

## **AUB Faculty Call for Sustainable Food Consumption at FAO Conference**

AUB faculty members highlighted the importance of sustainable food consumption while attending the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 33<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/nerc33/en/> held May 9-13 in Rome, Italy.

The NERC is a biannual meeting, gathering government officials and civil society observers from across the Near East and North Africa. The NERC offers representatives from across the region to discuss regional strategies and priorities, offering feedback based on their own country experience. This year's event was held under the theme of "Promoting Food Security, Blue Growth, and Empowerment of Small-Scale and Women in Near East and North Africa (NENA) Region," with discussions focused on the contribution of livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture to food security; the empowerment of small-scale farmers and women throughout the region; and updates from the Committee on World Food Security.

Faculty members Nahla Hwalla, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, and Lamis Jomaa, Assistant Professor of Nutrition, participated in the official Lebanese delegation, offering remarks to the plenary meeting and delivering a presentation during a side event that highlighted the importance of sustainable production and consumption for countries throughout the Near East and North Africa. According to Dr. Jomaa, these interventions were well received by the FAO, government officials, and civil society organizations.

In her remarks, Dr. Hwalla noted that, "In addition to increasing agriculture production and making it more efficient, we should be looking at the other end of the spectrum where food consumption plays an important role as a driver of production." She called on governmental leaders to consider and adopt measures including,

- Strengthening research endeavors that assess the impact of current food consumption patterns and dietary guidelines within NENA countries on food production and sustainable agricultural practices and recommend changes;
- Promoting evidence-based action plans and policies that address food security holistically, taking into consideration both sustainable food production and sustainable food consumption, which in turn need to be tailored based on populations' health problems and environmental challenges within each country; and
- Providing capacity building opportunities for governmental and non-governmental partners within NENA countries to address food security in a holistic manner by addressing sustainable production, access, and utilization of food.

This year was the first time that academic institutions have been invited to participate in the Lebanese delegation to the NERC, joining officials from the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss key issues around agriculture and food and raise additional considerations to the fore. Drs. Hwalla and Jomaa joined representatives from the Lebanese University and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in participating in the meetings.

The report of the 33<sup>rd</sup> NERC is available online <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mq757e.pdf>.