



## **MEFOSA's Contribution**

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### **MEFOSA and its role in the national framework**

MEFOSA *s.a.r.l.* (MENA Food Safety Associates) was formed to assist companies hone their competitive edge by establishing and verifying procedures and practices that ensure quality, wholesome and safe products. We provide consulting, auditing and training services in HACCP, GMPs, Hygiene and all the prerequisite programs. MEFOSA was founded by Mr. Atef Wafic IDRIS. Mr IDRIS is an Industrialist, Food Scientist and Agribusiness development expert by profession, Educated at the International College-Beirut, American University of Beirut, and University of California-Davis.

He was President and CEO of Conserves Moderns Chtaura SAL, President of the Board of Syndicate of Lebanese Food Industries, President of Lebanese Association for Marketing & Advertising (WFA-World Federation of Advertisers/Lebanese Chapter), Vice President of the Lebanese Association of Food Scientists & Technologists, and a past National Consultant for the Agro Food Sector UNIDO. Mr. IDRIS was a shareholder and member of the board of several companies and associations in Lebanon and abroad: AFFI (Arab Federation for Food Industries), Institute of Food technologists/USA, IAA (International Association of Advertisers), Institute of Industrial Engineers/USA, American Management Association/ International, LAHR (Lebanese Association for Human Rights). MEFOSA was hence concerned with the growth of the Lebanese industry, economy, and trade through the development of national, regional, and international policies.

MEFOSA's Services, Consultation and Research department includes Hala Romanos ( Project Manager) and Imtithal Sheet (Services and Consultation). Imtithal Sheet is a Microbiologist, working as a Food Safety Consultant in MEFOSA (Middle East North Africa Food Safety Associates) and Hala Romanos is a Microbiology and Food Safety Engineer and actually the Project Manager at MEFOSA (Middle East Food Safety Associates). One of MEFOSA's Services and Consultations Department priorities has been to focus on establishing, maintaining and developing international cooperation in the agriculture sector with related scientific institutions, universities and international organizations.

MEFOSA is engaged in several activities such as research on issues of public, social, and economic policy in coordination with the Ministry of Industry to evaluate and assist the industrial sector in order to increase production and exports. In view of that, it is important to develop a proper infrastructure at managerial and technical levels, and implement appropriate strategies and procedures to insure the corresponding human resources, marketing, and financial plans.

MEFOSA is also engaged in research projects. MEFOSA is interested and dedicated to converge Academic research efforts with its vision and to conduct market based research approaches for the benefit of the private sector. To better address food safety and quality pre-requisites and requirements, it is important to focus on primary topics in food science, food safety, analysis, packaging and labeling, and other related technologies and environmental issues. These topics include microbiological

contamination, mycotoxin contamination, water activity, extending the shelf-life of food products, colorants and additives, nutritional analysis, labeling, etc...

Consumer satisfaction, increased competition, and awareness, as well as governments' requirements are the drivers for ensuring that safe food is being produced and that best practices (GMPs, GHPs, GSPs...) are applied. Market access and rejections from exports and local markets, unsatisfied customer preferences must be taken seriously to protect the brands' reputation, gain customer trust and loyalty, and profitability.

## **MEFOSA's Services in the Food Safety and Agro Food Sector**

MEFOSA s.a.r.l believes that trading in safe food and feed is a prerequisite for sustainable development, and that the Arab Middle East should develop its own food safety prerequisites in full recognition with its own socio-economic priorities, and in harmony with international standards and norms. Through the complementary impact of consultancies and technology providing, MEFOSA offers a large range of activities, knowledge and equipments that can benefit at different stages of the supply chains and in the aim of accomplishing all the requirements related to agro food sector.

MEFOSA is competitive at this stage since the conducted activities are market driven and its experts reach out to solve industrialists', farmers' and government agencies' problems in the field. MEFOSA believes that the best approach to solve market problems is to understand consumer needs, private sector's constraints and public sector's requirements and regulations. In addition, MEFOSA insists on the necessity of the communication between the different actors involved in the supply chain (such as the necessity of communication between ministries, private industries, importers, testing labs and academia in order to maintain the market supply in imported meats or others).

MEFOSA s.a.r.l., through its consultations, services, and technology has been assisting the agro-food chain to establish and strengthen their programs for assuring the safety of food from production to final consumption. In this regard, MEFOSA offers a unique package of skills, functions, and technology, through its commitment to quality, to work collaboratively with the food industry and strengthen and better focus national food safety efforts.

MEFOSA offers several Agri-Business Consultancy Services by providing quality consulting to entrepreneurs who venture into Hi-Tech agriculture. Our services cover agricultural primary production, included horticulture, Forestry, Fisheries and aquaculture, Land management, Crop protection and disease control, Animal production and health Conservation, storage, processing and packaging, Agricultural production and marketing groups, Food/ Agricultural Traceability Services and Rural extension services. Moreover, MEFOSA provide consultancy on Agro-Industrial Management and Consultancy, technical expertise in good housekeeping, equipment layout and process flow, good manufacturing practices, food control, Agro-processing, storage and distribution for the food processors and product costing.

## **Capacity of mobilizing a network of agro food SMEs**

MEFOSA through its Integrated Program support policy advice and establishment of pilot centers to demonstrate the potential of agro processing in value addition, mitigation of post harvest losses and to

provide the know-how and best practices on technology options. Supply-chain analysis is becoming the main interdisciplinary activity in MEFOSA, where production and distribution processes involve a mixture of socio-economic, technological, legal and environmental criteria that are highly complementary in explaining overall agro food chain performance.

MEFOSA has the capacity to link between the private sector and academic research institutions by establishing several pilot projects related to Agro Food Industries and export board for Agro Food industrial products in collaboration with different Lebanese Ministries and different funding institutions. Moreover, MEFOSA contributes in the process of developing a Franchising program for integrating Lebanese SMEs in national, regional and international supply chains. MEFOSA plays a crucial role in facilitating a synergic action between the Agro Food Sector, Agri-businesses and Agro industries through launching SMEs development, Empowering policies, providing linkage services to the financial sector and fostering all the researches related to water recycling, agribusiness, agro industries and agro food projects which can serve the private sector.

In addition, MEFOSA is affiliated with several associations (LAMA, WAFIC) which are active as a consortium and realizing several projects such as AGRIPOLE which is a project created to be a new Business Development Centre (BDC) and business incubator established in Lebanon

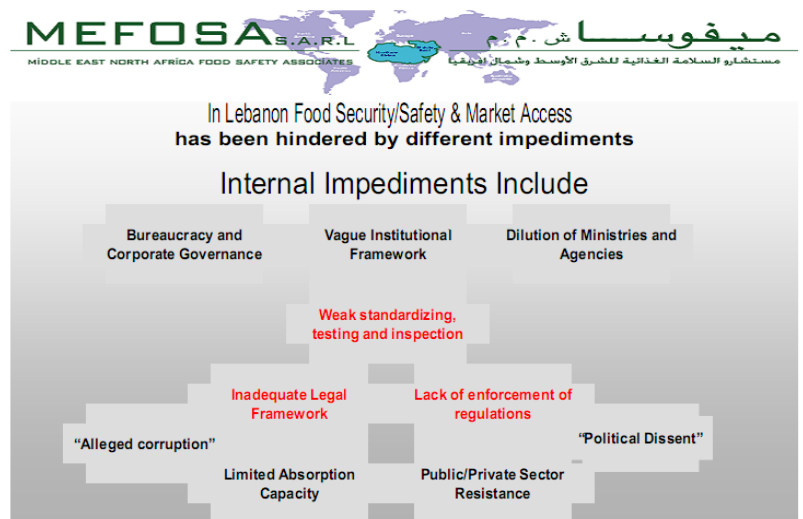
We are affiliated to:

- 1- **Universities and research centers** (Linæus, AUB, NDU. UC Davis...)
- 2- **International Affiliations (FAO, WHO, UNIDO,**
- 3- **NGOs (AL Wafic, Agripole...)**

## Major challenges of the agro-food sector in Lebanon

Various reasons influence the proper implementation of food quality in Lebanon. These involve a range of stakeholders from the agro-industrial private sector, to the legal sector, and national authorities. The gap between the required standards for maintaining and improving the Lebanese agro-industry and the current exercised practices is increasing because of legal as well as technical and scientific impediments such as bureaucracy, a vague institutional framework, lack of coordination between responsible authorities, dilution of ministries, limited absorption capacity, inadequate legal framework, weak standardizing, testing, and inspection, lack of enforcement of regulations, and private sector resistance. In this regard, a number of pre-requisites and provisions are necessary for building and implementing a correct quality system, in harmonization with international requirements; the government as well as the private sector should display more commitments to implement these laws.

Several initiatives have been taken by governmental bodies and national Programs to provide the food supply chain with technical and informative support. These include the regulations and standards for local food-businesses, manufacturers, exporters, and importers; the related legislations are approached by several laws and decrees that depict local food standards and regulations in harmony with



international requirements. The increased internationalization of food and product markets and trade agreements has compelled national authorities to develop food standards and regulations and model projects and initiatives to facilitate trade and support the agro-industrial private sector as well as consumer's health. For instance, Lebanese exports for animal and animal-derived products, as well as nuts, milk, grains, and animal feed are hindered by the increasing rules and regulations on these products, affecting the potential of agro-food businesses to increase their production, and exploitation of cultivable lands (75% of the farm holders have less 1 ha and exploit only 20% of the total cultivated land), resulting in a substantial deficit in the agro food trade balance (80%) (CCIAB). In view of that, it is important to consider the related food legislations, including the registration of manufacturers of animal and animal-derived products, Consumer Protection Law, Food Law, and Geographic Indications.

## **Benefits of the project**

Yet we at MEFOSA keep asking ourselves if this short recipe of actions is enough or do we need to look at some other core socio- economic issues that have rendered our MENA region so food insecure. We should concentrate on the improvement of Agro food sector and related food safety, agri-business and agro industries in order to create enabling and conducive environment for improving profitability of the sectors.

Enforcing the legal framework and developing the food standards, coupled with a the creation of the **Lebanese Food Safety Authority**, reinforcing Lebanon's food laws, upgrading technical guidelines (HACCP, GMPs, etc...), reinforcing the technical capabilities of food manufacturers as well as exporters, traders, all the way to the primary producers and agricultural suppliers, are all actions that will lead to a paradigm shift that this project can help achieve by clustering and enforcing Public, Private and Academia partnerships.

## **Statement for previous implemented projects and studies**

### *Conferences and Workshops*

- Regional Consultative Meeting on Food Safety Legislation by the WHO
- Environmental Considerations Affecting Trade in Agriculture and Agro Industrial Goods Within the Arab Region by the ESCWA
- Conference on Pesticide Residues Organized by MEFOSA for industrialists, farmers, agri-businesses and public sector
- Conference on Traceability organized by MEFOSA for the private sector
- Workshop on Environmental Guidelines and Gaps organized in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry.
- Workshop on Meat testing organized by MEFOSA in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Lebanese-American University for the meat inspectors, the testing laboratories and the private sector firms (2010).
- Conference on Food Safety, Security and Sustainability organized by MEFOSA in collaboration with Lebanese American University and UC-DAVIS (2010)
- Two Conferences on Food Safety, Security and Quality Control in the Agricultural, Industrial, Food Processing, Health care and Environmental sectors organized by MEFOSA in partnership with University of Damascus (2008) and University of Al-Baath (2009)

- Participation in the “First Arab Forum for Agricultural and Food Investment” Production, Processing, Marketing, Finance and Intra-Arab Trade organized by AAAID (Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development), Egypt (2010)
- Participation in the 2nd Arabian European FoodTec days “Advances in Meat and Fish Technology” organized by Suez Canal University, Egypt and presentation on “PPP and Food Safety in the Poultry Industry” (2010)
- Conference on Food Safety, Security and Quality Control in the Agricultural, Industrial, Food Processing, Health care and Environmental sectors organized by MEFOSA in partnership with Jordan Chamber of Industry (2011)

#### *Trainings*

- Trained operators from retail institutes on “Basic Hygiene & General Food Safety Principles” (2010)
- Trained operators of a poultry industry on “PRPs, HACCP Concepts and ISO 22000:2005” (2010)
- Trained operators from the kitchen staff of several hospitals on “Basic Hygiene & General Food Safety Principles” (2011)
- Trained operators from the kitchen staff of several hospitals on “PRPs and HACCP Concepts” (2011)
- Trained representatives from different industries on “Good Manufacturing Practices” (2011)

#### *Consultations*

- Case Study: Winter Chick Peas Plantations (Obtain information on the chick peas’ varieties suitable for the canning industry and start contracting with farmers to produce this product. Improve yields of cropping legume grains while cutting down on imports and reducing fungal diseases)- With ICARDA
- ADP: Agricultural Development Program- In partnership with Landel Mills, funding from the European Union, client Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture
- ELCIM Board member, "IMP" Industrial Modernization Program, between the European Union and the Lebanese Government to prepare the Lebanese Industry for the Impact of the Euro Med agreement, (Ministry of Industry- Lebanon)
- WHO, proposal for a Strategic Plan for the improvement of the food safety system (Egypt)
- ADP Consortium Partner, “Agricultural Development Project”, increasing farmers' revenues in the fruits and vegetables , Ministry of Agriculture (Lebanon)
- ESCWA, Capacity Bldg. for Trade and the Environment, “Environmental Considerations Affecting Trade in Agriculture and Agro Industrial Goods Within the Arab Region” (Lebanon and later Cairo)
- Managing Partner, AGRIPOLE: Business Development Center, helps create and develop Lebanese enterprises in the Agricultural and Agro-Foods, (Bekaa- Lebanon)
- FAO, Plenary Study on Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Strategies, Policies and Priorities for Achieving Pro-Poor Economic Growth in the MENA Region.
- Consulted a pastry and bakery manufacturing industry on extending the shelf-life of its products through “Monitoring of Process Flows, Determination of CCPs and Recommendations for Preservative’s Usage” (July 2010)
- Conducted Hygiene Inspections in retail institutes and presented basic hygiene recommendations (October 2010)
- Consulted on a HACCP built by design program model to a newly established restaurant (June-August 2011)