

Ministry of Economy and Trade

Article on inventory products potentially eligible for PDOs and PGI in Lebanon

EFTA/Swiss project on protection of Geographical Indications in Lebanon

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Geographical Indications considered as products of terroir are perceived as natural and authentic because they make reference to a limited area where natural conditions and Know-how of producers provide special characteristics to the product. There is a transfer of believes associated with the area, in terms of history and culture, toward the product. Thus it is generally viewed as making reference to a geographical area, to the reputation of the place in terms of culture, to the history, to people’s skills and others¹.

Protected Denominations of Origin (PDO) possesses quality characteristics essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, and the production, processing and preparation of which takes place in the defined geographical area whereas for the Protected Geographical Indications (PGI), it possesses a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics attributed to that geographical origin and the production and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area².

The product of “Mouneh” is, according to the consumers, a product linked to the region of production, to the terroir where the product is produced and to the landscape which surrounds the place. Mouneh is a concept very close to the concept of the geographical indication products which illustrate the area of origin. Therefore, the origin is a cue that allows consumers to identify the product. Consumers try to check the link between the product and the production area, depending on natural and climatic conditions. The concept of “Mouneh” arised many centuries ago, when the producers worked on preserving their products of origin in order to consume them during the wintertime.



The first product of origin which was linked directly to the terroir and which represents the typicity of the area of origin was the goat milk produced from herds grazing on rural highlands.

Goats in Lebanon (Local chami breed) feed on available plants and graze in large highland villages ranging from 1100 to 1800m (Jurd) or in "Oyoun Il simène". Goats graze exclusively on natural pastures composed of herbaceous strata of shrub and woody plants. The vegetation is typical of the Mediterranean countries with shrub land and many sources of fresh water.

The milk produced by the goats grazing in these Jurds varies according to the plants they find in the area.

It is the concentration of aromatic medicinal plants in the region that determines the quality of the produced milk.

The native way of breeding goats, the large rural surfaces for grazing and the distance from any source of contamination and source of pollution increase the value of the produced milk.

Farmers herd their goats during spring in the eastern chain of Mount Lebanon and winters in the western chain of Mount Lebanon or in the coastal area, which provides a strong link between the producer, the land and the product.

The milk produced by goats grazing on very dry highland Jurds (Arsaal, Jurd Baalback, Nahleh, Jabal El Cheikh (Chebea)) is characterized by its premium quality which may not be found in other Jurds of Lebanon

Some regions share common grazing areas:

Ex: Yammouneh, Bcharré, Ehden, Tannourine, Deir El ahmar, El akoura, Aynata, Chmestar, Chlifa, Beit matar, Beit Mchék share the same grazing surfaces.

Jurd Arsaal, Jurd Baalback and Nahleh; share the same grazing surfaces.

The produced goat milk typical for those grazing areas was preserved in different ways in many regions of production.

In Bcharré, Ehden, El Akoura, Hrajel and Aynata, the production of goat milk was preserved and the milk transformed into the well-known **Darfiyé Cheese Bcharré**.

Darfiyé Cheese is only made from raw goat milk. It is characterized by its conservation properties as it can be stored for up to 6 months and thus is available during the whole the year.

The actual region of production is concentrated in the Jurds (rural Highland Mountain) of Bcharré;

Other small production regions are: Baskinta, Niha, Fnaydék, Joroud el Danniyeh, il Qbayyet.

The Darfiyé Cheese Bcharré is an origin product well linked to the regions in which goat milk is abundant.

The fresh, raw and unprocessed goat milk is placed in the Darraf, a container made out of goat skin which has been used since the old days to age the cheese in for the winter consumption.

The “Darfiyé Cheese” is linked in people’s minds to the goats’ grazing areas and especially to “Bcharré”.

The reputation of the product is mainly due to its exceptional production method using the darf as a ripening media. This very old and traditional process was used by farmers seasonally in the mountains as a way to preserve goat milk production.



However, in Baalback, Chouf and Chebea goat milk was preserved and processed in a different way. It was preserved as Labneh Anbris (Sirdalé).

“**Labneh sirdalé El Chouf**”, “**Labneh Anbris Bcharré**”, “**Labneh Anbris Baalback**”, “**Labneh Anbris Chibea**”

The actual region of production is concentrated in the Jurds (rural highland mountains) of: Bcharré, Baalback (Ras el ein), Labwé, chibea, Deir el ahmar, Arsaal, chouf, Aynata, chlifa, yammouneh, Younin. Elkae, Ehden, Joroud el Danniyeh, El kae, Chmistar, Tarayya, Tannourine, Baskinta, El Akoura, Boudai, El knaysé, Niha, Rihan, Youhmor, Souhmor, El Kfeir, El khalwat, Mrajel, Baskinta, Fnaydék, il Qbayyet, Akkar.

“Labneh Anbris” is a very popular and traditional way of production for Labneh in the rural regions where goats are grazing.

Traditionally, this type of Labneh is prepared during the warm weather season.

The process starts at the end of March or at the end of April and is carried on until end of September (the season of goat milk production). Then the produced Labneh anbris is called green Labneh “Labneh Khadra”.

The process is characterized by its complexity and the distinctive know-how in the production method.

Fresh, unprocessed goat milk is placed in a special pottery vessel and drained every 2 to 3 days for 4 to 5 months.

Another type of preservation for goat milk is the “**Labneh Darf Baalback**”

The actual region of production is concentrated in the Jurds (rural highland mountains) of Baalback; (Ras Baalback), Deir el ahmar, Arsaal, yammouneh, Nahleh

The yogurt with a small amount of salt is filled into a closed darf which serves as a draining unit. Finally and at the end of the season, the “Labneh darf”, which has accumulated in the darf, is removed and filled into jars (placed upside down) in order to drain. The jars are then placed in storing places in order to be consumed during the winter.

The reputation of the product is linked to the area of production, i.e. people know that the product is not produced outside of Baalback. However, it seems that this product is not known in the cities due to the long distances between the Jurd and the cities. The product is demanded in its area of origin and made traditionally in the region as an inherent product.

These Goat milk byproducts are highly potential to be protected as a denomination of origin due to their particular quality characteristics linked to the geographical environment with its human and natural factors.

The reference to a special “know-how”, “tradition” and “method of production” is important too. A Geographical Indication product must not be produced elsewhere because it is linked to the history and culture of the region. The know-how, the experience built with time and the tradition cannot be produced everywhere else. Consumers are always attached to the history of the region and they link the product with this story.

*This is how the products of **Labneh Taenayel**, **Labneh Chtoura**, **Baladi cheese Chtoura**, **Shanklish Rahbeh** became well-known and considered potentially eligible to be protected as Geographical Indications*



The Bekaa, a well-known area for its great pastures, is notorious for its milk production. Chtoura is a region in the Bekaa, which is close to the Syrian border with the passage “El Masnae” and a crossroad between Beirut and the Bekaa valley. A long time ago, Chtoura was a good stopping point for diligences which crossed the “El Masnae” toward Beirut. The diligences used to take a break in Chtoura to change their horses.

The old story says that people of Chtoura started to create restaurants which sold fast dairy sandwiches in order to supply the travelers. The reputation of **Labneh Chtoura** increased during the civil war in Lebanon, as the travelers from Tripoli had to pass by Chtoura in order to reach south Lebanon.

The above mentioned reasons explain important dairy industry in Chtoura.

The increasing demand for the product encouraged people of the region to extend their knowledge in order to develop their know-how.

At the same time and during the French mandate (1922), Camembert was produced in Jarjoura (in Chtoura) for the French army in the “Casern Riyak”. After the independence, the Lebanese consumer, who did not like the fermented cheese, refused the

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Camembert. Thus Jarjoura tried to shift from the production of Camembert to another product more suitable to the Lebanese consumer and started producing the same cheese but without fermentation which was called later on the “**Baladi cheese Chtoura**”

The raw material of the baladi cheese "Chtoura" is not typical for the region “Chtoura” as there are no pastures in Chtoura and the milk is brought from the Bekaa and the surrounding regions. However, the reputation is linked to the know-how of the producers and the traditional method of production which has become later on industrialized.

Since Chtoura was the crossing point between Syria and Beirut and due to its closeness to the Bekaa, Chtoura became the most famous region with the greatest dairy industry.



On the other hand, Deir Taenayel, a monastery in the region of Taenayel near the pastures of the Bekaa, started to produce Labneh in 1860 in order to feed the orphans with the milk of the 2 cows they owned. During the French mandate, the French government helped the Deir Taenayel to develop its dairy production.

Deir Taenayel used to produce the Labneh for its own consumption and sometimes for selling in the nearest regions.

The dairy products of Deir Taenayel acquired, later on, a good reputation because they were the first who made **Labneh Taenayel** for the market.

Because of the presence of milk producers in the Bekaa and the reputation of the dairy products of Deir Taenayel, the demand for the dairy products and especially the Labneh increased tremendously.

This increasing demand, especially due to the location of Taenayel near Chtoura "the passage between Syria and Lebanon», pushed people of the region to widen their knowledge in order to develop their know-how.

Therefore, Taenayel became famous for its dairy production and products and especially for the Labneh.

Rahbeh is still carrying on its traditional mode of production for the **Shanklish Rahbeh**. The know-how is preserved through its transmission from one generation to another and through the professional careers.

The region Rahbeh is the only one that produces the Shanklish from skimmed yogurt. This production method is typical for the region and its traditions.

The milk is produced in local farms of the region and it possesses the typicity of the region as cows graze in its rural highlands.

The family members of the village are very much attached to their own land and to their own cows; they rely on the produced milk as a primary source of support and on the production of shanklish as a second income.

The natural way of grazing and the natural way of producing Shanklish in Rahbeh, preserve the human link between the way of producing and people of the region.

The traditional process of Shanklish and the rural way of production in Rahbeh, keep the environment away from any industrial pollution.

Rahbeh is said to have been the first one to produce the Shanklish a long time ago.

The reputation of Shanklish started to grow in the region Rahbeh where Shanklish used to be aged in caves before being sold all over Akkar.

Rahbeh is a small region situated in the North of Lebanon, far away from the big cities and still protecting its traditional way of life and its traditional products through the development of initiatives and livelihood enhancement.

The way of ripening Shanklish reflects the image of the region, as for many years and up until now, people of Rahbeh are the only ones who ripen the Shanklish and they still produce this type of Shanklish even though the product is not well known by the Lebanese consumer.

The perceived proximity between the consumers and the products both from a psychological and geographical point of view seems to be an important association with the GI products.

The recognition, of a specific quality product, by the consumer permits to remunerate for the particular efforts produced by the producers continuing therefore the justification of this recognition. The strong relationship between consumer and products enhances the producers to continue produce upon consumer's satisfaction and within the know-how and the typicity that he owns.

*These are products of quality of origin where the consumer can refer sometimes to a certain producer in a specific geographical origin to ask for a specific products as “**Kishek Bealback**” or “**Thyme south Lebanon (Zaetar Litanie)**” or “**Mouloukheya Arabsalim**” or “**Mouloukheya Kafarroumen**”.*

This strong relationship keeps the producer in his region, attached to his land knowing that the consumer will be able to find him as long as he stays attached to that region.



“**Kishek Baalback**” started as a product of shepherds, when they use to save goat's milk for longer times especially in the Jurd (high hills). The shepherds would stay with the herd all year around and move with the herd during the spring to allow for further breeding in the Jurd.

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Then the product spread to all the regions that lie beneath the hills and later on to all Baalback and North Bekaa including Al Kaa, Nahleh, Al Labweh, Bealback, Al Hermel, Bidneyél.

The product gained in reputation as it was a product eaten at breakfast which means it was basic food for most people in the villages and also a basic breakfast for most restaurants and bakeries who wished to serve typical Arabic food.

Another reason, for which the Kishek gained much interest and reputation in Lebanon and especially in Baalback, is that it is a product of Mouneh which means that the Kishek is essential as a food supplement during winter especially in the cold regions of Baalback and north Bekaa.

Kishek Baalback is made with goat milk (local chami breed and Baladi breed) and/or cow milk. Its typical taste comes from the aromatic plants goats feed on while grazing in remote rural areas.

The microclimate, the biodiversity and the richness of aromatic and medicinal plants in these very rural highland mountains in Baalback confer to the goat's milk its typicity. This typicity is fortified by the microflora which will influence the flavor of the Kishek.



Origanum Syriacum, widely used in bakeries for the “Manakish” grows widely in mountains and regions of south Lebanon that surround the Litanie river starting from the west Bekaa (Soujod, Riyhan....) towards Marjeyoun, El Nakoura and regions which lie under the mountains like El Rafid under Srafa, Marnaba under Froun, Sadd El Saffa under Alman, Zawtar, Youhmer El Chekif, Dar Seryan, El Taybeh, Hounin, Khiam, Hasbaya, Kafarkila, Al moutelleh, kaekaiyyat el Jiser

Thyme south Lebanon (Zaetar El Litanie) possesses the highest percentage of volatile oils compared to the thyme produced worldwide. The flowers of the thyme determine the flavour and the aroma of it.

Its historical background goes back many centuries and decades when people of the south used to consume it as basic food along with bread during war and peace, during the Turkish and the French mandate and during the Israel occupation.

Sesame, Semmae and salt are added to the *Origanum Syriacum* in order to get the seasoned Thyme south Lebanon (Zaetar El Litanie) ready for the Manakish.

As *Origanum* sp. was grown widely, in large quantities and in excellent quality in the south, it was easy for the thyme South Lebanon to become well known in all regions of Lebanon and even in foreign countries especially as a medicinal plant.

There is 2 ways of producing Thyme south Lebanon;

1- Gathered naturally from rural mountains and dried and processed in and outside homes.

2- Produced in open fields:

The know-how and the professionalism in producing seasoned thyme south Lebanon, make consumers loyal to this product and increase their interest in seeking for this product in its area of origin.

Another region, famous for its wide plain "Al Maydaneh", a plain which encloses most of the agricultural land in the region; its surface is 5300 dunum and is called the small Bekaa due to its wideness compared to the surface of the whole region (34000 dunum).

Kafarroumen is a region in Jabal Amel in Eklim El Touffah which lies next to the Famous Mountain Al Rafie.

The plain "Al Maydaneh" is situated between 2 mountains. It is characterised by its warm weather during the day and cold weather during the night. This contrast in temperature greatly affects the production of **Mouloukheya Kafarroumen** which is one of the products that requires warm and humid weather.

90% of the inhabitants live from their agricultural income; almost all the inhabitants of the region Kafarroumen are farmers and producers of Mouloukheya.

The enormous dependence on the agricultural sector and the high production of Mouloukheya which covers most of the market in Lebanon has provided the Mouloukheya an excellent reputation.

The region's altitude is 450m. It has different sources of water, a fact which differentiates the region Kafarroumen from the other regions as it is provided with the water from the river "Al Zahrani" which flows from the spring "Al Tasseh"; in addition to 3 springs (El Maydaneh, Ein El Hima and the Chikha). Thanks to this water supply, Kafarroumen is an evergreen vision all year around and farmers have enough water to irrigate their fields in the area.

The region is surrounded by many other regions (Jarjoue, Upper Houmine, Arabsalim, Soujod, El Rihan, Deir El Zahrani and Habboush) but Arabsalim is the only other region which participates in the production of **Mouloukheya Arabsalim**, the same one as produced in Kafarroumen.

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Both regions have made sure to keep the difference in flavor of the Mouloukheya produced in the two regions. Nevertheless, both produce Mouloukheya from the same kind of seed.

The inhabitants of Kafarroumen did not immigrate from the region during the past 20 years of war during the Israel Occupation for the south of Lebanon. It shows the strong relationship between the farmer and his land.

It is stated in Kafarroumen that each person has two mothers his real mother and his land.

The fertility of the soil in Kafarroumen's Plain "Al Maydaneh" and its special spring "Al Maydaneh" (which is a known element of the plain) has influenced the production of Mouloukheya as it is a leafy vegetable product that requires a fertile soil high in Nitrogen.

Moreover, the humid and warm conditions during the summer have provided the Mouloukheya of Kafarroumen with the needed climatic condition responsible for its maturation.

The Mouloukheya of Kafarroumen competes with the one of Arabsalim, but not the vice versa, as the production of Arabsalim just covers the demand of the region's inhabitants and their relatives.

As both regions are growing the same variety and are close to each other, they have almost the same climatic conditions.

The difference lies in the strong reputation of the product of Kafarroumen compared to the one of Arabsalim and in the fact that it is guaranteed by the inhabitants of Kafarroumen.

The know-how of people in Kafarroumen is characterized by their ability to distinguish the level of ripeness and dryness of the product by touching the leaves.

This product is sold based on the relationship between the producer and the consumer.

The Geographical indication product is a product bought along with the image of the geographical area in an open place or at the farm, places where a contact with the producer is possible and where there is no possibility to produce this product out of this region. The product is bought with the landscape, the way people talk, wear clothes and behave...., you just have all that coming along with the product. Consumers perceive them as more authentic than products that do not carry any Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

Olive oil Koura, olive oil Hasbaya, olive oil Zgharta and Olive oil Tyr are well differentiated one from another and each one has its own typicity and geographical characteristics.



It is well known in Hasbaya that all people in the region are farmers (olive growers and producers of **olive oil Hasbaya**) as all everyone becomes an olive grower after the retirement. People are very attached to their land, like to one of their children, and they always try to keep it from one generation to another even if their economical situation is critical.

Many olive trees in the region are very old and they have been growing since the Romanian \Phoenician Era until our days. It is an essential agricultural product for most of the population in the region and it reflects the history of the region as well. The relationship between the olive oil producers and the terroir and the native nature which surrounds their region, provides them with the professional know-how and with the ability to properly manage their land as well as with the ability to evaluate the quality of the olive grains during pressing.

The olive oil producers in Caza Hasbaya are very aware of the cultural practices of their land. As the area has been occupied for more than 18 years, producers still cultivate their land using old methods and rarely use chemical fertilizers and synthetic pesticides.

The varieties are grown in many regions of Lebanon; but the olive oil produced in Hasbaya, which is different from other olive oils produced in Lebanon, indicates that the olive trees in this region have become well adapted to the climatic and environmental conditions of this area. It has a special typicity, flavour, aroma and taste which are certainly due to the environment of the geographical area of Caza Hasbaya.

The altitude of the region is 822m above sea level and it is localized far away from the sea. High mountains and hills surround the area (The Haramoun mountain or sheikh mountain, Siddana mountain, Moutelline mountain, Sabroun mountain, El rousse mountain (1500m), El Shmais mountain, El Woustani mountain (1850m), El Nakkar mountain, Mountain of Rachaya el wadi and 3 hills). The biodiversity in the region is high and wild trees grow between the olive trees along with other wild plants. This particular natural environment tends to increase the accumulation of nutritive materials and decrease the free fatty acids in the grains and therefore provide olive grains with a typicity that differentiates them from the same varieties grown in other regions. This has led to a good



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reputation of the olive oil Hasbaya inside and outside the region of production (all over Lebanon) and to its differentiation from the other olive oils produced in the country, especially as the olive growers exclusively produce extra virgin olive oil.



On the other side of the country, is situated the largest olive oil producing region “Koura”, situated 70 km north of Beirut. The region’s altitude varies as it includes a coastal area and culminates at 950 m above sea level.

The taste and typicity of the **olive oil Koura** varies with elevation. This beautiful region counts 46 villages where most olive growers practice the art of producing olive oil koura.

Koura has covered most of Lebanon’s demand for olive oil during the 20 years of war; it has a good reputation and is a well known product.

The know-how in producing olive oil koura was transmitted from one generation to another by maintaining the traditional methods. Therefore, the production of olive oil in Koura did not become a job but rather a practice that allowed for living and cohabiting with the olive trees and the land.

The geographical area (altitude, water, soil, methods of production.....) is limited to the caza Koura which confers to the produced olive oil koura its typicity and differentiates it from the other olive oils produced in the country.

The fields of olive trees remain the major landscape element that differentiates this region from others. “Koura” is often thought to mean “Olives”.

You may ask about **olive oil Zgharta** as well as **olive oil Tyre** because both of them are very well considered in the country and the image that you buy with each product is typical for its region.

Tyre, was declared a world Heritage site in 1979, and has some of the world’s most fascinating archeological ruins, mostly from Roman times, but also from the Phonician, Greek, and Byzantine eras. It was stated that the olive trees of Tyre are have Roman ancestors.

However, the name Zgharta comes from the Ammourian language, and means “the fortified place”. Around 200 B.C. Zgharta was already inhabited. It is located on a rocky hill surrounded by two rivers, Rachin and Jout. The olive trees are grown in the plains of Jdeidet and Bisbeil and on terraces. The traditional method of production of olive oil was modernized since the 1950.



Geographical indication does not just mean the image, the altitude, the environment which surrounds an area, but it also means a particular skill, an art of producing and creating. It is a way to guarantee the authenticity of the product.

*Handcraft can also be a Geographical Indication because it reflects the history of a region in which a particular handcraft was initiated and evolved. “I buy the **blown glass Sarafand** from the Sarafand or “The ancient sarepta” because I know that the Phoenician lived in this special area and developed this craft by creating the most beautiful colorful and different shapes of blown glasses.”*



In the coastal Leuventine, the coastal Sidon-Tyre road leads south to Sarafand, the ancient Sarepta (15 kilometers). This is mentioned in the Bible and in both Assyrian and Egyptian texts. The ancient settlement is located on the coast between Ras al Quantaea and the Mausoleum of Khodor Abu Abbas, while the modern village of Sarafand lies in the neighboring hills, 1.5 kilometers from the coast. The modern town is fairly recent and is said to have been founded some two centuries ago. Modern access to ancient Sarepta is by a narrow street that leads to the small fishing harbor which is now entirely covered by vegetation.

Sarepta was one of the fortified cities of Phoenician Sidon where they settled for the first time in the middle of the millennium B.C. and stayed without major interruption until the Byzantine period.

As now a day's only one family still makes the blown glass, it is important to mention that thanks to this family Sarafand (Sarepta in origin) is still giving its typicity, culture and civilization through the know-how for this handcraft.

Even if blown glass was manufactured in Egypt many centuries before the probable date of the Phoenician occupation of the Mediterranean coast (glass blowing is represented in antique tombs at Beni Hassan); There is no doubt that the making of blown glass in Sarepta was one on which the Phoenicians eagerly seized, and which they carried out at a large scale and very successfully. Sidon, according to the ancients, was the chief seat of the industry; but the best sand was found near Tyre, and both Tyre and Sarepta also seem to have been among the places where glassworks were established in the early days. A large amount of debris was found, consisting of broken glass of many colors which means without doubt that there was a great glass manufactory in the Sarafand at that time. At Tyre, the traces of the industry are less extensive but there is historical evidence that it continued to be practiced there during the middle ages.



Also in the south, but this time in the 1770, the family Haddad settled in Jezzine and created what we call today the “**cutlery Jezzine**” starting this craft with the fabrication of guns, swords and knives with steel blades and a special handle made of a bird with closed wings.

The product has different colors and shapes; each piece shows the proficiency in art and tells a story about this flying bird.

The bird was at that time, made of buffalo bones and horns but due to conservation problems, the material was later on changed.

The art of producing this cutlery gained a great reputation and was offered to kings and ministers.

This craft became later on a source of living for many people in Jezzine who practiced this handcraft and relied on its production to support their lives.



However, in the 1480s, the governor of Tripoli established the khan el Saboun (a place which looks like a cave and in which the **soap Tripoli** used to be produced and aerated). A great number of families in Tripoli used to produce the soap Tripoli at that time. Therefore the art in producing this product became a handcraft in Tripoli.

The know-how and the art of integrating flowers, aromatic plants, colorants into the produced olive oil, the different shapes and colors of the soap gives this Geographical Indication its uniqueness of.

Tripoli turned into a commercial center for the production of soap and became very considered in and outside Lebanon.

Amchit is another region considered for its handcraft, situated 40km away from down town and 3km North of Byblos. It practices the art of producing **basket Amchit**.

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This region has been famous for many years for its products made out of straw (due to the great number of palm trees growing in the area) and especially for its baskets.

Beit Chabeb, one of the biggest regions in the north of “Metn”, practices the production of **bell Beit Chabeb**.

This handcraft started in the 1900s, when 15 families started producing the bell Beit Chabeb. However, only one family (Naffah) still makes this craft.

Geographical Indications rely on a special taste, flavor, aroma and typicity that cannot be found elsewhere.

The combination of several intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the region in association with the knowledge of the producers and the season of production provides a unique character that makes the GI product very distinguishable.

Fruits are very much influenced by the variety as well as the weather conditions and the region's altitude in which these fruits are produced.

*Lebanon's geography is very special: a narrow coastal plane- two parallel north/south mountains (The Mountains of Lebanon and anti-Lebanon) and the fertile Bekaa valley which separates these mountains. This unparalleled natural splendor is enhanced by Lebanon's moderate, Mediterranean climate which influences most of its agricultural products and differentiates it from others especially fruit like **Apricot Baalback, Peach Bekfaya Pears Danniye, Table grape Bekaa, Apple Kafardebian, Apple Mayrouba and Apple Baskenta...***



The most glorious site in the Bekaa valley is undoubtedly Baalback. Named after Baal, a revered Phonicien god; the world-famous archeological site is nestled in a plain between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges. The Acropolis of Baalback is among the largest and best preserved corpus of Roman architecture in the world. There, was firstly grown the apricot Baalback. The Baladi variety (Hamoui) was grown for a long time in the city of Baalback but today it has totally disappeared because it was the only variety that was grown beside the city of Baalback and the urbanization of the city reduced the surface of cultivated lands. The area cultivated with apricot trees in Lebanon was estimated by the FAO in 1998 as of 5000 ha. Whereby, Bekaa makes out 88% of all this cultivated area.

This percentage reaches its maximum in the Caza Bealback 78%.

The **apricot of Baalback** originates from the city of Baalback; far back, the Baladi variety was the most prevailing type of apricot grown in the region.

However, due to the presence of apricot farms near the Castle of Bealback and due to the renovation of the area by the Ministry of Tourism after the civil war; the farmers were notified that the lands surrounding the castle would go over to the government. In such a context, and considering that the area became more residential, farmers lost interest in their land and in apricot production and harvest.

As the apricot of Bealback was so reputed for its premium quality and market access and as the climatic conditions of the North Bekaa were suitable for the production of apricots; growers of Caza Bealback started to grow apricot trees in other regions close to the area from which the reputation originates.

Caza of Bealback consists of 75 regions, the most famous ones for the production of apricots being: El Kaa, El Hermel, Jabbouleh, El Fakha, and Ras Baalback.

Nahleh, Eyat and Labweh which are very close to Bealback, are not considered as regions of Bealback but are also considered for their apricot production as in Bealback.

North Bekaa ranges from 1020m to 1167m altitude from the sea level including Ras Bealback, Kaa, Hermel, Labweh and Fekha and Jabbouleh.

Considered as a semi-arid region; it is characterized by a rainfall that ranges from 250 to 400mm/year and a long period of drought that starts in mid February and ends in late December.

The conditions in Bealback (low humidity and increased dryness) accentuate the flavor of the apricot. Low rainfall levels result in low moisture contents in the fruits as well as a high sugar levels.

Kaa and Hermel are characterized by their early apricot production due to their warm weather and the variety (El Biyyadi) grown there, whereas the Labweh starts production beginning of April.

Varieties grown now are: Ajami, Bayyadi and Dahabi and small quantities of the Syndiani and Kilani.

The Ajami variety is the best variety grown in Baalback in our days due to its high quality fruits and special features and characteristics, whereas the Dahabi variety is a variety used mostly for jam production.

The production of apricot Baalback jam is still traditional.

Apricot Baalback acquired its reputation many generations ago, and it is still well known today especially in the region of production.

The reputation of the ancient Baladi variety (Hamoui) remains in the consumer's concept as the link with the region Baalback.

Therefore, when the cultivation of apricots moved out to other regions closed to the city of Baalback; it kept its reputation even if the variety changed in criteria and characteristics.

However, the Ajami variety is still preserving the highest quality and the good characteristics.

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The varieties grown now in Baalback became specific to the region as they adapted to the environmental conditions of the region. These varieties may be grown in other regions of Lebanon but they do not have the same characteristics as the ones grown in Baalback.

The climatic conditions that prevail during the whole year of production of apricot in Baalback give these varieties the typicity and the specificity of the region.



In the early 1920s, the beacock variety (with a honey taste and a velvety red colour) used to be grown in Bekfayya. However this variety was then replaced by the variety Giant beacock which is 1.5 times bigger than the beacock. Bekfayya and Mhaydseh are situated at an altitude of 900m to 1200m, with a mean temperature of 12°C during winter and 25°C in summer. Bekfayya is one of the Metn's loveliest towns, it offers a cool and congenial summer climate and there are many springs, including Naas, which is believed to have healing powers.

The region Bekfayya is characterised by its humidity, a reason for which the peach fruit becomes very juicy and of higher quality. After several trials of farming practices, of pruning and adaptation to the climatic conditions of the region, they chose the varieties beacock and Giant beacock which are now typical for Bekfayya.

Peach Bekfayya is characterised by its typical sweetness, firmness and juiciness at the same time.

Thanks to these characteristics the product has had a good reputation for many generations.

It was found that the king Farouk of Egypt used to request hundreds of boxes of peach Bekfayya to be exported to Egypt in the 1947. The nursery that was present in the past shows how demanded peach Bekfayya was at that time and how producers became specialized in producing these kinds of trees.

Not so far from Bekfayya, (but still in the mountains) grows the apple of the mountain. Due to the cold weather and the snow which covers the apple trees during winter, the fruit becomes hard and pointy at the top. Those are the criteria which differentiate the apple of the mountain from the apple of Bekaa which has a smooth round ending.

It is important to highlight that the quality of the apple depends on the altitude of the region in which it is produced (Mount Lebanon, including Fakra, kafarselwan, Baskenta, Kafardebian, Mayrouba, Akoura, Sannin, Canal Bekish, Bcharré, Ehden, spring El kana in Harajel, Mrah Chaddad, Al Azar, Al Mawasi, Haklet El Sayyed Jrud Keserwan and East mount chain of Lebanon.) as the quality of the fruit is highly affected by the climatic conditions and the elevation.

It was stated that the premium quality of apples is produced between 1200m to 2000m in altitude.

The apple orchards of Kafardebian are irrigated with the water from melted snow and with their springs “Al Asal and Al Laban”. It is important to mention that these 2 Arabic words mean “Honey and Yogurt” and that they are expressions mostly used to show the sweetness of the taste.

The high mountains of Sanin and Bekish belong to the region of Baskenta and it is said that the produced apple quality in these mountains is similar to the quality of **apple Kafardebian**.

The great production of apples in the region of Kafardebian, the fact that 90% of the inhabitants are apple producers, the willingness to continue producing this type of product and the quality with which the know-how is passed on to all the producers; shows how much people are encouraged to produce apples Kafardebian, a product that reflects the real image of the apple mount Lebanon.

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In Mount Lebanon and in the Caza of Keserwan, the region Mayrouba is well known for its apples. It is situated at 1250m altitude with many important source of water like Sawan and Ein eltanour.

Apples Mayrouba are irrigated from the sources mentioned above in addition to the spring “el Asal” and they are surrounded by a particular environment of pine and oak trees, always cold and humid which confers hardness to the apple of the mountain.

“Mayroubi ya Touffah”, an Arabic expression that you can hear wherever you go in the region, means “Apple Mayrouba”.

In the north of Lebanon, the production of **pears El Danniyeh** begins in El Kattine at 700m altitude and continues towards Bakheoun, Sir, bkarsouna, till Koursayta, Bet el Faks which lay between 850m and 1500m altitude.

Koursayta produces around 200 000 boxes of pears/ year. It is the primary region for the production of pears in Danniyeh in terms of quantity and quality; its inhabitants have the know-how and the experience in growing and producing pears of premium quality. It is stated that at Koursayta and Bet el Faks, people feed their trees “Kafta” which means that they take care of their trees in a tremendous way.

The pear orchards are irrigated with the spring “Al soukar” (an Arabic word which means that the water of the spring is very sweet). Koursayta is using this water for most of its orchards.

It is said that if this water was mixed with different water; the quality of the pears would change and they would loose some of their typicity. The pears in the Jrud Koursayta differ in colour, sweetness and size compared to common pears. Their taste is different and the conservation period long (8 months in the refrigerator compared to 3 months for the common pear.). These characteristics are due to the sun’s elevation, to the water, climatic conditions and the environment which enclose this area.

“Damoury ya moz” is another Arabic expression that means that you cannot find **Banana Damour** elsewhere than in this place.

The region Damour lies on the coast of Lebanon between Beirut and saida. The Banana orchards are mostly irrigated by the spring “El Safa” which confers juiciness and sweetness to the banana.

The Banana (Baladi variety) was grown for many years and generations in Damour before being moved out of Damour to other regions of south Lebanon. The new plantations went from Saida to the Nakoura due to the implementation of the Litanie project in the south and to the availability of the water for the entire region.

The harvesting period of the banana Damour is different from all the other banana productions in the world, one more reason why the reputation of the product increased.

In the 14th and 19th century, Damour was known for its sugar cane as a supplement of sugar. But now a day, with the large offer of sweeteners and the import of low-price sugar cane, the production of sugar cane Damour is dying out.

Driving towards the south of Lebanon, Maghdoucheh is situated at an altitude of 250 to 300m. The cultivation of orange trees (Abou Sfair) started in this region in the late 19th century when the first cultivator in Maghdoucheh grew 5 orange trees (Abou Sfair).

The second cultivator started growing orange trees in 1925; since then, many people in the region started this activity as they noticed the potential market for oranges.

The production reached as much as 100 tons in the year 2005.

The **orange blossom water Maghdoucheh** is typically made from the flowers of naturally grown (Abou Sfair) orange trees without irrigation, which confers to this product its typicity and its premium quality.

Since orange trees are not irrigated and due to the altitude of the region and the know-how in production, the orange blossom water Maghdoucheh gained good reputation in all of Lebanon.

It has been shown that the quality of the flower increases with the decrease in water supply.

The Abou Sfair trees in Maghdoucheh are characterized by resistance to summer dryness without irrigation.

Maghdoucheh is also reputed for its **table grapes Maghdoucheh**.

Lebanon’s fertile Bekaa Valley has a long and noble history that reaches back as far as the Roman Empire. The valley characterized by the vast agricultural land where varied fruits, vegetables, spices, and other crops grow.

It is here in the Bekaa , at an altitude of about 1000m, that the grapes are intensively grown. Being located between the 2 mountain-chains of East and of West Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa is protected from the high humidity of the Mediterranean coast and from the hot temperatures coming from the desert on the other side of the chain.

The Bekaa is characterised by its mild and dry summers, rainy winters and an average temperature of 25°C with about 240-250 days/year of sunshine. .

These climatic conditions protect the **table grapes Bekaa** against frost and diseases and enhance its quality.

The Bekaa is the main region for the production of table grapes; it represents 72% of the total cultivated area with table grapes in Lebanon.



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The cultivated area of table grapes represent 6630 ha in the Bekaa, distributed between Baalback (4105 ha) and Zahleh (1476 ha).

The table grapes of the Bekaa are now mainly produced in Fourzole (80% of the total production) , as well as in Ablah, Niha, the upper Tamnine, Bhousha, Ein El Filfle, Ksarnaba, Al nabi Ayla, highlands and plains of Zahleh, Beit Chami, Al meallaka, Wadi el Arayech, Baalback, Talya, Bidnayel.

The Plain of Zahleh has a production of about 80%, whereas it is of 20% in its highlands.

The non irrigated vineyards grown in the highlands give grapes with a special sweet taste but they are not as commercial as the ones from the Zahleh plain which is irrigated and gives well formed and large grapes.

At the beginning, the grapes of Bhousha and Ein El Filfle were very typical for the region of Bekaa as they had the very sweet tasting grape from the highlands of Zahleh.

The region Bhousheh and the region El Nabi Ayla have a calcareous soil, which gives a hard skin characteristic to the grapes.

The most widely grown grape varieties are Beytamouneh (a white grape called by the French “the date of Beirut”) 28% and Tfeifih or Halawani (a red grape) 48%.

It is clear that the grapes of this region were associated with the name “Bekaa” since the Phoenician era, and even earlier as grapes were one of their products at that time. This fact is clearly shown by the presence of temples in the region and the presence of old caves around the production area.

The Bekaa has encountered many civilizations and cultures and it has proven that grapes have been produced and will still be produced by many future generations.

Zahlé was also the traditional region for the production of potato. Later on the producers extended their production to the whole region of the Bekaa because it has the same climatic conditions needed for the cultivation of potato.

Starting in 1960, the producers of potato used wells to irrigate their fields. This is necessary for the development of the potato tuber which needs to be irrigated for 90 days, a fact which led to the spreading of potato production in the middle and west Bekka (even if the production is low) and north Bekaa (Bealback, Deir El Ahmar, Al Knayseh, Eiat).

Potato Bekaa gained much interest when the producers moved out of the middle Bekaa to the north and west of it searching for more available water and good fertile soil.

The potato Bekaa is well known in all of Lebanon due to its high production that covers most of the Lebanese demand during the summer from July to September.

The protection of GIs rewards Lebanese traditions while allowing evolution; it emphasizes the relationship between human efforts, culture, land, resources and environment and protect products from being freely transferred from one owner to another³.

Geographical Indication protection enables Lebanese products to be differentiated on markets and protects the rights and interests of indigenous Lebanese communities. It prohibits the transfer of GI products to non local producers and the use of the name on “similar” goods originating from outside the designated geographical area⁴.

It helps producers obtain a premium price for quality products produced according to traditional recipes in specified places, facilitates a better distribution of the added value in the production chain (from the raw-material producer to the manufacturer) and brings value to the region of origin.

GI protection encourages a variety and diversity of production. It allows producers to market differentiated products with specific characteristics that are clearly identifiable.

It encourages the preservation of biodiversity, local know-how and natural resources; and prevents the standardization of food. It also ensures that producers can offer consumers unique and different products.

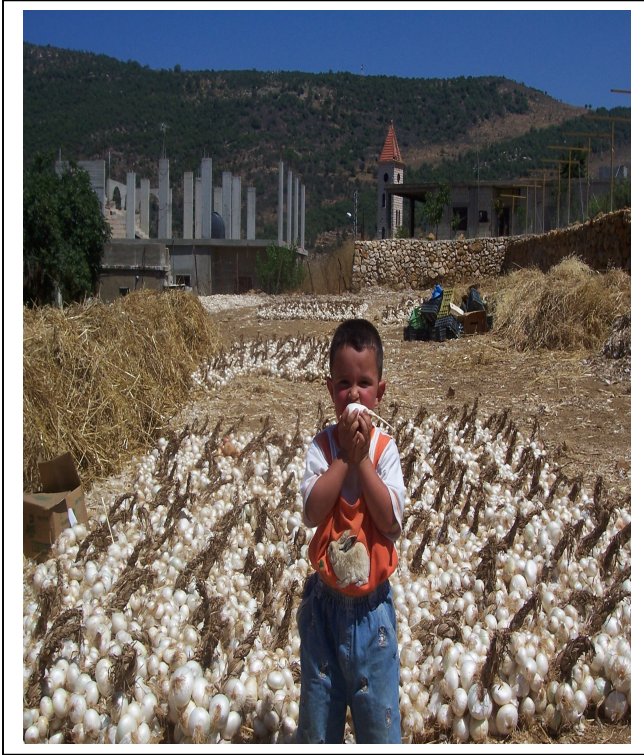
It contributes to social cohesion as it can help local producers to work together and solve common problems; it plays a positive role in raising local and national identity by making Lebanese producers and consumers proud of their unique traditional products⁵.

It can also have an indirect effect on tourism and would increase the marketing export potentiality through the collective promotion which highlights on the differentiated end product leading to a segmented market demand.

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Social cohesion is expressed in many regions especially in the rural areas where people used to work collectively during the picking season. Like **Onion Kafarfila**, **Onion Aychiyeh**, **lentil Sohmor-Yohmor**, **lettuce El Jiyeh**, **water melon Adloun** and **Cucumber Jbeil**.

Once you get into one of those regions during the picking season, you can see the fruits and vegetables on both sides of the road, people working hard in their fields and everyone busy picking.



Onion Kafarfila is a major product of all Kafarfila's farmers due to its strong reputation and ability to be grown under the region's climatic and soil conditions. Whereby, every farmer has a minimum production of 2 to 7 tons/year of onion Kafarfila, an indigenous variety of kafarfila.

The sweet white onion of Kafarfila cannot be imitated as it is the only onion in Lebanon which has an extra sweet and greasy taste.

Onion Kafarfila is said to have the taste of cucumber due to its sweetness. It is typically eaten raw due to the extra sweet flavour that it has.

The drier the onion Kafarfila becomes the sweeter. In contrast with other varieties which become pungent as they dry.

Kafarfila is a region which lies between mountains in Iklim El Touffah, and which is surrounded by other tourist regions like Jarjoue, Jbée and Kafarmilka.

Its name comes from the king "Fila" who used to live in this "kafar" which means village. The region's altitude is 500-600m; it is famous for its historical places and for the cold sweet water spring called "Eben Akil".

This spring "Eben Akil" only irrigates the region of Kafarfila. Its water was distributed equally between farmers since the French period mandate. Thanks to this spring, many farmers can rely on agriculture.

The soil of the region is red, very fertile and suitable for a natural, pesticide- and chemical-free onion production.

Another type of onion used to be grown in Al Aychiyeh which had a pungent taste when it was fresh and became sweet as it dried. The drier the **onion Al Aychiyeh** becomes the sweeter it becomes. In contrast with other varieties which become pungent as they dry. The production of onion encloses the region Al Aychiyeh (700-750m altitude) and the farms that surround it (Al wazeiyeh, Al Mahmoudeyeh, Al zegrine, Al Souweiry) as well as the some neighbour like El Jarmae and El Dimachkiyeh.

Even though, the reputation of the onion is linked to the region of Al Aychiyeh; most of the onions are now produced in the valley of El Jarmae and the region Demachkiyeh.

Al Aychiyeh is a region which lies on the mountain "Al Ryhan", Caza Jezzine. It isn't far from the Litanie River and is surrounded by pine forests.

The onions Al Aychiyeh are grown from seeds of the same variety of onion that has been grown in the region for many years. This variety has adapted to the specific environmental conditions of the region Al Aychiyeh. This is why it specific to the region.

The production of onion has gained much importance during the sixties, but it has faded later on due to the war.

It is essential to notice that the closer you get to the region Al Aychiyeh, the more you hear about the onion Al Jarmae and Dimachkiyeh rather than Onion Al Aychiyeh.

However, tobacco used to be grown in the region Al Aychiyeh many years before onions started to be grown 40 years ago. This production started because the region was well suited it.

Still in the Bekaa, but this time Sohmor and Yohmor, are regions which are close to each other in the Caza of Bekaa. Their altitude varies from 830 to 1050m.

For many years, Sohmor and Yohmor were the main production areas of **Lentil sohmor-Yohmor** as their soils are very rich in iron.

The reputation of the product has already spread through all of Lebanon, and it still finds its way to many people's houses especially to those who are close to the regions.

The lentils are conserved with salt as they are easily infected by weevils, a criterion which determines its quality.

Plain Adloun, which is very well known for its production of **water melon Adloun**, is at 136m altitude. It is characterized by its fertile soil and its proximity to both cities Saida and Tyr

The water melon has been grown in the Adloun plain for several years. The Adloun plain is one of the most famous plains in the south of Lebanon due to its width and high fertility. The variety baladi is not grown anymore in the region Adloun, or only very rarely, as it became extinct in the region.

Another famous region in the southern coastal area of Lebanon is El Jiyeh. It is famous for its lettuce production. The area is characterised by its warm and mild winters, during which the lettuce can grow without being affected by lower temperatures and

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snow. Its environment is healthy and free of disease-infection compared to the Bekaa and the south of Lebanon which suffer from snow during winter.

The baladi type of lettuce used to grow in El Jiyeh. Now this variety is not grown anymore in the region and was replaced by foreign varieties. Nevertheless the region is still considered for its lettuce.

During the winter, the fields of **lettuce El Jiyeh** are irrigated naturally from rainfall, unless it doesn't rain for some days in which case artificial irrigation is used.

For these reasons, El Jiyeh became the only region to supply Lebanon with lettuce during the cold season, starting at Christmas time and ending end of April. After that, lettuce from the Bekaa and the South comes into the market.

Byblos, the oldest constantly inhabited town in the world still looks like the ancient Phoenician port is used to be a few hundred years ago. Jbeil was known for its wonderful nature and delicious vegetables (cucumber, tomato, lettuce, pepper and melon).

Cucumber Jbeil was firstly grown around 1945, where no cucumber was produced in other regions of Lebanon.

Cucumber cultivation was later on developed and new varieties and cultural practices were introduced into the region. As a consequence, Jbeil remained considered for its Cucumber Jbeil only at local level, which is being produced all year around..

Conclusion:

Lebanon, in addition to its strong diversity in culture and natural resources, it is well characterized by the different climatic conditions which confer to his products a special recognized identity making them differentiated from other products.

The know-how, the experience built with time cannot be produced elsewhere it is just in some special regions of Lebanon where you can find all the environmental surroundings combined together to generate the product of origin.

The transfer of those natural and human resources to these products increases their potentiality to be protected as Geographical Indications. As the Geographical indication enables Lebanese product differentiation in markets, protects the rights and interests of indigenous Lebanese communities and prohibits the use of the indication on “similar” goods originating from outside the designated geographical area.

It encourages the producers to preserve their natural and human resources and to develop their know-how according to the market and the consumer need.

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