

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

YOUTH, ECONOMIC CRISIS, AND THE 'RETURN TO THE
LAND', THE CASE STUDY OF AGRICULTURE AND
LIVESTOCK FARMING IN WEST BEKAA

by
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Although the agricultural sector has always been a catalyst for economic growth in countries such as the ones situated in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, young people are still succumbing to the stigma revolving around it and livestock farming. In fact, these professions are affiliated with low status and lower salaries, rendering it unattractive to the youth and, therefore, causing an ageing in the workforce. Several other factors influencing this decision also include the lack of proper funding, regulations, and law supporting the youth, along with the lack of access to resources (such as land, water and raw material), education, and functioning infrastructure. The culmination of such conditions drives urban youth to look for employment opportunities in other sectors, and skilled/unskilled rural youth to pursue further education and/or to migrate to cities where bigger opportunities are offered. This also is even more difficult to women who seek to break away from the gendered nature of household activities. To further understand the challenges surrounding such a field, this thesis studies the case of West Bekaa in Lebanon as it still includes unutilized agricultural and arable lands.

Mixed research methods, with a special focus on qualitative methodology, are used for an in-depth understanding of the raised topic. Data is collected from youth aged 18 to 30 in different villages in West Bekaa through personal phone interviews. Correlations are then drawn to understand the link between the respondents’ characteristics and their attitudes towards farming activities. The research also investigates the assault on rural culture and the impact it has on the food security at an individual, household, regional and national level.

The study reveals that the main reasons behind the gradual disinterest of youth in agriculture and livestock farming include lack of access to land, resources, education, and the overall instability of the sector in Lebanon specifically. Following the onset of the economic crisis in 2019, access to foreign and local markets got increasingly difficult for farmers due to soaring prices of the currency devaluation, fuel, transport, and the impact the August 4th blast had on the functionalities of the port. As mentioned above, the absence of a supportive government resulted in a lack of security surrounding this field; in fact, the lack of regulations and protected income have restricted farmers to choose agriculture and/or livestock farming as a career path. This study is therefore significant in revealing rural youth’s perception on the agricultural sector and building recommendations around it.

Keywords: agriculture, livestock farming, rural youth, food security, rural development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Are family farmers caught in a limbo between dependence on the market for farming and subsistence yet unable to generate access to it because of resource limitation or other restrictions?” (Bush, 2016, p.4). This question raised by Bernstein and highlighted in Ray Bush’s working paper on family farming, is a clear depiction of the way in which the development of capitalism facilitated the transition of farmers from “peasants” – defined by Bernstein as household farming whose sole purpose is to achieve subsistence – to commodity producers (Bernstein, 2010). Colonialism left most countries, including the ones situated in the Near East and North Africa (NENA), with two prominent questions – “who owns what?” and “who does what?” – as well as the issue of rural poverty. As a result, such regions adopted neoliberalism, and consequently gave way to the rise of capitalist-driven agribusinesses and trade, as its optimal path towards food security. In the long term, this eventually led to the undermining of the agricultural and livestock sectors, and to what can be considered an “assault on rural culture” (White, 2012).

Although both sectors have the potential to be omnipresent across numerous regions on account of a variety of factors (notably climate, geo-political locations, arable lands, and other), they still are perceived as secondary fields. Indeed, the faster countries industrialize, with modernization as their primary objective, the lower the segment of people working in agriculture will be (Bernstein, 2010). This is the case, for instance, in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean regions where agriculture contributed to 12% of its gross domestic

product (GDP) in 2005 versus an average of 3% for the European Union member states (Mediterra, 2008).

According to the 2010 findings of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 64% of the total area in Lebanon – the country of choice for this thesis’ case study – was covered by fertile lands, and 14% of its territory was arable (IDAL, 2017). In contrast to recent years, Lebanon also had around 2.2 billion m³ of rainfall per year (IDAL, 2017). However, despite these favorable conditions, the agricultural sector contributes to only 3.5% of the Lebanese GDP and employs around 6% of its labor force (IDAL, 2017) which forms a huge threat to the country’s food security, and its self-reliance knowing it is a prominent net importer.

This thesis chooses youth as its focus since the world is experiencing an exponential increase of people aged 12-24 as well as “its largest youth cohort ever” (Chaaban, 2009, p.33). In fact, the youth have increasingly become essential in the development of their families, communities, and the world at large (Chaaban, 2009) seeing as they now make up a significant proportion of the labor force. They however must deal, in parallel, with a stagnant employment rate especially in economies facing challenges in their ability to match the demand for employment with the creation of a sufficient number of jobs (Al-Sayyid, 2018). This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak, considered a global health pandemic by professionals since late January 2020, especially for countries already dealing with crises of their own.

The culmination of such conditions poses a burdening risk on the food and nutrition security of the population, especially the most vulnerable. Rural youth, more specifically, tend to face additional barriers in terms of employment, such as the lack of effective bridges

into the labor market or the accumulation of opportunity deprivation as a result of living in a less “urbanized” setting. The issue here, further tackled throughout the paper, is that despite being potential solutions to unemployment as well as a bridge between the rapidly increasing population and food security, both the agricultural and livestock sectors are still seen as unattractive to the youth. This alienation from farming will cause a gradual disinterest in such activities, a loss of indigenous expertise, as well as an aging in the workforce in the longer run.

Therefore, this paper aims to tackle the reasons why youth, specifically the ones with the lower barriers to entry into farming, are not on the lookout for employment in these fields even when the macro-economic conjecture directly points at it; and the ways in which this amplifies food insecurity. Objectives also include analyzing the common factors that drive youth who own, or whose parents own, a land to divert their attention away from planting and/or raising livestock despite it being a readily “available” option and, consequently, examine the systemic problems that render farming less available than one might believe. By tackling these points, the thesis will be able to provide answers to the research question at hand: “why aren’t the youth choosing farming as a viable source of income despite the pull factors and the over-saturation of other markets?” A qualitative study, to be done in the form of phone interviews with youth from West Bekaa – Lebanon, will be able to provide further insights to the findings addressed throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER II

DEBATES ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A. Why Youth?

With over 1.3 billion youth around the world, and 66 million in the Arab region alone (Chaaban, 2009), the youth bulge – described as a stage where a country succeeds in halting child mortality whereas fertility rate is still high (Yifu Lin, 2012) – has become a very common phenomenon in developing countries. By delving into the different methods in which the economy fails to maximize employment opportunities for the rising workforce, this thesis puts the youth at the forefront of today’s discussion about market saturation amidst several crises.

Beyond the common understanding that cities are now overwhelmed with people on the lookout for jobs, rural youth also must deal with the additional pressure of living in areas less invested in, and less urbanized in some cases. As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), rural places are typically characterized by people living in less crowded zones distinguished by widely spaced towns and villages; the definition might, however, vary depending on the country (FAO, 2018). While historically such areas were considered pastoralists or exclusively agricultural, they also include villages near bustling cities where several people migrate in search for jobs outside of their hometown, or of youth engaging in non-farm activities. This is where the distinction of the different categories under which rural areas fall, explained by Stern and Turbin (1986) and extracted from Cartmel and Furlong’s

“Youth Unemployment in Rural Areas”, comes into place. These include traditional rural areas that are geographically isolated and whose main source of income is agricultural activity, urban fringe areas in which employment is linked to, and determined by, the proximity to crowded urban areas, seasonal areas where employment is heavily affected by its seasonality (rural tourism, guesthouses, and other), as well as ex-industrialized areas whose productivity has declined in recent years (Cartmel & Furlong 2000). It is important to note that the growth of urban centers, near rural areas and/or in bigger cities, accounts for the decrease of the overall rural population as well (Wenger & Abulfotuh, 2019).

Migration is a growing global phenomenon whereby economic migrants, distress migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as returnees and people moving for other purposes move within a country or across international borders (FAO, 2016). The root causes of rural migration include rural poverty and food insecurity, lack of employment and income generating opportunities, inequality, limited access to social protection, climate change, and depletion of natural resources (FAO, 2016). As a result, these challenges have made it increasingly difficult for rural youth to be part of a sector that does not offer them absolute security in the way a fixed salaried position would. While the total number of displaced people reached 60 million globally in 2015, the NENA region alone has witnessed an estimated migration of 22 million people (IFAD, n.d.) due to the rising conflicts in said countries. However, the rural dimension of forced displacement, along with the ensuing degradation of agricultural land and the collapse in food production, often goes unrecognized (IFAD, n.d.). This puts further pressure on natural resources, food security and agricultural systems in the host communities (IFAD, n.d.), a case very similar to the migration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Following the 2011 Syrian war and the onset of the Lebanese economic crisis in 2019, the agricultural sector in Lebanon started to profit more from “cheap” and temporary labor: in this case, Syrian refugees. Farmers need seasonal laborers for heavy agricultural work, but said workers are constricted by the rigid legal mechanisms that keep them excluded and moving from one informal job to another (Turkmani & Hamade, 2020). Similarly to most developing countries, Lebanon’s agricultural sector is considered informal due to the government’s lack of investment in rural areas, inadequate infrastructure, political corruption and limited access to finance (Turkmani & Hamaden, 2020). As a result, less and less Lebanese people are engaged in agricultural work unless they are self-employed or have access to land.

B. Land Tenure and Food Security

Defined by the World Summit 1996 as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic, access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”, food security is also dependent on the intersectionality of four pillars: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Therefore, an attack on what can be considered nowadays’ largest share of the population – “comprised of children and young adults, and [knowing that] today’s children are tomorrow’s young adults” (Yifu Lin, 2012, para. 1) – has, and will continue to have, a negative impact on food security at different levels. Hence, the question of why rural youth resort to internal displacement or external migration will be discussed in parallel to the ‘assault’ on rural culture.

As we actively take part in the age of neoliberalism, characterized by a set of political beliefs that “include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty (Mises 1961, Nozick 1974, Hayek 1979 in Thorsen and Lie 2006, p.14), it has become increasingly difficult not to associate financial security with forms of employment that fits the capitalist standards of monetary value. However, what these policies of economic liberalization fail to take into consideration are the cultural barriers and inter/intra-governmental conflicts omnipresent in previously colonized states, such as the case of Lebanon, which renders them unable to keep up with the rise of neoliberalism without urbanization and industrialization. In terms of the agri-food industry, trade liberalization facilitated the growth of giants within the sector; eventually leading to the gradual downfall of non-commercial agriculture and livestock farming. In fact, and as explained in Bernstein’s “Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change”, the very idea of peasant agriculture was challenged by the oppressive nature of agribusinesses. In other words, peasant farmers – whose main goal is to achieve self-subsistence – are replaced by petty commodity producers who become subject to class differentiation (Bernstein, 2010) and, in the bigger scheme of things, subject to competitive enterprises. This brings us back to the aforementioned questions of “who owns what?” and “who does what?”.

The first one delves into the issue of the post colonialism land tenure system that left many farmers displaced from their rightful land, and which continues to restrict access to what can be considered a primary resource for agriculture and livestock farming. Land tenure “denotes the relationship of man with land and man” (Sadr, 1972, p.5) where the relation between man and land is characterized by the right of ownership and utilization, and the latter by the remunerated labor and operation of a farm (Sadr, 1972). This is a direct outcome of a

set of institutional arrangements that are connected to property rights; one can buy, lease, or rent land which means that money is a necessity to have access to a fundamental source of security for the rural community. In fact, post-colonial land reforms were heavily leaning towards polarized ownerships (i.e., small percentage of landlords own large portions of land) therefore leaving the tenants with a weak status vis a vis this resource. This further facilitates the intervention of intermediaries and middlemen in the control of wealth generated. In the case of Lebanon, it is essential to note that this country was a victim of the land tenure system twice: once under the Ottoman rule and once under the French mandate. This left vast acres of land unclaimed for; and when there are no clearly defined rights for a piece of land, every individual will try to appropriate a portion of it through a market transaction or political act. The social implications of such a system include the separation of ownership and control, rising land prices, reduced access to smallholders, change in land-based social relations, land dispossession, debt dependency, and workers over-exploitation.

Putting this in the context of the thesis' focal group, young entrants into the market will not be interested in short extractive activities on someone else's land, especially when the access to one of their own is insecure, expensive, and not regulated by policies and laws. This is an adequate depiction of the dynamic between tenure security and food security; not having access to quality land (and consequently to resources affiliated with it, such as water) places, in turn, restrictions on the accessibility and availability of food. It is also important to note that this barrier often hinders the most vulnerable part of the population, especially in times during which coping strategies might be needed for survival. Following the idea that not all families might own land, renting one and/or working for someone else will allow for short-term cultivation only (with no control over the type of remuneration the household is

getting) and not as collateral damage in case of crises, nor as a property that can be sold / rented / invested in as they see fit (Roth, 2013). This puts additional stress on the household's food and nutrition security, as it offers no concrete form of stability, and exacerbates the idea that agriculture and/or livestock farming is not an ideal career path for new youth entrants in the market.

In cases where members of households do have ownership over pieces of land, and therefore of decision-making processes, setbacks come in the form of the patrilinear and gerontocratic inheritance omnipresent within most families. In fact, land is usually passed on, often in the form of divided parcels, to several siblings within the same generation hence leaving the youth as secondary users (IFAD, 2014). This is even more relevant for mothers and young women who, in the face of unjust policies and cultural barriers, are left with even less access to resources than men despite their role as caregivers within a household. Additionally, young women are victims of the gendered nature of the agrarian transition (*See Annex II, Figure 3*) in which men are expected to seek off-farm activities in the industry and service sectors, leaving women behind with children and elderly, and away from education opportunities due to time constraints (ADB & FAO, 2013). The lack of access to education reinforces gender norms amongst women, pushes them to be in charge of the “care” economy (ADB & FAO, 2013) through their reproductive role and/or gender-specific tasks, and does not help in breaking the feminization of poverty.

Due to governments' inability to act about abandoned pieces of land, many young people have taken it upon themselves to reclaim it by force. For instance, in 2012 Andalusia – Spain, hundreds of unemployed farmers occupied a plot of land owned by Spanish military with the goal to set up a communal agricultural project (France24 News, 2012). In a country

already devastated by rising unemployment, Andalusia had the highest rate of with 40% of the population finding it difficult to find a stable job while agricultural lands stood idle (France24 News, 2012). As such, youth resorted to breaking the law in order to reclaim the land and create their own set of policies. Would this be one solution to the issue of land tenure around the world, specifically in a politically corrupt country such as Lebanon? And would the state turn a blind eye to it?

C. Return to The Land

The role of family farming and peasant agriculture in fighting hunger and climate change is now at the forefront of discussion. Defined as a “mean of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family capital and labour, including both women’s and men’s” (Garner & de la O Campos, 2014), family farming offers an ideological framework for the protection of lifestyles. However, the marginalization of small peasantry is in no way a natural phenomenon or solely a personal choice, it is the result of economic policies that are unconcerned with the peasant world (Delcourt, 2010). This can be seen in the fact that 72.6% of farms worldwide are 1 hectare or less, yet they still are regarded as 8% of agricultural lands due to the focus on large farms and agribusiness (Garner & de la O Campos, 2014). While the level of productions can theoretically ensure the food requirement of the entire population, hunger still affects more than one billion people around the world; 70% of which are, paradoxically, peasants and, themselves, producers and suppliers of food (Delcourt, 2010). Given that family farmers produce over 80% of the world’s food in terms of value and are custodians of biodiversity and cultural heritage (Blondeau & Korzenszky,

2022), food insecurity will be felt at different pillars – notably food availability and accessibility.

As a result, the return to the land has been a common phenomenon across most countries around the world. One example includes Greece: with its plummeting economy and soaring unemployment, many youths resorted to going back to the countryside where they still had claims on ancestral pieces of land. The Panhellenic Young Farmers Association (PYFA) in Greece has shared that the number of young farmers aged between 18 to 40 years old has increased by 15% since the onset of the economic crisis, and almost half of them came from cities like Athens and Thessaloniki (Wetzels, 2019). Jenny Gkiougki, member of NGO ‘Agroecopolis’, states that “the people coming into farming from cities are more innovative and radical. As they are more educated they are also closer to agroecology, ecology, climate change and have new ideas about what to produce and how to market it. What is then important is their willingness to learn the skills and knowledge to do farming the right way”. However, this phenomenon is not new; it has, in fact, already taken place in 1970s France whereby the urban migration wave came to be commonly referred to as “le retour à la terre” or “the return to the land” (Farmer, 2020). During this time, thousands of youths turned to rural areas in order to live via subsistence farming in a way akin to self-sufficient peasant agriculture, away from capitalist standards of living (Farmer, 2020).

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the yearlong lockdown it ensued, further exacerbated by the financial crisis, Lebanon has witnessed a similar series of events. Ever since the start of the currency devaluation, it has been increasingly difficult for the Lebanese population to afford staple food items such as fruits, vegetables, bread and meat. As such, many families who have access to land are abandoning their city jobs in favor of going back

to the soil, whereas those living in urban areas are planting on their rooftops and balconies. In an interview with Reuters, a farmer located in the South shares “we couldn’t work, so what did we do? We turned to agriculture” while another one states “self-sufficiency starts at home. I used to buy everything from the shops. Today all the vegetables I need are available here” (Gebeily & Taher, 2022). Hence, this has helped many farmers and herders understand the advantages that come with investing in the soil and animals on the long run as both sectors have the potential to ensure food security at multiple levels.

D. The Issue of Rural Poverty

Speaking in broader terms, one of the main obstacles towards achieving food and nutrition security in a country is its economy’s slow rate of growth; partially determined by the, equally slow, amount of domestic and international investments (Al-Sayyid, 2018). This is essentially the issue of the least developed and/or low to middle income countries affected by constant socio-political instability and, most recently, a global health pandemic. With a 30% unemployment rate among people aged 15-24 in the Arab world alone, compared to 12% worldwide (Al-Sayyid, 2018), the maximization of job opportunities should be a priority. However, and as explained above, the issue with neoliberalism is that by allowing the fast rise of other sectors, it destroyed non-commercial agriculture in rural areas and created a rural exodus accompanied by a general disinterest in such a field. It even pushed youth to stay unemployed – or “working unemployed” defined by Ben White (2012) as engaging in odd jobs until they find a suitable one, often in specific sectors and based on specific incomes – rather than go back to the countryside and work in agriculture and/or livestock farming. As a result, many farms household members resort to pluri-activity,

defined as an “off-farm economic activity engaged by the farmer, typically for risk reduction and to supplement farm income” (Igwe et. al, 2022, p. 265). Three reasons behind pluri-activity have been identified within the sector: i) a coping strategy in case the season has not be as profitable as predicted, ii) deliberate decision taken by the family to avoid money shortage and iii) exit strategy (Igwe et. al, 2022). While relying on off-farm activities is, arguably, to absorb economic shocks, the issue also lies with the fact that there is no concrete protection of the farmers’ profitability. In parallel, rural youths are victims of both regionalism and nepotism in countries strongly filled with prejudice; regionalism predominantly originates from the perception of urban youth as more qualified than their rural counterparts, especially in private sector institutions where decisions are influenced by regional elites (World Bank, 2014). All of this has contributed to the stigmatization of farming, and its affiliation with low salaries and low social status, in countries whose economic improvement heavily relies on the inclusion of such domains.

Based on the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)’s analytical framework of the Near East and North Africa region (*See Annex II, Figure 4*), the main pillars of rural poverty are the limited financial investments in rural areas, vulnerability to risks and shocks, poor access to management and natural resources, and weak human capital. Coupled with insufficient agricultural support policies, as well as the lack of proper infrastructure, education and technology (Berk, 2018), the aforementioned setbacks further decrease young people’s interest in joining this field. In parallel, the lack of such support enhances food insecurity across multiple levels as well. In fact, with no tangible access to any type of resource and financial aid, no stability, nor policy regulations, even youth with the lowest barriers to entry into farming will not be interested in pursuing a career path this

unpredictable; even when the macro-economic conjuncture directly points at it. Stability, besides being an essential pillar of food security, heavily affects the quality and quantity of available jobs, an individual's efficiency and productivity, as well as the level of emigration and/or displacement (IFAD, 2019).

Moreover, countries led by authoritarian regimes also have to deal with the additional obstacle of investments taking place in areas affiliated with the regime and its political bases or, in simpler terms, in capital cities and developed areas; therefore, partaking in the exclusion of rural communities. All these factors have been gradually leading to an aging of the agricultural workforce, as well as a loss of indigenous expertise, which allows for invasive methods of farming to prevail. Commercial agriculture hence creates the familiar cycle of big companies, concentrated at the very top, restricting small-scale farmers' access to the market. This is also caused by the difficulty to get a hold of accessible labeling, social media presence, an exclusive food safety system that might facilitate differentiation amongst renown brands, and establish social acceptability, consumer's trust, as well as increased access to a larger audience.

E. Case of Lebanon and the Economic Crisis

Lebanon, much like other emerging countries, hosts a high number of individuals living below the poverty line which recently increased due to the economic crisis and global health pandemic affecting it. UNICEF Lebanon writes "some say the massive economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the August 2020 Beirut explosions and instability have all combined to create conditions worse even than they were during the 1975-1990 civil war" (UNICEF, 2021).

Ever since the October 17 uprisings in 2019, Lebanon has witnessed a series of crises that further led its population into poverty, debt and near famine. With the dollar being equal to 32,000 LBP (as of August 2022), as well as the increasing proportion of nation-wide unemployment due to businesses' inability to sustain themselves, it was impossible for the population to survive in said conditions. In fact, Lebanon's GDP plummeted about \$55 billion in 2018 and was estimated to further decrease by \$20.5 billion in 2021 alone, such numbers are usually associated with wars or conflicts (World Bank, 2021). Additionally, the real-time fall of the banking sector had a crippling effect on the livelihood of the Lebanese population, essentially through dealing with three types of currencies: fresh dollars, LBP on the 'sayrafa' rate, and the Banque du Liban rate which was standing at 3,900 LBP for almost two years. This eventually resulted in acute fuel and electricity shortage which has severely affected the agricultural and food sectors, amongst others. Lebanon was also simultaneously dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, intermittent lockdowns and spikes in cases; all of which further strained the situation in an already unstable country. In addition to the losses felt by many families, the impact of the August 4th Beirut port explosion has also done irreversible damage to the imports and exports of the country, its geo-political importance and infrastructure, knowing that Lebanon is a net food importer.

The accumulation of all these crises has hit every single pillar of food security:

- i) Food accessibility through limited access to income, employment opportunities, and viable infrastructure.
- ii) Food availability due to restricted access to staple food and imports.
- iii) Utilization with no electricity nor fuel to preserve food or abide by food safety standards.

iv) Stability due the geo-political tensions and constant protests.

Hence, the question to be raised, and studied, is: would the inclusion of agriculture and livestock farming be one solution to the population's survival?

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Overall Approach

Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) are used to answer the above question and gain an in-depth understanding of youth's interest in agriculture and livestock farming from their point of view. Data is collected from phone interviews with a diversified sample of surveyed people – notably farmers, women and youth from different socio-economic statuses, educational backgrounds and regions within West Bekaa.

This research takes into consideration the participants' confidentiality and protection by respecting their privacy and not revealing their identities, neither explicitly nor indirectly, under any circumstances.

B. Site and Population

Situated in a plain between two mountain ranges, West Bekaa is characterized by its Mediterranean climate and vast arable lands well suited for the plantation of a wide variety of produce and the raising of small ruminants. The Bekaa governorate has an altitude ranging between 800 to 1,100 meters above sea level and is mainly covered by agricultural and natural areas with mixed rural areas (IDAL, n.d.). It also is crossed by two rivers journeying in the opposite direction: Al Asi to the North and the Litani to the South (IDAL, n.d.) creating several bodies of water such as dams and wetlands throughout the region. Based on findings

published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2010, a large percentage of agricultural holdings are concentrated in the Bekaa with a share of 20%, along with the highest number of livestock heads by agricultural holding (IDAL, 2017). In addition, agricultural lands are still available and thriving in West Bekaa compared to other rural areas whose land has been used for other activities.

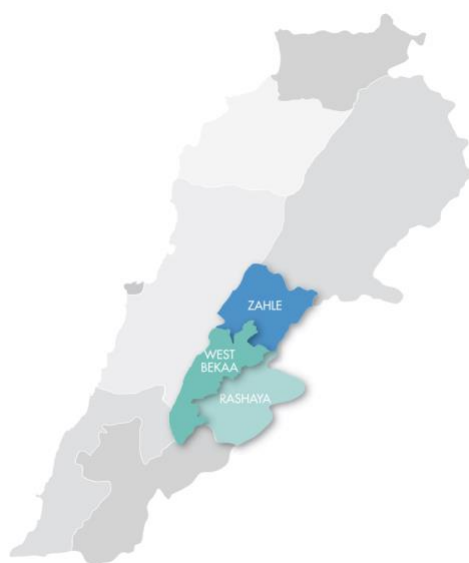


Figure 1: West Bekaa District in Bekaa Governorate (IDAL, 2017)

Despite the abovementioned competitive advantages, agriculture only represents 2.9% of the GDP in Lebanon with 67% of households that consider agriculture as a primary source of income falling below the poverty line (Hamade, 2019). This sector has, in fact, shown a very stagnant growth: the value of agricultural crops and forestry output has remained more or less the same between 2004 and 2016 (around 2 billion USD) whereas the livestock and fishery sector has slightly increased by 300 million USD in 12 years (Hamade, 2019). Moreover, the unregulated nature of agricultural work in Lebanon makes it difficult

for people to join this sector. With farming activities considered as informal work under the Lebanon Labor Law, agricultural workers – as well as herders – cannot benefit from formal public health coverage nor retirement and pension plans (Hamade, 2019), making stability within this domain quasi-impossible. West Bekaa, a land rich with opportunities for farming activities, has therefore been chosen in this study to investigate the aforementioned barriers from the relevant population’s point of view.

This study addresses the local people in West Bekaa, both farmers and those who decided to steer away from agriculture and livestock farming as a career path.

C. Data Gathering Methods

A total of 30 respondents were approached through phone interviews for the sake of this study (12 farmers and 18 non-farmers), all of which are situated in the West Bekaa region – counting Sohmor, Yohmor, Jeb Jannine, El Marj, Machghara, Kherbet Qanafar, El Mansoura, Al Manara, Kamed El Loz, Swairi, Hawch El Harime, Zahle, and Saghbine. A few criteria were taken into consideration during the selection process: age (youth between 18-30), gender (to ensure an equal representation), and location (West Bekaa). Phone numbers were retrieved from the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit’s (ESDU) database.

As such, the selected targeted audience was local youths in order to get their perspective on the impaired growth of the agricultural sector in Lebanon; especially since this age group is considered an essential part of a household, community, society, region and the world’s development. The residents were interviewed following a semi-structured interview in order to collect individual experiences and encourage discussion around their

interest in agriculture and livestock farming. Standardized questions on the socio-economic conditions of participants are inquired to analyze the correlation between their demographics and attitudes towards farming. Said respondents include young farmers and non-farmers and are only interviewed once for 10-15 minutes.

As can be seen in the below figure, West Bekaa has witnessed a youth bulge heavily linked to the demographic evolution of the Arab world in the past decade (Chaaban, 2009). As a result, the study has taken an interest in rural youth in Lebanon to understand the additional constraints this segment of the population experiences, especially in the face of geo-political and economic crises. The aspects considered during the interviews include economic, socio-cultural and political impacts.

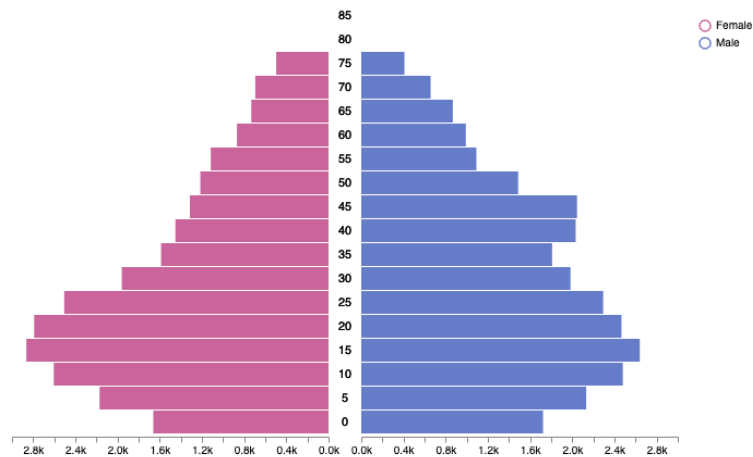


Figure 2: West Bekaa Population Tree by Age and Gender

Source: CIESIN (Center for International Earth Science Information Network)

D. Methodology Framework

The methodology adopted in this study is inspired by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) which provides a way of understanding the primary causes and dimensions

of poverty without focusing on just a few select factors (Majale, 2002). The value of this framework is that it pushes for a systematic view of the conditions that cause poverty – whether these are shocks, lack of access to assets, or non-functioning policies – and to analyze the relationship between them (Majale, 2002). This tool was therefore taken into consideration in this study to centralize local communities throughout the research process. The framework utilized throughout this research has for objective to draw a link between the literature review and findings through a preliminary analysis of the problem at hand, the development of a cohesive and inclusive questionnaire (See Annex I), data collection and the evaluation of said data.

E. Data Analysis

In this research, data analysis commences once the relevant data has been collected. Explanation and correlation are then generated accordingly based on two categories of respondents: 1) young farmers whose source of income comes partly, or entirely, from farming activities and 2) non-farmers youth who are not interested in agriculture or have not gotten the chance to work in it. Consequently, comparisons are made and conclusions about this sample are drawn in a way that goes beyond a basic descriptive process. The investigator dives into an analytic induction and gives recommendations based on it.

In addition to the qualitative analysis, a quantitative one is conducted to investigate the correlation between the respondents' socio-economic background and their attitudes towards farming.

F. Limitations

This study is qualitative in nature and the quantitative part is relatively minimal as the study looks into evaluating social phenomena rather than statistically identifying a representative set of respondents (Berg, 2001a).

The results are also based on the assumption that respondents' answers were objective and representative of a whole community; however, their opinions are subjective in nature and can only reflect the research's findings on a larger scale to a certain degree.

The research was also conducted in the midst of an economic crisis and two years after the Beirut port explosion. This might result in slightly skewed answers, possibly affected by the current events.

G. Ethics

Throughout data collection, the researcher's respected the participants' privacy by asking for their consent prior to the interview and by going over the aim behind the study. Respondents were given the option to skip any question they were not comfortable answering or withdraw without previous notice. A consent form was then sent to each respondent to give them the chance to go over it and give a written form of consent about the content of, and aim behind, the research.

Results will only be reported in the aggregate with no mention of any name, phone number, or description that might reveal the identity of the respondents.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Demographic and Socio-Economic Information

Quantitative data on demographic characteristics were collected and analyzed based on semi-structured interviews with participants. Respondents were asked about their gender, age, marital status, number of family members, educational background, number of dependents within the family, and current job status. The questionnaire was divided into two categories: farmers (43.3%) and non-farmers (56.7%).

It is important to note that only respondents above the age of 18 and below the age of 30 in West Bekaa were targeted to limit this questionnaire solely to this audience. The age range distribution in the personal interviews showed that 66.7% are in the 18-25 age group and 33.3% in the 26-30 age group. As for marital status, 70% of respondents are single while 30% are married. Interviewed individuals were equally divided between female and male. Most of the participants attended university (with 53.3% completing their undergraduate studies and 13.3% their postgraduate ones), followed by 20% who finished their vocational and technical education, 10% graduated high school, and 3.3% possess an elementary certificate.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	20	66.7%

26-30	10	33.3%
Marital Status		
Single	21	70%
Married	9	30%
Gender		
Female	15	50%
Male	15	50%
Educational Background		
Elementary (Certificate)	1	3.3%
Highschool	3	10%
Vocational / Educational Education	6	20%
University	16	53.3%
Postgraduate	4	13.3%

The working status showed that 66.7% of respondents are employed while 33.3% are unemployed; of the ones who are employed, 30% work in the agricultural sector, 20% are involved in agriculture but do not solely rely on it, while the other 50% work in other sectors (such as banking, education, beauty, and other). Around 43% of respondents live with 1–3 people, 47% with 3–5 family members, and 10% with a family of 5 or more people. Direct questions targeting family/personal income were not raised, but participants were asked about the number of family members who are financially dependent on them in order to get an understanding of the situation they currently are in. The results are displayed in the below table.

Table 2: Number of Family Members Financially Dependent on the Respondent

Number of Dependents	Frequency
0	16
1	2
2	8
3	1
4	0
5	2
6	1

B. Respondents Are Non-Farmers

18 respondents took part in this section of the questionnaire and answered 8 qualitative questions about their perspective on agriculture and livestock farming. The first question looks into the participants' family background in terms of farming as a career path; most of the interviewed individuals have family members who work in agriculture even though they personally decided not to venture into this field. There are three recurrent reasons behind not following in their family's footsteps: studying in order to get out of this sector and into another one, agriculture and livestock farming are regarded as a secondary source of income and/or as a hobby, or general disinterest. Some respondents also mentioned the lack of proper resources and education as a reason not to pursue farming. The rest of the participants do not come from a family of farmers and were not interested in creating a new generation of one. This showcases the degree to which youth in Lebanon are affected by their parents' career choices; following the rise of the banking and manufacturing sectors (among

others), agriculture has increasingly become a second choice for most of the new generation. In addition to the ruling of this specific field as unimportant, additional rationale behind not finding agriculture / livestock farming attractive includes seasonality in terms of employment, lack of access to social security and unstable working (Castagnone et. al, 2018). Regarding their opinion about agriculture and livestock farming, the interviewed youth had a consensus that agriculture is a profitable field if invested in properly. The issue in this case lies in the fact that subsidies and governmental support are extremely lacking in Lebanon; with no regulated access to raw material and resources (such as electricity, water and land), sustenance on farming alone is not sufficient to reach household/individual food security. In fact, two of the four pillars of food security, food availability and accessibility, will be breached as a result of the variables surrounding such a domain. Despite all of this, the below quotes from a few respondents indicate their willingness to engage in farming activities given the proper tools. The third question even shows that the majority of respondents expressed their interest in pursuing a career in agriculture and livestock farming, especially if given the opportunity to learn more about it.

“Agriculture is a field that brings me peace of mind, I can take care of the soil and know it will take care of me as well. I do believe farming is profitable and provides enough income if the producer has enough knowledge about the field, and experience in marketing, sales, and distribution”

“Agriculture is the most important sector in Lebanon as we need to be self-sustainable to decrease reliance on imports. It is however profitable depending on access to land and labor as well as revenue stream”

An interesting point to raise would be that two respondents mentioned they would prefer pursuing agriculture but not livestock farming due to the hard labor and high cost

associated with it. As explained by Dubeuf et. al, access to markets is very limited for small-scale herders in remote areas due to the high expense of milk and cheese collection as well as the processing that ensues (Dubeuf et. al, 2016). There is also no food safety system trustworthy enough to ensure proper utilization in handling livestock produce, resulting in less social acceptability and consumer acceptance.

When asked about incentives to join and stay in said sectors, participants gave an array of options including access to resources and law reforms, both of which can be linked back to the issue of land tenure in Lebanon. With no clear laws about land reclamation following the fall of the Ottoman empire and French mandate, it became increasingly difficult for small-scale farmers and herders to obtain land of their own. And with no land, nor the resources that come with it, there will be no interest to invest in long-term projects that need time and effort such as agriculture.

For instance, and as can be seen in Table 3 displayed below, the share of land and farms farmed by landowners are the lowest in West Bekaa with only 33% and 67.2% respectively, further reflecting the dominance of landlords within this region. The social implications of such numbers entail in rising land prices, dispossession and destruction of existing livelihoods, debt dependency and reduced access to land for smallholders which, as explained above, leads to food insecurity on a larger scale due to instability and lack of access to resources.

Table 3: Land Tenure by Region

Source: Hamade, 2019 elaboration from Ministry of Agriculture and FAO (2010) census raw data

		West Bekaa	Central Bekaa	Baalbek Al-Hermel	Akkar
Farmed by landowner	Share of land	33.0%	57.5%	64.8%	73.1%
	Share of farms	67.2%	79.1%	74%	83.7%
Leased Out	Share of land	50.3%	36.6%	14.7%	21.5%
	Share of farms	11.1%	16.5%	6.4%	8.5%
Sharecropping	Share of land	11.0%	5.4%	3.3%	0.9%
	Share of farms	3.5%	3.1%	1.5%	0.6%
Other	Share of land	5.7%	0.4%	17.1%	4.5%
	Share of farms	18.2%	1.4%	18.1%	7.3%

That being the case, respondents stated that the following obstacles restrict them from participating in the agricultural / livestock sectors: limited access to finance and raw material, no governmental support, limited education opportunities in these sectors, restricted access to marketing and sales networks, as well as the escalating prices of fuel and electricity. While most of these obstacles are the results of an absent government, two types of answers were given when asked whether or not the current crises made it a viable option for people to venture into farming activities:

- The COVID-19 lockdown and the rising prices / shortage of food drove people to engage more in backyard farming; some had more time on their hands whereas others needed a cheaper access to fruits and vegetables. While it still is not regarded as a

primary source of income, agriculture became an important aspect of people's lives when other sectors became more and more unreachable.

- The currency fluctuation and the fast increase in prices of raw material, resources and transportation made other respondents all the more cautious about joining this field. Backyard farming might be sustainable for household consumption but cannot be considered a stable source of income for said families.

Consequently, when asked if they would be encouraged to pursue farming if programs targeting the youth (such as scholarships) were implemented, 15 out of the 18 respondents had a positive response despite making their disinterest in agriculture and livestock farming clear at the beginning of the questionnaire. This indicates that when invested in properly, these sectors have the potential to improve food and nutrition security at different levels through equipping youth with the right expertise and education to increase food availability through domestic production, accessibility through own production, and utilization via reinforced food safety and quality standards.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were encouraged to recommend methods in which agriculture / livestock farming can be promoted amongst young entrants to the market.

Answers include:

“Capacity building and awareness raising about the importance of taking care of your own land. When you provide funds for the agricultural sector, it shows people that this sector can be profitable and sustainable on the long run”

“Youth in rural villages should be funded to start their own projects in agriculture even if it is not their original field of expertise. Capacity building can help with this problem”

“Law reforms from the Ministry of Agriculture in the form of subsidies, financing of small-scale entrepreneurs, and awareness raising about crops and agriculture in general”

C. Respondents are Farmer

In order to understand the correlation between family businesses and young people’s choice of career, the first question in this part of the questionnaire is very similar to the previous one’s: why did you choose to get into this field? Was it a family business or personal choice? 8 out of the 12 respondents stated that one of their parents are farmers and they decided to follow suit as the land and expertise are available. Seeing what agriculture and livestock farming can lead to, and in some cases helping with it, has encouraged youth to be part of the sector rather than completely giving up on it. Interestingly enough, the respondents with no family tied back to farming joined this sector as a way to follow their passion for a field they find sustainable. This might however be the case since almost all the respondents possess land (directly or by proxy through their fathers) which, in the grand scheme of things, makes it easier to steer towards farming.

1. Sales and Marketing Channels

When asked about their sales and marketing channels, the majority of respondents mentioned that they do have a network of customers – either direct ones, through farmer’s markets, or cooperatives – to sell their produce. While this seems like a positive experience for the respondents, import/export restrictions following the Beirut blast along with the

currency devaluation hindered many aspects of market accessibility – notably due to the inability to sell at competitive prices. This is reflected by the below statements from respondents who cannot afford to venture into production beyond household consumption:

“Transportation is very expensive. Everyone plants in lands near their villages so it is expensive to transport them to another one”

“Prices of raw material are too high to be able to include my products in the market at competitive prices. So, I limit production to the needs of my household”

This is made even more difficult when there are no entities (such as cooperatives, local syndicates, or informal unions) present to assist in the production, distribution and sales of produce in some regions of West Bekaa. Respondents agreed that a formation of one would be helpful in terms of financing, creation of marketing channels, and an increase in employment opportunities.

As such, self-sufficiency is a portal towards individual and household food security; however, in a net importer country ravaged by crises and no governmental support, it is near impossible to ensure food and nutrition security at a bigger scale. In fact, food insecurity affected 46% of Lebanese by the end of 2021 and 54% were found to be vulnerable and in need of assistance (WFP, 2022). That being the case, 10 out of 12 participants disclosed that farming is not their primary source of income and that other occupations are needed for survival.

2. Sustainability of Agriculture and Livestock Farming as Career Paths

In light of the severe economic, political, and social crises affecting Lebanon for the past three years, it is challenging to understand which sector, and therefore career, can be considered sustainable in the long run. Respondents seem to agree that the agricultural sector is indispensable for local communities in West Bekaa, and other rural areas in Lebanon, as it is considered the beginning of all humanity and, if sidelined, the end of it. Nevertheless, being a youth in the age of neoliberalism means that they would prefer staying unemployed – or “working unemployed” defined by Ben White as engaging in odd jobs until they find a suitable one, often in specific sectors and based on specific incomes – rather than work in agriculture. Beyond that, global consumerism, the media, and globalization participate in the downgrading of the agricultural sector, and further adds to the stigma of low status and lower salaries affiliated with it. This is further demonstrated by respondents saying that they cannot make a living out of agriculture and livestock farming alone unless there are available funds and an established network of clients.

Consequently, the associated obstacles they face as farmers include limited access to resources (such as water or bigger lands), expensive labor, no support from the government or the Ministry of Agriculture, and raw materials priced in dollars when they get remunerated in LBP. Similarly to the case of non-farmers, food security is quasi-impossible to achieve in these conditions as it affects food accessibility and availability and is affected by the stability of the situation around it.

3. Gender Dynamics

Women throughout the world play a vital role in achieving food security and yet are part of the largest groups currently facing marginalization in most households. In fact, their unequal status in society is systemic, and further affected by race, class, ethnicity, disability (Benzer Kerr, 2017) and cultural barriers which are often omnipresent in the Arab world. Women face such inequities partly because their labor – whether the gender-specific tasks, their social reproductive role, or their contribution in achieving household’s food and nutrition security – is largely unaccounted for since it has no monetary value. If food security is tightly interlinked with land tenure, then women are at the highest risk of food insecurity due to a patrilinear form of inheritance; therefore, leaving wives and daughters with no autonomy or contingency plan in case of widowhood, separation, or divorce (Benzer Kerr, 2017). In order to understand this on a smaller scale, participants were asked if there are specific roles for women and men in the agricultural and livestock sectors.

First, it is important to note that of the 12 randomly interviewed farmers, only 2 turned out to be women, further putting the above in context. Half of the answers stated that they do not think women and men should have different roles in agriculture, they are free to do what interests, and works for, them. The other half believe that women help in harvesting or planting activities as to leave exerting labor to men, making their role within this field assisting rather than primary (according to 58.3% of the respondents compared to 41.7%). This not only perpetuates gender roles within a society, but also makes it increasingly difficult for women to acquire a job in this domain. Although the number of hours spent working in agriculture is on average greater for rural women than for men, they still are

marginalized, underpaid and overexploited, as well as expected to perform gender-specific tasks in agriculture and in their households.

This circles back to the “feminization of agriculture” a concept popularized by Oliver De Schutter. It showcases the gendered nature of the agrarian transition, previously tackled in the literature review, and migratory patterns usually affected by the rise in industry, services, and urbanization in a country where the relative weight of the agricultural sector used to be higher (De Schutter, 2013) which is what took place in Lebanon. What occurs is that since men have higher levels of education in rural communities, they will seek activities in urban centers, leaving women behind to take care of household chores and, consequently, discriminated against as food producers. Consequently, less time outside the scope of work means that younger girls will have to help at home rather than pursue education.

Nevertheless, data retrieved from ESDU’s ‘Women Economic Participation’ project – funded by the Canadian government through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – showcases that extension services targeting women have the potential to increase their involvement in farming and/or food-processing activities. In fact, in a monitoring and evaluation survey conducted with 74 women who took part in capacity building activities within the project, 88% of women shared that they were able to apply the acquired knowledge and 97% would recommend those technical and vocational trainings to others. “Given equal access to resources and human capital, women farmers can achieve yields equal to those of men or even, as some studies show, significantly higher” (Quisumbing et. al, 1995).

4. Historic Transformation

To understand the difference the past decade has had on agriculture and livestock farming, this section studies three points: the changes felt during the last decades, the impact of the socio-economic crisis on these fields, and how easier / more difficult it is to find employment opportunities in farming. Diving into the first point, respondents have counted several ways in which this sector has shifted from the time their fathers used to farm including new equipment and tools that allow them to increase revenue using sustainable methods (such drip irrigation and solar energy). Capacity building mixed with innovation also added to the indigenous expertise of rural farmers which made it easier on them to navigate newer technology and add value to traditional produce, through food processing for example.

Evidently, the biggest setback is the soaring economic crisis that overtook Lebanon following the October 17 uprisings. This worsened conditions of living and severely hit the agricultural sector, especially after the Beirut blast and the pressure it put on imports. As such, respondents tackled the second question by sharing that a large percentage of the population had to resort to backyard farming as staple foodstuff became very expensive whereas farmers were driven to focus on small-scale production for household usage due to the high cost associated with farming. Even the crises in neighboring countries continue to put a strain on Lebanon's economy; for instance, the Syrian war severely impacted the agriculture and food sectors in Lebanon following the discontinuation of subsidized Syrian agricultural products (FAO, n.d.). Additionally, the collapse of the animal sector in Syria resulted in high occurrences of animal diseases in Lebanon (FAO, n.d.).

By the end of the questionnaire, respondents stated that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find employment opportunities in the agricultural and livestock sectors unless there is an appropriate level of knowledge, investment opportunities and access to finance. A couple of participants also believe that it would be easier to work in such domains if it is as an employee rather than employer as the latter comes with higher risks. As a result, it can be deduced that youth see agriculture and livestock farming as unattractive due to the lack of stability and security associated with this field.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted with young farmers and non-farmers from the West Bekaa district in order to understand their perception towards agriculture and livestock farming. By encouraging discussion in rural areas, this study enables decision-making bodies and academics to take into consideration the local communities' concerns and the obstacles they face in relation to the agricultural field. The research also investigates the assault on rural culture and the impact it has on food security at an individual, household, regional and national level.

The study shows how the absence of regulations, law reforms and instability of the sector causes disinterest in such careers and, in the case of farmers, difficulty to sustain from it. As such, Lebanon needs to exert the right to protect their own agriculture through subsidies and tariffs. While a few subsidies were already set in place – such as The Office of Wheat and Sugar Beets and The Régie Libanaise des Tabacs et Tombacs – they were either dropped or focused more on the monopoly over cash crops rather than self-sufficiency through staple foods. In fact, the Régie “masks the continuous manipulation of tobacco farmers by national political elites, the fundamental economic irrationality of the tobacco industry in Lebanon, and the shortcomings of development policies in Lebanese rural areas” (Hamade, 2019, p. 268). Therefore, the subsidies need to be organized in an “overarching policy framework that would ensure a proper use of subsidy instruments” (Hamade, 2019, p. 270) in order to secure at least two pillars of food security: food accessibility and stability. Additionally, the

achievement of stability in such sectors must derive from the replication of salaried jobs in farming activities whereby agriculture stops being considered as part of the ‘informal’ sector. Farmers need to have access to national health insurance and have their income supported directly by the state rather than being dependent on harvesting season.

Another obstacle tackled investigated in the research is access to resources, notably land and water. In a world where land tenure is deeply interlinked with food security, young farmers – or aspiring farmers – are at high risk of food insecurity. The primary way of acquiring a land by young people is often through inheritance which usually result in i) fragmented and unviable parcels in case of large number of family members and/or ii) a long wait as older generations do not pass on land while they still are alive (IFAD, 2014). Long term solutions to address this challenge include strengthening of legislation and legal services for youth to guarantee that their rights to land are recognized (IFAD, 2014), as well as empowerment of the young population by giving them a say in policy-making processes. Access to resources will therefore lead to food accessibility and food availability.

As far as land tenure security goes for young people, wives and young daughters are the last segment of the population with direct access to it. As explained throughout the study, this is the case in most aspects of farming activities whereby women take on more traditional and gender-specific roles, which often go unrecognized in society. In line with SDG5 “Gender Equality”, breaking the cycle of gender discrimination lies in having more systemic changes through implementing strategies that promote women’s decision-making and bargaining power. This will result in a drastic change in household food security through food accessibility and availability. Additionally, the involvement of men and boys in awareness-raising campaigns, education, and capacity building is an essential step towards

achieving a better understanding of why and how women can contribute more to the growth of a household's financial stability when given access to the appropriate resources. Evidence even shows that women's ownership of land and household assets improves their capacity to "make autonomous reproductive health decisions, limit the number of children, and use prenatal and delivery care" (Beegle, Frankenberg, and Thomas 2001, cited in ADB & FAO, 2013) which touches on one of the three determinants of nutrition security: care and feeding practices, as well as one pillar of food security: utilization.

In order to ensure the sustainability of this sector, education and experience are indispensable. This will not only allow farmers to correctly care for their crops, but also ensure proper utilization of resources and, therefore, promote access to healthy and nutritious food. As the study showcases, young people would be interested in joining educational programs, or taking part in capacity building activities, to further deepen their knowledge about agriculture and livestock farming. While curriculums tackling agriculture are developed in most universities in Lebanon, there needs to be a bigger focus on i) providing scholarships to people who do not have the means to attend a private university, ii) offering technical trainings to individuals who are not interested in pursuing an education in this sector, iii) breaking the stigma around this profession being affiliated with a low status and low salaries and iv) working on preserving indigenous knowledge as much as encouraging innovativeness. As a matter of fact, food security also encompasses "the right to access appropriate agricultural knowledge and skills and the right to reject any technology that undermines food providers' ability to develop and pass knowledge and skills" (Hamade, 2019, p. 270).

In wake of the lack of funding prominent in Lebanon, as can be seen in most of the respondents' statements, there needs to be more access to monetary resources granted to small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs. While some corporations – such as VITAS or Kafalat – stepped in to fulfill this role, it is also necessary for ministries to set a comprehensive and inclusive strategy plan to encourage youth to invest in agriculture and livestock farming; essentially providing better access to technology, better management of veterinary drugs and services, education on micro-credits in Lebanon, as well as guarantees on loans. For instance, incubators (such as Berytech) and start-ups programs (such as Tamkin) have been further promoting innovation through competition and access to funds which has led to a positive impact on entrepreneurship in Lebanon for the past several years.

Finally, it is necessary to work towards the de-stigmatization of the agricultural and livestock sectors in Lebanon via awareness-raising campaigns to be able to proceed forward. Both this study's literature review and methodology showcase a highly skewed opinion about agriculture – notably that it cannot yield profits and a stable source of income. While it is a high-risk field, supporting farmers would result in economic growth and a step further towards ensuring food security at different levels.

APPENDIX I – QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH

A. Personal Information		
1. Village in West Bekaa:	2. Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	3. Age:
4. Social Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Married With Children <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed / Separated	5. Number of Family Members: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5+	6. Level of Education: <input type="checkbox"/> No Specific Education <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (Certificate) <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate (Brevet) <input type="checkbox"/> Highschool <input type="checkbox"/> Technical and Vocational Training <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate
7. Number of Dependents (Family members that are financially dependent on you):	8. Current Job Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed	9. If employed, specify field: <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Retail <input type="checkbox"/> Sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Other

B. Questionnaire (If Farming):
1. Why did you choose to get into this field? Is it a family business or a personal choice?
2. Do you own the farm, rent it or work for someone else? If not your own land, would having access to one result in higher productivity and revenue?
3. Type of plantations / number of livestock.

- a. Do you sell your produce on the market? If yes, to whom and using which network?
 - b. Is farming your primary source of income?
 - c. If only for household consumption, what are the main challenges restricting you from selling your products?
4. Do you find this profession sustainable on the long run? Do you think you can make a living out of agriculture and/or livestock farming on its own? Please elaborate.
 5. What are the associated obstacles you face as a farmer? (e.g., lack of access to resources, support from government, finance, etc.)
 6. In your area, is there any entity (coop, local syndicate, municipality, or informal union) that assists in production, distribution, and sales? If not, would the formation of one help you?
 7. **Gender Dynamics:**
 - a. In your opinion, do you see that there are specific roles for males and females in agriculture / livestock farming?
 - b. If applicable, is the role of females primary or only assisting?
 8. **Historic Transformation:**
 - a. In your opinion, what has changed from the past? Are there any new regulations that help you? Did the socio-economic crisis make it harder to continue working in farming?
 - b. In your opinion, is it now easier / more difficult to find employment opportunities in agriculture and livestock farming? Please elaborate.

C. Questionnaire (If Not Farming):

1. Does/did anyone in your family work in the agriculture / livestock farming fields?
 Yes. Why did you choose not to follow in their footsteps?
 No
2. What is your opinion about agriculture and livestock farming? Do you think it's a profitable field to work in?
3. Would you consider pursuing agriculture / livestock farming as a career path? Please elaborate.

4. What would be an incentive to join and stay in these sectors (e.g., subsidies, reforms, trainings, access to resources, etc.)
5. What are the obstacles restraining you from joining these sectors (e.g., access to land, resources, water, finance, etc.)?
6. Did the current crisis make it a viable option to choose agriculture?
7. Would programs targeting youth (such as scholarships) encourage you to pursue farming?
8. In your opinion, what can be done to promote agriculture / livestock farming among youth? (e.g., capacity building, subsidies, funding, etc.) Please elaborate.

APPENDIX II – FIGURES

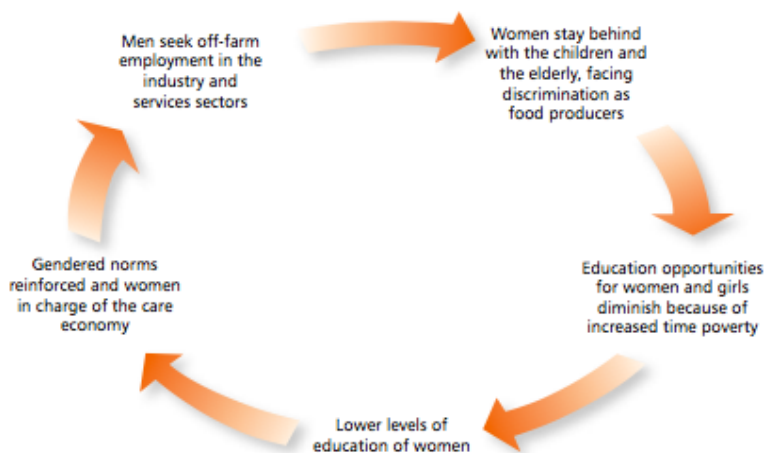


Figure 3: The Gendered Nature of the Agrarian Transition

Source: Author's work in ADB & FAO, 2013, p.23

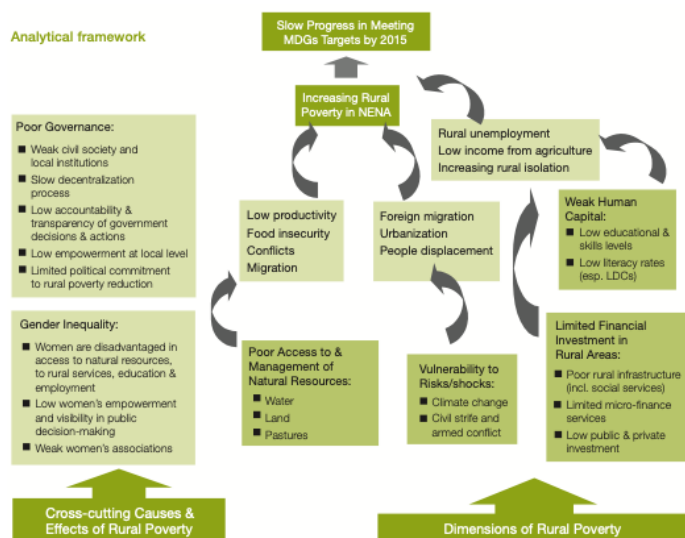


Figure 4: IFAD's Analytical Framework

Source: IFAD and FAO, 2007, p.22

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