



## Poultry Farmer Field Schools in Lebanon

### Semi intensive egg production to support the resilience of livelihoods in protracted crisis

→ **Context** The large influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon (an estimated 1.5 million) constitutes a major challenge across all sectors. The impact on the agriculture sector is particularly worrying, as this is the main source of income and livelihoods for a large proportion of the population – notably for the poorest and most vulnerable hosting communities in rural areas. The poultry subsector represents a major economic activity, employing at least 30 000 people. Through the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with the financial support of the United Kingdom, developed semi-intensive egg production for communities hosting Syrian refugees.

→ **Challenge** The massive influx of Syrian refugees has created a substantial increase in the demand for food, including affordable sources of protein such as eggs. This further deteriorated the food security status across Lebanon which, coupled with shrinking economic opportunities, more expensive goods and services, and rising insecurity, has put a strain on vulnerable Lebanese households and challenged their capacities to meet the most basic food needs.

→ **Methodological approach** FAO set up 25 poultry FFS groups consisting of a total of 500 members, who received 50 laying hens each. Each member then selected two secondary beneficiaries who received 15 hens each in return for help in building the FFS member's poultry coops.

- **Facilitators and training:** FAO trained 25 facilitators who met regularly with the FFS members (through a total of some 600 meetings) to discuss, experiment and validate poultry production and disease management techniques suited to the local context. Topics covered within the FFS included the design and construction of poultry coops based on biosafety and biosecurity. Training activities focused also on accurate book-keeping, marketing and saving mechanisms for re-investment (feed and new hens)
- **Beneficiaries** were first trained on a chicken coop that was built in one location owned by a group member. Once they were trained, beneficiaries received their own hens, feed and building materials. Training took place during a full production season in order to be able to produce eggs and manage their own chicken coop.



#### Key facts

**Location** → 25 Farmer Field Schools (500 members) were established across all six governorates of Lebanon.

**Resource partner** → Funded by the Government of the United Kingdom and implemented in 2015 as part of the project "Emergency Vaccination and Targeted Feeding of Livestock Grazing in Areas along the Syria-Lebanon Border".

**Key partners** → Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon and municipalities.

**Target Group** → Lebanese vulnerable households including those hosting Syrian refugees.

**Gender** → Women-headed households were carefully selected to ensure gender balanced participation.

#### What is a Farmer Field School and how does it contribute to increasing resilient livelihoods?

Developed by FAO in 1989, the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach is based on an innovative, participatory and non-formal interactive learning approach which builds on indigenous knowledge. Through experiential learning, farmers are trained to analyse their situation and make informed decisions about their livelihood practices. Groups of 25-35 farmers meet regularly over a season to conduct analyses, identify problems, design, carry out and interpret field experiments comparing traditional farmer's practices and improved practices learned through the FFS. This approach reduces the risks involved in self-experimentation and empowers people who have not had access to formal education.

Within this poultry FFS experience, FAO helped crisis-affected farmers to sustain food production, and initiate new income generating capacity. As a result, the practice builds the resilience of beneficiaries' livelihoods by equipping them to better cope with current and future shocks.



→ **Impacts** The support provided has been instrumental in generating income for many vulnerable households. In total, 40 000 laying hens and 525 tonnes of feed were distributed. The poultry FFS allowed beneficiaries to learn by doing poultry husbandry and egg production good practices, including construction of biosafe and biosecure poultry coops. It is estimated that the egg production of 50 hens should increase gradually to reach at least 40 eggs a day. Moreover, all the poultry FFS households are consuming eggs produced by their poultry units, thereby increasing the family protein intake.

The project is facilitating a self-driven continuous learning process and exchange of good practices

→ **Sustainability** As an agricultural extension methodology, FFS is a participatory and dynamic process which allows members to learn by themselves, using comparative experiments and accurate observation skills. FFS enable them to better respond to any livestock production and health risk as well as crisis challenges. After the training period, farmers continue to meet and share information with no or less facilitator intervention. The 25 poultry FFS groups carry out visits to one another which allows knowledge exchange among different regions. As such, the project catalyzed a continuous learning process and exchange of good practices and innovations, ultimately enhancing farmers' knowledge, productivity and nutrition. Once initiated through the FFS, the semi-intensive egg production is therefore continued.

1 500 households have started a semi-intensive sustainable egg production, generating income and improving protein-intake

→ **Replicability/Scaling up** Building upon the experience of this project, the component on poultry FFS will be scaled up within a two year EU-funded project (2015-2017) and FAO will team up with the World Food Programme (WFP) to include an electronic voucher system to provide chicken feed. Through this project, FAO also aims to improve the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon in early detection and response to poultry disease, at central, regional and local levels.

The project will be scaled up within a EU-funded intervention over two years

## Testimonial

"We attended one meeting per week about the poultry rearing, feeding, watering and hen coop building. We learned all these things given that we did not have any idea about poultry. In fact, we used to apply the traditional method that consists in keeping two or three chicken in one hen coop. They used to lay eggs for one day and then stop doing so for the next ten days."

**Jacques Tayeh, Beneficiary**



## → More information

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Video on Poultry Farmer Field Schools in Lebanon:  
<https://youtu.be/W8sTFxPa7vc>

## On resilience good practices:

- [KORE@fao.org](mailto:KORE@fao.org)
- [www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/en/)

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