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## NEWS RELEASE

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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### International Day of Cooperatives

#### An occasion to shed the light on the support of FAO to the General Directorate of Cooperatives

**(Beirut, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020)**

On the occasion of the International Day for Cooperatives, and in the presence of H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Abbas Mortada, and the presence of Mr. Jamie Schnurr, Head of Cooperation – Government of Canada in Lebanon, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC) organized today a meeting highlighting FAO's support to the General Directorate of Cooperatives within the framework of the Canada-funded project: "Support to Women's Cooperatives and Associations in the Agri-food Sector in Lebanon"

The meeting was also attended by FAO Representative in Lebanon, Mr. Maurice Saade in addition to the project team, women's cooperatives representatives', GDC Staff and project partners.

After a welcoming speech by the Director-General of Cooperatives (GDC), Eng. Gloria Abouzeid, H.E the Minister of Agriculture stated that the development of the productive sectors, including agriculture, can be done through cooperatives while strengthening the role of rural women, especially in these circumstances that Lebanon is going through. Minister Mortada stressed the importance of enhancing the capacities of rural women, adding: "communities are based on cooperation. The cooperation is the teamwork that allows the individual to advance."

From his side, Mr. Jamie Schnurr, Head of Cooperation- Government of Canada in Lebanon said: "Canada is proud to support the agriculture sector in Lebanon to strengthen local economies and help the most vulnerable communities living in rural areas rebuild their livelihoods while contributing to increased food security in Lebanon. Through this project, Canada is particularly proud to support women's cooperatives and women's leadership in the agriculture sector. Canada believes that when women play a strong and central role in a society's economic, social, and political activities, society grows stronger, richer, and more secure."

In his speech, Mr. Maurice Saade, FAO Representative in Lebanon, mentioned that FAO highlights the critical role of inclusive and effective cooperatives in supporting small producers and marginalized groups such as youth and women. FAO also recognizes the need to work on gender equality, women empowerment, and their involvement in the agricultural sector and cooperative work and to shed light on the successful experiences and opportunities for women in this field starting with the adoption of sex-disaggregated data in the relevant institutions.

The fourth of July 2020 is the International Day for Cooperatives. The theme for this year is Cooperatives for climate action.

The Canada funded project: "Support to Women's Cooperatives and Associations in the Agri-food Sector in Lebanon" named *Raodat El Rif* presents a great opportunity to celebrate this day. The project is being implemented by FAO since October 2018 in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC), and the General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA). The project is expected to create an improved and enabling social and cultural environment for rural women's economic empowerment and to increase

the participation of women's cooperatives and women's associations in local economies to establish and/or expand agri-food income-generating enterprises.

During the meeting, attendees were introduced to the project's activities to strengthen the capacities of the General Directorate of Cooperatives through a Quality Management System, a Management Information System coupled with training and provision of equipment. Also, the project is assisting the GDC in the preparation of a five-year strategy in a participatory way.

During June and July 2020, a series of training sessions about the law of cooperatives is also being conducted in all the Lebanese regions and will be attended by more than 600 persons mainly women. The law texts and an easy to use publication about the law of cooperatives are being widely distributed.

#### Background

FAO implements the project "Support to Women's Cooperatives and Associations in the Agri-food Sector in Lebanon", in collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture. The project aims to support women's cooperatives and associations by promoting a social and cultural environment that enables women's economic empowerment while also increasing the opportunity for these cooperatives and associations to participate in local economies to establish or expand agri-food income-generating enterprises.

More than 250 women's cooperatives/associations benefit from the sensitization of the communities on the rights and roles of women through gender equality and gender-based violence awareness campaigns. They also benefit from guidance towards profitable businesses through the gender assessment of the agri-food sector. Through the farm business schools, women in the cooperatives/associations are provided with training on topics relevant to them and to business management. They are further coached and supported by twenty-five (25) trained facilitators to develop productive and sustainable business plans.

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