



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon

(GCP /LEB/043/CAN)

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CCIAB	Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture
CNRS	National Center for Scientific Research
ESOP	Environmental and Social Operational Pillar
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FESM	Framework for Environmental and Social Management
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GCP	Global Cooperation Programme
GDC	General Directorate of Cooperatives
GH	Greenhouse
LARI	Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute
LCEC	Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
QOOT	Agri-Food Innovation Cluster
RMF	Rene Mouawad Foundation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction

The FAO project “Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon”, funded by the Government of Canada, aims to increase adoption of gender-responsive, nutrition-sensitive climate smart agricultural practices, improve the performance of fruits and vegetable value chains, particularly in apples and greenhouse/open-field vegetables, and create an enabling environment for value chain (VC) actors over a five-year period (2023-2027). The total project budget is CAD 20,000,000.

Small-scale fruits (apples) and vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplants) farmers and their organizations are supported to increase their technical and organizational skills to participate more effectively in selected value chains and increase their income. All other VC actors, from input producers to processors and traders, are also supported to develop their business strategies and activities for the adoption of innovative and modern technologies at the production/marketing and processing levels, to become more competitive, inclusive, sustainable and responsive to farmers’ needs.

A policy dialogue between VC actors and the government is also promoted to design and implement inclusive policies, legislation and programs that meet the needs of farmers and their organizations and that are oriented to develop sustainable and inclusive VCs.

Main activities include:

- provision of gender-responsive capacity development programmes on technical and organizational skills for individual farmers and for those organized in formal and informal groups;
- provision of inputs/tools/equipment and advisory services to small-scale farmers and their organizations to improve their performance. The main technological innovation regards the introduction, in the vegetable sector of modern environmental-friendly greenhouses (GH).
- provision of technical assistance, coaching and trainings to farmers and their organizations for them to develop business and marketing plans. In particular, farmers’ organizations and MSMEs will be supported to access renewable energy sources and to adopt new technologies;
- provision of technical assistance for farmers’ groups creation;
- implementation of an investment support scheme for farmers’ groups for collective production, marketing and processing actions;

- implementation of a matching grant for VC actors and MSMEs related to the apple and vegetable value chains to adopt new technologies or improve the existing ones for business development;
- creation of interprofessional fora among VC actors for a better VC coordination;
- implementation of a pilot inclusive rural finance scheme created to support various actors of the apple or greenhouse/ open field vegetable value chains;
- provision of trainings to all VC actors to develop negotiation and communication skills and effectively engage in policy dialogue as well as promote gender equality and mainstream gender activities at all levels of the value chains;
- provision of technical assistance to mainstream gender equality in selected VCs;
- development of a multistakeholder open dialogue platform among VC actors and public authorities for an inclusive policy dialogue;
- provision of technical assistance to promote Public-Private partnership in the selected value chains; and
- design, development and implementation of an advocacy plan for removing gender barriers, women's rights, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability in the selected value chains.

The project is implemented in coordination with local and international partners. Its geographic scope encompasses rural areas across the entire country where agricultural value chains are pivotal for local economies, especially in regions most affected by food insecurity.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the project, as outlined in the project document, include:

1. **Direct Beneficiaries:**
 - **Small-scale farmers:** Particularly those involved in apple and vegetable (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplants) production, with a focus on both greenhouse and open-field agriculture.
 - **Women agricultural stakeholders:** Special emphasis is placed on women working across the different segments of the value chains (agricultural workers, smallholder farmers, agrifood producers, etc.), who form a significant portion of the agricultural labor force, to enhance their technical and organizational skills.
 - **Farmers' organizations:** Both formal and informal groups of farmers, especially those led by women, will receive support in technical training, business strategy development, and collective actions.

- **Value chain actors:** This includes input suppliers, processors, traders, and other entities involved in the fruit and vegetable value chains.
- **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs):** Engaged in the apple and vegetable value chains and benefiting from business development support, including the adoption of new technologies and access to finance.
- **Government Agencies:** Specifically, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI), and the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC) will receive support in strengthening their institutional capacities.

2. Indirect Beneficiaries:

- **Agricultural businesses:** These include companies providing inputs, retailers, exporters, and those involved in processing agricultural products.
- **Consumers:** Benefiting from improved food safety, increased food availability, and higher quality products due to better practices and innovations implemented in the value chains.

Objectives of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The purpose of stakeholder engagement is to maintain two-way communication with beneficiaries, affected, interested and vulnerable stakeholders throughout the life of the project. Stakeholder engagement is considered meaningful when it offers the real possibility for stakeholders to influence the project design, raise concerns about impacts or risks not foreseen in project analysis or by project proponents previously, to object to projects without fear of retaliation, there are truly safe channels for expressing concerns including a Grievance Redress Mechanisms which protects anonymity and confidentiality. For communication to be meaningful, it must not just be pushing information or informing but also listening and taking into account opinions of stakeholders in response to information shared about projects. Stakeholder engagement should include as well civil society organizations, community-based organizations, women's associations, organizations working with vulnerable groups and stakeholders, and make every effort to accommodate and proactively create safe spaces for the participation of vulnerable stakeholders such as to hold separate meetings for women only. The SEP lays out the strategy in which the FAO Lebanon will carry out the stakeholder engagement, and the general outline of a Grievance Redress Mechanism, which is the Community Response and Feedback Mechanism in the case of FAO Lebanon, through which beneficiaries and affected or vulnerable stakeholders can submit questions, complaints or new impacts or risks related to FAO projects including the ones discussed in this SEP.

The benefits of carrying out meaningful stakeholder engagement include to detect new environmental and social impacts and risks, or conflicts with stakeholders, and address

them before they escalate, and enthusiasm for the project, which ultimately lead to reaching the desired positive impact as well as avoiding reputational risks for FAO.

Stakeholder engagement principles

The stakeholder engagement process will align with the following guidelines and objectives:

- Permanency. The stakeholder engagement will occur starting with project design and throughout the life of the project.
- Inclusiveness. Vulnerable groups such as women, people with disabilities or the elderly or youth, will be prioritized, and proactive measures taken in order to ensure their ability to genuinely participate and feel safe expressing views, including those that may bring up new risks or impacts or question or object to the projects.
- Communication method chosen should correspond with the most accessible forms of communication used by stakeholders.
- Women. Women facilitators will lead focus group discussions with women stakeholders as a principle, to provide confidential methods for women to share their views anonymously, and when possible, verbal or oral interviews.
- Culture. The communication should be held in a way that aligns with and honors cultural traditions and customs of the stakeholders, and their traditional leadership structure, while not excluding other voices that are part of the community but not the leadership (i.e. women, the disabled, elderly, youth, etc.).
- Do no harm. The most important aspect of the exercise of stakeholder engagement, even more than understanding and recording the views of stakeholders, is to protect the health and safety of stakeholders. At no time should they be coerced to speak, give an opinion, or to participate, and their safety and integrity should be prioritized above everything else, and their confidentiality should be maintained whereas any analysis of their opinions should not be disclosed with personal identifying information that could allow others to recognize them and retaliate.
- Stakeholder engagement activities will be documented and recorded (while protecting the identities of stakeholders) periodically.

Key design elements and potential social and environmental issues

1. Technological Innovations:

- **Modern Greenhouses:** The introduction of modern, environmentally friendly greenhouses for vegetable farmers to improve yield, crop quality, and working conditions. These structures also reduce pest incidences and improve energy efficiency.
 - **Renewable Energy:** Support for value chain actors to adopt renewable energy and modern technologies for production and processing, enhancing sustainability.
 - **Precision Agriculture:** Encouragement of soil and water testing to optimize the use of fertilizers and agrochemicals, reducing environmental impacts.
2. Social Innovations:
- **Women's Empowerment:** Special emphasis is placed on empowering women farmers and their organizations through technical and organizational training. The project will help women overcome barriers to participate more effectively in VCs, contributing to improved income and gender equality.
 - **Farmer Groups:** The project supports the formation and strengthening of formal and informal farmer groups, especially for women, to help them access resources, markets, and participate in policy dialogues.
 - **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Collaboration between public authorities and private sector actors to support investments in sustainable agricultural technologies and practices.
3. Institutional Innovations:
- **Value Chain Coordination:** The project aims to create interprofessional fora to facilitate dialogue among value chain actors, fostering better coordination and policy development.
 - **Policy Advocacy:** Through multi-stakeholder platforms, the project seeks to influence the adoption of inclusive and protective policies that address the needs of smallholder farmers and value chain actors, promoting sustainability and gender equality.
 - **Financing Schemes:** The project aims to develop innovative rural financing schemes for farmers' and producers' groups, and for MSMEs.

Potential Social Issues:

- **Gender Inequality:** Despite women's substantial involvement in agriculture, their participation in decision-making roles within value chains is low. The project aims to address this by focusing on reducing gender disparities in access to resources, training, and leadership roles.
- **Economic Barriers for Women:** Many rural women lack control over income and land, access to credit, and financial services. The project seeks to bridge this gap by providing

rural finance mechanisms and investment support schemes tailored to women farmers.

- **Crisis Exacerbation:** Lebanon’s ongoing economic crisis, compounded by the effects of the Syrian refugee influx, COVID-19, inflation, and now the war with Israel with all its fallouts on agricultural lands and internal displacement, has disproportionately affected women, who are often the first to lose jobs. The project will address the compounded impact of these crises on women’s agricultural participation.

Potential Environmental Issues:

- **Chemical Overuse:** There is a risk of environmental degradation due to the overuse of agrochemicals (fertilizers, pesticides), which can contaminate soil and water resources. The project promotes integrated crop and pest management practices to mitigate these risks.
- **Waste Management:** The project aims to address the environmental impact of greenhouse materials and agricultural waste by linking farmers with recycling centers and promoting environmentally sustainable waste disposal methods.
- **Climate Change and Natural Hazards:** Lebanon is prone to water shortages, land degradation, and natural hazards like droughts, floods, and pests. The project will promote climate-smart agricultural practices to mitigate these risks and improve resilience against climate change impacts.

2. Regulations and requirements

The project includes several legal, regulatory, and donor requirements for stakeholder engagement, emphasizing gender equality, environmental sustainability, and public consultations:

- **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** The project ensures that vulnerable groups, including women, are actively involved in decision-making processes and policy dialogues. Specific measures are taken to raise awareness and build capacity, particularly among female farmers and value chain actors, allowing them to participate fully in consultations. This is aligned with the principles of FPIC, which emphasizes informed and voluntary participation of stakeholders.
- **Public Consultation and Disclosure Requirements:** Public consultations are a core component of the project design, as demonstrated by consultations conducted with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), local stakeholders, and women’s cooperatives at the preparatory phase of the program. These consultations are vital in identifying the needs and gaps in value chains, especially regarding gender and

social inclusion. Furthermore, regular stakeholder consultations will occur throughout the project's lifecycle.

- **Customary Authorities and Procedures:** The project recognizes the importance of customary norms and involves local authorities, particularly in agricultural sectors. The project's design includes consultations with rural community leaders and cooperatives to ensure that local customs and practices are respected while promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA) Requirements:** The project incorporates environmental sustainability, focusing on reducing chemical pollution, soil degradation, and over-irrigation. It requires compliance with national environmental regulations and encourages practices like the use of organic fertilizers and renewable energy. Stakeholders, especially farmers, are provided training on sustainable agricultural practices that align with national and international environmental regulations.
- **Gender Equality and International Obligations:** The project complies with Lebanon's international obligations, particularly those related to gender equality, as it promotes women's empowerment in agriculture. It acknowledges that gender equality is not optional but a legal obligation under international treaties. Gender-responsive capacity development and awareness-raising activities form an integral part of the project, targeting both men and women, as well as public institutions.
- **Stakeholder Platforms and Policy Dialogue:** The project aims to create multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms, involving government agencies, private sector actors, and farmers. This platform will facilitate participatory policy recommendations, ensuring that stakeholders, especially marginalized groups, can contribute to the policy-making process. This also involves the institutional strengthening of key public agencies like the MoA, LARI (Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute), and the GDC (General Directorate of Cooperatives).

In particular, Lebanon is subject to several international laws and conventions that ensure stakeholder engagement and the protection of community rights in development projects. Below is a summary of the key international laws and conventions, including web links to further explore these frameworks:

- *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):* FPIC is a right recognized under international law, particularly through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*¹, which Lebanon aligns with. FPIC ensures that Indigenous and local communities are consulted and provide informed consent before any development

¹ [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*: Lebanon is a party to the ICCPR, which protects the right of peoples to self-determination. This covenant emphasizes that all people have the right to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*: Similar to the ICCPR, the ICESCR, to which Lebanon is a signatory, guarantees the right to self-determination, allowing peoples to control their economic, social, and cultural development. This is relevant to projects that may impact local communities' resources and livelihoods.
- *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*²: Lebanon is also a signatory to the CBD, which encourages community involvement in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This convention supports the principles of FPIC when projects potentially affect local ecosystems and community livelihoods.

These conventions collectively ensure that Lebanon upholds international standards for stakeholder engagement, ensuring that affected communities are properly informed, consulted, and able to provide consent before the implementation of any projects that may impact them.

In addition to national requirements, also **FAO** has developed a range of policies and guidelines to ensure stakeholder engagement in projects, especially when it comes to local communities, and vulnerable groups. Here are the key FAO policies that pertain to stakeholder engagement, including FPIC, statutory recognition of customary norms, and the role of customary authorities:

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC): FPIC is a cornerstone of FAO's stakeholder engagement strategy, particularly in projects that affect local communities. The FAO has adopted FPIC³ as a standard to ensure that all stakeholders, especially those in rural areas, are able to participate in decision-making regarding projects that may affect their lands, territories, and resources. The core elements of FPIC include:

- **Free**: Consent is given voluntarily without any form of coercion, intimidation, or manipulation.
- **Prior**: Consent is sought well in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities.
- **Informed**: Communities are provided with all relevant information regarding the project, including its risks and potential impacts.

² <https://www.cbd.int/>

³ FAO's FPIC manual: [FAO FPIC Guide](#)

- Consent: Communities have the right to accept or refuse a project based on their deliberations.

FPIC is particularly relevant in projects that might affect agriculture, water use, forestry, or land development, as it ensures that local communities' rights are respected before any project proceeds.

Recognition of Customary Norms and Procedures: FAO recognizes the importance of customary norms, practices, and procedures in local. It works to integrate traditional knowledge and customary laws into agricultural projects and land management strategies. By recognizing these norms, FAO ensures that community-based governance structures are respected and included in decision-making processes.

- Customary laws can influence how resources are managed, how disputes are settled, and how communities engage with external stakeholders.
- FAO emphasizes the need for governments and development agencies to respect these practices when planning projects, especially in rural or Indigenous territories.

Customary authorities, such as village chiefs, local councils, or tribal leaders, play an essential role in many rural and Indigenous communities. FAO policies support the inclusion of these authorities in project planning and implementation, recognizing their role in ensuring that the concerns of local people are heard and addressed.

- Customary authorities are often gatekeepers to community acceptance of projects, and their involvement is crucial for the successful implementation of any project that affects communal lands or resources.
- These authorities also help ensure that the community's values and traditions are respected throughout the project cycle.

Framework for Environmental and Social Management⁴ (FESM): FAO's FESM is designed to help manage and improve FAO's environmental and social performance through a risk- and outcome-based approach. By providing a set of tools, the FESM seeks to ensure that the requirements related to the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment and livelihoods are integrated into the definition, preparation and implementation of FAO programming. In particular, the Environmental and Social Operational Pillar (ESOP) 2 sets out the principles for ensuring meaningful, effective and informed participation of all stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of FAO programmes and projects as well as the grievance, conflict-resolution and accountability mechanisms to prevent and mitigate adverse impacts. Stakeholder engagement is central to the FESM, ensuring that communities are informed about risks and can actively participate in safeguarding their environment.

⁴ [FAO Framework for Environmental and Social Management \(FESM\)](#)

- The ESOP 2 mandates community consultations and the integration of social and environmental assessments to minimize harm to local populations.
- It includes provisions for grievance mechanisms, where stakeholders can raise concerns or complaints regarding project activities.

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT): The VGGT⁵ is a key FAO framework that supports responsible governance of tenure, ensuring equitable access to land, fisheries, and forests. The guidelines advocate transparent, inclusive, and participatory processes that involve local communities, especially in cases where tenure rights are informal or customary.

- These guidelines support the rights of marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples, women, and small-scale farmers, ensuring their voices are heard in decisions that affect their livelihoods.
- The VGGT also promotes the legal recognition of customary tenure systems and the role of community authorities in land governance.

FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: FAO's Indigenous Peoples policy⁶ provides a framework to promote the rights and involvement of Indigenous communities in development projects. The policy encourages:

- Active participation of Indigenous peoples in project design and execution.
- Protection of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.
- Application of FPIC in all FAO-led projects affecting Indigenous peoples.

FAO Stakeholder engagement and information disclosure guidelines: FAO Framework for Environmental and Social Management (FESM) requires stakeholder engagement to be carried out according to the principles mentioned above, and information about every project financed by FAO, as well as environmental and social assessments and environmental and social management plans, to be disclosed to and shared with the stakeholders in an accessible way for their response and opinion, as well as to be disclosed to the public with ample time before executing the project so that there is time to review it before any activities that may create impacts occur.

Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) and conflict resolution processes: FAO requires that GRM be established for beneficiaries, or affected, interested or vulnerable stakeholders to be able to submit complaints, questions, concerns, or new impacts or risks they are experiencing that have not yet been detected, and to have a response and resolution. They

⁵ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure: [VGGT Guidelines](#)

⁶ FAO Indigenous Peoples Policy: [FAO Indigenous Peoples Policy](#)

are also entitled to be anonymous and have their identity protected and to be protected from retaliation. In the case of these projects, the FAO Lebanon level GRM “Community Response and Feedback Mechanism” will serve as the GRM.

The following contact information for this mechanism was provided to all the stakeholders consulted during the stakeholder engagement process that took place in July 2024:

Telephone: +961 1 841701

Fax: +961 1 841705

Email: You can reach the FAO Lebanon office via their general email for inquiries at fao-lebanon@fao.org.

Website: [FAO Lebanon page](#)

FAO’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG): For complaints that are not resolved at the level of the GRM of FAO Iraq or of any GRM within FAO, complaints and concerns can be escalated directly to the Office of the Inspector-General (OIG) who has the authority to investigate. This includes allegations of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (SEA) or of any complaint of a severe nature, or where the stakeholder feels that the GRM has a conflict of interest or doesn’t feel safe with the operators of the GRM for any reason.

Contact	
For general information	(+39) 06 570 54884
By e-mail:	inspector-general-office@fao.org
By mail:	Office of the Inspector General Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 Rome, Italy

In addition to Lebanon’s and FAO’s rules for stakeholder engagement, also the **Government of Canada** has its own regulations. The Government of Canada’s international development cooperation policies focus on promoting inclusive and sustainable development, emphasizing stakeholder engagement, transparency, and respect for the rights of local communities. These principles are particularly relevant to projects involving agriculture, land management, and the environment, such as those under FAO cooperation. Below are key Canadian policies that pertain to stakeholder engagement, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and the role of customary norms and authorities:

Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP): Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) places a strong emphasis on inclusive decision-making, ensuring that women, girls, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities are involved in project planning

and implementation. Stakeholder engagement is central to Canada's development efforts, and the policy outlines specific guidelines for:

- FPIC: Canada supports the right of Indigenous communities to FPIC, ensuring they are meaningfully consulted and give consent before projects that affect their land, resources, or livelihoods are initiated.
- Inclusion of Women and Marginalized Groups: FIAP ensures that development projects actively involve women and other underrepresented groups in decision-making processes, aligning with broader international norms of social equity.

Rights of Local Communities: Canada is a strong supporter of Indigenous rights and local communities globally and is committed to the principles outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*⁷, which includes FPIC. This is applicable to Canada's development projects abroad, ensuring that Indigenous and local communities have a say in projects that affect them.

- FPIC: Canadian policy emphasizes the need for obtaining FPIC from Indigenous peoples in development projects that affect their traditional lands or resources. This aligns with Canada's domestic approach to Indigenous rights and is reflected in its international development initiatives.
- Customary Authorities: Canada recognizes the importance of customary governance structures and supports the role of traditional leaders in community decision-making.

Environmental and Social Safeguards: In line with international best practices, Canada's development cooperation includes strong environmental and social safeguards, which emphasize stakeholder engagement, particularly for projects involving land use or environmental impact. Key aspects include:

- Recognition of Customary Norms: Canadian-supported projects respect and incorporate local and customary norms, particularly in land management and resource use, ensuring that development interventions are culturally appropriate and sustainable.
- Grievance Mechanisms: The policy ensures that affected communities have access to grievance mechanisms to voice concerns or complaints about project impacts.

⁷ UNDRIP Document: [UNDRIP](#)

Partnerships for Development Innovation: Canada's Partnerships for Development Innovation program emphasizes collaboration with local communities and stakeholders. This program aligns with the principles of community ownership of development initiatives and recognizes the role of traditional leaders and community authorities in ensuring the success of projects.

- Customary Authorities: Through its partnerships, Canada ensures that customary authorities are involved in the design and implementation of projects, particularly in areas of agriculture, resource management, and governance.

Global Affairs Canada's Development Cooperation Policy: Global Affairs Canada (GAC) supports FPIC and other community engagement strategies in its international development cooperation projects. These policies aim to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and ensure that local norms, practices, and governance structures are incorporated into project planning and implementation.

- FPIC: GAC ensures that projects affecting Indigenous communities adhere to the principles of FPIC, where communities have the right to grant or withhold consent based on comprehensive and culturally appropriate consultations.
- Customary Norms and Procedures: GAC's projects respect local laws and traditional governance, working closely with local authorities to align development initiatives with customary practices.

Canada's international development cooperation policies emphasize inclusive stakeholder engagement, the recognition of customary norms, and the role of local authorities. FPIC is a key principle in Canadian development efforts, ensuring that Indigenous and local communities are meaningfully consulted and able to influence projects that affect them. Canada's approach aligns with international standards, such as UNDRIP and other rights-based frameworks.

3. Summary of any previous stakeholder engagement activities

The project design relied on inputs from consultations carried out with MoA, local stakeholders from different governorates and line ministries undertaken in the framework of PSDP and other ongoing projects. It is also based on inputs emerging from consultations with women's cooperatives carried out under the framework of the project titled "Empowerment of women cooperatives and producer associations in the agro-food sector in Lebanon" GCP/LEB/030/CAN.

Inputs resulting from these consultations were key to identify the value chains to be targeted by the current proposal and to identify gaps and needs that will be met through this project.

Here's a summary of key details of stakeholder engagement activities carried out in 2023 as part of project preparation and in the inception phase:

1. Type of Information Disclosed:

Information has been disseminated through consultations, reports, and oral presentations.

Arabic and English are the main languages used in communication with stakeholders.

2. Locations and Dates of Meetings:

The project has conducted online consultations with various stakeholders across multiple locations, including the **Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)**, **regional representatives**, and local **women's cooperatives**. These consultations have taken place throughout the design and planning phases of the project.

3. Consulted Individuals, Groups, and Organizations:

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI), General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC), local women's cooperatives, and various informal/formal farmer groups have been consulted. Women's organizations and cooperatives are targeted for active involvement in the consultations. These include:

- Informal Groups in Ainata, such as Helene Rahmeh, member of an informal group involved in apple products.
- Women Group Associations, such as Etoile de la Paix. This group is engaged in the carob value chain and actively participates in consultations related to the project.
- Association in Ras Baalbek, represented by Nada Fadel, this association focuses on tomato sub-products, with an emphasis on agrifood processing and income diversification.
- Women Cooperatives Under Prior Projects: the project also builds upon previous consultations carried out under the "Empowerment of Women Cooperatives and Producer Associations in the Agro-Food Sector" project (GCP/LEB/030/CAN). These cooperatives are expected to continue being involved in the ongoing implementation.

4. Key Issues Discussed and Concerns Raised:

- **Gender Inclusion:** Women farmers expressed concerns about access to financial resources and decision-making roles within the value chains.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Discussions focused on sustainable agricultural practices, particularly reducing chemical use and enhancing waste management in the greenhouse vegetable sector.
- **Economic Barriers:** Stakeholders raised concerns about the economic barriers to market access for smallholder farmers and women-led cooperatives.

5. Responses and Follow-Up Actions:

The project has committed to providing tailored training, financial support schemes, and the creation of e-marketing platforms to enhance market access for smallholder farmers and women-led cooperatives.

Environmental sustainability initiatives include grants for renewable energy and waste management schemes.

6. Documentation and Reporting:

All engagement activities are documented in project reports, which include focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and consultation summaries. These activities are reported back to stakeholders through structured meetings and written reports.

As part of the development of the **Project Implementation Plan (PIP)**, an extensive consultation process was undertaken to fill identified gaps in the project document (PD) and contribute to better inform and shape project’s activities. During October and November 2023, the following representatives of local partners were interviewed:

Table 1. Stakeholders consulted during the development of the project implementation plan in 2023

	Organization	Position
1	Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	Director of Plant Resources Directorate
2		Head of Service of Horticulture
3	Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI)	Director General
4	General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC)	Director General
5	National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)	Associate Researcher – Remote Sensing Center
6	Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation (LCEC)	General Director- President of the Board
7	Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture (CCIAB)	Deputy General Manager/Service and Agricultural Development Department Manager - CCIAB Zahle and Bekaa
8		Head of the Agriculture and Agro-Industries Department- CCIAB Beirut and Mount Lebanon
9	Lebanese University	Professor of Conservation and Management of Natural Resources

10	Holy Spirit University of Kaslik	Director of the Higher Center for Research / Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies for Science and Technology/Professor of Entomology
11	Care International in Lebanon (NGO)	Agriculture Specialist- Basatine project
12	Rene Mouawad Foundation- RMF (NGO)	Project Manager
13	Georges N Frem Foundation	Head of Programs
14	Kafalat S.A.L. (Financial institution)	Deputy General Manager
15	The Lebanese Association for Development- Al Majmoua	Executive Director
16		Non-Financial Services Manager
17	Agricultural Companies	Agrimatco
18		COO Robinson Agri President of QOOT Agri-Food Innovation Cluster
19	Machatel Loubnan Nursery Association	Technical Director/ Expert in Apples
20	Cedar Environmental (Recycling Facilities)	CEO
21	Compost Baladi – Social enterprise specialized in Organic Solid Waste Management	Cofounder / CEO
22	FAO- Lebanon	Project Manager/ Programme Assistant/ Focal Point for Gender and Nutrition
23		Project Manager
24		GIS Expert
25		M&E Officer
26	FAO- RNE	Associate Professional Officer (Agribusiness)
27		Agricultural and Rural Development Expert
28		Rural Institutions and Services Expert
29	FAO-HQ	Rural Finance Officer- ESP
30	Informal group in Ainata- (apple products)	Member of the Informal Group

31	Association in Ras Baalbek (tomato sub-products)	Member of the Association
32	Women group association Etoile de la Paix (carob value chain)	Members of the Association
33	UPADI	Officer Business Development Manager
34	Atayeb Kfardebian COOP	Head of Cooperative
35	Sir El Dinniyeh informal Association for Pear and Pear Jam Production	Deputy Head of Association
36	Informal Group on production and processing of open field vegetables	Head of Group
37	Processing Cooperative for drying outdoor vegetables and production of jam	Head of COOP

Summary of the findings:

Consultations with relevant key informants at national and international level highlighted pivotal contributions / clarifications to be taken into account in the implementation phase of the project. The below is a summary of the main findings from the consultations in 2023.

1. Climate Change Impacts:

- Water Scarcity due to increased domestic and irrigation demand, worsened by heatwaves.
- Changes in production due to climate pattern shifts and extreme weather events.
- Short-term strategies include selecting climate-tolerant crops and improving water harvesting and irrigation efficiency. Moreover, in the apple industry, while specific data on orchard removal or variety switching is limited, farmers are known to adjust planting and harvesting dates as an adaptation measure to changing climate conditions.
- Long-term strategies focus on investing in new, climate-resilient crop varieties, such as apple varieties resistant to pests or drought. Greenhouse farmers are also adopting advanced technologies, such as climate-controlled environments and improved irrigation systems, to enhance resilience against climate variability. These investments often require substantial capital, which is difficult to secure due to the economic downturn and banking restrictions.

2. **Climate Insurance:**

- Introducing climate insurance is crucial but currently unavailable in Lebanon. The project could explore innovative insurance models and rural finance schemes to mitigate climate risks.

3. **Pest Management and ICT Tools:**

- Early warning systems for pest outbreaks, like those from LARI, are useful as part of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
- Raising awareness about ICT tools is essential for spreading timely information on irrigation, soil management, and pest control.

4. **Natural Enemies and Chemical Reduction:**

- Lebanon has experience in producing natural enemies to reduce chemical use in agriculture, particularly in grape value chains. This has improved food safety and facilitated access to export markets.

5. **Business Diversification and integration into value chains:**

- Encouraging farmers to engage in off-farm activities, like eco-tourism and food processing, can generate additional income and serve as risk management. However, widespread diversification could lead to issues of oversupply of diversified services and products.
- Access to loans and grants is vital for enabling farmers to diversify.
- Enhancing farmers' control over downstream value chain functions such as aggregation, distribution, and marketing can increase their income.

6. **Energy Efficiency:**

- Small-scale farmers face difficulties accessing energy-efficient technologies. Solar energy equipment, especially for solar pumps, could greatly improve irrigation and post-harvest storage. However, use of solar panels for small-scale farmers is associated with both environmental risks (such as over-pumping) and legal risks (supporting illegal wells) which are highlighted in detail in the Environmental and Social Management Plan of the project, along with their mitigation measures⁸.
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7. **Waste Management:**

- Waste management strategies are critical for reducing environmental impacts and improving soil fertility. Lebanese companies are already active in recycling plastics and producing organic fertilizers.

8. **Rural Finance:**

⁸ In particular, they are highlighted in Table 3 of the Environmental and Social Management Plan of the project, with reference to project activity "Access to renewable energy sources and new technologies".

- The project will explore new rural finance mechanisms, including grants for farmers' groups, collective rural finance models, and support for women's access to finance through collective action.

9. **Women's Participation in groups and associations:**

- Concerns were raised about meeting the target of 30–40% women's participation in the project. Women's groups active in agrifood processing and other related areas need support with equipment, renewable energy access, and marketing opportunities.

10. **Opportunities for Women in Agri processing businesses:**

- Agrifood processing and business diversification present significant opportunities for women, allowing them to move from supporting roles to becoming entrepreneurs.

The consultations confirmed the relevance of the project's approach, with key focus areas on climate resilience, collective action, women's empowerment, business diversification, and rural finance.

The full findings of the consultations are reported in the **Project Implementation Plan (PIP)**.

4. Project stakeholders

The project identifies several key stakeholder groups that will be informed about and engaged in the project, based on stakeholder analysis:

Directly and Indirectly Affected Stakeholders:

1. **Smallholder Farmers and Farmer Groups:**

- **Direct beneficiaries:** 2100 farmers (30% women) across the greenhouse (GH) vegetable and apple value chains will receive technical assistance, training, and support in adopting climate-smart agricultural practices.
- **Farmer groups:** At least 200 formal and informal farmer groups (40% women) will benefit from organizational strengthening, financial support, and communication training.

2. **Government Agencies:**

- **Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI), and General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC):** These institutions will benefit from the development and implementation of policies that support the quality infrastructure needed for agriculture (standardization, accreditation, and biological control support).

3. **Private Sector Actors:**

- **Agricultural Companies and Agribusinesses:** The private sector, including input suppliers, traders, retailers, and processors, will be indirectly affected by improvements in agricultural productivity and value chains. Some private actors are also directly engaged through public-private partnerships (PPPs).
4. **MSMEs:**
- **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs):** 250 MSMEs (40% women) in the vegetable and apple value chains will benefit from investment support schemes for modern, environmentally friendly agricultural technologies.
5. **Women’s Organizations and Cooperatives:**
- Specific consultations have been carried out with women’s cooperatives to ensure their active engagement. These organizations are crucial for empowering women in agricultural activities and value chains.

Stakeholders with Interests or Influence in the Project:

1. **Policy Makers and Public Authorities:**
- Policymakers at various levels, including government representatives, are critical stakeholders. The project aims to create a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue platform to involve them in discussions on agricultural policies, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.
2. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):**
- NGOs like CARE International, which has a history of supporting women’s cooperatives and farmers, will be involved in supporting capacity-building, rural finance mechanisms, and other project components.

Support for Stakeholders with Limited Capacity:

1. **Capacity-Building for Smallholder Farmers and Women:**
- The project addresses limited capacity by providing training and financial resources to smallholder farmers, particularly women, to improve their technical and organizational skills.
 - Women’s access to decision-making roles is supported through capacity development programs in communication, leadership, and policy advocacy.

By engaging these stakeholders through capacity-building measures, consultations, and policy dialogue, the project seeks to create an inclusive environment for the development of sustainable value chains in Lebanon.

Additional experts were interviewed during the process of preparation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) in October 2024. These experts can become key stakeholders for the project, due to their experience in Lebanon on the project's areas. Table 2 summarizes the stakeholders interviewed, type of stakeholder, along with the main concerns raised, main feedback on the project, and their specific suggestions or requests.

Table 2. Additional stakeholders consulted during the project inception phase and for the preparation of the Environmental and Social Management Framework October 2024

Organization	Stakeholder type	Name and position of person interviewed	Main Concerns	Main Feedback	Suggestions/Requests
The Quinta Group	Technology solutions provider	Nadine Khoury (CEO) and Lina Zgheib	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers face financial challenges when trying to upgrade to efficient greenhouses. - High cost of bio-production inputs, and economic crises have further constrained investments. - Managing old greenhouses and structures is an issue when transitioning to new technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quinta has worked on projects to uplift old structures, focusing on reusing materials (e.g., galvanized steel) to reduce waste. - New greenhouse technologies provide better conditions for women and older farmers, improving aeration and reducing disease. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers need financial support or incentives to upgrade greenhouses. - Training in promoting end products to improve market competitiveness. - More access to affordable solar panels and drip irrigation systems would enhance productivity.
Cooperative Association for Manufacturing and packaging of agricultural products "Atayeb" – Kfardebian, Mount Lebanon	Cooperative	Samira Zgheib (Head of COOP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of financial resources to upgrade equipment, particularly for greenhouses and bio-production. Difficulty in accessing loans due to lack of collateral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cooperatives recognize the opportunity in bio-production but face challenges scaling due to high input costs and lack of financial resources. Some cooperatives highlighted that the banking crisis in Lebanon has made it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for financial support to acquire solar panels and modern greenhouse technologies to improve production efficiency and reduce costs. Cooperatives request micro-financing options with minimal collateral requirements, or alternative financial mechanisms

			and distrust in financial institutions.	difficult to trust financial institutions or access credit. Climate change in their area (of very high altitude) is rendering most apples produced inappropriate for raw consumption. The coop thus found an opportunity in transforming apples into apple cider or apple juice or apple chips, however they cannot produce in bulk and sell due to lack of financial resources to be able to purchase equipment such as juicers or dehydration machines which would reduce their costs and increase their sales.	like government-backed loans to support cooperative expansion and innovation.
Association in Sir Ed Danniye, North	Association	Ahmad Khodr (Deputy Head of Association)	The high cost of bio-production inputs and inability to pass these costs to local consumers.	Financial limitations prevent cooperatives from upgrading equipment (e.g., greenhouses, solar panels) despite the availability of local knowledge and resources.	Suggestions include providing loans or small grants to support purchasing modern equipment, as well as training on how to make production more cost-efficient while maintaining product quality.
Informal group in Batha, Mount Lebanon	Informal Group	Joyce AlSkayem (Head of Association)	Market constraints and reduced demand making it difficult to expand or sustain production.	Cooperatives expressed frustration over not being able to produce economies of scale, which affects their competitiveness against	Request for support in marketing and export facilitation to increase access to markets. Also, cooperatives request guidance on how to align product pricing with

			<p>The need for capacity building in production technologies and sustainable agricultural practices.</p>	<p>cheaper, mass-produced goods.</p> <p>The association possesses most of the know-how and willingness to learn, yet do not have the financial means to be able to access modern technologies.</p> <p>There is a strong interest in learning about new agricultural technologies, particularly those that increase production efficiency and reduce environmental impact.</p>	<p>market demand while maintaining bio-product standards.</p> <p>They also request more upgraded technologies for more cost-efficient production, such as fruit and vegetable dehydration machines, preservative and sugar free, aligning with global health snacks standards.</p> <p>Requests for capacity building in areas like hydroponics, sustainable pest control, and advanced greenhouse technologies. Also, cooperatives suggest the importance of digital literacy training to make use of modern agricultural technologies and manage cooperative activities more efficiently.</p>
<p>Processing Cooperative Association in Majdal Koura-Magdelya, North</p>	<p>Cooperative</p>	<p>Ghada Zoghbi (Head of COOP)</p>	<p>Limited access to technology, such as solar panels for irrigation and post-harvest processing tools.</p>	<p>Cooperatives mentioned that solar panels have significantly reduced electricity costs for those who have installed them.</p>	<p>Request for training on renewable energy technologies like solar panels and precision agriculture, as well as access to affordable financing options for further equipment acquisition for modern technologies to support small scale production, particularly olive seeding machines, which would save time and effort from the workers to be used for other higher-value activities.</p>

<p>Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU), Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences of the American University of Beirut</p>	<p>Academia</p>	<p>Lina Jaber (Professor) and Diana Marroush (member of the Executive Committee)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability of technology after project implementation is a concern. Farmers are hesitant to invest in maintaining new technologies. - In some cases, cooperative involvement and coordination were lacking. - Scale of technology implementation was too small for communities to perceive benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living labs demonstrated the potential of climate-smart technologies, but these were not widely adopted. - Targeting of beneficiaries was uneven, with men being the primary users despite the intention to involve more women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve transparency in site selection for technology interventions. - Expand the scale of demonstrations to show the full benefits of technologies like hydroponics and solar panels. - Continue encouraging women's involvement in technology projects. - ESDU suggests running competitions to promote innovative green technologies.
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5. Stakeholder engagement programme

The main assumptions made during the conceptualization phase of the project activities and sub activities, in line with the PIP, are summarized in the following table.

Table 3. Assumptions made during the conceptualization phase of the project activities and timeline

Assumption	Description	Timeline
Partnership Identification	Identifying potential partnerships during the project inception and establishing coordination mechanisms to foster collaboration among various actors.	Q2 2024 and early stages
Engagement and Capacity Development	Engaging state and non-state actors in capacity development activities using the "Training of Trainers" (ToT) approach and promoting knowledge exchange.	Early stages
Needs Assessments and Studies	Conducting thorough assessments (needs assessments and early analysis of target groups) in collaboration with local partners before designing voucher and investment support schemes.	Prior to voucher implementation
Capacity Building Activities (FFS, FBS)	Building on previous experiences to plan and implement capacity building using Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Farm Business Schools (FBS), incorporating ICT tools.	Early stages
Collective Action Encouragement	Supporting collective action through participatory capacity development programs, technical support, and involving both formal/informal groups.	Throughout project
Preparatory Work for Support Activities	Developing voucher and grants operations manuals, selection criteria, and identifying priority areas for voucher/grant programs. Preparations to start roll-out of schemes.	Q3-Q4 2024
Inter-connection Amongst Project Activities	Creating linkages among project activities by aligning training and support activities (e.g., vouchers and grants) with the capacity development programs.	Throughout implementation

Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups	Enhancing the inclusion of women, young farmers, and other vulnerable groups in project activities.	Throughout project
Promotion of Technologies and Innovation	Supporting the use of energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies, promoting Climate Smart Agriculture, and waste management practices.	Throughout project

The purpose and goals of stakeholder engagement for this project focus on ensuring inclusive participation and transparency throughout the project's lifecycle. It aims to create a supportive environment for the project's success by engaging stakeholders across different levels and ensuring their active participation in policy dialogue and project outcomes.

Below is a summary of the engagement strategies and goals:

Information Disclosure

- **Formats and Languages:** Information will be disclosed in Arabic and English using a variety of formats including brochures, posters, reports, and oral presentations. Dissemination methods vary by audience, targeting rural farmers, cooperatives, and policymakers.
- **Communication Methods:**
 - **Newspapers and Radio:** Used for reaching rural communities and smallholder farmers.
 - **Brochures, Posters, and Reports:** Distributed in community centers and local government offices.
 - **E-Marketing Platform:** This will facilitate online communication for stakeholders engaged in business transactions.

Stakeholder Engagement Methods

- **Interviews and Surveys:** Key informant interviews and surveys will be conducted with farmers, cooperatives, and public agencies to gather input on the project's implementation and effectiveness.
- **Workshops and Public Meetings:** Focus groups and public consultations will be used, especially to engage women's organizations, rural farmer groups, and cooperatives.
- **Traditional Mechanisms:** These include consultations with local authorities and community leaders, aligning with local norms and ensuring the inclusion of customary authorities in the decision-making process, such as village chiefs and local councils. These leaders are often consulted during project planning and implementation to incorporate

traditional knowledge and governance structures into strategies for resource management, farming practices, and dispute resolution. Women's cooperatives and informal groups, such as those in Ainata and Etoile de la Paix, are also actively involved to address gender barriers and promote inclusivity.

Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

- **Women and Marginalized Groups:** Special emphasis will be placed on facilitating the participation of women, elderly, youth, and minorities. This includes gender-responsive training and empowerment initiatives aimed at increasing women's leadership roles in value chains.
- **Local Communities:** Where necessary, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols will be applied to ensure that local communities are consulted before key decisions are made, respecting their customary practices.

Feedback and Ongoing Communication

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Stakeholders can provide feedback through formal consultations, written reports, and the e-marketing platform. Continuous communication will be ensured via regular updates, public meetings, and follow-up workshops.
- **Documentation and Reporting:** All engagement activities will be documented through meeting minutes, reports, and surveys, ensuring transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

Additional Engagement Activities

- **Capacity Building and Training:** Participatory processes such as business and marketing training for farmers (30% women) will be provided. These initiatives also support collective decision-making and participatory action plans.
- **Partnerships with NGOs and Communities:** Partnerships with local NGOs, women's cooperatives, and microfinance institutions will be used to ensure broad-based stakeholder engagement. These will include benefit-sharing programs and stakeholder-led initiatives, especially in gender equality and financial empowerment.

6. Timetable

The project schedule includes various dates and locations for stakeholder engagement activities related to consultation, disclosure, and partnerships. Below is an outline of the activities and the expected dates by which they will take place:

Consultation and Engagement Activities:

- **Consultations with Farmer Groups and Stakeholders:**
 - **Outreach Campaign:** This campaign targets 2,100 farmers (30% women) in Lebanon. The outreach and needs assessment will start in the first phase following the inception phase, with initial consultations conducted in 2023 and October 2024 across different governorates.
 - **Gender-sensitive Needs Assessment and gender strategy:** Carried out by November 2024, focused on understanding the needs of male and female farmers across value chains.
- **Training Activities:**
 - **Technical Skills Development Training:** Training for farmers on climate-smart agriculture and value chains will be conducted in multiple locations starting from the first quarter of 2025 and will continue throughout 2027.
 - **Financial Literacy and Business Development Training:** These sessions will be held for formal and informal farmer groups, beginning in mid-2025 and continuing annually.
- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Development:**
 - **PPP Pilots:** Two PPP activities will be piloted—one for apple value chains and another for greenhouse/open-field vegetable value chains—beginning in 2026.

Disclosure Activities:

- **E-Marketing Platform Launch:**
 - An e-marketing platform will be created between Q3 and Q4 of 2025 to support farmers and MSMEs to connect with markets and develop a roadmap for sustainability.
- **Awareness Sessions on Environmental and Social Issues:**
 - From 2025 to 2027, awareness sessions on climate change, gender equality, and child labor will be conducted across Lebanon to reach over 2,500 stakeholders.

Partnership Development:

- **Institutional Strengthening Partnerships:**

Partnerships with MoA, LARI, GDC, and other agencies will be solidified through multiple stakeholder consultations and dialogues, with the goal of strengthening Lebanon’s agricultural quality infrastructure by 2026.

More specifically, the schedule for stakeholder engagement activities as outlined in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) includes more detailed milestones and timelines for the first year of the project, with a focus on consultation, disclosure, and partnerships:

Key Engagement Activities (Year 1):

- **Inception Phase (until February 2025):**
 - **Recruitment of key staff** such as a Project Manager, Gender Expert, and Environmental Consultant, and development of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) plan.
 - **Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) and Environmental Analysis (EA)** will be conducted to guide the Gender Equality Strategy and environmental planning.
 - An **inception workshop** will be held at the end of this phase in January 2025, followed by the first **Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting in February 2025**.
- **Q3 and Q4 of 2025:**
 - **Capacity development activities** will begin, including climate-smart agriculture training for farmers (2100 farmers, 30% women), laboratory testing services for soil and water, and the establishment of Farmers Field Schools (FFS) and demonstration plots.
 - Two main **voucher support schemes** targeting smallholder farmers in greenhouses and apple/carob production will be launched in Q3 2025, with the first call for applications expected in Q4 2025.
 - A **grant scheme** for modern greenhouses and environmental technologies will be designed, with calls for applications to be launched in Q4 2025.
- **Consultations and Partnerships (Throughout 2025):**
 - **Public-private partnerships (PPPs)** and stakeholder consultations, including value chain inter-professional fora, will begin in Q4 2025, with the goal of strengthening collaboration and coordination.
 - **Training and consultation sessions** for formal and informal farmer groups, focusing on organizational development, will also take place during Q3-Q4 of 2025.

The detailed work plan in the PIP ensures continuous consultation, capacity development, and stakeholder engagement activities, fostering ongoing collaboration and inclusive participation.

7. Resources and responsibilities

Responsibility for Stakeholder Engagement

- **FAO Lebanon:**

The **FAO Representative in Lebanon** serves as the **project budget holder** and will be responsible for general administration, financial supervision, and oversight of stakeholder engagement activities. A dedicated **Project Manager** and a **Technical Coordinator** will be appointed to manage day-to-day activities related to stakeholder engagement. The Project Manager will oversee the coordination between various government institutions, private sector actors, and NGOs.

- **Ministry of Agriculture (MoA):**

The **MoA** will appoint a **National Program Coordinator (NPC)** to ensure the alignment of stakeholder engagement activities with national agricultural policies. The MoA will assign focal points to manage coordination at both the central and regional levels.

- **Project Implementation Unit (PIU):**

A **Project Implementation Unit (PIU)** will be established, consisting of a full-time Project Manager, technical experts, and consultants. This unit will manage and coordinate all stakeholder engagement efforts across multiple value chains.

Resources and Budget for Stakeholder Engagement

- **Allocated Budget:**

The **forecasted budget** for stakeholder engagement and related activities for Year 1 of the project is approximately CAD 3,379,929 (equivalent to USD 2,520,962). This includes the cost of workshops, outreach campaigns, consultations, and capacity-building programs. Detailed budget allocation for each activity, including stakeholder engagement, is provided in the annual work plan.

- **Other Resources:**

FAO will provide in-kind contributions such as staff time and administrative support. The project will also utilize FAO's communication resources to develop and distribute materials such as brochures, reports, and social media campaigns, increasing outreach and visibility.

Facilitators and Expertise

- **Gender Expert:** A Gender Expert will be recruited to conduct a gender analysis and ensure that women and marginalized groups are fully integrated into the stakeholder engagement process. The Gender Expert will also lead capacity development and training focused on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Facilitator:** The project may consider hiring a stakeholder engagement facilitator to manage specific engagement activities, particularly in areas with significant potential impacts or multiple stakeholder groups. The facilitator will support the organization of public consultations, focus groups, and participatory planning.

- **Consultants and Technical Experts:** Various national and international consultants, including those with expertise in environmental sustainability, renewable energy, and agriculture, will be mobilized to ensure stakeholder engagement activities align with the project's broader goals.

8. Monitoring and reporting

Stakeholder Monitoring and Involvement:

- **Involvement of Project Stakeholders:**
 - **Beneficiaries and local communities:** Farmers, especially women and marginalized groups, will be directly involved in monitoring the project's implementation through participatory mechanisms. They will provide feedback through structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys.
 - **Third-party monitors:** External monitors, including representatives from NGOs and local organizations, will be engaged in evaluating the project's environmental and social impacts. This allows for independent monitoring and verification of the project's goals and outcomes.

- **Role of FAO and Government Authorities:**

The **FAO M&E Unit**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), will be responsible for continuously supervising the progress and monitoring of activities, with special attention to gender equality, environmental impact, and socio-economic outcomes. This will be coordinated with public and private stakeholders through regular field visits, progress reports, and feedback mechanisms.

Reporting Results of Stakeholder Engagement:

Communication Channels:

- **Newsletters/Bulletins:** Regular bulletins will be disseminated to stakeholders, including summaries of the project's progress and any necessary actions. These will be shared via printed materials, emails, and local media.
- **Social and Environmental Assessment Reports:** These will be publicly available and distributed to stakeholders via both FAO and MoA websites. Reports will summarize key findings, recommendations, and corrective measures.
- **Monitoring Reports:** Annual reports, mid-term evaluations, and end-line surveys will be shared with project stakeholders. These will include quantitative and qualitative data from various sources (surveys, interviews, FGDs) on project impacts, especially those relating to gender, environmental sustainability, and value chain development.

- **FAO's communication channels:** such as social media platforms and public communication, in direct coordination with the donor.

Methods for Feedback and Ongoing Communication:

- **Focus Groups and Surveys:** Stakeholders will be invited to participate in focus group discussions and surveys on key project milestones to ensure their views and concerns are incorporated into decision-making processes.
- **Public Meetings and Workshops:** Regular public consultations and training workshops will be organized at key stages of the project to ensure that stakeholder feedback is collected and incorporated into the project's continuous improvement strategy.
- **Complaints and feedback mechanism:** the complaints and feedback mechanism, established at the onset of activities, will be a main tool to regularly collect issues directly from project beneficiaries, allowing to regularly amend activities in response to the complaints.