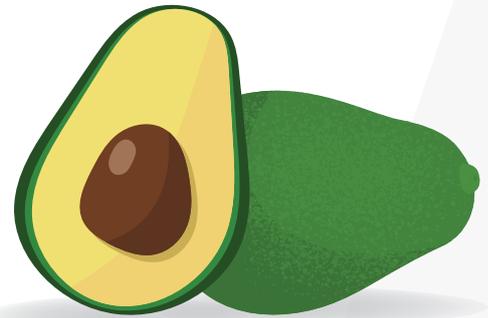




**SUPPORTING THE  
AGRIBUSINESS SECTOR IN AKKAR**  
COMPONENT 1 OF THE PSD PROGRAMME  
FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION & IMPLEMENTED BY EXPERTISE FRANCE

# ONE-TO-ONE TECHNICAL CONSULTANCY



## CHALLENGE



The local and international demand for avocados has significantly increased in recent years. The competitiveness of this value chain creates a lot of opportunities for the stakeholders in it. In Akkar, avocado cultivation is relatively new and the few orchards present were not set up properly leading to the production of non-commercial varieties and trees that are not suitable for the harsh climatic conditions of Akkar and high mortality at orchards. The lack of know-how results in low productivity rate and profitability impacting MSMEs' livelihoods.

## SOLUTION



In order to upgrade the competitiveness of the avocado value chain across Akkar, the René Moawad Foundation (RMF), in the framework of the Private Sector Development Programme (PSD-P) funded by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France, took a holistic approach starting with equipping existing avocado farmers with the technical knowledge required to upgrade their orchards and start producing at full capacity. Building trust between farmers and the RMF technical team was a priority because at first, farmers were resistant to any new approach. This was overcome through a strategic plan that was executed through the length of the PSD-P.

## SOLUTION

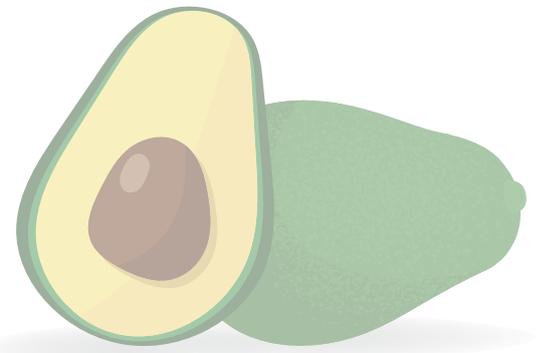


### *Tailored capacity building program*

A theoretical and practical tailored capacity building program has been developed focusing topics that can benefit new and existing avocado farmers including:

- **Orchard establishment and selection of varieties:**  
Farmers learnt all the needed steps to establish a new orchard e.g. site selection, intensity, varieties and rootstocks and pollination, choice of site, choosing commercial varieties that provide high production, local and international market requirements. Experts visited 112 sites across Akkar to assess their suitability and assisted in overseeing the plantation of 44 new orchards.
- **Pest and disease management:**  
These sessions covered the basic principles of avocado plant protection, pests and disease that affect this crop, and types of agrochemicals used.
- **Frost management:**  
Farmers familiarized with the agricultural practices to be conducted in order to prevent from frost risk, protection against cold damage/frost and mitigation measures if the orchard is affected. This was complimented by a collaboration with the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) whereby 9 preventative SMS messages were being sent to alert farmers of incoming frost and the actions to be taken.
- **Fertilization and water management:**  
Farmers learnt the best fertilizer program depending on the tree maturity. As for the water management, the participants learnt the needed amount of water, when to irrigate and how to optimize the water use.
- **Harvesting and post-harvest practices:**  
Farmers learnt when and how is the best way to pick the avocados using the dry matter test. These sessions also included practical field sessions for actually practicing onsite.

# ONE-TO-ONE TECHNICAL CONSULTANCY



## SOLUTION



### *One (expert) to one (farmer) field visits*

One-to-one consultancy is an extension to the theoretical and practical capacity building sessions whereby the RMF technical team of experts was ensuring best production practices are employed by the farmers under expert technical assistance and supervision directly on the field. The experts were giving personalized instructions and recommendations suited to each farmer's land and it was very interactive and social. Following each visit, the expert wrote a report including an observation of the current condition of the orchard, the expert recommendations and comments after the follow up visit. The farmer signature at the bottom of the report was a way to incentivise him to follow all expert recommendations. This was also a record keeping method to measure the success and compare results following the technical assistance provided on the project.

### *Study visits*

Study visits were organized on two separate occasions to the South of Lebanon where all the capacity building modules were applied and resulted in visible success so the farmers can see the short term and long term results of applying the agricultural practices recommended by the experts.

### *Social media best practices*

Good use of social media platforms such as creating an "avocado farmers in Akkar" WhatsApp group by the RMF technical team and including all 4 experts. The group was used by participants as a platform to ask questions, share stories, successes and trials with one another.

## RESULTS



RMF trained a total of 259 individual farmers through:

- 20 collective theoretical and practical (on the field) capacity building programs
- 246 technical one-on-one consultancy visits in the field
- Planting 272.5 dunums of new avocado orchards under close expert supervision and instruction
- Converting 59 non-commercial orchards to high yielding ones