

SECOND ITALIAN ARAB BUSINESS FORUM

Panel 3: Sustainable agriculture and food security

Panelist: Raphael Debbané

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Agriculture is one of the main oldest occupation on earth that provides the world with food supply; it accounts for about 40 percent of the land, consumes about 70 percent of the world's water resources and 30 percent of the world's green reserves. In order to achieve agricultural sustainability, we must exploit, protect and develop all available resources in order to provide safe, clean, continuous and long-term food to the maximum for the community. If agriculture does not achieve the desired profitability for the investors, the needed environment for sustainable agricultural investment will be missing, and therefore there will be no possibility to provide adequate and safe food for the community.

Our world is faced with many challenges, primary of which is the declining ability of developing countries to ensure food security to their populations. This was mainly the result of the neoliberal trade policies imposed by the triumvirate of WTO, IMF and World Bank. These “free” trade policies and consequent market restructuring in developing countries has benefited multinational corporations at the expense of the poorest strata in these developing countries.

We can not talk about water security, food security, health security, energy security, or human security independently, as they are interconnected through what we call the "security of primary resources". The imbalance in distribution and management threatens those primary resources, which are vital not only for human security but also for economic security and the welfare of the nation.

The challenge we face today is to change the existing business model, to be efficient and productivity-oriented; a model in which the resources are treated as valuable inputs. In this context, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Lebanon, in collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, published a document entitled "FAO Strategic Framework for Lebanon for the years 2016-2019", which focuses on seven priorities:

1. Food security and resilience of the agricultural sector,
2. Phyto-sanitary and food safety,
3. Enhancing food security and nutrition information,
4. Sustainable agricultural production,
5. Sustainable management of natural resources,
6. Promoting agricultural sector policies, including social protection systems,
7. Development of agricultural production chains.



The projections for the next 30 years for the ESCWA region indicate a decline in watercourses, affecting groundwater reserves and leading to low freshwater levels, decreased food production, reduced water-based energy production and increased demand for energy.

Training the new generation of leaders on water management and sustainable agriculture is critical.

The misuse of water by some, and the lack of concern of others to what this may cause to our children and future generations call for a change in the prevailing consumption pattern. The international community claimed for the need to move towards a new concept of sustainability and reliance on either absolute or infinite resources, such as the sun, as well as reliance on resources produced more than consumed, or at least produced as much as consumed.

In brief:

- 1) Food security is achieved through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. This service is an extension service, providing quick, easy and real-time guidance services to all farmers and at a low cost.
- 2) Sustainable development is linked to increased and improved quality and quantity of food, thus through achieving food security.
- 3) ICT provides farmers with new ways of accessing information and services (improved and increased production).

- 4) Sustainable agriculture objectives must be integrated into food security frameworks.
- 5) - It is better to focus on future plans to contribute to the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food security.
- 6) It is necessary to raise the voice to highlight the importance of sustainable agriculture because of its direct link to our food security, so it is our role as citizens and officials to contribute to the development of strategic plans to find solutions to secure the human needs of water, food and energy without damaging or destroying the ecosystem. We can look into the future with great optimism.

Thank you for your attention

Raphael Debbane

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