

# Fact sheet: Lebanon - Women, agriculture and rural development

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Population:	3.8 million
Growth rate:	2.3 %
Fertility rate:	3.1
IMR:	34/1000 births
GNP/head:	not available
Source:	World Bank Atlas, 1994.

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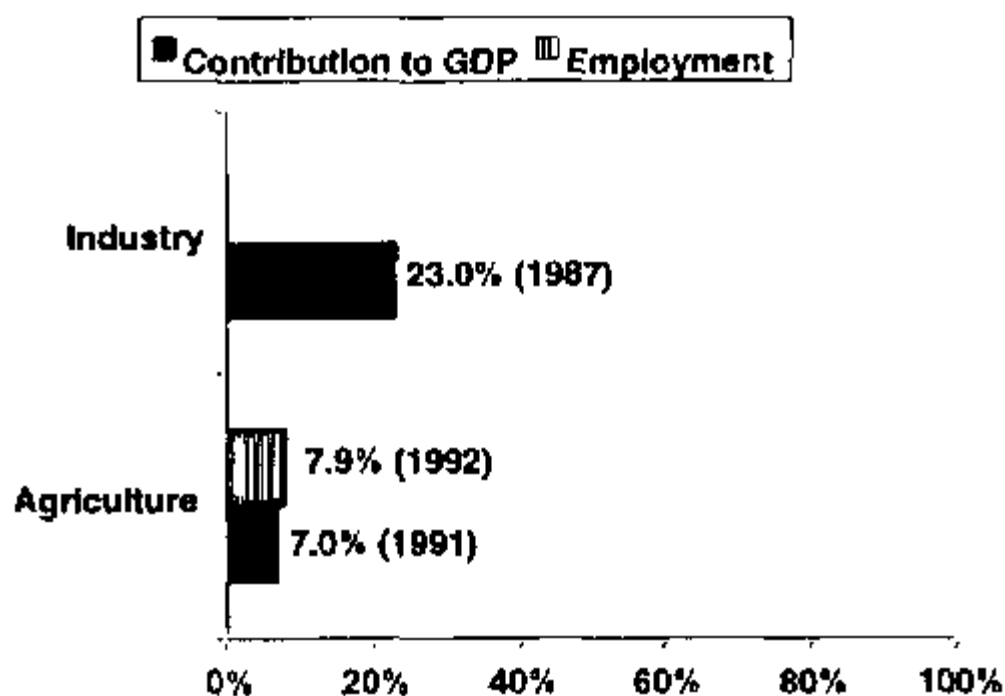


## [Importance of agriculture to the economy](#)

### Importance of agriculture to the economy

Although agriculture contributed only an estimated 7% of the total GDP in 1991, it is considered essential to the economy of the country, mainly as a source of food and foreign exchange earnings generated by the export of fruits, vegetables and eggs, in particular, and of cereals, sugar, vegetable oils and livestock products. Food products accounted for 17.5% of industrial export earnings in 1993. Viticulture is also important. The rural population constitutes about 26% of the total, and agriculture employed 8% of the labour force in 1992. Both figures represent a steady decline from the 1970 figures of 40.6% and 19.8%, respectively.

Sectoral Contributions to GDP and Employment



Source: Europa World Yearbook, 1994





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## [Role of women in agriculture](#)

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### **Role of women in agriculture**

Due to the lack of gender-disaggregated data, and the fact that the last census carried out in Lebanon was in 1970, it is difficult to give accurate information on the role of women in agriculture. According to United Nations projections, women comprised 40.7% of the agricultural labour force in 1990. However, rural women have had to become the main contributors to agricultural production, from planting to marketing, due both to extensive male migration to urban areas and to increasing widowhood as a result of war. More than 10% of rural households were headed by women in 1987. Most women work on family farms, although a considerable number work as seasonal daily paid labourers, particularly in harvesting, where their wages are only half those of men. Women are also employed as cheap labour in food processing industries.

**Division of Labour by Gender.** The division of labour varies from crop to crop and depends on whether or not the area is irrigated. In all cases, women perform a large share of the agricultural work. Men generally carry out land preparation, irrigation and spraying, while women are primarily responsible for seeding, harvesting and processing. In animal husbandry, men care for the health of animals and market the by-products, and women carry out all other tasks. Fisheries are male-dominated, with women involved only in food processing for home consumption. Both men and women collect fuelwood, while women are responsible for virtually all other household tasks.

**Gender Relations in Decision-making in Farming Activities.** According to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) interviews in 1994, almost all decisions related to farming activities are made by men, except for the allocation of water for livestock, which is a woman-dominated activity. When the husband is away, most women are able to decide on allocating family expenditures, hiring labour and allocating water to crops. Single, divorced and widowed women have a lower status in society and decisions are usually made by other males in the family, although such women may have a say in the allocation of family expenditures.





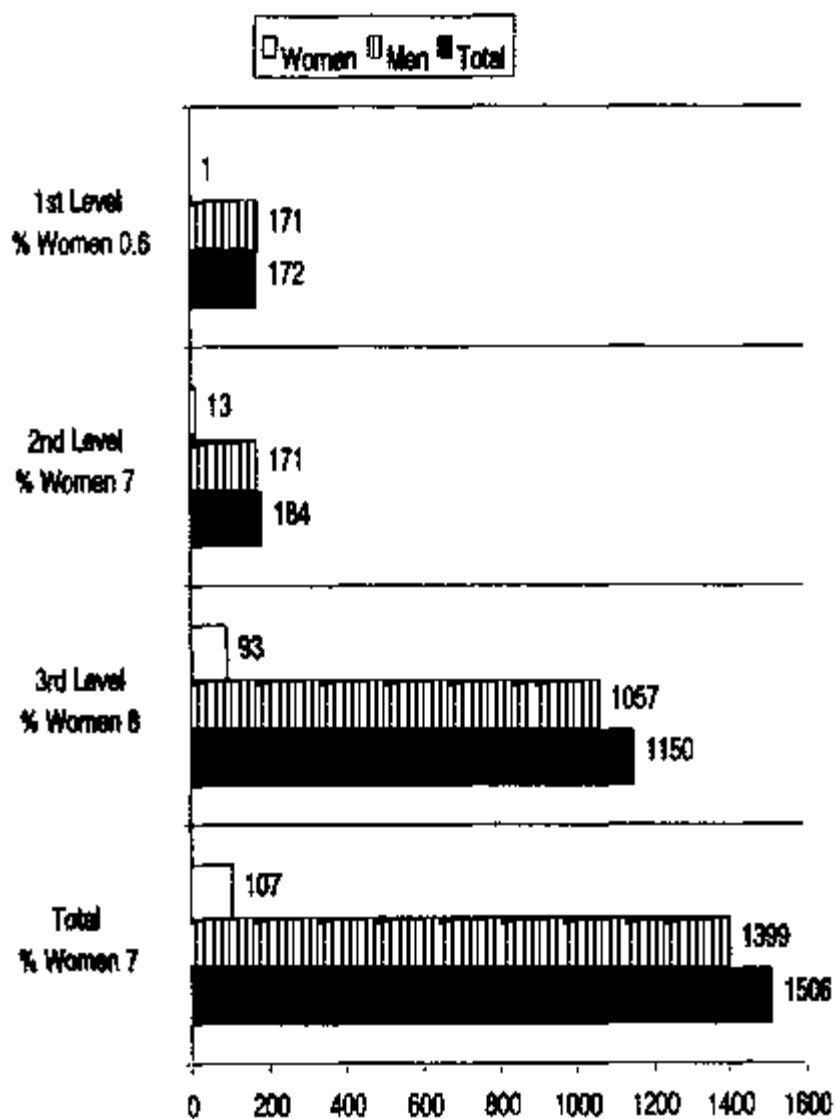
## [Sharing of power and decision-making](#)

### Sharing of power and decision-making

**Members and Officers of Agricultural/Rural Organizations.** In 1993, there were 526 cooperatives in the country, as follows: agricultural, 287; consumer, 76; housing, 115; savings and credit, 8; cultural and artisanal, 18; and caisse solidaire, 23. Statistics on cooperative members are not gender specific, but very few women are members of agricultural, housing and consumer cooperatives and only one agricultural cooperative is headed by a woman. Women predominate in the handicraft cooperatives and three of these are composed exclusively of women.

**Women in Decision-making Positions in Ministries and Government Bodies.** Data on women in decision-making positions in ministries is limited to information from a questionnaire on the first (Director-General, President Board of Directors), second (Head of Department) and third levels of employment, without reference to specific ministries.

Policy-making Positions in Ministries by Gender, 1993





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[Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women](#)

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## Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women

**National Machinery.** There is no national machinery specifically for women. The Ministry of Social Affairs provides services to rural women, such as literacy programmes, health services and vocational training. Limited resources do not allow it to meet all the needs of such programmes.

**WID Units or Focal Points in Technical Ministries.** No WID units or focal points exist in the technical ministries.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).** During the 1976-1990 conflict, the number and size of NGOs increased. However, most of these are urban-based and focused on relief and emergency operations. Very few target rural women. Some NGOs, however, have provided credit to small-scale rural enterprises and extension services, and have supported the establishment and reactivation of local agricultural cooperatives. Women have benefitted directly or indirectly from some of these programmes. Some NGOs have tried to promote gender sensitivity and to involve women in programme planning and evaluation.





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## [Women's rights](#)

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# Women's rights

National legislation provides women and men with equal rights in regard to ownership, access to loans and banking facilities, and inheritance. However, rural women lack awareness of their rights, and discrimination is still very common, especially in regard to credit and inheritance. Legal provisions on employment in the agricultural sector are inadequate for both men and women. In addition, the National Social Security Fund that provides health and maternity insurance, end-of-service indemnity, and family and education allowances, covers only permanent agricultural employees. Since most women in agriculture work on a part-time basis, they are not protected by laws governing working hours, maternity leaves, health measures and other aspects of employment.





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## [Dimensions and determinants of rural poverty](#)

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### **Dimensions and determinants of rural poverty**

*Civil strife* from 1976 to 1990 has adversely affected the agricultural sector and all other sectors of the economy. In particular, there was an almost complete destruction of the socioeconomic infrastructure of the country, devaluation of the local currency, high inflation rates, increased costs of inputs, decreased prices of outputs and lack of access to credit and marketing facilities. Lebanon ranks 102nd on the 1993 UNDP human development index that includes 173 countries. *Increasing poverty*, as a result of the war, is indicated by malnutrition, lack of safe water supply, lack of rural healthcare facilities and inadequate educational facilities.





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[Access to agricultural resources and services](#)

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## Access to agricultural resources and services

**Land.** While women have a legal right to own land, few women have land registered in their names. In general, land ownership in villages is often fragmented and not registered in the name of its present owner because of the expensive and difficult registration process.

**Livestock.** Data collection needed.

**Forestry.** Data collection needed.

**Water.** PRA surveys indicate that many villages suffer from a lack of potable water or do not get water through pipes. This creates additional work for women who are usually responsible for securing water.

**Credit.** Small farmers, especially women, have limited access to credit due to the lack of adequate collateral and the high risk involved in administering small agricultural loans. Since few women are cooperative members, they are less able than men to benefit from cooperative credit. Some NGOs have established credit programmes for small-scale rural enterprises, with women comprising about 20 to 35% of the beneficiaries.

**Extension services and agricultural training.** The Ministry of Agriculture ceased providing extension services at the beginning of the war.

While extension services have been practically nonexistent, private agricultural input companies have employed many trained agents in the field, whose work is based on commercial considerations. Some NGOs provide special extension and training programmes addressing farmers and agricultural cooperatives, or include extension activities in their rural development programmes. However, no extension work or field training is specifically addressed to women. There are few women extension agents.

In the area of professional education in university faculties of agriculture and veterinary science, women comprise a significant portion of the student body: in 1993, women were 59% of the graduates at the Master's level and 47% of the graduates at the Bachelor's level. Women are most frequently found in food technology, nutrition, agronomy and horticulture, while men predominate in soil and irrigation, animal science, fisheries and forestry.







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[Selected programmes in support of women in agriculture, forestry and fisheries](#)

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## **Selected programmes in support of women in agriculture, forestry and fisheries**

### **Legal and Policy Reform**

The Lebanese Association for Human Rights has taken several initiatives to increase women's awareness of their legal rights, including: publishing and distributing free of charge a series of booklets on women's legal and political rights; launching a one-year campaign addressed to women on "Know Your Rights" in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women; and organizing legal training for workers in women's organizations.

### **Access to Agricultural Resources and Services**

A number of recently-started projects are designed to increase women's access to agricultural resources and services in crop production and livestock-related activities, and in credit and training for income-generating activities.





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## [Areas to be strengthened](#)

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# Areas to be strengthened

## **Policy Planning and Research.**

- A WID unit should be created in the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that women's concerns are incorporated in the mainstream of agricultural policy and practice.
- Comprehensive surveys need to be conducted to provide accurate data on the general status of rural women, on their contributions to agriculture and the national economy and on their needs for income, credit, educational and health services, and protection and human rights.
- A gender-disaggregated data base and statistics should be set up.
- A national coordinating body comprising representatives of different ministries and NGOs should be set up to cooperate and coordinate activities.

## **Legal and Policy Reform**

- Efforts should be made to overcome the lack of legal provisions that govern employment in agriculture.
- Changes should be introduced in existing laws, and in the National Social Security Law in particular, to cover daily and seasonal labourers and those working in agriculture at the household level, and to make provisions for maternity and health security more effective. Legal changes should also be introduced in respect to land ownership, inheritance and land use rights for women.

## **Access to Agricultural Resources and Services**

- Income-generating activities in the areas of animal husbandry, crop production, cottage industry and handicrafts should be directed to women.
- Women's workload should be lightened through improved provision of fuel and water' childcare facilities and labour-saving technologies in food production, processing, conservation and preparation.
- Cooperative activities should be set up for purposes such as the use of post-harvest technology and machinery, securing access to land, marketing, access to extension and improved tools, and on the use of alternative cropping patterns.
- Agricultural extension should be designed from a gender perspective and involve both men and women in its activities. Women should also be given the opportunity to work as extension agents.

Source: *National Sectoral Report on Women, Agriculture and Rural Development, 1994.*

Prepared by:

*Integration of Women in Development Service*

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations