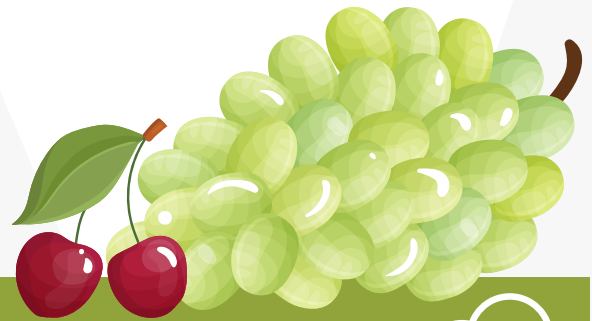




**SUPPORTING THE
AGRIBUSINESS SECTOR IN THE BEKAA**
COMPONENT 1 OF THE PSD PROGRAMME
FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION & IMPLEMENTED BY EXPERTISE FRANCE

**ACCESS TO MARKET STRATEGY
INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT
and MERULA**



CHALLENGES



National level

- Lack of formal arrangements in local markets between farmers, distributors and traders/retailers
- Lack of transparency in price communication between wholesalers and farmers
- Long chains of transaction between farmer & consumer (farmers receiving the lower margin for their product)
- Lack of communication about consumer preferences and market demands to farmers

International level

Agricultural exporters report that they are often unable to meet market requirements when exploring export markets in terms of

- Volume: small-scale production is prevalent in Lebanon of highly varied quality and products offered to consumers. Farmers work independently and due to the small cultivated area, adopt traditional farming practices, making it more difficult to increase production volumes and achieve economies of scale
- Branding: especially on grading, sorting and packaging levels
- Quality: more specifically products in compliance with international food safety standards

ACTIVITIES



Improve product quality

Integrated Crop Management (ICM) certification

Food safety and quality standards play a key role in agriculture in the developing countries and have become indeed a key purchasing criterion nowadays as consumers' concerns on product safety have increased and are looking for safe, certified and healthy products (meaning pesticide residue respecting international standards).

Compliance with some of these standards has become de facto compulsory to access markets in developed economies, reduce the production cost and sell at higher prices.

Thus, there is a need for farmers to change their mentality in managing their orchards.

Throughout the PSD-P, a group certification process (ICM) has been initiated in 2018 with two pilot groups of cherry and table grapes farmers in Kaa El Rim, Wady El Aarayech and Kfarmehke respectively. Such type of group certification enhances the group work and cooperation between farmers from the same region.

During this pilot, phase ICM guidelines have been developed indicating the appropriate technical specifications for the production of cherries and table grapes in the Bekaa, in order to apply the best agricultural practices of the integrated crop management in the vineyards, to get a healthy and safe product. Local and international experts have been following up closely with the concerned farmers (on weekly basis through site visits) the proper implementation of these guidelines at several levels: soil testing, pruning, pesticide spraying, pests monitoring, irrigation,...

The success of this pilot initiative has led to widening the scope of certification to cover new regions and new farmers.

ACTIONS



- 1• Improve product quality through ICM certification
- 2• Develop a brand and its relative packaging
- 3• Reduce trade inefficiencies and strengthen trading links to create greater benefits for farmers (farmers selling at higher prices and farmers benefiting from higher margins)



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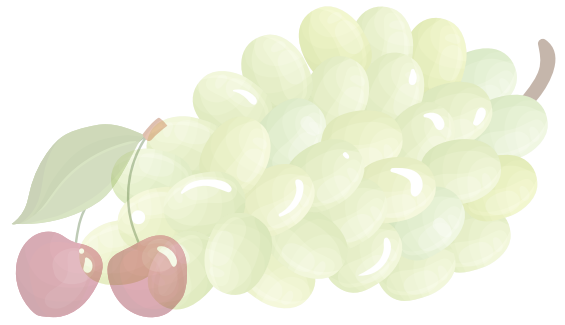
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What is ICM?

" Integrated Crop Management is an eco-friendly cultivation method using techniques that guarantee lower environmental impact and a reduction of the release into the environment of chemical substances, integrating these with natural input. Adopting this method makes it possible to provide better environmental safeguards and to guarantee consumer's greater food safety, in addition to adding more value to the products thus obtained.

For more information on the certification, please visit www.ccpb.it/en"

ACTIVITIES



Develop a brand and its relative packaging **Merula**

To value the qualitative ICM certified products that cherry and table grapes farmers have, make a memorable impression on consumers and generate goodwill and loyalty. The PSD-P has developed "Merula", a common brand that represents who these farmers are, what they believe in and how they want to be perceived.

"Merula" is the Latin word for the bird "Al Chahrour الشحرور", typical of our country side, and known to pick the good grapes and cherries when they become suitable for harvesting

Merula's packaging has been developed based on studies to understand the consumer's behaviour and criteria for purchasing cherries and table grapes. It has been tested in two in-store promotions conducted in the Lebanese market. Merula's packaging is environmental. It reflects quality, safety, freshness and transparency.

Reduce trade inefficiencies and strengthen trading links **Merula in-store promotion**

In order to highlight to farmers the added value that the certification, branding and packaging can have on their products and impact on sales, and therefore their revenues, the PSD-P organized six weeks of in-store promotions for "Merula" cherry and table grapes in Storium Saliba and some Carrefour branches. . 29 farmers were involved in these promotions.

RESULTS



- 22 ICM certified cherry farmers
- 17 ICM certified table grapes farmers
- 50 farmers are ready to apply to the ICM certification in 2020
- ICM certified farmers are now capable of respecting their soils, water, and biodiversity
- 9.5 tons of certified cherries sold (locally and internationally) at prices higher than traditional wholesale market. Farmers were paid cash after the promotion
- 121 tons of certified table grapes sold (locally and internationally) at prices higher than traditional wholesale market. Farmers were paid cash after the promotion
- Farmers and relative partners are trained how to sell their products directly to stores on contract basis
- Farmers and relative partners are familiarized with the in-store promotion concept



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Agvisor
دليلك الزراعي

CHALLENGES



Stakeholders across any agricultural value chain face many challenges limiting them to compete in local and international markets, one of them being the lack of access to information, significantly reducing their bargaining power and promoting development of non-competitive markets which impact directly the livelihood of their families.

SOLUTION



The access to and management of information at different levels of the agricultural value chain is increasing as it improves the competitiveness of the chain in general, in local and international markets, the decision making, the product improvement to fit market requirements, reach new markets,...

Studies conducted throughout the PSD-P have shown that more than 75% of the cherry and table grape value chain stakeholders are using smartphones and mobile applications. They raised their need for an effective data system with accurate information which can provide them with better planning and decision-making.

Within the framework of the Private Sector Development Program in Lebanon, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Zahle and the Bekaa, in cooperation with local experts, developed "Agvisor", a user-friendly agriculture mobile application (available in both Arabic and English languages, on Google Play and the App store for download) as well as a website (www.agvisorlb.com). "Agvisor" will enable cherry and table grapes farmers (for the time being as it is expected to be extended to cover other crops) to improve the produce quality and fostering bridges of networking and trade collaboration between the different agricultural value chains stakeholders

AGVISOR



The name

As it is an agricultural application advising its users on market prices, studies conducted/good agricultural practices (amongst other information) and giving access to a directory on the various value chain actors, "Agvisor" is a combination of both words agriculture and advisor.

The logo

The four images used in the logo, represent the main functions of the application: market price (the money photo-top left corner), the directory (photo top right corner), notification (the bell photo-bottom left corner) and the library (the open book-bottom right corner)

The features

Throughout its features, this application helps its users access the market, improve the quality of the agricultural products and facilitate trade relationships between the different stakeholders of the agriculture value chain.

RESULTS



- More than 3500 users
- 393 cherry farmers mapped
- 335 table grape farmers mapped
- 535 other stakeholders mapped
- 71 studies available in the library



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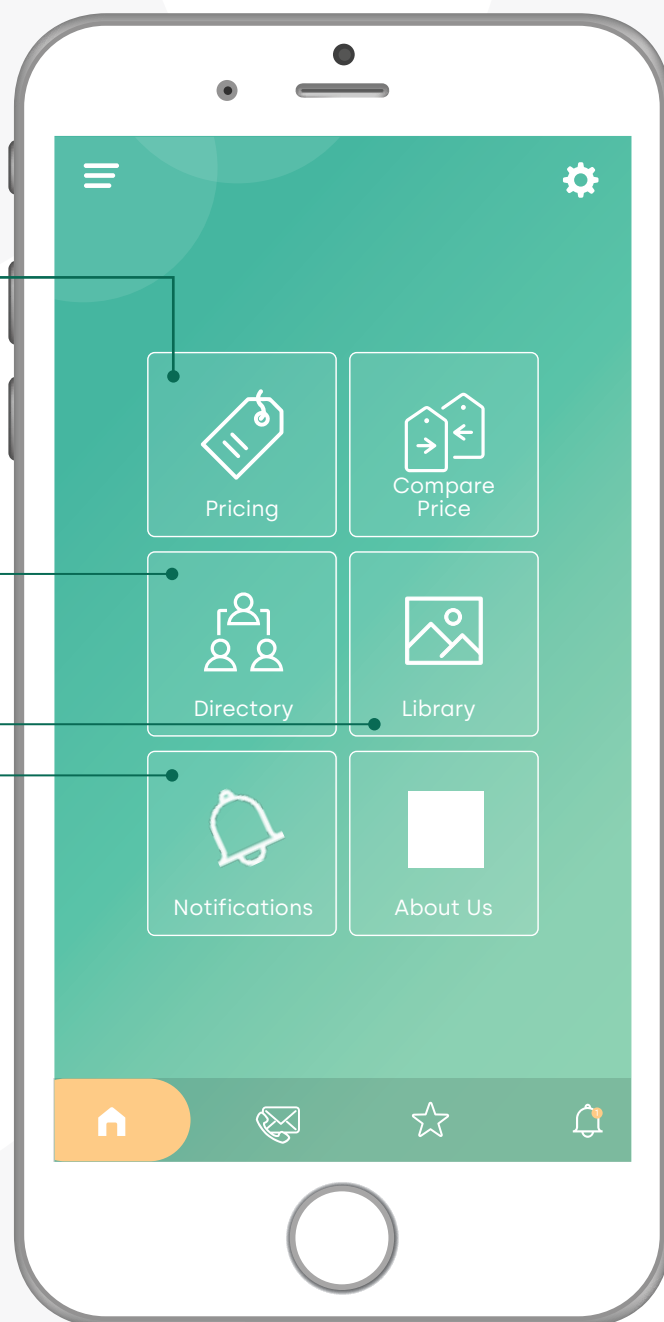
FEATURES

Prices of fruits and vegetables: this feature enables the users to get acquainted with and compare the latest prices of vegetables and fruits in the local wholesale markets (Beirut, Ferzol, Jbeil, Qab Elias, Saida, and Tripoli), followed at a later stage by retailers' prices in local and international markets

Directory: this feature enables the users to access the database of the agricultural value chains stakeholders active in the agricultural sector (such as markets, farmers, wholesale distributors, cooling and packaging centers, exporters, produce buyers, international importers, ministries, chambers' union, donors and financial institutions...) which foster bridges of networking and trade collaboration between them.

Library: this feature enable the users to benefit from the latest agricultural practices and studies to enhance their agricultural knowledge and agribusiness competencies

Notifications: this feature enables the users to receive the latest news and guidance from specialized agricultural engineers to help them improve the produce quality and protect it from diseases and effects of natural and climatic factors



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