional labour sources.

Competition for agricultural jobs is heightened by the fact that agriculture is also one of the major livelihood sectors in Syria. According to UNHCR, more than 10% of displaced Syrians were involved in agriculture-related professions in Syria.⁴⁶ The ILO also pointed out that Syrian workers are mostly unskilled workers with low educational attainment and willing to work under difficult conditions.⁴⁷ According to ILO, this threatens Lebanese workers mainly in the construction, agricultural and, to a lesser extent, services sector.

⁴¹REACH / OCHA, Informing Targeted Host Community Programming: Preliminary Analysis for Sector Planning (October 2014)

⁴² World Bank, note 16 *supra*

⁴³ Prior to the crisis, a large proportion of the Lebanese population was already considered vulnerable. In fact, nearly 1 million Lebanese were estimated by the GoL to be living in poverty (having access to less than USD 4 per day).

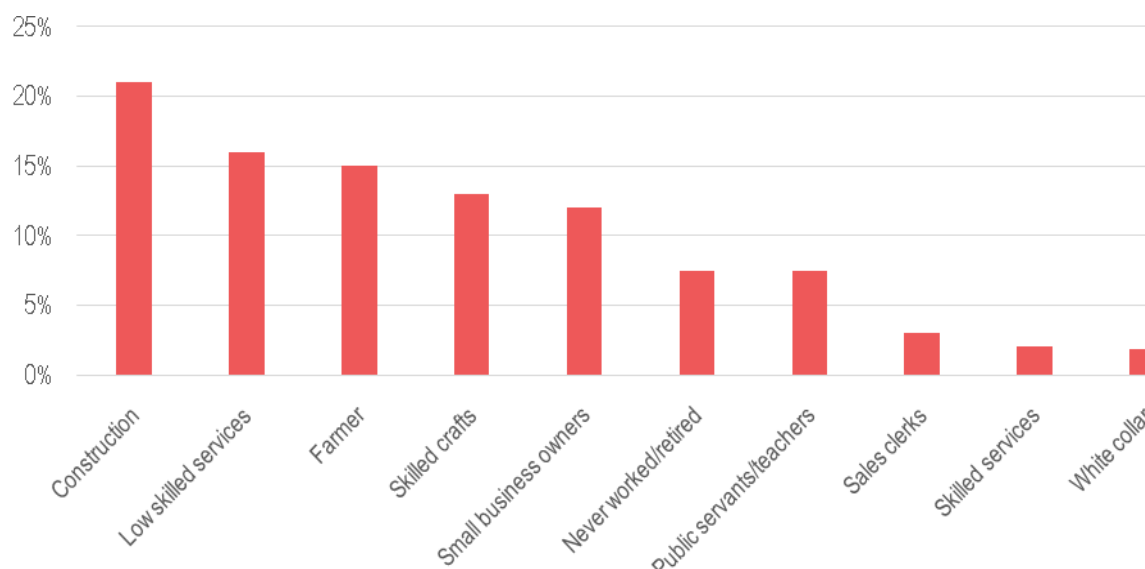
⁴⁴ FAO, note 36 *supra*

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council, OXFAM, and UKaid, Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon. Recommendations for growing livelihood opportunities for refugees and host community families (April 2013).

⁴⁷ ILO, note 17 *supra*

Figure 2: Original occupations of displaced Syrians (current heads of household) before coming to Lebanon



A World Vision report examining the impact of the Syrian Crisis on host communities found that the latter are worried about the economic impact of the crisis. According to the people interviewed for the research, humanitarian interventions targeting primarily displaced Syrians were allowing workers to undercut the local competition.⁴⁸ Indeed, the report highlighted the following quote: *"Syrians are employed informally, they do not have to pay taxes, and they are receiving food vouchers and accommodation support. Of course they can afford to work for much lower wages."*⁴⁹ Through focus group discussions (FGDs) with Lebanese host communities, ILO found that many of them are concerned with competition at the self-employment level, especially in handicraft and semi-skilled jobs — such as carpentry, welding, mechanics and repairmen — which they explained, Syrians have better skills and provide cheaper services than Lebanese.⁵⁰

Decreasing Wages

The highest concentrations of displaced Syrians and Lebanese returnees are actually located in rural, agricultural districts.⁵¹ A large number of the Lebanese host communities living in these areas or in the border host communities (e.g. in Hermel) have either lost their jobs, or seen their incomes being significantly reduced as they were mostly related to trading with Syria.⁵² Most are unable to find alternative jobs to compensate for their loss of income. An Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labour Market System in the North and Bekaa found that, in the Bekaa, Lebanese workers reported a drop in average wages from 35,000 to 25,000 LBP per day, as a result of competition from the increasing numbers of displaced Syrians seeking work.⁵³ A continued decline in wages for Lebanese workers will have an impact on the Lebanese population's economic access to food.

⁴⁸ World Vision, *Under Pressure: the Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host communities in Lebanon* (July 2013).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ ILO, note 17 *supra*

⁵¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (March 2013), note 28 *supra*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council, OXFAM, and UKaid, note 50 *supra*

Increase in Prices

Before the crisis, Syria's neighbouring countries were relatively food secure in terms of "food availability". However, the significant drop in food production in Syria is negatively affecting food availability in the rest of the region, raising the need for food imports and thus increasing exposure to shocks in global and regional food supplies and prices.

Between 2011 and 2012, food prices increased annually in neighbouring countries by an average of 5 to 10%. However, with the sharp decline in international food prices since 2012-2013⁵⁴, domestic prices of food staples in Lebanon did not witness any significant increase, as confirmed by the WFP Prices Survey Monitoring Report⁵⁵. In fact, during the first quarter of 2014, the Centre for Statistics Research (CAS) indicated a 0.5% and 0.3% decrease in the CPI of food and non-alcoholic beverages in February and March 2014 respectively, compared to a 4% consumer price index (CPI) increase in January 2014⁵⁶.

UNDP's rapid assessment of the impact of the Syria crisis on the socio-economic situation on Lebanese households reported that all respondents representing the North and Bekaa noted increases in food prices after the onset of the Syria crisis.⁵⁷ The assessment found that a majority of respondents have no, or in some cases very limited, food stocks, therefore rendering them more vulnerable to external shocks — for example a marked decrease in the security situation. In Bekaa, 61% of respondents had no food stocks and in the North, 82% of respondents had food stocks for less than two weeks.

Coping Strategies

The 2013 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) found that nearly 50% of interviewed Syrian households reported having experienced a shortage of food (and/or money to buy food) in the month prior to the survey. Of the households experiencing a shortage of food, some 90% applied coping strategies related to their food consumption.⁵⁸ The most common food related coping strategies were to rely on less preferred or inexpensive food (89% of households) and to reduce the number of meals and portions sizes per day (69% of households).

Displaced Syrians also resort to non-food related coping strategies. The most common ones were to spend savings (45% of households), to buy food on credit or to borrow money to purchase food (39% of households), and to reduce essential non-food expenditures such as education or health (30%).

However, displaced Syrians are not the only populations in Lebanon resorting to coping strategies. Many vulnerable Lebanese host community members are also forced to rely on coping strategies. Results from the OCHA/REACH Host Community Vulnerability Assessment indicate that they are increasingly applying a range of both food and asset-based coping strategies. These ranged considerably by region, and included reducing the number of meals, borrowing money for food, purchasing food on credit, and purchasing lower quality or cheaper food. Selling land or household assets, relying on remittances and depending on aid were also reported.⁵⁹ The UNDP assessment found that in Bekaa, 19% of respondents were purchasing food on credit and/or

⁵⁴ The FAO Food Price Index declined from a peak of 230 in 2011 down to 180 by end of 2014.

⁵⁵ WFP Prices Survey Monitoring Report February-April 2013

⁵⁶ <http://www.cas.gov.lb/index.php/en/economic-statistics-en/cpi-en#cpireults>

⁵⁷ UNDP, note 31 *supra*

⁵⁸ WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) (2013).

⁵⁹ LCRP, Sector Response Plan: Food Security (2014)

borrowing food, while 9% of respondents did so in the North.⁶⁰ In terms of relying on humanitarian actors for food, 4% of respondents in Bekaa and 13% of respondents in North said they did so.⁶¹

Utilisation

As one of the four pillars of food security, food utilisation notably addresses how much food people eat, what they eat and how they eat. The secondary data review revealed that there is a lack of information on food utilisation of Lebanese host communities. Nevertheless, food safety was the only topic mentioned in available literature.

Food Safety

Food safety has been identified as an issue in Lebanon. Indeed, **fresh and processed products in Syria informally sold in Lebanon do not follow handling standards during processing or transport.** Moreover, inspection and quality control that should take place at the border is not performed consistently.⁶²

This is an important issue as low standards of food safety render food unfit for human consumption and thus impair food security and public health. This situation puts the poorest and most vulnerable consumers at a high risk, as they are more often forced to buy cheap and potentially unsafe food.⁶³

Food Stability

This section aimed to review available information on food stability, the latest of the four dimensions of food security. Food stability refers to the ability to obtain food over time and is determined by political and economic factors (e.g.: unemployment, rising food prices) as well as natural conditions (e.g.: weather variability).

As unemployment and food prices were discussed in the Food Access section (as they affect economic access of host communities to food), these will not be mentioned in this section. However, they also affect stability of supply. A stable security situation is also a major factor affecting stability of supply. However, as mentioned in the availability section, insecurity and conflict in border areas is affecting farmers' access to land therefore affecting production.

⁶⁰UNDP, note 31 *supra*

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² FAO, note 36 *supra*

⁶³FAO, '[Syria crisis, neighbouring countries – Top three priorities](#)' (8 June 2013)

The Agricultural Sector

This section provides an overview of the agricultural sector in Lebanon and finds that:

- Lebanon's agriculture sector benefits from several comparative advantages due to: its **strategic location** in the region (between Europe and the Gulf States); the **diversity of its topography and its Mediterranean climate**, which allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops; the availability of highly skilled human resources.
- **Fruit** constitutes the largest share (47%) of agricultural output in Lebanon, followed by **vegetables** (23%).
- Institutional, technological and financial constraints, as well as several political crises, have resulted in the sector's **low performance and struggle to expand**.
- Nonetheless, the **sector represents a major source of livelihoods** with approximately 20 to 25% of Lebanon's active population involved in it, including full-time and part-time workers as well as seasonal family labour.

Main Characteristics of the Agricultural Sector

Natural Advantages for Agriculture

Lebanon stands out in the Middle East as a suitable location for agricultural activity due to multiple factors. The country enjoys a moderate climate, rich soil, abundant water resources and is in a strategic location between Europe and the Gulf States. The country is endowed with the highest proportion of agricultural land in the Middle East. According to the most recent Agricultural Census (2010/11), the total agricultural area is estimated at 332 000 hectares (32% of total surface area)⁶⁴. A total of 230 000 hectares is cultivated, of which half is irrigated.⁶⁵

Lebanon's Mediterranean climate allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops that would normally grow in both cold and tropical countries. Major regions for crops, meadows and pastures include the Bekaa plain (more than 40% of the total cultivated land), the North — especially in the Koura and Akkar districts (26 percent of total cultivated land) — and the South — with the coastal region from Sidon to Tyre (where intensive agriculture is also present in greenhouses). Mount Lebanon and Nabatiyeh are also important agricultural zones, although with lower shares of cultivated land due to their hilly landscape.⁶⁶

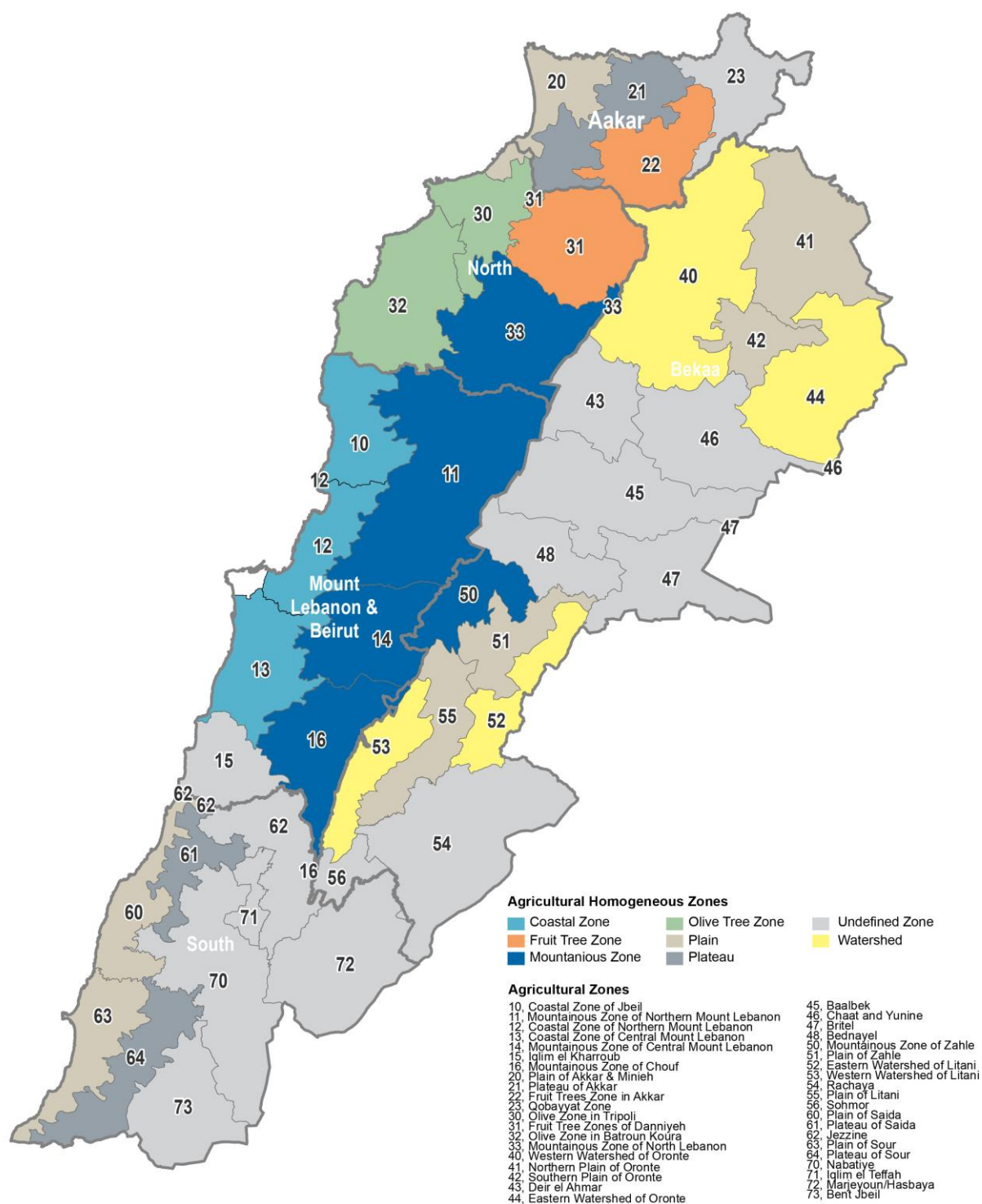
In 2006, MoA identified 40 Agricultural Homogenous Zones (AHZ) across Lebanon. These zones, which possess distinct socio-economic and geopolitical characteristics, were elaborated in order to identify agricultural strengths and weaknesses of different areas in the country. Specific programmes can then be formulated to provide the most effective support to each zone. For example, the agricultural zones located in the Bekaa and northern Lebanon provinces typically belong to large commercial farmers. In contrast, southern zones comprise smaller farmers, many of whom live in remote rural areas. Map 2 below shows the repartition of Lebanon into AHZ.

⁶⁴ FAO, Lebanon - Country Programming Framework, 2012-2015 (November 2012)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), Agriculture Fact Book (2014)

Map 2: Agricultural Homogeneous Zones⁶⁷

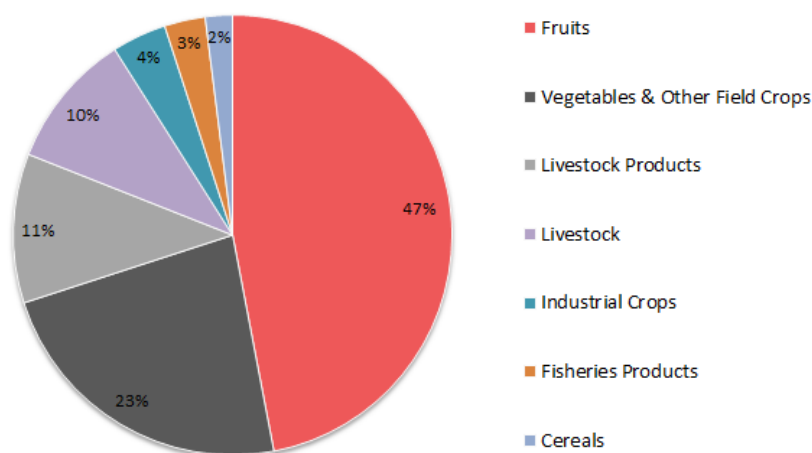


⁶⁷Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon

Main Agricultural Products

Lebanon's natural advantages allow for the cultivation of a diverse array of crops, as illustrated on Map 3 afterwards. Fruit constitutes the largest share of agricultural production in Lebanon at 47%.⁶⁸ Fruit production mainly consists of citrus (i.e. orange, lemon, mandarin and grapefruit), followed by grapes, apples and bananas. Vegetables rank second with 23% of total agricultural production; mainly potatoes, tomatoes, and cucumbers. In addition to the aforementioned crops, other produces include tobacco and cereals (predominately forage crops, wheat, and barley).⁶⁹

Figure 3: Agricultural Output by Sub Sector (2010)



Livestock products - which include dairy products, constitute 11% of agricultural activity in Lebanon. Traditional Lebanese dairy products such as *laban* and *labneh* (produced from goat and cow milk) form a significant proportion of livestock production in the country⁷⁰. Indeed, these products are popular protein sources in Lebanese culinary habits and accompany daily meals.

Livestock production in Lebanon is also an important activity (10% of agricultural activity), particularly in mountainous areas and in the Baalbek-Hermel area on the eastern mountain chain, where soil fertility is relatively low. In recent years however, livestock production has been gaining pace. In fact, meat production has more than doubled since 1990, reaching levels slightly below 200,000t.⁷¹

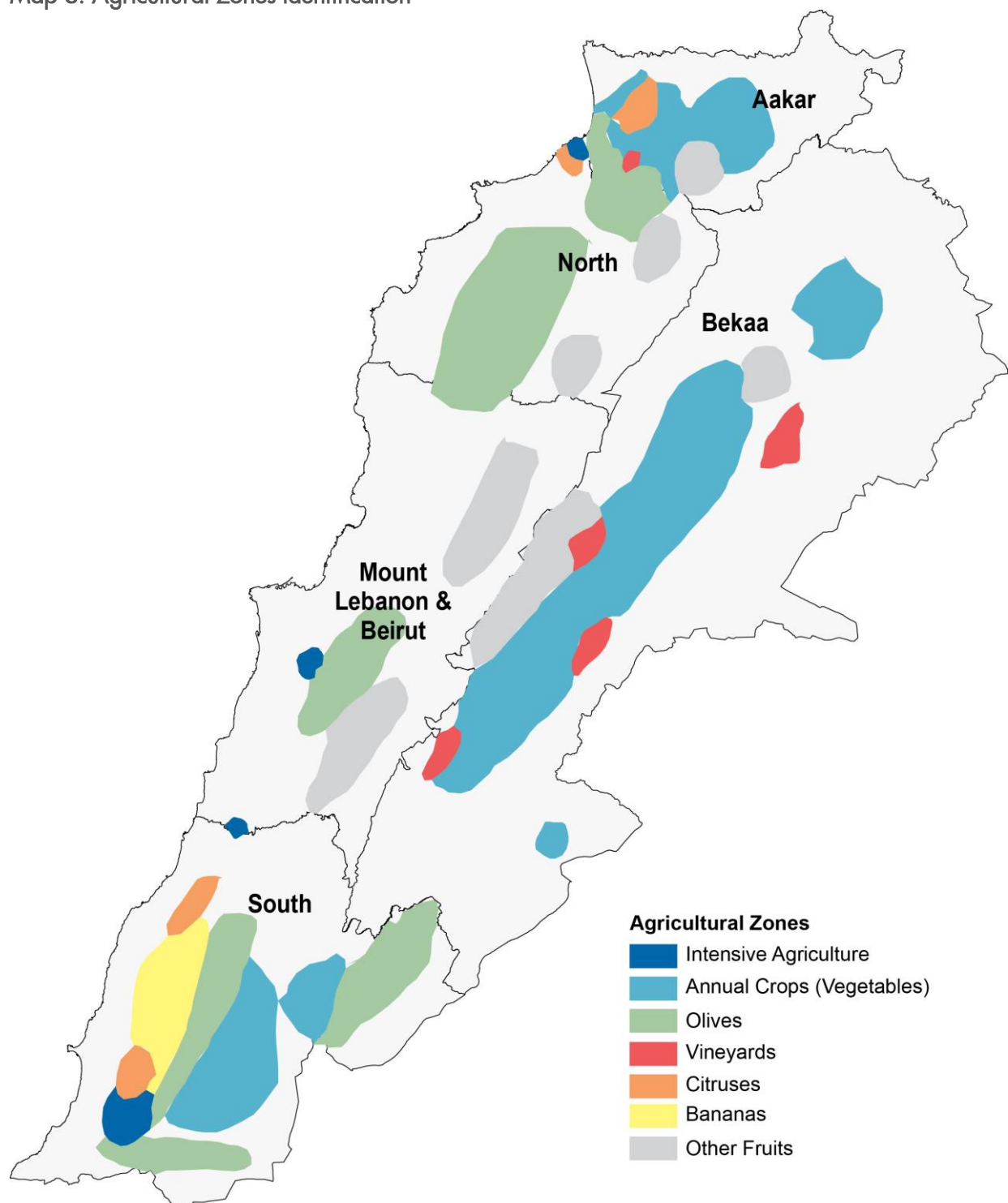
⁶⁸ Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), note 69 *supra*

⁶⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, note 28 *supra*

⁷⁰ FAO, note 68 *supra*

⁷¹ Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), note 69 *supra*

Map 3: Agricultural Zones Identification⁷²



⁷² Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon

The Agricultural Sector in the National Economy

According to FAO, the agricultural sector in Lebanon (including crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry production) represents, on average, about 6.4% of the country's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (from 2001 to 2010). This is considerably less than neighbouring Arab countries but is consistent with Lebanon's higher level of per capita income, as well as its more urbanised and diversified economy. However, agricultural value added per hectare is higher in Lebanon than in many nearby countries, reflecting a higher intensity of production and greater focus on higher value fruits and vegetables. Lebanon's annual agricultural production is estimated at 2.7 million tonnes, with a total value of USD 1.2 billion.⁷³

Obstacles to Growth

Prior to the Syria Crisis, the agriculture sector in Lebanon was already facing major problems. Institutional, technological and financial constraints resulted in the sector's low performance and struggle to expand. According to FAO's Country Programming Framework, 2012-2015, the combination of these constraints has created the following issues.⁷⁴

Firstly, the majority of land holdings in Lebanon are small and fragmented. Indeed, 70% of the total farm holders have an area of less than one hectare, and cultivate less than 20% of the total cropping area. Undersized exploitations generally result in low productivity and low incomes for farmers.

Another major problem is farmers' lack of access to agricultural inputs (irrigation networks, agricultural roads, marketing outlets for agricultural and agro-processed products).⁷⁵ Other problems include the widespread use of foreign labour; rural-urban migration; insufficient knowledge of modern techniques and environment-friendly practices; excessive use of pesticides; high cost of production resulting from high costs of inputs, labour, and energy; degradation of natural resources; and low competitiveness of the agricultural products coupled with an increase in the agricultural trade deficit.⁷⁶

The 2006 war also had a negative impact on the Lebanese economy. The agriculture sector suffered considerably, incurring heavy losses, exhausting those working in it and increasing Lebanese farmers' frustration. Overall, the Ministry of Agriculture said the losses inflicted to the sector were estimated at USD500 million following the conflict⁷⁷ with the Southern part of Lebanon being the most affected. After the war, donors poured money into the reconstruction but consequences of the conflict on the agriculture sector remain visible to this day. This war, combined with several consequent crises including the Syrian one, have resulted in a negative cumulative effect on the agricultural sector.

A Major Source of Livelihoods

Although agriculture represents a small portion of Lebanon's service-oriented economy, it is a major source of livelihoods for its population. Indeed, **approximately 20 to 25% of Lebanon's active population is involved in the agricultural sector**, including full-time and part-time workers as well as seasonal family labour. Female farmers constitute some 9% of the total farmers, involved mainly in the production of dairy products, food preserves and subsistence farming.⁷⁸

⁷³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, note 28 *supra*

⁷⁴ FAO, note 68 *supra*

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Arab NGO Network for Development, Economic, Social and Environmental consequences of the War: A preliminary assessment (August 2006).

⁷⁸ World Bank, Lebanon Agriculture Sector Note: Aligning Public Expenditures with Comparative Advantage (January 2010).

Moreover, the agricultural sector is a main source of income particularly for the poorest segments of the population in rural areas and vulnerable communities. Many of Lebanon's poorest families depend on agriculture as the primary source of income and employment. In many villages in the South as well as in Baalbek and Hermel — which are part of the poorest areas of the country — agriculture is reported to contribute to 80% of the local GDP and represents the major income-earning and employment opportunity.

According to UNDP, over 20% of heads of households engaged in the sector are classified as very poor, with the North governorate being among the hardest hit areas, with one in four agriculture workers likely to be poor.⁷⁹

Finally, with its strong forward and backward linkages within rural settings and with other sectors of the economy, agriculture has been described by the World Bank as a major source of stimulus for growth and income generation in Lebanon.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Key Areas of Fellow Research Needed

Therefore, findings explained earlier show that a key issue in addressing the impact of the Syria crisis on the agriculture, food security and livelihoods situation in Lebanon is the **lack of available assessment data**. Indeed, the FAO Plan of Action 2014-2018 noted that “one of the most significant obstacles to planning for emergency and recovery interventions is the absence of comprehensive and reliable information to assess the impact of the Syria crisis on Lebanon’s agriculture sector and rural socio-economic situation”⁸¹.

The present report revealed that this lack of information has created a situation where it is currently challenging to accurately assess the food security status and natural resource use in affected areas, which presents a major problem for evidence based decision-making. In addition, the 2014 MSNA confirmed the fact that there is extremely limited data on how the Syrian Crisis is affecting the food security and livelihoods situation of Lebanese host communities. Specifically, this secondary data review found critical information gaps with regards to food utilisation, nutrition, health, water, and sanitation issues affecting Lebanese host communities.

Therefore, the Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment implemented aims to fill this critical information gap in order to provide the humanitarian and development community with sufficient data to allow for the evidence based strategic planning of food security and livelihoods interventions targeting Lebanese host communities.

⁸¹FAO, note 36*supra*

CONCLUSION

This secondary data review has demonstrated that the Syrian crisis has had a significant impact on the Lebanese labour market. While some local businesses are benefitting from the availability of cheap labour, Lebanese are finding it increasingly difficult to find work and particularly in non-skilled job categories. The increased competition for work threatens to push more Lebanese into situations of poverty and vulnerability.

Lebanese host communities face the additional threat of food insecurity. Indeed, the secondary data review found that the pillars of food security have been affected by the Syrian crisis. First, availability of food is compromised as the agricultural supply chain has been disrupted. Changes in trade patterns, the increase in agricultural input prices and farmers having problems accessing their lands are some of the disruptions that are affecting crop and livestock production. In addition, economic access to food is an increasing concern. The Syrian crisis' impact on the labour market means that host communities are now struggling to access sufficient resources to sustain themselves and have started resorting to food as well as asset-based coping strategies. In terms of utilisation, reports have indicated that food safety is a problem. Finally, the stability of supply relies on a positive security situation and adequate weather conditions, elements that are both extremely fragile and unpredictable.

The secondary data review also examined available data on the agriculture sector and found that Lebanon is well-endowed with natural resources to support agriculture. Its moderate climate, the diversity of its topography and its strategic location between Europe and the Gulf States, are some of these advantages. However, institutional, financial and technological constraints as well as multiple political/security crises and Lebanon's service-oriented economy have hindered the country's ability to exploit these natural advantages and have limited the sector's role in the national economy.

Nevertheless, the agriculture sector is a major source of livelihoods for Lebanese people. Indeed, approximately 20 to 25% of Lebanon's active population is involved in the sector. Moreover, it is a main source of income, particularly for the poorest segments of the population in rural areas and vulnerable communities. However, the continuous influx of displaced Syrians, Lebanese returnees and PRS into Lebanon, is slowly affecting the sector. Therefore, gaining a better understanding of the livelihood opportunities available in the sector and ways to maintain or increase production are highly necessary to avoid a looming food security crisis at the national level.

Overall, the secondary data review showed that there is a lack of available assessment data specifically providing an analysis of Lebanese host communities and their food security and livelihood status, as well as information on agricultural resources. Indeed, most reports were based on qualitative data, anecdotal evidence or outdated information. This lack of information is a major problem for the identification of particular vulnerable Lebanese populations in specific areas. The Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment aims to fill these information gaps and help build an evidence-based response.

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