Following the Food Security Sector (FSS) Working Group ad hoc meeting held on 30 May 2019, the monthly regular meetings of the sector have been resumed with 11th June meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA).

**Discussion**

The meeting was co-chaired and opened by the MoA focal points.

The Agenda of the meeting was presented and included the following:

1. **Updates from the Food Security Sector (FSS Coordinator)**
2. **Presentation on the project “Support to Women Cooperatives & Associations in the Agri-food Sector of Lebanon” (Project Manager/FAO)**
3. **Agricultural Activities: Livelihoods’ Sector (Livelihoods Sector Coordinator)**
4. **AOB**

1. **Updates from the Food Security Sector**

The FSS Coordinator presented a brief on key facts, figures and the sector partners’ responses for the period January until April 2019. The main facts presented were those related to the achievements (beneficiaries effectively reached) versus the targets (FSS planning 2019) and the funding received versus the funding requirements. In addition, under food security outcomes, key figures on in-kind food distribution (food parcels, ready-to-eat food, snacks and hot meal, community kitchens) and the Cash-Based Assistance were presented. As for the Agriculture support outcomes, results on the support to agriculture sustainability, livestock production and water-use conservation measures (trainings, inputs etc..) including the support to the small-scale farmers agriculture investment and the strengthening of the agriculture labor market were highlighted. The results were obtained from the
partners’ reporting on the Activity Info as well as from different updates provided upon requests and bilateral meetings with the FSS Coordinator.

The main discussions with regard to the in-kind food assistance, tackled the high number of beneficiaries effectively reached in comparison with the target set at the beginning of the 2019. It was brought to the attention of the participants to verify whether the increased number of beneficiaries was a result of their interventions due to the Storms that hit Lebanon during the winter (January-February).

As for the agriculture and agricultural livelihoods’ activities outputs, the comments raised were mainly on the reason behind the low level of beneficiaries in comparison to the “Food Assistance” outcome of the interventions.

In addition, the Coordination Team highlighted once again the importance of the monthly reporting on the AI within the FSS.

The main comments that were raised, focused on the possibility of substituting the number of training days with the number of working hours given that there is a difference between short training sessions (example half a day) and extensive long training ones (several days) so to avoid duplications.

In the same context, LOST explained that beneficiaries cannot be at the same time benefitting from the Food for Training (FFT) and the Food for Assets (FFA) programmes at the same time.

2. Presentation on the project “Support to Women Cooperatives and Associations in the Agri-food Sector of Lebanon”

Ms. Marie-Louise Hayek, Programme Assistant and Gender Focal Point at FAO office in Lebanon, made a presentation on the project on women cooperatives implemented by FAO in close collaboration with the ministry of Agriculture and specifically the Directorate General of cooperatives.

Ms. Hayek gave an overview of the project with its general impact of empowering and improving the livelihoods of rural women, thus contributing to the reinforcement of Lebanese local economies and social stability. As for the project’s objective, the fixed target is to reach 150 women cooperatives or associations, allowing them to have a grant, and labor vouchers to implement their own business plans in the agri-food sector.

Afterwards, the 5 project outputs with their respective activities were presented namely: (i) Gender Equality Awareness Campaign & Basic Training; (ii) Increased capacity of the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC)/Legalization of NOWARA; (iii) Gender Analysis in Agro-food sector: Needs and Opportunities; (iv) Increased Knowledge / Business plan; (v) Increased capacity of Women Cooperatives or Associations.

Ms. Hayek explained how women cooperatives/associations would benefit from an extensive training package to develop their business plans. A group of trained facilitators will coach them.
During the project cycle, the Directorate General of Cooperatives will be assisted and upgraded according to a Quality Management System roadmap.

Labour vouchers will target Syrians, whereas adequate linkages between cooperatives themselves and between cooperatives and markets will be strengthened.

In addition, Ms. Hayek highlighted the project main innovation aspects as follows: (i) the inclusion approach of individuals with special needs; (ii) a rewarding system (collecting laurel leaves) that will help making trainings mandatory; (iii) piloting the Farm Business School Approach with cooperatives; (iv) piloting the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Methodology for the gender behavioral change; and (v) ensuring that the partners/service providers will limit the use of plastics and waste production throughout the whole project life cycle.

Discussions following the presentation focused on that cooperatives are exempted from taxes and it would be advisable to check with the Ministry of Labour if the Syrians can be hired by a cooperative, taking into account that the Lebanese law allow them to work for less than 60 hours per month without being registered.

The FSS Coordinator asked for clarification about the major challenges facing women cooperatives and the answers were mainly that women’s work is not necessarily well visible despite they are active in several agriculture sub-sectors (as helping husband, father, etc..). An example was given for livestock activities where women seem to do all the work and not only processing of dairy products and only men are taking the profit and the benefit and being recognized for the work.

In addition, there is no specialization of women in a defined agriculture area nor an existing regular quality of the product despite several trainings provided on food safety.

LOST shared its experience and success stories in women cooperatives support (in Bekaa women raising goats and in Baalbeck: Mouneh and Kichk processing with a market to sell their products).

LOST supported farmers in cooperatives or associations creation (in Deir El Ahmar and El Ain villages) and helped connecting those with the ministry of agriculture. It was providing small credit loans (between 8,000 and 10,000 USD) to support cooperatives and if the project exceeds 12,000 USD, LOST will facilitate establishing contacts between the cooperatives themselves and some micro-credit enterprises.

3. Agricultural Activities: Livelihoods (LH) Sector

Ms. Gloria De Marchi, the LH Sector Coordinator, presented an overview of the LH Sector activities under the LCRP and more specifically those related to agriculture within the LH Logframe outcomes 1 and 2 (Log Frame).

She explained that the AI reporting under the LH Sector is completed monthly through a breakdown between agriculture interventions and agro-industry interventions. In addition, she informed the FSSWG that an online tool has been developed and operational since the beginning of 2019 for the value chain interventions as an interactive dashboard where the Data is collected at the field level by national coordinators through a bilateral follow-up with selected partners.
As for the Value Chains interventions, she highlighted that half of them are in the agriculture or agro-industry sector.

Ms. De Marchi informed as well the FSSWG that for the Labor-intensive work interventions, only three partners are working in the agriculture sector (IRC, Leb Relief and UNDP) whereas thirteen partners are involved in vocational trainings of which five in agriculture and agro-industry activities.

Ms. De Marchi, reiterated that with the arrival of the FSS Coordinator, joint technical meetings are being resumed in order to strengthen coordination between both sectors (FS and LH) and share information among participants on current agriculture-related interventions from both sides and seek common indicators that might benefit both sectors.

4. Any Other Business (AOB)

The FSS Coordinator announced the following:

- The development of the mid-year dashboard (with narrative) that will be shared with the FSSWG for their inputs and/or comments;
- Submit to the FSS Coordination team any success story from their interventions they would like to share (January-June 2019);
- A Survey Monkey will ask for their interest to have Technical sub-groups within the FSSWG and these will held quarterly meetings;
- Seek the FSSWG advice /interest on having a coordination structure for the sector at decentralized (local) level.

Action points

- Partners to update their lists in the Contact hub (through the UNHCR portal) in order to identify the active ones;
- Partners to provide the coordination team with the 4 Ws matrix which was shared previously along with the Ramadan food distribution packages (if applicable) in order to identify their respective interventions;
- Partners to respect to the extent possible the dates of the following: monthly reporting of activities under the Activity Info, attending the monthly meetings of the FSSWG and sharing assessments conducted at the field level;
- The FSS will open a call for candidatures for NGOs to co-chair the sector for the coming six months as IOCC was until present fulfilling this job. As such, the FSS Coordinator warmly acknowledged the active participation and commitment of IOCC throughout the previous period.

Follow up

- Bilateral meetings between the Coordination team, FSS partners and other Sectors Coordinators will continue to create linkages and strengthen coordination with the relevant sectors;
The Coordination Team will hold internal preliminary technical meetings to revise the FSS log frame outcomes, outputs and indicators before having the general brainstorming session with the FSSWG.

**Next WG meeting will be held on July 9 at MoA.**