**Lebanon's Culinary Nation Branding Promotional Campaign to Support Agrifood Export**

Beirut, Lebanon — June 15, 2023

The Ministry of Economy and Trade and Fair Trade Lebanon, in partnership with the Department of States’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and under the scope of BIEEL project (Business Innovation and Enhance Exports for Lebanon), organized a press conference to launch Lebanon’s culinary nation branding promotional campaign to support Lebanese agrifood exports. The press conference featured a captivating documentary-video projection, which immersed attendees in the flavors, colors, and food traditions that make Lebanon's gastronomy so unique. Audiences embarked on a sensory journey, discovering the stories behind Lebanon's wine, olive oil, sweets, and the authentic Mediterranean experience offered by its fruits and vegetables. The five promotional videos mark a significant milestone for BIEEL project in promoting the country's agrifood industry and supporting access to international export by elevating the visibility of its agrifood products.

The videos highlighting Lebanon’s rich gastronomy, culinary heritage, and savoir-faire will be promoted on several platforms to showcase the country’s exceptional high-quality products and will be passed to the Ministry of Economy and Trade as a designated promotional tool during international fairs and events.

The event took place at the Smallville hotel on June 15 and brought together key representatives of embassies, ministries, associations, chambers, food experts, and food influencers. His Excellency Minister of Economy and Trade Amine Salam, President of FTL Mr. Samir Abdel Malak, and Mr. David Lewis, MEPI Coordinator at the U.S. Embassy, delivered opening remarks.

In his speech, Minister Salam highlighted the significance of Lebanon's agrifood industry and its potential for economic growth. His presence underlined the commitment of the Lebanese government to support and promote the country's culinary heritage. Minister Salam's speech emphasized Lebanon's significant leap towards global recognition and economic growth through the launch of its culinary nation branding campaign. This initiative positions Lebanon as a distinguished player in the global market, attracting international consumers, creating export opportunities, and sustaining the agrifood industry. This National branding is aligned and supported by Lebtrade and Lebfresh platforms, which provide market insights, trade regulations, and business opportunities to exporters and importers, as well as promote Lebanese fresh produce globally and connect producers with buyers. Therefore, the campaign showcases the quality and diversity of Lebanese agricultural products. Minister Salam also highlighted the Ministry's commitment to digitization, enhancing market access, attracting investment, and fostering sustainable growth. His presence underscored the Lebanese government's dedication to supporting and promoting the country's rich culinary heritage.

Mr. David Lewis noted in his remarks that the United States’ commitment to fostering a conducive environment for SME growth, including easy access to business financing, efficient export activity, improved corporate governance, and enhanced access to finance and international markets. He added that the “We are excited to see our investment in this project facilitate Lebanon’s access to international markets. This project is just one in a long series of efforts to strengthen the bond between our nations, with U.S. support to Lebanon totaling nearly $3.8 billion since 2018 including security, humanitarian, and economic development programs.”

Mr. Samir Abdel Malak highlighted the Ministry’s instrumental role in spearheading the BIEEL initiative and praised FTL’s team’s commitment in empowering local producers and SMEs within the agrifood sector. Mr. Abdelmalak thanked the U.S. government and MEPI for their valuable support in funding initiatives with the Ministry of Economy and Trade within BIEEL project such as the Export Data Center at Lebtrade and the Culinary Nation Branding Campaign, which was first featured at the SIAL fair in Paris.

Dr. Zeina Tohme, Senior Communication & Education Consultant at Fair Trade Lebanon, engaged with the audience through a presentation of the Culinary Nation Branding strategy. Dr. Tohme showcased the essence of Lebanon's culinary identity and the unique qualities that make it a treasured global phenomenon: “The Culinary Nation Branding encapsulates the richness, diversity, and vibrant flavors of Lebanese gastronomy, creating a recognizable and compelling image that will resonate with audiences worldwide and promote export.”

Following the presentations, a dynamic Q&A session allowed attendees to communicate with the speakers and get more into the details of Lebanon's culinary heritage, branding campaign and agrifood exports. The session fostered lively discussions and further enriched the collective understanding of Lebanon's food landscape.

The event concluded with a cocktail reception, where attendees networked and savored a selection of delectable Lebanese culinary delights.

The launch of Lebanon's Culinary Nation branding, with the support of the BIEEL initiative and funding from MEPI, represents a significant step towards promoting economic growth, food export, and sustainability within Lebanon's agrifood sector. By empowering local producers through training, labeling support, their brands’ uplifting, and connecting them with global fairs and markets, Lebanon aims to foster a deeper appreciation of its rich gastronomic heritage.

# **About Fair Trade Lebanon & BIEEL initiative**

Fair Trade Lebanon is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting fair and ethical trade practices that guarantee fair remuneration and decent income to small producers and cooperatives. Founded in 2006, Fair Trade Lebanon is member of the World Fair Trade Organization, a global community of social enterprises spread across 76 countries that fully practice Fair Trade and put people and planet first in everything they do. Through various initiatives and projects, Fair Trade Lebanon aims to create sustainable opportunities and improve the livelihoods of marginalized communities and local producers.

BIEEL stands for **“Support Business Innovation and Enhance Export for Lebanon”.** The project is led by Fair Trade and initiated by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). The initiative aims at creating an environment which enables business development and **empowers 100 Lebanese SMEs and cooperatives** by increasing their competitiveness internationally through 3 pillars: access to market, standard and access to certification.

Website: <https://www.fairtradelebanon.org/>

# **About the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)**

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is a program initiated by the United States to promote partnerships and opportunities for economic and political progress in the Middle East and North Africa. MEPI supports initiatives that empower local communities, strengthen civil society, and promote economic growth in the region.

Website: <https://mepi.state.gov/>