

# Employment creation and income generation through the development of micro and small agro-industries in South Lebanon

A multi-disciplinary activity implemented by ECRI and the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division at UN-ESCWA

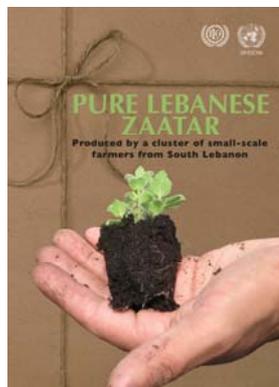
## Overview

In 1999, the Lebanese High Relief Committee declared South Lebanon the most socio-economically deprived area in the country. Since then, employment and income generation opportunities remain limited. The agricultural sector is remarkably important to South Lebanon, accounting for an estimated 25% of the local economy (compared to the national figure of about 10%) and 45% of local employment. This vital sector was hit particularly hard during the July-August 2006 war, since agricultural land and livestock were not attended to during and in the months following the war, due to the wide dispersal of cluster bombs.



In view of the above, UN-ESCWA and the International Labor Organization (ILO) launched in 2004 a project which aims to create work opportunities and generate income by increasing the competitiveness of micro and small agro-industries in South Lebanon, with a focus on women and young persons.

## Project Components



Two pilot projects were established to produce honey and the herb *origanum syriacum* (known locally as “zaatar”). A cluster of small-scale zaatar farmers was officially established in Bint Jbeil/Lebanon, which includes women and young persons. Technical assistance was provided to the cluster in the use of drip-irrigation and fertigation technologies, efficient propagation techniques under greenhouse conditions, and improved harvesting, processing and marketing methods.

Training was provided by food safety specialists from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on good agricultural and manufacturing practices. Efforts were made to build management capabilities of project beneficiaries and assist them in product marketing through the production of a poster, label and promotional video. Assistance was also provided to the Lebanese Government in the elaboration of a national quality standard for zaatar and for establishing a geographical indicator for Lebanese zaatar.

## Achievements

- Half a ton of dry zaatar was produced during the project's first harvest in 2006, with production doubling to one ton the following year due to productivity gains.
- The cluster was able to sell all the produce in the local market and achieve tangible economic benefits.
- Project achieved positive technical results despite the effects of the Summer 2006 war, which proved the resilience of zaatar and its feasibility as a profitable alternative to subsidized tobacco culture, which dominates agriculture in South Lebanon.



## Success Stories

The lessons learned from the zaatar pilot project were replicated in another village in the South in cooperation with World Vision. The new project features a new dimension of also seeking to inter-crop zaatar plants with existing olive trees, in view of identifying potential productivity gains associated with improved land use management. One of the farmers trained during the pilot project also launched his own zaatar project with other partners in South Lebanon. Since then, other municipalities and clusters of farmers have approached UN-ESCWA with requests for assistance to replicate the zaatar pilot project in their communities.

## Moving Forward

Additional funds have been secured, which will enable further replication of the pilot project and the pilot testing of other herbs, such as sumac.

## Primary partners:



ILO: The International Labour Organization is the main funding agency.



UN-ESCWA: The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia is the implementing agency.

