

For Immediate Release



## **AUB develops first degree program in rural development in Arab world**

Beirut, Lebanon- 21/02/2014 - The Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences will start a new graduate program in rural community development in the fall of 2014.

The Rural Community Development Master of Sciences program (RCODE) will allow students to build their capacities in community development to better design, manage, follow up, evaluate and monitor development projects, either in the public or private sector and locally, regionally and internationally.

The program is hosted by the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) and has been reviewed and evaluated by Cornell University Professor David Brown, co-director of the Community and Regional Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell, who recently visited AUB and highly recommended the program. The program is now registered in the New York State Education Department and the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education.

“According to a 2010 World Bank report, non-governmental and governmental organizations, in Lebanon alone, have spent more than \$500 million on community-based development project addressing mainly agriculture, public health, natural resources and environmental in the past decade,” said FAFS Dean Nahla Hwalla. “Yet there is currently a shortage of qualified professionals with a strong knowledge base in rural community development. What’s more, no university in Lebanon or the Middle East offers such training, while this approach is now firmly established in western universities.”

Hwalla added that community development efforts in the region have largely failed because of top-down approaches leaving little room for community-driven initiatives and partnerships.

“AUB recognizes these challenges and is well-situated to be the first academic institution in the MENA to offer a rural community development program,” she noted.

The program will focus on a participatory and multi-disciplinary approach, in order to graduate professionals in community development with up-to-date knowledge on issues and tools to better assist their organizations and their community in development programs in different disciplines.

The program aims to train students to be able to work as planners, extension associates, human service providers, economic development specialists, or other local, regional or state policy-makers, practitioners or administrators in order to improve the livelihoods of their communities.

The degree offers both thesis and non-thesis options.

To apply, please go to: <https://graduateadmissions.aub.edu.lb/>

For more information on the program, click [here](#).

Established in 1952, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) has played a pioneering role in the region in the fields of nutrition and dietetics, landscape, environment and natural resource management, and community and rural development. FAFS owns and operates a 100 hectare research and outreach center located 80 kilometers east of Beirut in the Beqa'a Valley known as AREC, Advancing Research, enabling Communities. It offers seven undergraduate programs in agribusiness, agriculture, food science and management, landscape design and ecosystem management, nutrition and dietetics, nutrition and dietetics, as well as graduate programs with special focus on issues of regional importance, and opportunities. It also shares its professional expertise through national and regional consultancies.

ESDU (Environment and Sustainable Development Unit) at FAFS has established itself as a regional interdisciplinary research and development center, specializing in community-based research and capacity building. Through its programs, ESDU adopts an inter-disciplinary approach to conduct studies that support local food production and improve food security. The Unit also offers international training in community development project design, implementation, and monitoring.

ENDS

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar, Director of News and Information, [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb),  
01-75 96 85

**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 8,500 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.

**Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:**

Website: [www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)