FOOD PRODUCING COOPERATIVES IN THE BEKAA VALLEY: A GATEWAY OF CULTURE FOODS INTO LEBANON'S URBAN CITIES

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INTRODUCTION

LEBANON a rich and diverse country







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- Za'atar mix
- Keshek
- Traditional cheeses
- Sumac
- Olive oil

- Labneh
- Pomegranate molasses
- Pine nuts
- Vine leaves
- Pickles
- Vinegar



- Burghul
- Concentrated sour grape juice

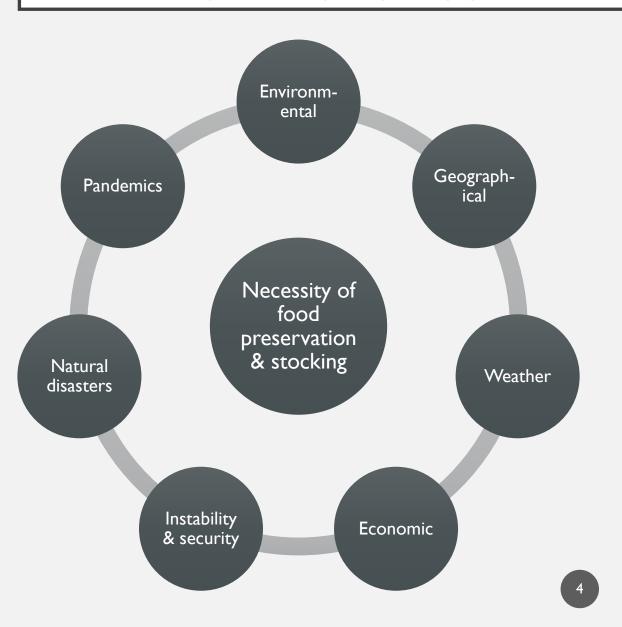


- Orange blossom water
- Rose water
- Rose petal jam
- Nuts

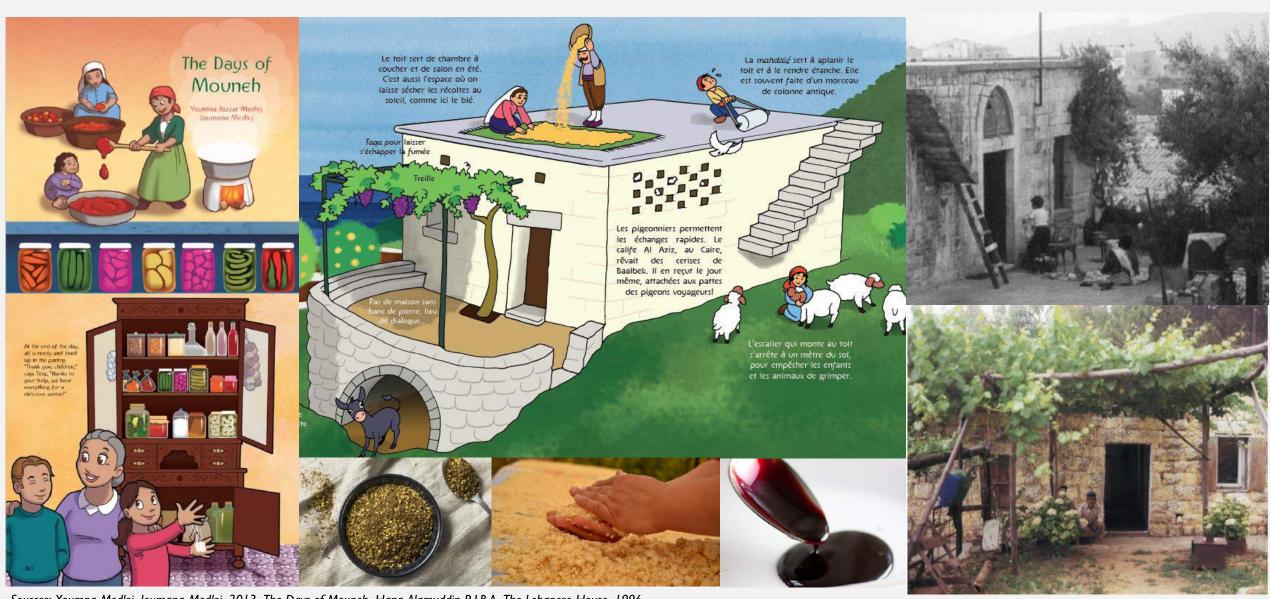




MOUNEH - LEBANON'S TRADITIONAL PRESERVATION OF FOOD



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Sources: Youmna Medlej, Journana Medlej, 2013, The Days of Mouneh. Hana Alamuddin R.I.B.A, The Lebanese House, 1996

TODAY'S MOUNEH

- Culture food, described as "Baladi" reminiscent of traditional & village life
- Strong link to urban public with villages, due to noted internal exodus
- Capitalized for market production = potentially recognized resource
- Market channels include: supermarkets, souks & farmers market, specialty shops
- International recognition through the Lebanese cuisine, and evident through increased frequency of "online shopping"



FOOD COOPS AS TERRITORIAL ACTORS

Food-producing Cooperatives:

- Work within a specific geographical area
- Aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of its members
- Affiliated with several official bodies / ministries because of their food processing activities (Ministry of Industry, Environment, Public Health, Agriculture, Social Affairs...)
- Reputation as traditional producers (ILO, 2018)
- Have been the **focus of development**, due to their socio-economic component, support to groups specifically women producers, flexibility in business transactions, and livelihoods.
- Have been introduced to technology, knowhow and collective marketing by donors
- Have been targeted through State/donor partnerships as the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)



FOOD COOPS AS TERRITORIAL ACTORS

Food-producing Cooperatives:

- Have the opportunity of coalescing, and pursuing independent marketing routes (direct linkages, private label, collective branding...)
- Rare but existent networks constructed by other cooperatives / enterprises as collective brands

Important to understand the characteristics,
organization of cooperatives, their horizontal
relations and the type of associations linking them
under the national context to evaluate their
complementarity, competition and their general
behavior and propensity for action

Network with organized actors?

Arrangement and behavior?

Mobilization and collective action?





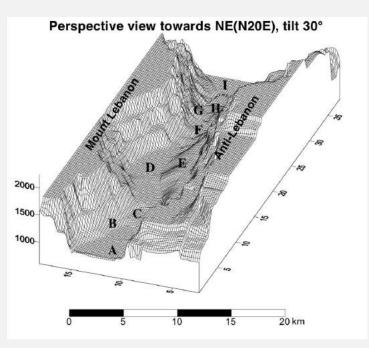
THE TERRITORY



The Bekaa Valley, Lebanon Important agriculture zone



Source: Central Administration of Statistics, webpage



Source: Lateef, 2006

The agricultural setting and presence of workforces makes "almost every resident a farmer" (Bou-Antoun, 2014).

- Largest producer of cereals, pulses, potatoes, vegetables and grapes: 43% of cultivated land in the country
- Major Producer of livestock, sheep (38%), goats (29%), and cattle (26%)
- 44% of dairy farms and and associated skilled labor
- Most packaging centers (33%) and cold storage houses (42%), and research stations
- Mosaic of soil "rarely can be found in comparable areas" (Darwish, 2013)



THE STUDY

Potential Resource

Group of traditional preserved foods mouneh



Actors

Artisanal small producers

Cooperatives



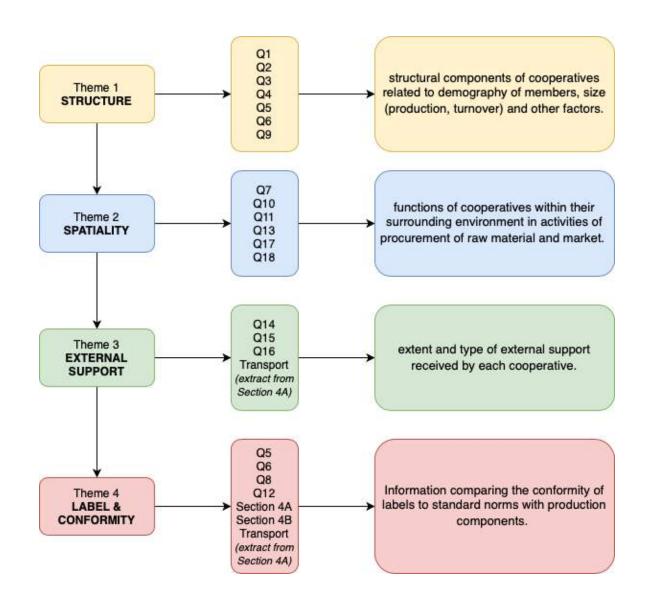
40 cooperatives identified, surveyed & characterized

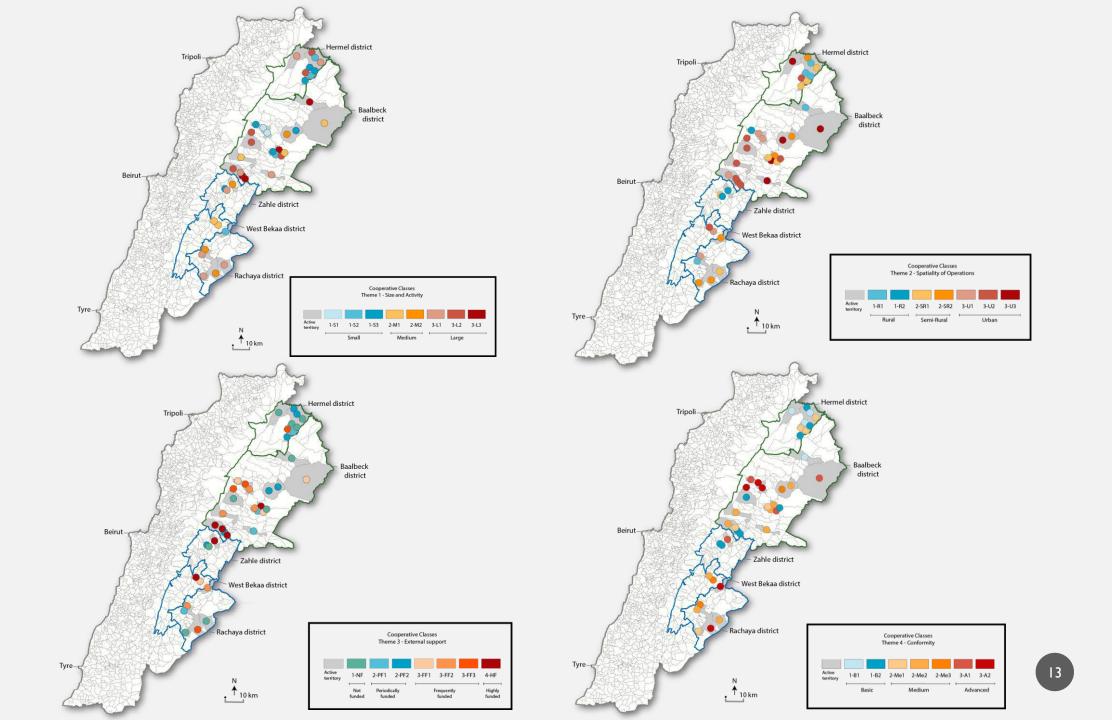
Territory

Lebanon Bekaa valley

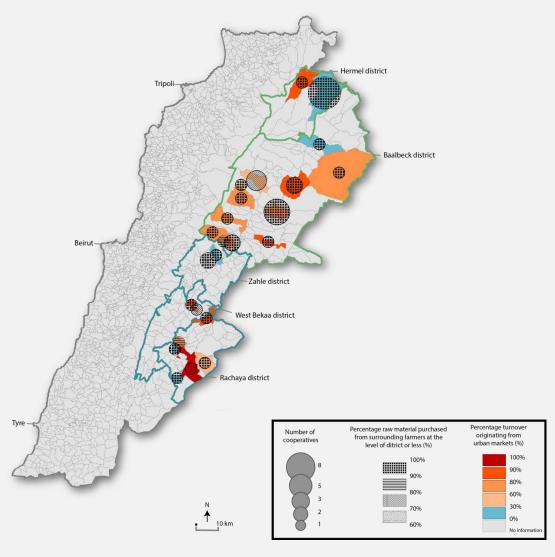


CHARACTERIZATION OF FOOD COOPS





MAIN COMMON CHARACTERISTICS



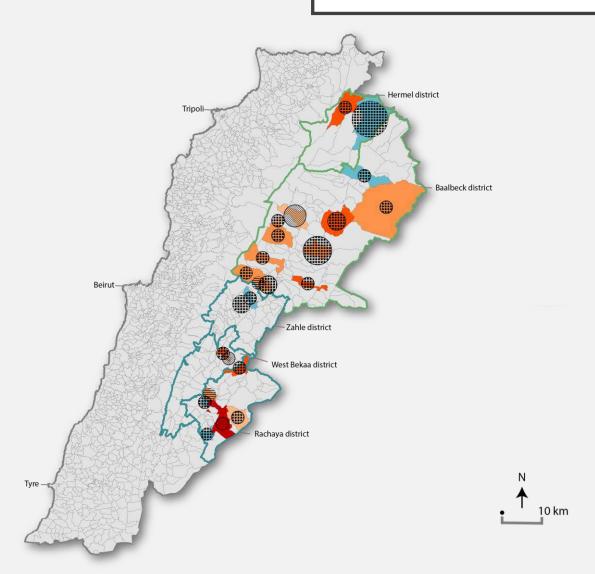
Cooperatives demonstrate:

- Major incorporation of women: 30% of coops are onlywomen & only 30% have less than 70% of women members.
- Low attraction to youth: Only 18 of 700 members are less than 30 years of age; and almost 60% of members are over 40 years of age, comparable to ILO (2018).
- Small size & production: average of less than 20 members (double in agricultural cooperatives) and a minimum of 1 up to 15 tons of annual (seasonal) production, but do not represent full capacity. Cooperatives are market-driven & have scale-up potential.
- Extensive external support received: 65% of coops received support from NGOs and 28% from the state, mostly as equipment and capacity building (training). Support is regular (annual) for over half of coops. Dependency? (Esim & Omeira, 2009) (McKinsey & Company, 2018) or enhanced efficiency?

Figure: Spatial distribution of food cooperatives in the Bekaa valley, Lebanon (Baalbeck-Hermel governorate in green and Bekaa governorate in Blue) coupled with the percentage of raw material originating from surrounding farmers at the district level, and the percentage turnover originating from the urban market of the capital Beirut.

Source: Jalkh R., 2020, ART-DEV, UM3

RURAL-URBAN FOOD BRIDGES



Cooperatives demonstrate:

- Strong link to local sources of raw material with a minimum of 80% originating from surrounding farmers within the district level
- Significant reliance on urban markets for trade sales: 60% reporting over half of turnover from the urban market (capital Beirut), of which 60% indicate an urban turnover of over 80%.

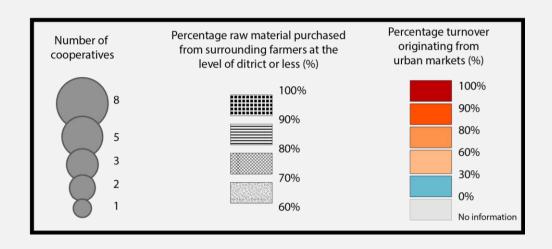


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CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

National Call Encouraging production & consumption of local productions given the recent developments

Reputation

Protectors of culinary heritage: highly linked with traditional foods (ILO, 2018) and artisanal nature **Opportunities**

Agents of food security

Evident production and social component

GDP 80% in areas as North Bekaa compared to a national average of 5% (FAO), characterizable territory, culinary history...etc.

Possible scalability and contribution to urban food security given recent economic setback

Certain unclear geographical divisions at the level of municipalities leading to overlap Data availability & accuracy

Ex: Difficulty in quantifying national production, consumption and export of mouneh items

Geographic clarity

Challenges

Governance & Centralizati on

Centralized government, influence of external international agency support, centralized tax systems, limited authority at the local municipal level...etc.

Official recognition & regulation

National

& regional

instability

No official categorization or definition:
Legislative (State) & normalization (LIBNOR) levels

Transitional phase for Lebanon: October 2019 uprisings, economic setback, increased poverty, corruption, issue of refugees...etc.

THANK YOU QUESTIONS?