



## 4.1.1 – Regional Focus Group Discussion Report

### Jordan – National Agricultural Research Center (NARC)

#### CLUSTER (C\_A.3.1\_0014)

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## 1. Summary

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In recent years, the primary sector has declined partly due to the change of labour preferences of young people. The technological and services industries have prevailed as their preferred sectors. The number of people working in agriculture has decreased more than the quantity of farmed acres. In most states, but particularly in the Mediterranean, the bulk of people professionally involved in land cultivation and food production are above 55 years old, with little to no education and minimal expertise in the field.

A trend toward encouraging young people to become professional farmers has emerged during the past five years in many Mediterranean states, along with technological advancements and developments in the agricultural industry. This shift occurs due to a variety of circumstances. First, there is a resource challenge, especially for the Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, the climate crisis is reducing rainfall and causing extreme heat and crop damage. Foreign competition is affecting the market price of many goods. Lastly, the COVID-19 crisis has reduced the employment opportunities of our target group. Together, these factors caused revenue losses, job losses, and a shift in the global economy toward the primary sector.

The CLUSTER Focus Group meeting took place on 29 June 2022, at the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC) in Amman-Jordan. This meeting was held to evaluate the technical and vocational education and training programs for NEETs who want to engage in agricultural professions. It aims to help young people both men and women to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to properly meet the requirements of their agricultural activity. The team consisted of people experienced in education in agriculture. The program will help participants to learn more quickly, avoiding costly errors and implementing cutting-edge skills and environmentally friendly methods in their workplaces.

The team consisted of people experienced in vocational training and education in agriculture, the private and public sector and other trainers from projects that CLUSTER is capitalizing on their achievements like HELIOS.

Furthermore, it became apparent that everyone thought that education in the subject of agriculture is crucial for everyone, regardless of where they implement their activities. The program will help participants to learn more quickly, avoiding costly errors, and implementing innovative and environmentally friendly methods in their workplaces.



## 2. Methodology

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The main stakeholders were invited to the Focus Group discussion meeting in order to get their opinion. Trainers from other projects were also invited to highlight the needs of the NEETs from their point of view based on their previous training experience.

The discussion took place in an informal way to receive answers from the stakeholder. After gathering everyone's approval, the meeting was recorded, and photos were taken.

The Focus Group facilitator was in charge of documenting the information, recommendations, and notes. Attendees were given the opportunity to read and assess the training outlines according to their areas of interest. If needed, they could add chapters, include new themes, and discuss specific points that required improvement. The facilitator then asked everyone a series of questions to capture their responses.

The Focus Group was attended by 12 people from the private sector, the public sector, TVET organisations, civil society organisations, academics, and trainers from other projects, in addition to CLSUTER representatives from the National Agricultural Research center. Everyone had experience in one or more fields.

### 1. Key findings

It has been discovered that it is essential to establish education programs in the agricultural sector, especially for women and the unemployed. It was recommended to raise the age restriction because it appears that unemployment is more severe above the age of 30. It was also found that those over 30 seemed to be more prepared to change career than the younger generation.

There was no debate over the fact that training delivered in person and through interaction is more effective. It should also be deemed vital to receive practical training in the field because it is crucial for the trainee to become familiar with the subject by working on it and trying to solve any challenge that may face in real life.

There was no opposition regarding online schooling. It is also considered an effective training method that may be used with a larger audience followed by coaching support.

## 3. Participant demographics

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The Focus Group was attended by 10 people and everyone had experience in one or more fields. They were chosen after a study was done among the national academic institutions that provide agricultural education and among the agricultural organizations working in the agricultural sectors under discussion.

The team consisted of:

- 4 teachers of higher education in organic farming, food processing, and hydroponics.



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- 1 agronomist – researcher from the State Agricultural Research Institute with involvement in hydroponics.
- 1 ichthyologist – trainer in the field of aquaponics.
- 4 representatives of agricultural organizations engaged in organic farming.

NO	Name	Organization
1	Majd Abu Salem	WADINGO
2	Maram Zaid	ECO Consult
3	Khadijeh Atyat	ECO Consult
4	Haitham Hamdan	HELIOS hydroponic trainer
5	Zein Khreisat	HELIOS food processingtrainer
6	Mufadi Al-Momani	BAU vocational training
7	Raghda Dradkah	Extension services from MoA
8	Ola Ali Al-Arabiati	Extension services from MoA
9	Alaa Ahmad Alabdallat	NARC training center
10	Jamal Abdallah Khader	VTC
11	Khaled Al-Jazzazi	VTC
12	Tareq Abu-Taleb	WADI

#### 4. Key findings

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It has been discovered that it is essential to establish education programs in the agricultural sector, especially for women and the unemployed. It was also argued that people above the age of 30 seem to be more ready to switch career paths and include agriculture as one of their options. There was no debate of whether interactive training delivered in person is more effective.

It should also be deemed vital to receive practical training in the field because it is crucial for the student to become familiar with the subject by working on it and instantly be dealing with any challenges. Internships were suggested as an effective way to put in practice the lessons learnt. However, no opposition on online schooling was encountered. Nevertheless, the inquiries between the trainer and the trainees are hoped to take place in person



CLUSTER is working to fight against poverty by giving the NEETs, particularly women, technical training on topics that may help both NEETs and the environment. The main topics include:

1. Circular Economy / Soilless Hydroponic Module closed systems.  
Soilless hydroponic closed systems refer to a method of cultivation without soil where organic or inert substances are grown. Hydroponics can be a solution for states that struggle with water scarcity and dangerous soil-borne illnesses with numerous adversaries. If used in closed systems, it is regarded as a cutting-edge method of production with significant water and nutrient savings.
2. Blue Economy / Soilless Aquaponic Module  
Soilless aquaponic modules refer to a method of cultivation without soil. Fish breeding tanks provide the water that is enriched with nutrients for plant growth by fish waste.
3. Initiation to sustainable agriculture  
Green crops and plants that resist climate change and reduce environmental pollution and land stress, are crucial for the Mediterranean. Organic farming is one example of this type of agriculture, especially when used on crops that are suited to the climate of a particular area.
4. Circular Economy / Food Processing Module  
Despite not being a kind of farming, food processing is nonetheless an integral aspect of the agricultural production chain since it allows for the development of new goods with a longer shelf life, higher added value, and the use of goods that cannot be sold as fresh in marketplaces. Additionally, it makes employment possible for those who are unable to work in the field. All rules governing food production must be adhered to when processing food.

## ***5. Conclusion or recommendations***

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It is crucial to understand the fundamental ideas, laws, and quality and safety procedures that must be implemented. Through this program, education and training will be imparted.

Clear reference should be made to all programs for the existing regulations to be implemented such as the application of pesticides with the necessary authorization.

All participants agreed on the importance of working on the soft skills and entrepreneurial abilities of young people to facilitate their employability. The emphasis should be placed on practical activities and simulations of professional situations.