



# Baalbek's Agriculture and Livestock Sector Amid Conflict

October 2024



## Investigative Report: The Agricultural and Livestock Sectors in Baalbek Amid Ongoing Conflict October 2024

### Overview

Lebanon, and particularly the region of Baalbek, has endured severe impacts from the recent conflict. Among the sectors devastated by this aggression, agriculture and livestock—both pillars of the region's economy—have been hit the hardest. This report sheds light on the extent of the damage inflicted upon the agricultural lands, livestock, and the thousands of laborers whose livelihoods are tied to these sectors.

### Agriculture Sector: A Sector Under Siege

Baalbek-Hermel is renowned for its fertile land and agricultural productivity, with the local economy largely dependent on both crop farming and livestock. The conflict, however, has interrupted critical harvest periods, leaving landowners and laborers with catastrophic losses and threatening food security for the wider population.

The impact spans multiple facets of agriculture, affecting:

- **Crop production**
- **Poultry farms**
- **Cattle farms**
- **Laborers**

### A. Crop Production: A %67 Decline in Harvests and Productivity

Reports from agricultural labor unions indicate that up to %67 of agricultural production has been affected due to direct attacks on farmland. Crops, especially

vegetables and fruit trees, sustained extensive damage as agricultural lands were repeatedly targeted. Operations in the sector have all but ground to a halt.

### Damage Breakdown:

#### 1. Destruction of Vegetable Fields:

Many crops—such as zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and beans—were destroyed before they could be harvested. Some of these vegetables play an integral role in local food industries, such as pickling and preserving, exacerbating economic loss. The damage is estimated as follows:

- %30 of fields destroyed due to direct shelling, damaging the soil and spoiling the harvest.
- %45 of the harvest left in the fields, as ongoing shelling deterred laborers from collecting the crops, resulting in substantial unharvested produce.

#### 2. Impact on Olive Groves:

Olive production, a significant contributor to the regional economy, has faced severe setbacks

**"%20 of olive fields have been destroyed due to bombardments, damaging both trees and soil and %45 of olive crops remain unharvested, leading to further financial strain on farmers and laborers who were forced to abandon their work,"** said Ali Jaafar, an official from the Olive Farmers Union.

#### 3. Vineyards Suffer Heavy Losses:

The grape industry, vital to the agricultural landscape of towns like Qasrneba, Ablah, Tamnin, Nabi Ayla, and Talia, has been equally hard-hit.



**“%65 of vineyards sustained damage** due to uprooted vines and soil erosion, rendering the land unsuitable for future cultivation. Moreover, **%25 of grapes remain uncollected** due to the proximity of vineyards to conflict zones. As a result, **only %10 of the season’s yield was salvaged**. The crisis also led to a significant decline in grape prices due to closed borders with Syria, where demand for Lebanese grapes was previously high”, stated Union leader Ahmad Hassan shared:

#### 4. Potato and Onion Farms:

Potato and onion crops are among the hardest hit, with **more than %55 of these crops lost** due to airstrikes targeting both farmland and storage facilities. This loss is a heavy blow to Baalbek’s agricultural economy, as these crops are significant local staples.

### B. Livestock Sector: A Devastated Economy

The livestock sector, including both cattle and poultry farming, has faced unprecedented losses. Farm infrastructure has been reduced to rubble, with animals killed and resources diminished. The economic impact on breeders and workers in this sector is profound.

#### 1. Cattle Farming

Ali Al-Haj Hussein, from the Cattle Breeders Union, highlighted the destruction of cattle farms across the region, which accounted for %25 of the area’s farms. The financial implications are staggering:

- Numerous cattle farms were bombarded and are now beyond repair.
- Production costs skyrocketed, as feed prices rose by %20, while production

utilization dropped to %35. This decline has left laborers without steady income, threatening the region’s entire cattle industry.

#### 2. Poultry Farms

The poultry sector has also suffered severe losses. Union representative Ali Al-Haj Hassan reported that “%35 of poultry farms in Baalbek were targeted, resulting in the death of all birds within these facilities.” AL-haj Hassan added: “Feed costs soared by %40, and with a diminished poultry population, only a fraction of the demand can be met, directly impacting labor and food supply.”

### C. Impact on Agricultural Laborers: A Disenfranchised Workforce

The war’s disruption of agricultural activity has left thousands of laborers jobless. These workers, who often work on a daily-wage basis, have no social safety nets, no compensation from the state, and minimal protections under labor laws. Seasonal workers are the hardest hit, with an estimated %85 experiencing severe financial losses. This period is usually the peak season for them, essential for securing income before winter. With the collapse of the agricultural economy, these workers face not only economic hardship but also food insecurity and uncertainty about future employment.



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## Conclusion: A Sector in Crisis

The aggression has led to a near-total shutdown of the agricultural sector in Baalbek, resulting in economic devastation for both landowners and workers. Without state intervention or international aid, the agricultural community faces an uncertain future. Affected families are being deprived of their primary source of income, and the prospect of a long-term recovery seems grim unless substantial support is provided to restore this essential sector.

The plight of Baalbek's agricultural workers reflects a larger crisis affecting Lebanon's rural economy. Immediate measures are needed to address the humanitarian and economic fallout, protect the livelihoods of laborers, and rehabilitate the agricultural sector that has been the lifeblood of Baalbek for generations.

