

For Immediate Release



AUB researchers promote no-tilling for higher agricultural yields at lower cost

Beirut, Lebanon- 23/09/2013 -Thanks to research conducted by the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, Lebanese farmers now have access to simple techniques that reduce land degradation, while increasing farmers' profits and lowering production costs.

Known as Conservation Agriculture (CA), or the no-till technique, this method allows the soil to preserve minerals and water content, while promoting better management of the top soil cover to create a permanent and rich organic soil cover. Moreover, CA calls for crop rotation which is known to control the spread of diseases and pests.

CA contrasts sharply with the prevailing belief among Lebanese farmers that heavy tillage increases fertility.

FAFS has been championing Conservation Agriculture (CA) since 2007, in partnership and with the support of GIZ (German Technical Cooperation) and the Lebanese Agricultural Institute (LARI). FAFS aims to introduce CA to the largest number of people involved in agricultural activities and which is expected to have a positive impact on agriculture in the future.

“CA research has been going on since 2007 and the results show that this technique lowers production cost, increases farmers' profits and reduces land degradation,” said Professor Isam Bashour, who specializes in soil science and nutrition, and is leading research studies on CA. “Under the impetus of FAFS research, what started as a pilot experiment in AUB’s Advanced Research Enabling Communities (AREC) and Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) on a plot of just 4 hectares has expanded to more than 2,000 hectares in 2012.”

More recently, 34 students from faculties of agriculture at AUB, Lebanese University, Université de Sainte Esprit Kaslik and Université Saint Joseph met at AREC on September 11-14, 2013 to enhance their knowledge about CA. The workshop at AREC was taught collaboratively by faculty members from the four participating universities—a probable first for Lebanon—and will help in strengthening ties among them, while at the same time confirming FAFS’ leadership role in agricultural education and research.

AUB research results have also convinced Agriculture Minister Hussein Hajj Hassan that “CA is a beneficial system for Lebanon.”

The minister noted that “the ministry has formed a CA committee made up of university professors and ministry specialists to decide what should be undertaken to spread awareness of CA and no-till techniques among Lebanese farmers.”

Professor Bashour is excited about this progress. “CA is expanding gradually in Lebanon and will continue to do so, as this method of production needs more research, more promotion and more governmental support,” Bashour added.

Students have already participated in three summer courses, funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and efforts are underway, including by the Ministry of Agriculture, to find new sources of funding.

“AUB’s future role is to continue teaching students about CA and the no-till technique, keep on researching the subject in the field and the laboratory, and also support the extension department at the Ministry of Agriculture in their field trials and workshops to farmers, explained Bashour.

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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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