

# SOUK EL TAYEB IN BEIRUT: A FARMERS' MARKET IN LEBANON

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**AUTHORS: ELISA MEREATUR,  
KAMAL MOUZAWAK, ISABELLE  
LACOURT**

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**Between innovation and tradition, Souk el Tayeb is an innovative social entrepreneurial project, and also place where a new sense of community is experienced around food value and culture.**

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These are places where to exchange knowledge and interests and that offer alternative ways of food consumption.

Looking at the Lebanese socio-cultural and economic context long years of conflicts have created inequalities and prejudices and also diseconomies which have turned the local agri-food system - rich of "savoir faire" and local knowledge- into an industrialized agri-food system based on worldwide food imports.

The Souk el Tayeb project was created to preserve food traditions and the culture of small farming in Lebanon, with the aim to protect the interests of the local small farmers and producers, enabling them to compete fairly in an era of globalized agricultural trade.



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# Summary

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The Lebanese (Beirut) farmers' market project of Souk el Tayeb shows to what extent farmers' markets can be a place of encounter for different people of diverse cultures and traditions. These are places where to exchange knowledge and interests and that offer alternative ways of food consumption.

Looking at the Lebanese socio-cultural and economic context long years of conflicts have created inequalities and prejudices and also diseconomies which have turned the local agri-food system - rich of "savoir faire" and local knowledge- into an industrialized agri-food system based on worldwide food

imports. The Souk el Tayeb project was created to preserve food traditions and the culture of small farming in Lebanon, with the aim to protect the interests of the local small farmers and producers, enabling them to compete fairly in an era of globalized agricultural trade.

After an introduction of the current international agri- food situation, The ECADIM will then give an overview of the Lebanese socio-cultural and economic scenario, with a special focus on the agri-food sector and consumer food habits. A broad section is dedicated to the description of Souk el

Tayeb activities, including the different projects and the parties involved.

Finally, a description of strengths and weaknesses invites the readers to contemplate the potential contribution of a project arising from civil society in order to lead to the preservation of small and local food production. Furthermore, communication campaigns and the promotion of new environmentally-friendly practices aim to combat environmental impacts while simultaneously building a sense of citizenship among diverse communities through the promotion of food sharing and trade as well as the inherent

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## Souk El Tayeb : the first farmers' market in Lebanon

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Since the 70s, alternative food provisioning networks have been increasing, especially in Europe and the United States. There has been a joint rise in movements supporting small-scale and local food production as a sort of "resistance" to both the anomic forces of a globalising corporate food system and the standardization and homogenization of food. The shift toward the production and consumption of quality food produced locally has been variously conceptualized either as a more sustainable system for the environment or for the society: meaning the re-embedding of the rural to the urban society.

Lebanon has experienced a different history. Well known for its long lasting conflicts and socio-cultural divisions,

alternative food provisioning networks have only been created recently, after the Civil War (1975- 1990). Their intention is to create a sense of community and sharing of cultural identity. Spaces once dedicated to conflicts have now transformed into places of encounter for Christians and Muslims, urban and rural people and small farmers and consumers are annulled.

SOUK EL TAYEB was the first farmers' market to take place in Lebanon; and was created in 2004 in downtown Beirut to share knowledge of food as a basic and important common denominator that could help bring together fractured communities by promoting unity around common respect for food, land, and agricultural traditions. This farmer's market also

aims to preserve food traditions and small farm culture in Lebanon to protect the interests of the small farmers and producers, enabling them to compete with industrial and globalized food trade, while the different governmental associations and agricultural trade unions remain passive.

Indeed, the first Lebanese farmers' market was created as a private initiative by Kamal Mouzawak, a young Lebanese with experience in the food sector, with the intent of creating a "souk" with the same vibrant energies as traditional "souks". The driving force is solely supplied by small farmers who bring to the market their knowledge and savoir-faire preserving centuries old Lebanese food traditions for future generations to enjoy.

The literal translation of Souk el Tayeb is “the good market”. In Arabic, Tayeb means “good” and in this context the term “good” is relegated to both taste and character. “We would say it is a good tomato, for its great taste, and say good about a person for manners and

personality. In Arabic we would say also good, meaning alive ... that man is still good, he is still alive. Good taste, good energy and life are what we always try to add to Souk el Tayeb”.

By bringing together both consumers and producers in the same place, the

whole project of Souk el Tayeb aims to create an advocacy group to promote the consumption of local food, give value to small-scale farmers, and enhance food knowledge culture, while preserving traditions and raising education and skill level.

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## The Lebanese Agro-food Context

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### **The importance of religions**

Lebanon is a country of only 10,452 square kilometers with a population of 4 to 5 million people. Interestingly, despite its small size, it is incredibly fragmented for what concerns religious, national and ideological identity. Due to a political system based on sectarianism (religious identity), the many divisions and feelings of mistrust among the different sects resulted in long and turbulent conflicts, bad government and economic crisis.

About half of the population is Muslims, Sunni, Shia and Druze, less than half of the population is Christian and few belong to minor religions. Even though Lebanon is a secular country, family matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance are still handled by the religious authorities representing a person's faith. Calls for civil marriage are unanimously rejected by the religious authorities but civil marriages held in other countries are recognized by Lebanese civil authorities while “non-religious” is not recognised by the State on personal documents.

### **Conflicts of recent decades**

Sectarianism has provoked different conflicts that continue to plague Lebanon since 1975. The so-called Civil War pitted Lebanese Christian against Lebanese Muslims and saw the intervention of Israel, Palestine, Syria and Iran. The Civil War lasted from

1975 to 1990 and resulted in an estimated 150,000 to 230,000 civilian deaths. One-million people (a quarter of the population) were wounded, and another million were cast into exile. The post-war occupation of the country by Syria was politically disadvantageous to the Christian population as most of their leadership was driven into exile, or had either been assassinated or jailed. However, since the end of the conflict until July 2006, Lebanon enjoyed stability, Beirut's reconstruction was almost complete, and increasing numbers of tourists poured into the nation's resorts. However, in 2006, a month-long war between Israel and Lebanon that lasted 33 days - July 12 to August 14 - killed 1,200 Lebanese citizens, most of them civilians.

### **The economic situation**

Lebanon is characterised by a liberal economic activity open to international investments. Before the civil war (1975-1990), the Lebanese economy was thriving, thanks to a well-developed banking system; Lebanon was considered the “Oriental Switzerland”. During and after the war, economic activity registered a strong decline: many factories were destroyed, foreign investments reduced as well as the tourism; consequentially unemployment increased and in turn inflation.

This situation contributed to growing poverty and forced Lebanon to become dependent on international aid, passing through two phases with distinct post-war development phases.

From 1992 to 1997, foreign aid was mainly channeled to providing resources for post-war reconstruction projects. Since 1997, a qualitative shift has occurred in foreign aid utilization, from reconstruction needs towards financial stability and balance-of-payments equilibrium requirements. The government maintained balance-of-payments surpluses during this period, reduced interest rates on public debt instruments and provided the necessary liquidity and 'confidence' to continue borrowing funds from local commercial banks and foreign investors. More importantly foreign aid allowed the government to avoid financial and monetary crises in 2002. However, the cost of such a qualitative shift was heavy in terms of fiscal management, diversion of funds from reconstruction, and increased dependency of the Lebanese economy on foreign aid for stabilization.

### **Poverty and the distribution of foreign aids**

A report on poverty, growth and income distribution between 1990 and 2007, edited by the United Nations Developing Project (UNDP), shows that nearly 28 percent of the Lebanese

population can be considered poor and 8 per cent can be considered extremely poor under international standards. This implies that almost 300,000 individuals in Lebanon are unable to meet their most basic food and non-food needs. The dollar equivalent of the lower poverty line (when converted at the current official exchange rate) is US\$ 2.40 per capita per day. The poor are concentrated among unemployed and unskilled workers, such as people working in agriculture and building sectors.

The most fertile part of the country is located on the coast and most of the economy buzzes around Beirut, the capital of the country. Poverty is lower in the Beirut area, whereas in the North, South and Bekaa governorates consumption per capita is below the national average.

### **Agriculture development**

Prior to the civil war period, food production and supply was internal; however, the conflicts have cancelled self-sufficiency. During and after the conflicts, the agricultural sector has been heavily financed by foreign aids. A survey conducted by FAO in 2003 indicated that from 1961 to 1998 a total of 88% of food was imported as an aid and only 12% was produced in the country.

Indeed, Lebanese farmers have been hurt and priced out of the local markets either because of subsidized after-war food imports, which have kept food prices down, or because of the advent of more industrialized farming methods leading to the integration of rural food producing areas into the international economy, thus creating a scenario that severely disadvantages small-holder productions. These structural realities have created waves of migration from the rural areas into the cities as small-holder farming have lost their farms and ended up working as poorly paid wage workers on the same land. Small-holder farming loses its economic vitality and

small farmers lose their livelihoods. This resulted in the loss of farms for many rural dwellers, who were forced to take on poorly paid jobs.

Despite the difficulties and constraints, the agricultural sector remains an essential component of the Lebanese economy. About 40% of the Lebanese population is currently involved in the agricultural sector and agri-food industries, out of which 34% is employed full time. 36% of the land is cultivated for a total of 277,000 Ha, of which 135,000 Ha are irrigated (data published in 2007). These cultivated areas are located mainly in the narrow coastal plains of Akkar, the in-land Bekaa valley, the Marjeyoun plain in the South and the terraces along the mountain sides.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, in 2007 the main crops in the country were:

**Olive:** the total cultivated area has been estimated at 59,100 Ha with an average annual production of 177, 300 tons. Most of the production is locally consumed. More than 12 local and introduced varieties are currently cultivated; and continuous efforts are undertaken to characterize and inventory the Lebanese olive diversity while broadening the local genetic base to make it available to farmers.

**Cereals:** Among the cereal crops, wheat ranks first with a total area of 52, 800 Ha producing 116, 200 tons. The majority of consumption is covered through import, which is 3.5 times greater than local production. Durum wheat landraces are commonly used for parboiled wheat (burghol) and for bread making in mixture with common wheat imported mainly from Australia and USA.

**Fruits:** Citrus plantations are estimated at 14,600 Ha producing 3,451,000 tons. About 60% of the production is locally consumed, while the remaining 40% is exported to the Arab countries. Grape plantations are estimated at 10,500 Ha

with a production of 106,000 tons, 40% of which is exported to the Arab countries. Apricot is also one of the major fruit crops in the country (6 397 Ha, 32, 000 tons), mainly cultivated in the North of Lebanon and northern Bekaa. Fruits are used for fresh consumption and in juice and jam industries.

**Legumes and vegetables:** Several vegetable crops are considered important in Lebanon namely tomato (4, 060 Ha, 305,300 tons), cucumber (3,100 Ha, 142,600 tons), watermelon (2,384 Ha, 85,600 tons), cauliflower (1,950 Ha, 87,700 tons), cabbage (922 Ha, 24,100 tons) and lettuce (889 Ha, 22,200 tons). Green pulses like common beans (1,420 Ha, 14,200 tons) and green fava beans (1,845 Ha, 14,800 tons) are widely cultivated legumes. Areas are cropped only to improved varieties, the seeds of which are regularly imported by seed companies.

### **Lebanese food culture**

Lebanese food culture has at length been successively influenced by many civilizations - Arab and non-Arab traditions – that succeeded one another in this little country, imprinting it and in particular the capital, Beirut with various cultural influences. The food habits reflect this ancient past and the cultural blends of which Lebanon was witness. Therefore, food is largely influenced by historical heritage and by the geographic and climatic diversity in this small country. Although traditional food is still consumed at all social occasions (marriages, baptisms, funerals, and so forth), food habits have changed, as in many parts of the world, due to the urbanization process that began at the start of the century. The post-war period has accelerated this process because of the large amounts of foreign subsidized imported food that has contributed to the disappearance of traditional food.



**Hammana town, district of Baabda**

**The food supply system: traditional souks**

Prior to half a century ago, the only food supply system was represented by traditional souks – permanent city markets as in the old city of Beirut, Saida or Tripoli – open every day, where only local producers sold their foodstuff. However, food supply strategies eased and adopted changes. With the openness to the global system of food supply, souks became a place where imported goods were also marketed.

Despite the advent of supermarkets, souks still represent a current food supply centre for many people, especially those living in the countryside. But their number is going down, especially in the largest cities where they are replaced by shopping centres. The most famous souk in south Lebanon is the Nabatiyyeh, traditionally held every Monday. Historical records dating back to the 19th century indicate that the Nabatiyyeh souk attracted people from all over region. In 1860, the chronicler Chaker el Khoury reported

that 5,000 to 6,000 individuals attended every week and more than 50,000 transactions took place every Monday.

He also describes it as a meeting place for people of all creeds: Christians, Muslims, Druze and Jews. Today, the Nabatiyyeh market is still vibrant but, as in the other town markets of Lebanon, many goods offered are imported from as far away as China. Moreover, the diversity that once characterized it has been much reduced by war, polarization and divisions in Lebanese society.



**Souk el Tayeb farmers' market in Beirut**

# The actors involved in the Souk El Tayeb project.

## THE VISIONARY FOUNDER: KAMAL MOUZAWAK

Unlike many other farmers' markets around the world, Souk el Tayeb was not set up by public or private associations, the chamber of commerce or the agriculture trade union. No political body is involved, just merely the will of a single person: Kamal Mouzawak.

Kamal Mouzawak is a Lebanese born to a family of farmers and producers from the rural town of Mouzawak- He grew up in a culture that lived off of the land and celebrated food and the importance of having a space to share this food with others. After completing his undergraduate studies, Mouzawak found himself working in a cultural centre, 'Art et Culture', that he credited as his first lesson in life. As the first post-war cultural centre in Lebanon, it focused on providing a space in a historic Lebanese home where people could view and interact with local artists. The kitchen of the house was the heart of the centre.

This reminded Mouzawak of the importance of a space where with a common history, despite the variety of religious and social backgrounds, could come together. The focus on food and shared history led Mouzawak to travel writing; discovering places in Lebanon that, because of the civil war, had been previously unreachable and unknown to a large portion of the population. From these travels came the discovery of Lebanon through its people and their food, and it was the shift from travel writing to food writing that led to spotlighting the different food traditions in different regions of the country. By 2000, as the editor of 'Saveurs du Liban et d'Ailleurs' – the only food magazine in Lebanon – Mouzawak was exposed to macrobiotic food and a philosophy of respecting food, the small-scale food

producers, and the benefits of organic products. Through this job and increasing exposure, an opportunity came about in early 2004 to plan a Garden Show that hosted around 10 local producers. In June 2004, Mouzawak created the legal structure to establish Souk el Tayeb as an independent individual enterprise. "The idea of Souk el Tayeb was just an evolution from one thing to another - post-war cultural gathering activities, to food writing, to macrobiotics ... then to setting a farmers market. The idea of a farmers market existed everywhere, and the idea of souks in the region. It was a mix of both, and mainly a development project, a producers-only market, and latter, an evolution to many other projects supporting the same vision".

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## THE ASSOCIATE: CHRISTINE CODSI

In the summer of 2008, Kamal Mouzawak met Christine Codsí, who was on a 6-month sabbatical from a successful consulting job with a local management consulting firm, Consulting and Development Services (CDS). She had spent 10 years on consulting corporate strategies and business process reengineering for other clients and corporations across the MENA region, but was searching for a sense of fulfillment on a personal and community level that she felt missing in the context of her current job and life routines. Christine and Kamal enlarged the Souk el Tayeb project in November 2009, opening TAWLET - a farmers' kitchen

## PRODUCERS INVOLVED



near the market area where cuisine is prepared with the market's products and where the chefs are farmers themselves.

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### PEOPLE INVOLVED: A FAMILY BASED PROSPECTIVE

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From a customer standpoint, Mouzawak and Codsí followed an unorthodox perspective in that they did not recognize a customer base, but rather a "family base", with no differentiation between consumer and producer. It was an extension of the same philosophy that viewed all stakeholders (suppliers, intermediaries, and customer) as "family members" that were invested in the same project, thus creating what Codsí called a "virtuous circle." "It's not just about an exchange. It's about complementarity. There's a win-win situation in anything you do in life, and we're building a family. We tapped onto something important which is food, tradition, life, authenticity, which are issues that touch people's hearts and that we happen to believe are also crucial for coexistence and nation-building."

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### PRODUCERS INVOLVED AND THEIR PRODUCTS

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Souk el Tayeb was driven by an instinct and focus on creating a means for rural producers to showcase their products to an urban clientele. Vendors are farmers and producers coming from different Lebanese regions, who are directly involved in production. They can be individuals, families, group or association.

Participants, farmers and producers, were first recruited by Kamal and Souk el Tayeb team through visiting them directly in villages and areas of production. Nevertheless, thanks to an increasing popularity of Souk El Tayeb's farmers and producers currently ask to participate in the market spontaneously. Food & feast, regional food festivals (launched in 2007)- as they will be latter on described- were

an important way to recruit participants too.

The market flourished and grew steadily from 10 producers in 2004 to 70 in 2011.

To participate in Souk el Tayeb vendors must apply through an application form available on the Souk el Tayeb website and submit it to the Souk el Tayeb Quality Control Manager.



VENDORS SHALL BE ACCEPTED IF THEY:

- 1 - grow / produce their own product within the Lebanese territory;
- 2 - sell directly without intermediaries;
- 3 - are a small-scale producer or farmer (typically a non-industrial infrastructure);
- 4 - provide proof that products are grown / produced on own land / production place;
- 5 - provide updated organic certification from a recognized certification body - for organic producers / farmers;
- 6 - allow Souk el Tayeb Quality Control manager to inspect the farm or location of production;
- 7 - pay the Souk fee;
- 8 - sell high quality products.

Vendors may sell fresh fruit and vegetable, poultry and dairy products, homemade food products (mouneh), meat and fish products and baked goods if respecting the following criteria:

1. Organic / certified products: all items sold as organic must meet the requirements of an official certification body. Sellers of organic items at the Souk must clearly display a copy of their updated certification when selling at the Souk. Only certified organic growers may display signs using the words "certified organic".
2. Fruits and vegetables: must be fresh and grown from seeds or seedlings by the vendor.
3. Mouneh: must be prepared by the vendor from fresh raw materials, without any additives or preservatives. Preference will be given to vendors who grow their own fruits and vegetables, which purchase fruits and vegetables from other SET members, or from local sources.
4. Fresh juices: preferably from growers or from Souk El Tayeb.
5. Dried Fruits: Preferably from growers or from Souk el Tayeb and dried by vendors themselves.
6. Nuts: must be foraged by Vendors from their own farm.
7. Honey: Vendors must own the hives from which honey is extracted and bottled.
8. Meat and Fish products: must be from animals raised by vendors and reared extensively.
9. Eggs and Poultry: must be from the vendors' own fowl and reared extensively.
10. Cheese and other dairy products: must be prepared by vendors themselves. Preference will be given to vendors who have a dairy herd providing the milk used to make the dairy products.
11. Baked Goods: including breads, cakes, pies, biscuits, etc. must be baked by vendors in their own kitchen (homemade). Baked goods must be kept covered at the Souk.
12. Soap: must be produced with an actual hot or cold soap making process. If the soap contains herbs, preference will be given to applicants who grow their own herbs or who purchase herbs from other SET members, or locally sourced herbs.
13. Dried herbs, spices, beans, grains: must be grown by the vendor and processed by the vendor in compliance with all health regulations.
14. Crafts [if any]: must be handmade. Any craft or artwork sold must be the work of the vendors themselves. Crafts should be limited at the Souk.
15. Miscellaneous: other products can be sold at the Souk on a case by case basis (i.e.: book from Lebanese authors, tote bags, etc.).

Moreover vendors are subjected to a list of restrictions as follows:

1. Crops grown in soil fumigated or harvested/ protected in storage with chemicals not approved by the government, may not be sold at Souk El Tayeb.
2. Livestock, meat or dairy product raised or developed using Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH) may not be sold at Souk El Tayeb.
3. Food and mouneh products containing additives, preservatives, colorant or any other chemical reagent may not be sold at Souk El Tayeb.
4. Food and mouneh products should be labeled, mentioning the origin of the product, ingredients, production and expiry dates, and a batch number allowing traceability for the product.
5. Any vendor wishing to sell new items not previously approved by Souk El Tayeb, must notify the Quality Control manager in writing a new list of products before bringing the products to the Souk.
6. Vendors with organic certified products must submit a copy of the certification and the annexes to the Quality. Producers shall pay a small fee (\$25) that is allocated to logistical costs of the market such as tent and stands. Vendors are invited to respect the Rules and

## CONSUMERS INVOLVED

There is a distinct group of consumers who choose their food on the basis of different values, such as: organic production, environmental sustainability, solidarity, social justice, wellbeing and personal health. Such consumers look for “new” forms of agri-food markets, either based on direct marketing of local and typical products - mainly organic food - directly from producers to consumers.

With an increasing awareness of all problems related to food consumption, consumers preferring direct marketing channels to buy high quality food at a reasonable price have increased in many industrialized countries as well as in Lebanon. Souk el Tayeb is located in a wealthy Beirut area, so as well as in other similar markets located in other countries, consumers are nearly as of the same profile as anywhere else in the world: educated, well-travelled, often young parents who want to give the best to their children, aware individuals making the best choice for the environment,

## CONSUMERS INVOLVED



## Souk El Tayeb's activities

### The first steps

The first Souk el Tayeb farmers' market was held in May 2004 in the Beirut Garden Show- a food, flower and leisure spring festival. It hosted 10 local producers throughout a successful 5-day event that drew a lot of attention in establishing the country's first farmers market. In early June 2004, Mouzawak created the legal structure to establish Souk el Tayeb as an independent individual enterprise.

Souk el Tayeb is a virtuous example of interactions and synergies of agri-environmental public goods, rural cultures, local food-ways and food traditions woven to create a project with a social purpose.

Souk el Tayeb was perceived first as an organic market, but soon changed into a farmers' market offering fresh, local, and seasonal food products – natural, traditional and possibly organic. Since September 2005, Souk el Tayeb has been divided into 2 clear sections: the first clearly labeled “organic” for certified products and the second labeled “non-organic”.

Souk El Tayeb is held every Saturday from 9 am to 2 pm in downtown Beirut. In 2010, an attempt was made to hold the market an additional day for almost one year in a different (ABC mall in Achrafieh), every Wednesday from 4 to 8 pm, but it was not successful and stopped activity.

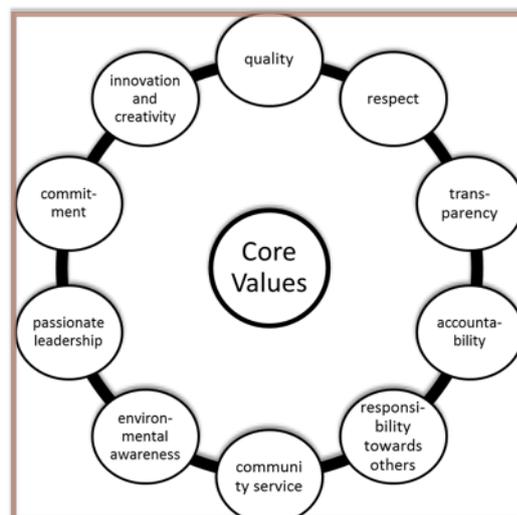
### Vision, Values & Objectives

The Souk el Tayeb vision - as Kamal said- can be summarized as “celebrating food and traditions that unite communities while supporting small-scale farmers and producers and the culture of sustainable agriculture” through the mission of fostering innovative, environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially responsive approaches”.

A set of 10 core values complete the vision: quality, respect, transparency, accountability, responsibility towards others, community service, environmental awareness, passionate leadership, commitment, innovation and creativity.

### The project relies on 6 main goals:

1. to bridge producers and consumers;
2. to become a trustworthy economical partner for small producers;
3. to promote food traditions;
4. to build up a common sense of citizenships among diverse communities;
5. to promote environmental-friendly food production;
6. to become a place for exchanges and dialogue.



# Souk El Tayeb's goals and objectives.

**Goal 1: Bridge gap between food producers and market by increasing presence in new markets and regions.**

**Objectives:**

A. Seek out more opportunities to partner with local players in order to increase “social market share”.

B. Perform analysis to determine domestic and international markets where value can be added.

C. Network/lobby with governmental and non-governmental players to achieve increased involvement in markets.

D. Perform fundraising to achieve financial support to expand market presence.

**Goal 2: Obtain social and economic recognition for small food producers**

**Objectives:**

A. Seek to involve more producers within the institution.

B. Discover new offers of partnership and market presence for local producers.

**Goal 3: Contribute to the preservation of tradition through culinary events and the promotion of traditional recipes**

**Objectives:**

A. Work with local producers / farmers at the Souk to obtain / revive new recipes and traditions.

B. Discover forgotten recipes and traditions.

C. Prioritize these recipes and traditions based on acceptance or perceived popularity.

D. Communicate with general public about the existence and value of recipes / traditions.

**Goal 4: Build citizenship among diverse communities through the promotion of respect and interaction**

**Objectives:**

A. Maintain diversity within the choice of markets where SET will be present to ensure that all communities are represented.

B. Research and implement innovative methods to promote citizenship through events or activities on symbolic days (i.e. 22 November).

C. Launch annual survey of consumers and non-consumers to assess social attitude and behavior towards SET.

D. Monitor press and public information to understand SET's position as an innovative leader in citizenship building.

**Goal 5: Impact the environment through the introduction of new campaigns and new environmentally-friendly practices**

**Objectives:**

A. Look for partnerships with other associations or institutions to promote environmentally-friendly practices (i.e. eco bag or Cedar Environmental).

B. Engage in environmentally friendly practices within the institution.

C. Monitor number of newly introduced environmentally practices at SET.

**Goal 6: Develop a platform for diverse communities to gather to share a common vision and set of values**

**Objectives:**

A. Ensure that all communities and regions are included in SET as producers.

B. Seek to constantly develop into new regions to increase reach.

C. Provide a space where people can freely exchange and share their love of food and traditions (i.e. Tawlet, the producers' restaurant).

Values and objectives are guidelines to implement in all project activities, which mostly belong to four main areas:

Support for small-scale farmers and producers.

Launch of local community-level development initiatives.

Advocacy, research and education on food traditions, heritage and on living an organic - healthy lifestyle.

Creation of a platform and space bringing people from different regions and of various beliefs around a common goal.

**A social entrepreneurial enterprise: how Souk el Tayeb is structured**

When Souk el Tayeb started, it was neither a pure for-profit enterprise nor a non-profit charity, but rather a hybrid structure which was first and foremost a social business with a primary non-profit arm (farmers' market) and gradually expanding to include an income-generating venture (Tawlet farmers' kitchen opened in 2009). All returns from Souk el Tayeb farmers' market and events were toward maintaining operational solvency, with Mouzawak and Codsí investing their time, energy, and even their personal resources and savings, opting out of earning a salary and directing capital towards funding their various events.

From 2008 when Christine Codsí entered to be part of Souk el Tayeb project, Kamal saw that it would be better to shift from an 'individual enterprise' to an NGO structure. Tawlet would separately be registered as an income generating company.

Souk el Tayeb employs a full time souk manager, and quality assurance manager – and a part time accountant and office administrator (all paid with the souk and activities income), whereas Tawlet employs 8 people including a full time chef, waiters, janitors, a manager.

With the structure in place, Souk el Tayeb recognized that any organization's sustainability lay in critically leveraging its human capital. In this case, the human capital entailed external producers and farmers, as well as internal employees. At first, recruitment was conducted through references and acquaintances, and as the enterprise grew, a selection process was implemented with clear criteria delineated. Managing this process was a full-time quality control manager who ensured that producers, farmers, and cooks met the quality standards set for each role. Internally, job descriptions

were utilized for managerial-level positions, while waiters and support staff were hired through regular recruitment procedures. Common to both hiring strategies - and credited by Mouzawak as the reason for the low turnover - was the focus and affinity of new recruits to the philosophy underlying and driving the endeavours of Souk el Tayeb.

Mouzawak and Codsí believed that the key to attracting and retaining talent – in this case farmers, producers, and employees – had less to do with the structure of the organization than with identifying and finding the right profile of employees who shared Souk el Tayeb's philosophy. In practical terms, Codsí was quick to point out that a company's philosophy was integral to ensuring top talent attraction and retention, and underscored the importance of fostering and promoting

this philosophy through formal and informal internal meetings, communications, recognition, and sharing success stories.

Additionally, Mouzawak and Codsí introduced various empowerment programs and capacity-building workshops as a means of improving Souk el Tayeb's producers' skills and practical knowledge and bolstering their livelihoods. Codsí stressed the importance of holding regular training sessions often (on a monthly basis in this case), to ensure that all farmers and producers in the network had the opportunity to expand their skills. Topics included the importance of certification and practical legal tips on how to set up a small shop. Most producers from Tawlet were part of the Souk el Tayeb network and benefited from additional training capacity workshops conducted numerous times

## Not just another market.

### **The farmers' market: SOUK EL TAYEB**

Souk el Tayeb is an open-air weekly farmers market in Lebanon that specializes in local, natural, traditional and organic food products. It is held every Saturday from 9 am to 2 pm. The market had other locations as well, and it was originally held at Sofil (Ashrafieh – June 2004), then moved to Saifi Village (Dec 2004) and a Wednesday afternoon market at Rue Verdun or ABC mal in Ashrafieh were also experimented. Other locations were also attempted: Byblos, Zouk Mikael or Tripoli-Mina.

Producers: farmers, bakers, cooks, etc. come and sell their own typical products.

### **The eco-souk:**

As a natural evolution of Souk el Tayeb, Eco-Souk will become the permanent space for the Farmers' Market.

Eco-Souk is a green space that serves as a market, a meeting place, a community garden, a childrens' eco-playground, a communal kitchen, a co-op shop and a mini sorting and recycling plant...using green architectural practices, built from re-used and locally recycled materials and powered by clean, alternative energy. This innovative concept brings Lebanese communities together in an eco-friendly green space, which Beirut desperately lacks.

The eco-market will become a microcosm of Lebanon where communities join in celebration of Lebanese rural and culinary traditions. It will represent every aspect of environmental best practice against a backdrop of fair trade economic activity and improved social integration.

- 3,000 sqm including a barn, co-op shop, producers' kitchen, recycling waste & water plant, kids playground
- Materials – recycled, reused, locally produced recycled glass and plastic panels
- Zero waste, onsite waste recycling, solar energy, etc.
- Allows the development of more activities to cater to people more than just one day a week therefore....
- bringing more income generating activities for the producers: more days to sell, more outlets to sell, etc.
- Provides a flexible dynamic space that can evolve over time to and according to needs.
- A living earth – platform for environmental awareness.

### The farmers' kitchen: TAWLET

Tawlet (Arabic for table) is an open kitchen where every day a different producer/cook prepares typical food from his/her region according to the philosophy that “everyday hosts a different cook, a different producer, a different meal, and a different story”. Most of the cooks belong to the Souk el Tayeb’s “family”, while many more are producers that sell at the Saturday farmers’ market. Other are just cooks at Tawlet, chefs from Beirut or from around the world (visiting Beirut). It provides a permanent space or meeting place in Beirut for local producers mainly women to prepare the specialty and cuisine. Each day of the week would focus on a different producer from a region in Lebanon.

Tawlet was launched by Kamal and Christine in November 2009 ; a farmers’ kitchen that would generate a steady income for producers, particularly women, as well as Souk el Tayeb, while maintaining the core values of their social business. With Tawlet, the idea was to create a permanent space where producers from remote villages could cook their cuisine, local dishes, and specialties, and make them available to city clientele. Mouzawak conceived of Tawlet “as more than just a restaurant; it is a space that provides opportunities for producers and farmers, particularly women living in remote villages, to share with others their food traditions and culture, in addition to earning a revenue or income.” For Codsí “Tawlet is a for-profit extension of Souk el Tayeb, but essentially retains the same non-profit soul.”

The creation and institutionalization of Tawlet in November 2009 seemed like the most logical and pragmatic solution

to meet the challenge of sustainability. Tawlet has shown a steadily growing monthly revenue stream between \$35,000 and \$56,000, and a net income of \$36,000 over 12 months in 2010. The majority of revenue generated by this new venture was directed towards food and beverage (F&B) costs and salaries (including Mouzawak’s and Codsí’s first salaries). In keeping with their mission of helping and promoting local producers, Mouzawak and Codsí were diligent in ensuring that most of Tawlet’s spending for F&B was directed to the producers of Souk el Tayeb. Indeed, local producers made up 60% of Tawlet’s F&B, ensuring their continued economic viability.

Though the social mission adopted did not leave a high margin for profitability, Tawlet nevertheless generated a surplus for the founders in its first year of operation. According to Codsí, “We made sure that our producers are paid generously for raw materials, and that our customers are charged moderate prices, which are considerations that remain at the heart of our social business model.” Tawlet more importantly attested to the fact that the social entrepreneurs held themselves accountable to their core constituency in their new revenue generating ventures, hence staying in tune with the social side of their mission and striking a delicate balance between upholding the original vision and goal while generating an income and a sustainable source of revenue. Codsí considered Tawlet as an opportunity to tackle the challenge of sustainability head on, while remaining as inspired and committed to the core mission and guiding values of Souk el Tayeb.

Once a month, Tawlet (the Souk el Tayeb open kitchen- see below) hosts a special guest- chef, food writer. Monday to Friday hosts a Producers’ buffet,

culinary classes and children’s’ culinary classes on demand, while Saturday’s souk offers Brunch. At night, Tawlet is available for private dinners and for “I COOK” formula, where guests play the role of chefs and Tawlet personnel is available to help people set their menu.

Other activities include: Photography exhibitions, Book signings, Dekenet Souk el Tayeb: a coop-shop selling farmers’ and producers’ products



## Other events and campaigns

Farmers' market and then Tawlet, "the farmers' kitchen", has been linked with other events such as food-awareness campaigns and food and feast events in various rural communities, celebrating diverse local cultures, traditions.

Souk el Tayeb has been organizing many events to point out that people, regardless of socio-cultural background, eat not just to feed their body but also their mind. So events aim to highlight what perhaps is the most important thing: eating brings people together.

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## TASTE OF BEIRUT

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Taste of Beirut was an event held in Spring of 2008 by Marije Vogelzang a Dutch designer who was invited to Souk el Tayeb to work on a workshop and presentation called Khobz w Melh on the Green Line (meaning literally "Bread and Salt on the Green Line". In her book "EAT LOVE", M.V says that when you have a good bond with one another then you are inextricably bound together like salt and bread. Marije involved participants in the workshop to make basins of bread as a metaphor. Indeed, people are essentially alike, made of the same dough, but at the same time very different one to another, in other words unique form. So bowls assumed different forms, kneaded by individuals from a range of backgrounds. The bowls were filled with typical Lebanese food and presented on a long line of tables running right to the market.

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## FOOD & FEAST (AKL W EID)

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Food & Feast (Akl w Eid) since 2007 are a series of festivals in Lebanese regions and in Beirut, to promote local traditions and food specialties, organised by Souk el Tayeb, (in

partnership with USAID in 2007 and the United Nations Development Program for 2008 and 2009). Food and Feast activities were initiated in 2007. For each event, Souk el Tayeb would select a region and a food theme, gathering farmers and producers of the region around it. The event includes an exhibition of the local farm produce, a food competition and local entertainment (zajal, local band...). Each event is usually coupled with visits to local sites and attractions. Souk el Tayeb works hand in hand with municipalities and regional authorities and organizations to organise and implement events. Food and Feast aims at identifying and supporting local producers of the different regions thus promoting and encouraging local production and giving recognition to rural producers. It also aims at identifying regional dishes and propagating food traditions. Food and Feast promotes every visited region (sites, activities and attraction), encouraging internal tourism. Each event is visited by hundreds of visitors from all around Lebanon.

During 2007, six Food and Feast activities were implemented regionally, in collaboration with SRI/INMA (USAID), while further activities were implemented in Beirut. Food and Feast activities have greatly achieved their objectives, during 2007, through:

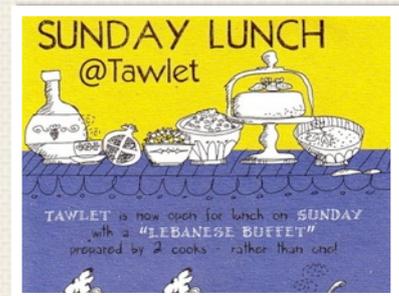
The number of small scale, quality oriented producers that have participated in the events.

The sales, visibility and contacts that these activities generated for the producers

Press coverage (local and international) and general public awareness.

The implication and active participation of local authorities, organizations and institutions making each of the events a sustainable community based project.

## SOUK EL TAYEB RELATED EVENTS



## BEIT LOUBNAN (COMMUNAL HOMES OF TRADITION)

Souk el Tayeb has partnered with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop Beit Loubnan/Communal Homes of Tradition (CHT). These CHT "Homes" are located in Lebanese villages as centres featuring traditional architecture, arts and crafts, sustainable agriculture, indigenous food and Lebanon's legendary hospitality.

The Mission of the project is to keep the farmer/producer in his own environment while creating a meeting place for producers, artisans and consumers to contribute towards reviving and perpetuating local traditions. The goal is to prevent traditions and crafts from dying out by creating job opportunities in the rural communities through a wide range of services, offering traditional food, arts and crafts, the best Lebanese ingredients and skills in an authentic setting.

## SOUK @ SCHOOL

Souk @ school is a year-long project in schools for students of all ages, to raise awareness of healthy life and food, and promote farmers and producers to students and their families. Projects have been realized in Lyçee Français Berjaoui, ACS (American Community School) and Lycee Melkart. All souk @ school projects end by a small version of the Souk in the school, introducing producers to students and their parents.

## THE KIDS' CORNER

The Kids' Corner at Souk El Tayeb's weekly farmers' market is a space for kids. It hosts educational games and activities for students of all ages to raise awareness on a healthy lifestyle and food.

**Kids' Books:** Kids' Books is a yearly event held in Souk El Tayeb's weekly farmers' market in Saifi. The event includes an exhibition of children's books along with various activities for kids, like Storytelling, Craftwork and musical Entertainment

## NATIONAL TABBOULEH DAY

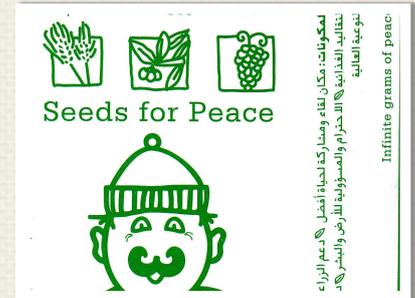
National Tabbouleh Day is a day to celebrate the most famous and cherished Lebanese dish. The National Tabbouleh Day was launched internationally on Saturday, 7 July 2001 by Ricardo Mbarkho, where one would make a tabbouleh home and send a picture to a common forum. Since 2007, it is an official event in Lebanon, and is held at Souk el Tayeb, every first Saturday of July. During the National Tabbouleh Day, a competition of the Best Tabbouleh is held in three different categories: traditional tabbouleh; winter tabbouleh; creative tabbouleh.

## SEEDS FOR PEACE

Seeds for Peace is a campaign aimed at supporting small-scale farmers, producers and artisans who are still perpetuating traditions, local specialties and natural ways of life. A campaign aiming to: save cultural landscape, defined by agriculture, plantations and all other human interventions in the land and to enhance professionalism of small enterprises, so to support rural development, give recognition to small producers and perpetuate tradition, which is the history of land and human.

## FARMERS' EXCHANGE PROGRAM

As any of Souk el Tayeb's projects, the "Farmers Exchange Program" aims to give recognition to small-scale farmers and producers of high quality food products.



The FEP's approach is seen as a bilateral exchange between farmers and producers around the world. Lebanese farmers and producers will visit international markets and share the work experience and daily life of fellow farmers and producers. During the course of their visit, they will participate in farmers' markets and present their traditional food in tasting sessions, themed dinners, cooking classes and workshops. They will stay with fellow farmers and producers, assisting them on the farm and making field trips to the area. In return, Souk el Tayeb will welcome farmers and producers from markets around the world to share the same experience in Lebanon, while introducing them to the Souk el Tayeb's family and to Lebanese traditions in general. This program will be made possible through the extensive network of SET all around the world. It will be implemented in partnership with farmers' markets, international and local associations, schools and restaurants as well as individuals active in the fields of environment, agriculture, food and travel. The FEP has already established a strong network of partners in London, Galway, Amsterdam, New York, and Latakia. This exchange is to explore similarities rather than differences. Of course Abou Rabih, a Lebanese farmer from Akkar, is very different from a

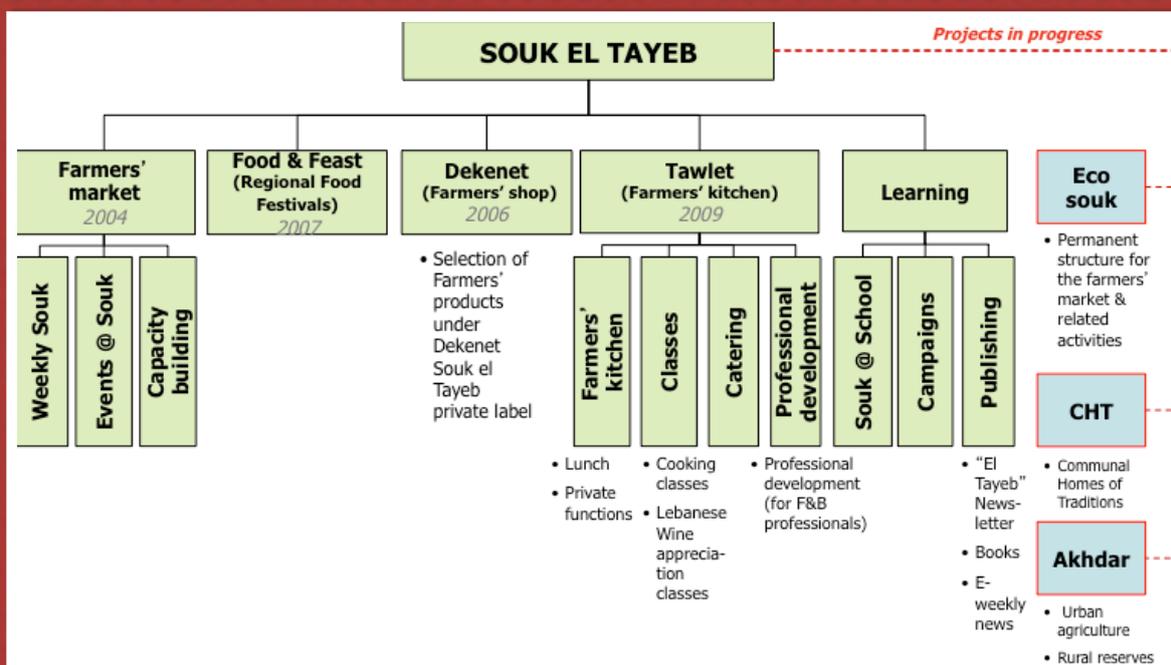
Tuscan smallholder in terms of language and traditions. But at the same time, the two will have much in common: their respect for nature, their devotion to the land, their quest for quality produce, their concern for sustainable production and their desire to market and distribute their goods effectively. Beyond difference towards similarity! Always using the same visionary approach, the experiences from the Farmers exchange program will ultimately be collected in a book, "Farmers and Markets of the World".

### DEKENET SOUK EL TAYEB

Dekenet Souk el Tayeb created in 2006 as a selection of Farmers' products under Dekenet Souk el Tayeb private label, Dekenet is a real seal of quality, a fair recognition for all producers, a perpetration of culinary tradition and the best our land, mountains and sea have to offer.

Dekenet also assembles traditional kitchen utensils as well as books around culinary heritage.

Dekenet products are available at Tawlet Souk el Tayeb, Mar Mikhael, Nahr Street and at TSC Signature, Beirut Souks.



# The results: strength and weaknesses

## A great success

Since 2004, the starting year of the Souk el Tayeb project, many results have been achieved. as can be seen here below:

Bridging food producers and consumers by increasing presence in new markets and regions. That it happened thanks to the weekly market in Beirut but also thanks to the 'Food and Feast' project: a multi-town yearly event whereby Souk el Tayeb collaborated with about 12 Lebanese rural municipalities and producers in their hometowns to organise a celebratory event of their local traditions and wealth. The festivals were organised in a dozen villages across Lebanon. Souk el Tayeb further empowered local governments by involving them in the organization and planning of each event and sharing the responsibilities and outcomes of these events.

Promoting social and economic recognition for small food producers. As a social enterprise, Souk el Tayeb maintained that all gains and profits should be reinvested in projects that benefit the producers, the local farmers, and cooks that come from remote villages and regions. Souk el Tayeb sought to foster this connection between the farmers and the city clientele and promote in the process the social and economic wellbeing of small scale producers.

Contributing to the preservation of tradition through culinary events and the promotion of traditional recipes. Educational programs, including 'Souk@school' and 'Prepare your Meal', along with educational children's activities at the farmers' market, were designed to educate the youth on healthy living and preserving their country's wealth, traditions and natural resources.

Building citizenship among diverse communities through the promotion of respect and interaction. At the core of Souk et Tayeb is the aspiration to build citizenship, a sense of community, common traditions and shared history. This was the broader social aspiration that motivated the proliferation of activities undertaken. Partnerships were forged across various spheres and sectors including foreign government agencies, local municipalities, local ministries, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, banks, intergovernmental organizations, local universities, and the private sector.

Impacting the environment through the introduction of new campaigns and new environmentally friendly practices. Souk el Tayeb lived daily its mission of local support and contribution, awareness-raising and education, advocating a healthy lifestyle, and environmental responsibility - Souk el Tayeb was the first space in Lebanon to ban the use of plastic bags through its 'Plastic is Back' campaign underscoring the importance of upholding principles through action. Tawlet (the farmers' kitchen as it will be discussed later in the ECADIM) was the 1st restaurant in Beirut where smoking was banned, despite the fact that the owners did not display any signs or instructions to that effect.

Developing a platform for diverse communities to gather to share a common vision and set of values. Souk el Tayeb was founded on the idea that food was the basic common denominator uniting the different communities. Souk el Tayeb embraced the notion of "looking for similarities beyond differences." In a country as diverse as Lebanon, Souk el Tayeb was striving to emphasize commonalities, revolving around shared food traditions and heritage. Souk el Tayeb was

essentially about building platforms for inter-communal interactions and nurturing a common appreciation for shared values and traditions.

## Reconciling social and financial sustainability

As a social business, Souk el Tayeb has been managing to sustain its financial viability through creating income-generating ventures as well as launching innovative events that served to further promote its vision. Souk el Tayeb was considered as the umbrella enterprise encompassing both the farmers' market and the farmers' kitchen, where each followed its own legal and organizational structure and quality control standards but shared the same overarching mission or purpose, hence reinforcing each other in a synergistic way.

This organizational design allowed Souk el Tayeb (farmer's market) to grow from an enterprise with a budget just over \$12,000 in 2004 to a budget of \$100,000 in 2010. Over the same period, Souk el Tayeb increased the number of producers from 10 individual producers to over 70 in 2011, impacting around 300 direct beneficiaries who work with the producers. Mouzawak and Codsí credited this phenomenal growth and scaling impact to the low-cost organizational design adopted, translating into increased economic viability for rural producers, and particularly women producers, and reinforcing their business model. For example, since the inception of Souk el Tayeb, producers have continued to pay only \$25 to set up a table in the Souk. This fee has remained constant despite exponential growth. During this time, Mouzawak and Codsí did not earn a salary from the money generated by Souk el Tayeb; instead directing all surplus income towards the producers,

meeting basic operating costs, and sustaining the fast-paced expansion of Souk el Tayeb.

However, in mid-2009, Mouzawak and Codsí started thinking about sustainability in a different way and contemplated revenue-generating options to enlarge Souk el Tayeb, and benefit the producers and themselves going forward.

By 2011, having achieved great progress and gradual institutionalization, Mouzawak realized that Souk el Tayeb was at a critical juncture, and needed to think carefully about the evolution and expansion of the project. Mouzawak called on his Managing Partner, Christine Codsí, to discuss the best way to scale Souk el Tayeb's impact through promoting a sustainable living for a wider group of small-scale producers and farmers. The question that remained unresolved was whether to invest immediate and limited resources in expanding the existing producer network or focus on developing a new income-generating business venture that would secure more exposure and potential entry into different markets, sustaining an increased number of producers over the long term.

### **Dissemination of the project**

Not all the attempts to open new farmers' market have been successful. For instance, Souk el Tayeb has tried to open other markets in other small cities in Lebanon without success.

However, it has been an inspiring activity that also created other markets and activities which promote local food and producers.

El Mina was launched in December 2007. The market was originally developed by Souk el Tayeb and held on land provided by Mina City Council, not far from the sea and the city's fishing port, and provides a venue for local producers to sell their produce: seasonal fruit and vegetables, traditionally made Lebanese products

such as mouneh (vegetable preserves), olive oil, fruit juices, and honey.

Another market - Beirut Earth Market- is held every Tuesday from 9 am to 2 pm in the central Hamra district, well known for its shops and cafes, the Beirut Earth Market has provided an important new outlet for 15 small-scale farmers and producers from the city's surrounding region. Products range from fresh fruit and vegetables to mouneh (traditional Lebanese preserves), mankoushe (traditional thyme pita bread), olive oil and artisan natural soaps, the market provides reliable access to quality food. As with all Earth Markets, it has also created an important social space for people to meet, and where they can rediscover the distinctive features of their regional cultural identity.

The Beirut Earth Market has been developed as part of the ROSS program (Reconstruction, Employment, Services and Development) of Italian Cooperation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This program has provided support to small producers through training courses and assisted in opening a further two Lebanese markets in El Mina and Saida. The project is co-financed by the Tuscany Regional Authority, and is run by the NGO UCODEP in collaboration with Slow Food Beirut and the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity.

New projects to develop "Souk el Tayeb" markets are under study both in Qatar and Dubai.

### **Weaknesses**

All activities developed and economic results achieved certainly show that Souk el Tayeb has gathered a solid network of sensible producers and consumers in only a few years, obtaining success beyond all expectations. In Beirut and to some extent in Lebanon, it has become the reference point for a better food system and place of positive encounters

and sharing of knowledge. "Souk el Tayeb's figures are as follow:

*A-from 2009 till Sep 2010*

- Low season: 30 producers; 500 visitors
- High Season: 70 producers; 1200 visitors
- Average: 50 producers; 800 visitors

*B-from Sep 2010 to Dec 2011*

- Low season: 25 producers; 200 visitors
- High season: 60 producers; 800 visitors
- Average: 40 producers; 500 visitors"

*Data Souk el Tayeb, 2011*

However, Souk el Tayeb is still facing few weaknesses. On the one hand, looking at the organizational point of view, it can be said that the market being without a proper covered structured- requires a lot of efforts in terms of hours of work and costs to set it (to provide to stands electric power etc...). Moreover, being open air it is subjected to external phenomenon such as the weather.

During the war in 2006, because Beirut was under the bombs, Souk el Tayeb couldn't take place for more than one month. It was very important to find an alternative for producers who were living of their weekly sales – so an alternative market was created during the 33 war days, in a summer resort.

On the other hand, looking at number of people involved, it can be said that it is still a small scale initiative that involves only a small portion of the Beirut population - a niche of educated and wealthy consumers. The fragility of the project also derives from the fact that it is tightly related to the person of the founder.

Moreover, the market is held only once a week and not every day, as a traditional souk, which means that Souk el Tayeb is perceived more as a special event than an everyday market place.

# Reflections upon the Souk El Tayeb project

Souk el Tayeb is an interesting example of how an independent individual enterprise project has been able in few years to contribute to the preservation of small and local food production and to impact the environment through the introduction of new campaigns and new environmentally-friendly practices, and to build citizenship among diverse communities through the promotion of exchange and share of food and food culture. Souk el Tayeb has turned a city space (empty and anonymous) into a place (where human relations take place) of encounters where to share knowledge traditions between producers-coming from a rural culture- and consumers-coming from an urban and globalized context. To some extent, thanks to the different campaigns and events, Souk el Tayeb serves as an instrument where

meet people of different creeds and traditions can come together. However, it has not yet been able to challenge the Lebanese agro-food system. Although Souk el Tayeb was the first Lebanese attempt to make people reflects on the importance of a local food production based on the organic agriculture principles, still it has not been able to neither influence the Lebanese agro food policy makers nor expanded the project to other part of Lebanon. The Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, particularly after the Arab Spring, still remains fixed on the idea that the agro-food production should be based on large scale production of few crops and rely on international goods import. Nevertheless, similar to actions taken in the CAMPAGNA AMICA project (creation of an alternative short food

supply chain system in Italy), the project highlights the need - at a worldwide level- of new initiatives able to create local alternatives to the mainstream and globalized agro-food system, which has been causing diseconomies, environmental and socio-cultural problems. Though apparently small and insignificant, these examples can in concert contribute to convince consumers that policy makers should innovate designing local food policies relying on product quality (including health and environmental quality), job creation and valorisation of local food production in one hand and connection between the different regions at continental and trans-continental level according to their cultural and production specificities and needs in another hand.

## Reading framework

Souk el Tayeb represents the Lebanese answer to the will in many countries, to develop an alternative to globalized and standardized food supply system which had led to the separation between urban and rural areas and between food producers and consumers; has have led to diseconomies, food price speculations, which enables farmers to get a fair price and to valorise good quality fresh products. The design of a short food supply chain system, which has been mainly interpreted as a creation of food products direct-selling occasions for farmers.

Looking at the Lebanese socio-cultural and economic scene, long years of conflicts have created inequalities and prejudices and also diseconomies which have turned the local agro-food system - rich of "savoir faire" and local knowledge - into an industrialized agro-food system based on worldwide food imports. However, the Souk el Tayeb project has been demonstrating to be a successful place where to experiment a new communication on the importance of

food as a vehicle of knowledge and traditions able to raise interest and connect people. The Lebanese (Beirut) farmers' market project, Souk el Tayeb brings a strong demonstration that farmers' markets can be a place of encounter for different people of diverse cultures and traditions, where to exchange knowledge and interests and also where to experiment alternative ways of food consumption.

It brings elements to answer the following questions: *To what extent can food bring people together?*

*To what extent Souk el Tayeb uses marketing and communication to create economic value for small food producers?* This project may be compared to Campagna Amica Italian project, also relying on the synergy created by marketing and communication tools. However the results also highlight the limits of the project: *How can a market open just one day a week 9am-2pm make changes for the city food provision? To what extent Farmers' Markets and so producers*

*and consumers can influence the a nation's food and agriculture system and to what extent they can influence the government's decisions making? To what extent can Farmers' Markets be considered an innovative short supply food chain? To what extent can they challenge the mainstream globalized food and agricultural system?*

Of course, there is no one answer for the above questions. Short food supply system can become really alternative only if they become achievable by the mass and not a niche sporadic project. The positive trend of both Campagna Amica and Souk el Tayeb shows that a good quality education and communication project runs very well as a catalyser. Yet, wider food policies are needed to make the reaction working. The involvement of producers and farms trade union or associations is not enough and must be fostered by politicians and public decision makers at regional, national and international level.

# MEDIAGRAPHY

## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LEBANESE FOOD AND FARMING POLICIES:

ZURAYK R., 2011 "FOOD, FARMING AND FREEDOM: SOWING THE ARAB SPRING". JUST WORLD BOOK.

Rami Zurayk is an agronomy professor of Ecosystem Management in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut and a long-time activist for political and social justice. He has published over a hundred articles, monographs and technical reports on agriculture, food, environment and education. Zurayk's current research focuses on the relationship between landscapes and livelihoods, on food politics, and on local food systems. He is the co-founder of the Association for Lebanese Organic Agriculture and of Slow Food Beirut. He initiated, the HYPERLINK "<http://www.healthybasket.org/>"Healthy Basket, Lebanon's first and on-going community supported agriculture program in 2001. After the July 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, he created a post-war development program, HYPERLINK "<http://landandpeople.blogspot.com/>"Land and People to aid in livelihood recovery.

His three most recent books are: From `Akkar to `Amel, Lebanon's Slow Food Trail (co-authored with Sami Abdul Rahman, 2008), Plants and People: Ethnobotanical Knowledge from Lebanon (co-authored with Salma Talhouk, 2010). An interesting article is been published on the Slow Food Almanac: Zurayk R., 2008, Souk Every Monday, Almanacco Slow Food, Bra – Italy p. 108-113

This book gives a broader idea about the issues of food sovereignty and politics in the Middle-Eastern countries and how the food-price crisis of the 2007-2008 affected the area. The book is also well describes the problems created by the western-dominated development efforts, an argument only briefly touched in the first part of the ECADIM. Moreover, issues at the nexus of environment, resources, and people, including phenomena such as the "Slow Food" movement with which Zurayk has long been affiliated, are largely described. Zurayk interleaved between the book chapters a series of informal travel reports, illustrated with his own photos, from trips he took in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Morocco. In these reports he shares some of what he learned (and enjoyed) about these countries' land and people-- and their food! Central issues include environment, resources, and people, including phenomena such as the "Slow Food" movement with which Zurayk has long been affiliated.

Zurayk interview on the book "Food, Farming and Freedom": HYPERLINK "<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttBraP-zlaU>"<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttBraP-zlaU>

MOUAWAD H., 2005 "MODERNITY AND TRADITION OF LEBANESE FOOD CONSUMPTION BETWEEN STANDARDIZATION AND PARTICULARSIMS". 11TH CONFERENCE OF ERF (ECONOMIC RESEARCH FORUM), BEIRUT. AVAILABLE AT: HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.MAFHOUM.COM/PRESS8/237E14.PDF](http://www.mafhoum.com/press8/237E14.PDF)"[HTTP://WWW.MAFHOUM.COM/PRESS8/237E14.PDF](http://www.mafhoum.com/press8/237E14.PDF)

Hanane Mouawad wrote this paper as her PHD field research in Food Economy. The aim of this paper is to explore urbanization phenomenon and its consequences on food consumptions through tradition or modernity in Lebanon. The research has demonstrated that the thesis of the increase of food dependence with urbanization (urban population was multiplied by 4 from 2001 to 2005) was not confirmed. Data from questionnaire with 216 households on food consumer's behavior have been discussed. Empirical results have proved that in Lebanon, neither tradition nor modernity is the exclusive prerogative of the cities or the villages. The tendencies towards modernity or tradition are present in the villages as well as in the cities.

The article is an appealing read because - along with tables and charts - gives inner sight on how food-scapes have been changed in Lebanon throughout the years and why. It also well describes the role of food as a bridge between cultures and religions in a country as divided as Lebanon.

2008, "Poverty, growth and income distribution report", edited by United nation developing project available at: HYPERLINK "<http://www.undp.org.lb/communication/publications/index.cfm>"

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## TO THINK OVER THE MULTI-RELATIONS THAT ARE EMBEDDED IN ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS

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GOODMAN D. 2009 "PLACE AND SPACE IN ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS: CONNECTING PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION", DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY: KING'S COLLEGE LONDON. AVAILABLE AT: HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.KCL.AC.UK/CONTENT/1/C6/03/95/42/GOODMANWP21.PDF](http://WWW.KCL.AC.UK/CONTENT/1/C6/03/95/42/GOODMANWP21.PDF)"

This paper examines the realm of Alternative Food Networks: new and rapidly mainstreaming spaces in the food economy defined by—among other things—the explosion of organic, Fair Trade, and local, quality, and premium specialty foods. In these networks, it is claimed that the production and consumption of food are more closely tied together spatially, economically and socially; however, the politics and practices of alternative food networks have more recently come under critical scrutiny from geographers and others as a narrow and weakly politicized expression of middle- and upper-class angst.

It is interesting to read this paper to reflect on to what extent Souk el Tayeb can be a terrain of unity, a place where diversities are really cancelled and not only a place where only upper-class wealth people go to do their shopping. The paper well analysed the social relations of production and consumption that arise in places such farmers' markets, which the author defines as contested knowledge practices of growing food and knowing food.

Zurayk interview on the book "Food, Farming and Freedom": HYPERLINK "<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttBraP-zlaU>"

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SOUK EL TAYEB AND THE PROJECTS CONNECTED TO IT:

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Souk el Tayeb videos: worth watching to feel the Souk el Tayeb project atmosphere and to understand in which contest the market was created, which people are involved and which products are sold.

Slow Food Lebanon-Souk el Tayeb, 2008, HYPERLINK "[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_OqgSLrX94&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_OqgSLrX94&feature=related)"

Slow Food- Beirut, Lebanon HYPERLINK "<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0wCjut5YAY&feature=related>" (Kamal Mouzawak, Souk el Tayeb founder is talking about him self and the Souk el Tayeb experience)

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## TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS WROTE ABOUT SOUK EL TAYEB

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HYPERLINK "<http://www.greenprophet.com/2010/10/beirut-souk-el-tayeb-farmer/>"<http://www.greenprophet.com/2010/10/beirut-souk-el-tayeb-farmer/>

HYPERLINK "<http://www.soukeltayeb.com/articlesArchive.php>"<http://www.soukeltayeb.com/articlesArchive.php> (all the articles called directly by Souk el Tayeb)

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## TO SUBSCRIBE TO SOUK EL TAYEB MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO BE UPDATED ON ALL THE ACTIVITIES:

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HYPERLINK "<http://www.soukeltayeb.com/pressNewsletter.php>"<http://www.soukeltayeb.com/pressNewsletter.php>

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## RECOMMENDED WEBSITE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SOUK EL TAYEB AND ITS RELATED ACTIVITIES AND FRIENDS:

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HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.makefoodnotwar.org](http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.rmfmf.org.lb](http://www.rmfmf.org.lb)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.healthybasket.org](http://www.healthybasket.org)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank<http://lebanon.worldvision.org>

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.bookofrai.com](http://www.bookofrai.com)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.saveursduliban.com](http://www.saveursduliban.com)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.destinationlebanon.com](http://www.destinationlebanon.com)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.the-gardenshow.com](http://www.the-gardenshow.com)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.makefoodnotwar.org/>" \n \_blank[www.lebanongastronomy.com](http://www.lebanongastronomy.com)