

For Immediate Release



## **AUB-ICARDA MOU to enhance quality of crop and agricultural research**

Beirut, Lebanon- 08/01/2013 -The American University of Beirut signed on January 7, 2013, a memorandum of understanding with the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a leading research center, with the purpose of enhancing research and training on the topic of crop breeding.

Through the MOU, Aleppo-based ICARDA, an autonomous, non-profit international research center established in 1977, will offer AUB—through its collaboration with the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences (FAFS)— its expertise in advanced crop breeding techniques using bio-technology, in order to produce hardier, higher-yield crops that are resistant to drought, heat, pests and diseases, thus helping boost food security.

“By using biotechnology, we can enhance the efficiency of traditional breeding methods without resorting to genetic engineering or introducing foreign genes into crop varieties,” explained Mahmoud el-Solh, director-general of ICARDA, which works towards food security, poverty alleviation, and protection of natural resources in dry areas.

The MOU will also help AUB offer specialized training programs in agriculture to its undergraduate and graduate students at FAFS, while supporting agricultural research at the University’s Agricultural Research and Education Center (AREC) in the Bekaa region.

In addition to research and training cooperation, ICARDA and AUB will establish a gene bank at AREC, which will conserve a large sample of crop varieties that are about to become obsolete or extinct. These varieties, though of low yields, have desirable traits that are worth studying and conserving.

ICARDA already owns one of the largest gene banks in the region in Aleppo, with more than 140,000 crop varieties.

“As we are committed to serving the region and producing quality research, we stand to benefit tremendously from such a cooperation with ICARDA,” said AUB Provost Ahmad Dallal. “Our ongoing and long-term goals are to offer high quality training to our students, contribute to knowledge production, and develop advanced and specialized degree programs in agriculture.”

**ENDS**

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## Note to Editors

### About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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