Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

One Country One Priority Product

Lebanon

Chickpea (*Cicer arietinum*)

General overview

Chickpeas have long been an integral part of Lebanese farming systems and local diets. Cultivated primarily in rain-fed areas, chickpeas contribute to soil health as a nitrogen-fixing crop and support food security and sustainable agriculture. The crop's cultural and culinary value is deeply tied to Lebanese traditions and growing global recognition.

Status of the chickpea in Lebanon

Chickpeas remain a strategic crop for Lebanon, particularly in rain-fed areas where they contribute to food security, soil health and rural livelihoods. Despite low national production compared to rising demand, chickpeas continue to play a vital role in the local diet and offer significant potential for value addition, innovation and market expansion.

Production (MoA 2010)

- Grown on around 2 900 ha, producing ~3 000 tonnes per year
- Average yield: 1 091 kg/ha
- 97 percent of farms are small or medium-sized (0.1–3.2 ha)
- Chickpeas are rain-fed and grown in rotations
- Main regions: Baalbeck-Hermel and Bekaa (74 percent of production)

Storage

- Most farmers sell chickpeas immediately after harvest due to cash needs and lack of storage
- Existing storage is controlled by traders and processors, and used for imported dried products
- No centralized storage for farmers; existing warehouses need rehabilitation

Processing

- Chickpeas are mainly cleaned, sorted, and graded by about 25 service providers, each handling ~82 tonnes per year (FAO, 2023)
- Processing losses reach 5 percent, due to outdated machinery and poor storage
- Innovation is growing, with new chickpea-based products such as gluten-free flour, roasted snacks, protein bars, pasta, chips, and beverages

Marketing and trade

- Annual demand: ~21 000 tonnes (FAO, 2023)
- Only 14 percent is locally produced; remainder imported from Turkey, Mexico, and Canada
- Main buyers: local consumers, food processors, and food service providers
- Per capita consumption: 3.25 kg/year
- Growing demand for processed chickpea products like hummus, driven by health and sustainability trends

Challenges

- Limited access to high-quality or certified seeds
- Reliance on traditional farming practices
- Lack of modern processing plants and storage facilities
- Low market prices and absence of national grading standards
- Weak coordination and linkages among value chain actors

Key activities

- Between 2023–2024, FAO Lebanon conducted stakeholder workshops and engaged research institutions
- In 2025, FAO will:
  - Train 300 farmers in sustainable chickpea cultivation
  - Develop a technical guide on good agricultural practices
  - Host a donor investment workshop
  - Promote the chickpea value chain nationally

Cultural importance and local consumption

Chickpeas are a key ingredient in Lebanese cuisine and food heritage, featured in iconic dishes like hummus. Beyond tradition, they play a vital role in food security and sustainable farming. Their global popularity, particularly among the Lebanese diaspora, strengthens their role as a symbol of national identity and hospitality.

Coordination and key stakeholders

- FAO Lebanon
- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
- Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI)
- Lebanese Standards Institution (LIBNOR)

Target areas for partnership and investment

Production

- Develop infrastructure to produce certified, high-quality seeds
- Strengthen farmer capacity in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

Processing

- Upgrade equipment to reduce losses and improve quality
- Develop national standards for dried chickpeas in partnership with LIBNOR

Storage

- Improve conditions to meet quality standards
- Expand access to storage for small and medium farmers

Marketing and trade

- Establish business models to improve coordination among value chain actors

For more information:
OCOP Secretariat: OCOP@fao.org
FAO Regional Office for NENA: rne-ocop@fao.org
OCOP Lebanon: FAO-LB@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

Learn more about FAO OCOP Initiative

Regional Knowledge Platform on OCOP