



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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**American University of Beirut launches the 2023 Raja Tannous
Lecture Series: reducing food waste, improving food security**

Industry professionals and public sector representatives joined the American University of Beirut's Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) in celebrating World Consumer Rights Day by launching the 2nd Raja Tannous Lecture Series on March 15, 2023.

The forum aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry to foster creativity and create a holistic approach towards a food-secure future. The forums also aim to shed light on how academia-industry partnerships can expand the relevance of research, foster the commercialization of research and development outcomes, and increase labor mobility between academic institutions and the private and public sectors. Collaboration between industry, and academic and research institutions, is critical for efficient national innovation schemes. In Lebanon, such alliances face pronounced barriers calling for a distinguished approach to promote such collaborations.

The theme for the forum held this March was reducing food waste and improving food security. It explored the challenges of ensuring access to sufficient and nutritious food while reducing food waste worldwide, especially in Lebanon, amid current financial and social crises. Reducing food waste would require the concentrated effort of the academic, public, and private sectors.

The event, attended by over 85 participants from Lebanon and abroad, featured Dr. Mohamad Abu Haidar, director general of the Ministry of Economy and Trade, represented by Director of the Consumer Protection Unit at the Ministry of Economy and

Trade Tarek Younis; Dr. Tamara El-Zein, director general of the National Council for Scientific Research in Lebanon; Dr. Elie Bou Yazbek, assistant to the director general for technical affairs at the Ministry of Economy and Trade; Dr. Hussein Hassan, associate professor and academic compliance director at the Lebanese American University; CEO of Natagri s.a.l. Fadi Sarkis; Associate Director and Program Manager at EBRD Huda Saigh; Deputy Chief of Party and Chief Technical Officer at the USAID funded Agriculture and Rural Empowerment (ARE) activity Sami Khairallah; Dr. Marc Bou Zeidan, cluster manager at QOOT Agri-Food Innovation Cluster, Berytech; in addition to Dr. Mohamad G. Abiad, professor and director of the faculty's Laboratories for the Environment, Agriculture, and Food (LEAF).

In his speech, Dr. Abiad, FAFS' Industry-Academia Partnership champion, discussed how “consumer rights can be critical in reducing food waste and improving food security. By exercising their right to information, choice, safety, complaint, and participation; consumers can help to create a more sustainable and equitable food system that meets the needs of all individuals.”

Dr. Ammar Olabi, FAFS interim dean, highlighted the importance of the collaboration between industry and academia and the contribution of such alliances to the advancement of research and economic growth. Participants discussed the challenges of food security and food waste in Lebanon, how the private and public sectors can tackle food wastage, and the innovative solutions that could be implemented to address these two challenges simultaneously, such as utilizing food waste as fish feed. The forum also explored funding opportunities to support academia-industry collaborations and food security initiatives in Lebanon.

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 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to 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 365-bed hospital.

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