

# Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



## Souk el-Tayeb: Farmer's markets, food festivals and social boutiques in Lebanon

8

**Project Name:** Souk el-Tayeb  
**City, country:** Beirut, Lebanon  
**Name of entrepreneur/ founder:** Kamal Mouzawak

### Description:

Souk el-Tayeb is the first farmers' market in Beirut, aiming to preserve food traditions and the culture of sustainable agriculture in Lebanon. Kamal works to protect the interests of local small farmers and producers in Lebanon, enabling them to sell their products directly at the market, thus ensuring a fair price for their goods. The market is held twice a week selling baked goods, yogurts, organic vegetables, honey, fresh juices, and local delicacies, and to celebrate the shared interest in food and traditions.

Souk el-Tayeb has grown into a food movement throughout Lebanon, expanding operations to include educational programs in local schools and food festivals across the country to celebrate Lebanon's culinary heritage. Souk el-Tayeb launched a producers' open kitchen in Beirut called **Tawlet**, where a different producer or cook prepares a traditional meal from their region every day. Kamal has also launched the following initiatives in partnership with international organizations and the public sector:

- In partnership with the International Labor Organization, **Beit Loubnan** will establish communal homes of tradition in rural communities throughout Lebanon to perpetuate and revive disappearing traditions; to serve as production centers for cooking, planting, arts, and crafts; and to represent a home away from home.
- **Dekenet Souk el Tayeb** is a cooperative boutique selling fine food selections from Souk el-Tayeb's farmers and producers. The Dekenet Souk el-Tayeb label will provide a quality-assurance guarantee to customers and protect the interests of the small farmer.
- **Souk @ School** will teach Lebanese children, aged ten through twelve, about healthy eating choices through educational games and school projects.
- Through visits to international markets, the **Farmers Exchange Program (FEP)** will foster bilateral exchange between farmers and producers, raise recognition of small-scale farmers, and transfer culinary traditions around the world to look for similarities beyond differences.
- **Food & Feast** one-day regional food festivals will promote coexistence, preserve Lebanese heritage, and enhance a better understanding of the "other" to promote reconciliation in Lebanon.

### Investment:

*Start up capital:* None.

*Return on investment:* Not applicable.

*Sources of funding:* Self sustained activities through cost sharing model; either farmers or producer contribute by paying a fee against stand rental or contribution from local partners and local authorities.

### Stakeholders:

Farmers and producers and many other friends of Souk el Tayeb, as well as international organisations and public sector bodies.

### Employment generation:

5 full time employees including a market manager, a quality control manager, admin and accounting officer, communication manager, 2 top management.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Feasibility study:</b>                           | No feasibility study was carried out at the beginning; this was Kamal's personal initiative for 5 years before it became a non for profit organization.   |
| <b>Geo-social-economic setting:</b>                 | The agricultural sector in Lebanon was in decline, with rural areas and small farms being abandoned due to lack of markets for small scale farmers to sell their produce at a fair price. Souk el Tayeb provides a market for small scale producers and growers allowing them to sell directly to consumers. In a country that has been divided along ethnic and religious lines for decades, the common act of shopping and enjoying the same foods begins to erase invisible barriers and unite communities. According to Mouzawak, "in a country as divided as Lebanon, nothing can bring people together as much as the land and food." |
| <b>Overall rationale and motivation:</b>            | Drivers are personal motivation and passion as well as the love of land the country and sharing the traditions. Also, peace building initiatives by gathering all religious communities in one place and serving a common goal. Also promoting green and healthy living as well as eco-friendly practices through local consumption.  |
| <b>Strengths:</b>                                   | Passion and networking and leadership qualities of Kamal. Along with his appointment as a Synergos Social Innovator, Kamal was listed as one of <i>Monocle Magazine's</i> New Heroes-Worldwide in 2009, and his work was most recently featured in the <i>New York Times</i> , <i>the Guardian</i> , and a number of industry-specific publications. In addition, Kamal participated on a panel with Synergos in March 2009 at the Skoll World Forum in Oxford, UK, entitled "New Approaches in the Arab World," highlighting his contributions to the field of social entrepreneurship in Lebanon.   |
| <b>Challenges and constraints:</b>                  | Financial constraints and sustainability over time while being independent and self sustained.  |
| <b>Direct activities and impacts:</b>               | <i>Social:</i> Perpetuating traditions through a market, local agriculture and local cuisine, better visibility of local rural areas through tourism etc.<br><i>Environmental:</i> Raised awareness on citizens as of health and natural lifestyle. Availability of a green space and a clean product in the city.<br><i>Economic:</i> Income generating project for small scale farmers and producers of Lebanon (through farmers market and farmers kitchen), job opportunities for local inhabitants.  |
| <b>Use of innovative technologies:</b>              | Social media, twitter and facebook, website and emailing.   |
| <b>Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:</b>  | Kamal comes from a family of farmers and has a deep love and respect for his country and its diverse regions, which bear a rich assortment of natural foods and culinary delights. Often characterized as a "culinary activist," Kamal reaches many audiences both inside and outside of Lebanon through his advocacy for celebrating food traditions that unite communities and support the farmers and producers who tend the land.   |
| <b>Scale of benefits:</b>                           | Network of 100 members serving 350 farmers, producers and families at 3 regular farmers markets.  |
| <b>Policies, incentives and regulations needed:</b> | No information provided.  |
| <b>Lessons and recommendations:</b>                 | No information provided.  |
| <b>References:</b>                                  | <a href="http://www.soukeltayeb.com">www.soukeltayeb.com</a> - <a href="http://www.tawlet.com">www.tawlet.com</a> - <a href="http://www.synergos.org/bios/kamalmouzawak.htm">www.synergos.org/bios/kamalmouzawak.htm</a>  |