

For Immediate Release



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AUB FAFS conference champions sustainability and launches food security website

The American University of Beirut (AUB) Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) organized the two-day conference entitled "Together for a Sustainable Society" last week. The large crowd of participants included faculty, students as well as professionals and stakeholders in the agricultural and food sectors, nationally and internationally.

The conference addressed several topics related to nutrition and its impact on public health, as well as sustainability issues and how sustainability can be involved in practical processes. The many side attractions of the conference included a farmers' market and display for the sale of natural and traditional food products, and a village dinner which concluded the first day of the conference.

The coverage of the role of Arab women in protecting the quality of the soil, within the Environment Unit, was among the most prominent objectives of the conference. Deliberations showed how serious is the role that can be played in this respect. The idea of sustainability may be a somewhat modern concept. The aim is to include it in the agricultural and nutrition sector, but it is undoubted that the American University of Beirut seeks to be a pioneer in this field, as it realizes the importance and sensitivity of the issue. This was stated by the Dean of the FAFS Dr. Nahla Houalla, speaking in the opening ceremony in the presence of AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, and a large number of students, professors and journalists.

The conference was held within AUB's ongoing celebrations of its 150th anniversary, and Dr. Houalla focused in her speech on the leading role played by the AUB and FAFS in the region and the world. She thanked the university's administration on its support for FAFS and its belief in FAFS' ability to cope with all the research and scientific needs of students and faculty.

She added: "Societal needs were the main impetus for efforts and for focus on food security. Access to adequate food within a healthy environment to create natural and effective food systems are objectives that must be addressed in any plan to be put in practice. Today, FAFS pursues a policy of working towards sustainability. This policy was set by the United Nations as a major goal within a global strategy for improvement. Our university is seeking to work on this strategy and to put it in application on various levels and areas".

Dr. Houalla confirmed that FAFS received US accreditation as a crowning of its efforts and this allows FAFS students to work and study in the US and abroad.

Dr. Amira Qusais, FAFS alumna and a researcher at the Nestle Research Center in Switzerland gave a presentation on her experience abroad and on her work to launch and promote the idea of sustainability through food. She had participated in the nutritional support project for the pilots of Solar Impulse, the Swiss long-range experimental solar-powered aircraft which flew around the world using only solar power.

During the two days of the conference, deliberations addressed the importance of methods and patterns of nutrition, and the connection between obesity and disease, with the participation of AUB's Dean of Medicine Dr. Mohammed Sayegh, Dr. Shadi Saleh, and several of their colleagues.

The conference coincided with the joint launch by FAFS and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) of a website to serve as a platform for ideas and strategies to target food insecure areas. The goal of the site is to support the evidence-based and Technology-supported decision-making processes with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

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 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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