

PROJECT

USAID Convenes Public-Private Sustainable Reforestation Gathering



More than 100 key reforestation practitioners gathered at the “Building Linkages for Sustainable Reforestation in Lebanon” event, held at the Ecole Supérieure des Affaires in Beirut on April 18. The event highlighted the crucial role of coordination among native tree growers, tree planting groups, municipalities, and the private sector to enhance the results of reforestation efforts and increase tree survival rates.

The main goal of the gathering was to develop broader constituencies for reforestation in the country, building on the early successes of native tree

nurseries and municipality-based reforestation projects through the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI). LRI is a four-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the United States Forest Service (USFS) as part of USAID’s environmental program to engage local communities in preserving Lebanon’s natural resources.

In his welcome address, Mr. Heath Cosgrove, Economic Growth Director at USAID said, “We are pleased today to bring together nursery and cooperative partners with public and private

sector entities interested in supporting reforestation. This will enable the stakeholders to become familiar with the work carried out so far with Lebanon native tree nurseries and reforestation non-governmental organizations to meet the national reforestation plan of increasing forest cover by 20%.”

“It was about time that the native tree producers joined their efforts and shared their knowledge and expertise in order to produce vigorous seedlings that would surely survive when planted,” said Dr. Nabil Nemer, representing the Cooperative of Native Tree Nurseries of Lebanon. “The group of nurseries will now be able to accurately diagnose, prevent, and better address challenges,” continued Dr. Nemer.

Event participants highlighted successful new approaches to sustainable reforestation in Lebanon that incorporate international best practices of tree seedling production and field planting techniques. Leading companies in Lebanon were enthusiastic about the initiative and announced significant financial support to new reforestation proposals. The companies included Dar El Handassah, Holcim, La Phenicienne Insurance, and Tinol, which have each committed to help re-

Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI)

Joyce Bejjani, Institutional Development and Communication Manager

forest many hectares of native forested land throughout Lebanon. At the end of the gathering, participants agreed that building broader constituencies for reforestation and incorporating new technical approaches will not only significantly improve survival rates of native trees, but will also generate economic opportunities through capacity building and job creation.

Efforts to engage with and coordinate between reforestation practitioners and interested stakeholders, including the private sector, will continue to ensure the sustainability of current and future reforestation efforts in Lebanon.

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Newly formed cooperative of native tree producers of Lebanon

A group of 18 nursery managers representing eight leading native tree nurseries in Lebanon are working together to produce high-quality native tree seedlings for reforestation in the framework of a cooperative that was officially recognized in April 2013. For the past few years, these cooperative nurseries collaborated with international forestry experts and institutions to enhance their native seedling quality to raise tree survivability rates once they are planted and decrease production costs.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES THESE NURSERIES?

All the cooperative nurseries have upgraded their production methods to meet international quality standards with technical and financial assistance from the United States Forest Service and other international experts. In fact, they have implemented advanced growing equipment and techniques, including:

- Introduction of advanced seedling germination containers
- Improvement of seedling growing environment, including greenhouses to ensure a faster and more robust development of tree seedlings.
- Introduction of low-cost growing media
- Improvement of fertilization and irrigation systems

In addition, the cooperative nurseries have improved their production methods, seed preparation, sowing and growing techniques, storage and transportation methods, business development, record keeping, and planning approaches.

WHY PURCHASE SEEDLINGS FROM COOPERATIVES NURSERIES?

The new techniques and protocols adopted by the Cooperative nurseries have resulted in the production of vigorous seedlings with improved root structures that dramatically increase survivability after planting.

These techniques have lowered the cost of seedlings and increased the number of native trees available for planting each year. The new approach of the cooperative nurseries is now being adopted nation-wide.

To order your seedling please contact 76-558 551 •

