

For Immediate Release



AUB farmers' market promotes local organic and healthy products

Beirut, Lebanon- 22/10/2013 -The [Environment and Sustainable Development Unit](#) (ESDU) at AUB is organizing a farmers' market on October 30, 2013, wrapping up a year-long project to promote organic and local healthy products to farmers and small producers. The October 30 farmers' market is the second one held this month. The first one was held ten days ago.

Funded by Waterfront City Cares, an initiative by the real-estate developer Waterfront City, the project, which falls under the framework of "The Promotion of Organic and Local Healthy Products through a Weekly Farmers' Market", was started in October 2012 and closes this month. It focused on training farmers and small producers on food safety, organic agriculture and business. A highly successful weekly farmers' market, 'Souk Aal Souk' (a wordplay meaning drive to the market in Lebanese Arabic) has been established in Zico House in Hamra - Spears and open to visitors on Wednesdays from 12:00pm to 6:00pm.

"The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region suffers the most from lack of food security in the world," said Nahla Hwalla, dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), during her welcoming speech. "AUB has been a pioneer in this field and FAFS has been serving the community and supporting the rural Lebanese farmers since the 1930s and currently covering the whole MENA region."

Hwalla stressed the priority and need for food security, availability, accessibility and regional capacity building. A master's program in Rural Community Development (RCODE) is also scheduled to start in the spring to enable people to address the issue and serve as a model for Lebanon and the region, she noted.

ESDU Knowledge Management Officer Salwa Tawk said that people should "actively participate in making decisions regarding the source of their food and not simply leave it up to international policymakers and big agribusinesses that are in it for the profit."

She added: "Currently the way that our food is produced, distributed and consumed creates unsustainable economies, environmental damage, health problems and exploitation of workers."

The ESDU 2012 – 2017 Agenda includes food security, regional capacity building and academic programs, with the objective of developing a sustainable model for community development and replicating the model in Lebanon and the MENA region.

Farmers from the October 11 market said that their organic patches are growing, thanks to such initiatives. "We started organic farming in 2000 and currently plant 20 dunums," said Hani and

Siham Ghanem of 'Kounouz Lebnan' from Al Warhniye in the Chouf. "We are happy to say that people have been more and more inclined to purchasing organic products."

"When we first tasted our organic zucchinis, my mother's reaction was that we had been eating 'garbage' up to this time," said Hanna Rizk from Keserwan who plants a 6,000 square-meter patch in the Kleiaat Roumieh region.

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 700 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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