



Briefing note

June 2021

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is leading international efforts in the fight against hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices to achieve good nutrition for all. FAO Lebanon Programme is aligned with FAO's global Strategic Objectives. Lebanon was among the first countries to benefit from a FAO Country Office to strengthen the Organization's programmes on the ground. Established in 1977, the Office seeks to promote harmonious and sustainable development of the agricultural sector along with the national agricultural policy, in consultation with relevant ministerial departments.

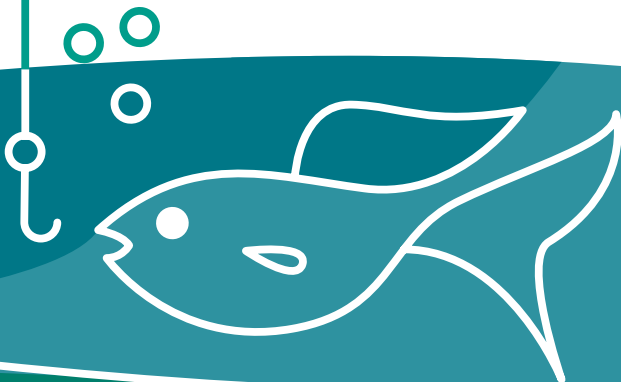
Fisheries & aquaculture in Lebanon

Sector context



The Lebanese coastline is 220 km long with a narrow continental shelf (less than 1 200 km² with up to 200 m depth), which rarely extends beyond an 8 km strip from the coast, except for North Lebanon. Lebanon's large hydrological network includes a dozen of rivers running through the coast, which consequently plays an important role in the quality of marine coastal waters. The Lebanese coast hosts 44 fishing ports and landing sites that harbor around 3 000 all-artisanal, small-scale fishing vessels. The fisheries of Lebanon are traditionally based on trammel nets, longlines and purse seine nets that capture roughly 3 000 - 3 500 tons annually (2 800 tons in 2018).

Main species caught are sardines, anchovies and seabreams. Since the production of the fisheries sector cannot cover the national demand, Lebanon has been dependent on fish imports, which averaged 35 000 tons in recent years, but dropped to 12 800 tons in 2020. Freshwater aquaculture has been practiced since the 1930s. Most production, from the 300 farms, was rainbow trout (1 000 tons in 2018), which are grown in semi-intensive growing systems, mainly along Assi River, that were introduced in 1958. Moreover, the only onshore marine farm in Aabdeh, Akkar produces annually 15 tons of shrimps.



Challenges in Lebanon



The per capita fish consumption (mainly from imports) was about 8.9 kg (2017) as compared to global per capita consumption of 20.3 kg. This has probably more than halved in 2020. Furthermore, a limited number of players controls the import market, while many individuals locally handle the marketing of the scattered domestic production.

Logistics challenges for imports drive stakeholders to work through the perceived cartel of the traders/importers/auctioneers at Beirut (Quarantina) Central Fish Market. The small and medium-scale players could barely afford to organize these imports; moreover, bureaucratic procedures present another significant hurdle. The political instability of the country seems to play a key role in dis-incentivizing investments in the seafood sector.

Most of the fishing nets used have small mesh sizes (less than the mandated 2x2 cm).

This illegal practice started during the Lebanese Civil War and became widely prevalent after the national fishing fleet quadrupled to around 3 000 vessels.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) lacks the necessary financial, technical and human resources to assess the extent of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and related activities and enforce pertinent fisheries management and conservation regulations.

Furthermore, the all-artisanal predominantly wooden fishing fleet (average length is 7 m) can only practice coastal fishing, due to its questionable navigation and safety capabilities. This makes the fishing area practically limited to within three nautical miles from the shoreline; thus, causing immense pressure on and overexploitation of the coastal fish stocks, catch, biodiversity and environment.

The present inappropriate conditions of the sector make work in fisheries not appealing to the young generation (average age of skippers is 51 years) that risks losing the traditional fishing as a way of life. Fishing must be attractive to both the fishing industry and the consumers by providing decent working and living conditions to the fishers and good levels of supply and product quality to consumers. The limited knowledge of market and fish consumption patterns, together with the lack of a strategic vision to define priorities, hamper the creation of job opportunities.

Although most of the Lebanese prefer marine fish, consumers are becoming more aware about rainbow trout, which has the potential for growth and constitutes an additional food source if higher production levels can be attained. This must be coupled with marketing strategies and advertising.

FAO interventions, response and impact



FAO Lebanon has been involved with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) in the development of the Lebanese Fisheries Sector since 2004 with the conduct of the first ever Census of Lebanese Fishing Vessels and Fishing Facilities and then throughout several projects and activities (MedFisis and FAO EastMed Project) to conduct: socio-economic surveys, collection of biological data and stock assessments (in collaboration with the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) - Lebanon); development of web-based Fishing Licensing System (FLS), development of Fisheries Catch and Effort Data Collection Utility – FLOUCA WEB (in collaboration with the University of Balamand), collection of catch and effort data, thus complying with Lebanon's reporting obligations to international and regional organizations, study on Puffer Fish (in collaboration with the University of Balamand), and study on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) and the development of management plan for the Lebanese Sardines Purse Seine Subsector (in collaboration with the University of Balamand). In addition, through several technical cooperation projects (TCPs), FAO supported the elaboration of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Strategic Roadmap in Support of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Lebanon (2014) and the preparation of the new draft Fisheries and Aquaculture Law (2014).

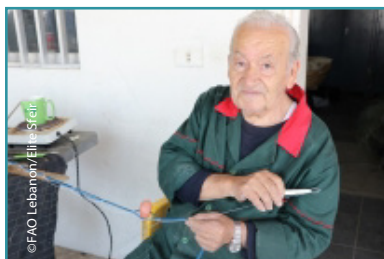




FAO assisted the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture in the conduct of:

- Two studies on Lebanese seafood markets. TCP/LEB/3601 C2. (2017)
 - Assessment of the Commercial Seafood Chain in Lebanon.
 - Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Consumer Behavior Survey and Restaurant Sector Study.
- The design of a certified modern fishing vessel for Lebanon and for the modernization of small scale fishing fleet. TCP/LEB/3701 C1. (2019)
- Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries - EastMed ECY9. (2011-2020)
 - Biological data collection (in collaboration with CNRS-Lebanon).
 - Supply of 15 PCs to MOA Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and its outposts.
- Assessment for Replacement of Illegal Fishing Gears in Lebanon. TCP/LEB/3703. (2020/21)
 - General census of fishing fleet and fishing gears.
 - Development of software for tablets used for data collection and entry.
 - Establishment of showcase pilot region(s) that uses legal and sustainable fishing gears.
 - Provision of fishing net shredder/compactor to dispose of unused fishing gears.
- General Aquaculture Census. GFCM. Including the provision the MS Access data entry tool. (2020/21)
- Assessment of Lebanese Recreational Fisheries Sector. GFCM. (Regional Pilot Project). (2019-21)
- Assessment of discards on fishing vessels. GFCM. (in collaboration with CNRS-Lebanon). (2019-21)
- Collaboration with UNDP in providing three ice plants and refrigerated vans to three fishers' cooperatives. UNDP. (2019)
- Survey-at-sea. Assessment of demersal species. GFCM. (This project was supposed to be launched in September 2020, but was postponed due to Beirut Port explosion). (2021)
- Socio-economic survey. GFCM. (2019/20)
- Pilot Logbook trials for Lebanon. GFCM. (2020)
- Cooperation with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on the provision of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFIDs) for pilot study in the context of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS). GFCM (2020)

Related videos and publications



[Assessing the fishing fleet and fishing gears in Lebanon](#)



[The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2020 AT A GLANCE](#)



FAO Representation in Lebanon

Email: FAO-LB@fao.org

Website: <http://www.fao.org/lebanon/en/>

Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/FAOLEbanon>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Beirut, Lebanon



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