

For Immediate Release



## **AUB offers the only graduate programs in the MENA region in Food Security**

Beirut, Lebanon- 12/2/2016- The American University of Beirut has started offering a Masters program on Food Security. The University offers the only graduate-level programs on food security and targets the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with Masters and Diploma programs beginning summer 2016.

The AUB Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) successfully launched its seven-week Diploma in Food Security in 2015 and will again offer its classes during the summer term (end-May to July). The Diploma is an intensive, non-degree summer program. Students learn about the challenge of food security; its connection to agricultural value chains, human nutrition, environmental sustainability, and economic development; and how policies can be developed to address and improve food security. The Diploma prepares them for policy-and program-oriented careers in the field. It targets individuals who may already have a graduate degree but want to close gaps in their education, including those with some professional experience in the public and non-governmental sectors. Students may also apply academic credit earned under the Diploma to the MS program. Diploma classes will be held at the AUB campus in Beirut, Lebanon, over a seven-week summer term beginning May 30, 2016.

FAFS will also offer the Masters (MS) in Food Security program beginning September 2016. The MS program is a full graduate degree that provides students with a deeper understanding of food security and additional skills to tackle it. It offers both a thesis and a non-thesis track, and will typically be completed over two academic years. It allows for a deep study and exploration and is suited to more traditional students who want or need a full graduate degree. Graduates gain the skills and knowledge to work in the public, non-governmental, and private sectors, or to pursue further academic training. The Masters classes will be held at the AUB campus in Beirut.

Both the Diploma and the MS program apply an interdisciplinary approach and draw on contributing faculty members who combine expertise in agricultural systems, nutritional health, development economics, policy and programming, and a deep knowledge of the MENA region to engage and challenge students. Eligible students should have a bachelor's degree in a field related to food security such as agriculture, nutrition, natural resources management, or economics, and a high level of English proficiency. Applications for both the Diploma and the MS are now open, and the submission deadline is April 1.

Dr. Nahla Hwalla, Dean of FAFS, explains why the Diploma and MS are important additions to the AUB curriculum. "Food security is a pressing global issue with strong local impact. The MENA region is most vulnerable to food insecurity worldwide. AUB, being a regional leader in higher education, has the responsibility to address this problem through capacity building and research, and to graduate leaders and agents of change in their societies," she told us.

The Diploma and the MS are the first such programs in the MENA region, allowing students to focus on issues and concerns of the region. "The MENA region previously had no graduate level academic programs in food security despite the clear and relevant challenges: The region is scarce in arable land and water, reliant on food imports, and dealing with major conflict and demographic changes that mean millions cannot or do not get the food they need," said Rachel Bahn, Coordinator of the Food Security Program at FAFS. "In the past, individuals seeking to gain an interdisciplinary understanding of food security had to travel to Europe or North America and enroll in programs that emphasize the needs and challenges of other regions than MENA. With the MS and Diploma in Food Security, AUB is providing a way for individuals to build their applied knowledge by working alongside professors and colleagues who are similarly focused on the region, with different options that suit both traditional students and busy professionals."

AUB is building on the success of last year's Diploma program. Last year's inaugural class of graduates found the Diploma program relevant, enriching, and demanding. "The Diploma in Food Security program has allowed me to gain much information about the status of food security in the MENA region that I was not aware of before. Having spent the last six years working in infrastructure development from an engineering perspective, a clear connection between this program and my work has now been established," said Abdulaziz Al Sumait, an engineer with the Kuwait Fund who completed the Diploma program in summer 2015.

"I found this experience to be very inspiring and valuable [...] I would definitely recommend this program to anyone interested in expanding their horizons and learning new things in an interdisciplinary approach, especially people interested in making a difference in the world," said Nour Nashef, a Masters graduate in Nutrition and Dietetics at AUB who also received her Diploma in Food Security last year. "There was a well-balanced composition of theoretical and practical knowledge throughout all the coursework," added Aliaa Al Dirani, an AUB graduate student of ecosystem management who has also studied under the Diploma program.

Details on the Diploma and MS programs - including course descriptions and admissions requirements - can be found at <http://www.aub.edu.lb/FAFS/foodsecurity/>, or via email at [foodsecurity@aub.edu.lb](mailto:foodsecurity@aub.edu.lb).

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**For more information please contact:**

Office of Communications, [information@aub.edu.lb](mailto:information@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 130 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 420-bed hospital.

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