

QUALITY *info*

Newsletter of **QALEB** *Strengthening Quality Management, Capabilities and Infrastructure in Lebanon*



EC Funded Project

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'The government, fully supports the concept of a Lebanese National Quality Centre'



Lebanese National Quality Centre expert group

So stated the Minister of Economy & Trade, HE Sami Haddad, when speaking recently at the end of an intensive round of discussions with all the Lebanese key public and private sector bodies, who have an on-going interest in the important concept of Quality. Establishing a Lebanese National Quality Centre is one of the cornerstones associated with the conception and development of the multi-component Quality Programme, hosted in the Ministry of Economy and Trade. The Minister noted that 'Lebanese producers must not only compete on price but also on quality and innovation'.

The proposed National Quality Centre will operate as a centre of expertise for quality advice, promotion, exchange of practical knowledge and experience, training and consultancy activities for industry, quality infrastructure institutions and public sector bodies throughout Lebanon. Within Europe, there is a widespread network of national and European voluntary organisations, related to the public sector, that work for the promotion of business excellence.

In countries like Finland and Ireland, the national quality bodies are known as Excellence Finland and Excellence Ireland respectively, according to Juhani Anttila, a Quality Expert from Finland with over forty years of experience. In his opinion and long experience, there are no bad

Quality Centres, only good or very good centres, adding that there is a strong relationship between 'quality and culture'. (See also quality article by Juhani Anttila on page 2). Possible activities to be delivered by Excellence Lebanon will include a national co-ordination role, training & consultancy, international quality benchmarking and developing the criteria and implementation of a National Quality Award.

A number of the attendees endorsed the comments of the minister including Mr. Wajih Bizri, Chairman of the Quality Advisory Committee, who noted the importance of implementing a quality awareness campaign throughout the Lebanese mass market. Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture in Beirut. Mr. Ghazi Kraytem noted the obligation to inform consumers in relation to quality matters (consumer protection, imports & exports) while Mr. Ghassan Boulbol, President of the Syndicate of Electric Manufacturers in Lebanon, strongly supported the concept - 'this centre must have a greater role than just in co-ordination and must have the authority and resources to deliver a quality culture for Lebanon'. Mr. Raffy Samerdjian, Chairman of the recently established Lebanese Society for Quality, urged the meeting to submit proposals to international donor funding Agencies, while Dr. Zouheir Berro, President of Consumers Lebanon, strongly supported the idea of a National Quality Award, with strict criteria developed and administered to the highest international standards.



H.E. Minister Haddad meeting with Lebanese National Quality Centre expert group



'Quality Assurance and Quality Management are the key'

Lebanon is a tiny country with a small base of natural resources, a limited population and a geographic make-up that does not lend itself to large-scale farming. It is therefore not a country that should try to compete in world markets through economies of scale which arise from mass-production. Neither will it be able to conquer world markets, by offering low-priced products based on an abundant supply of low cost labour.



Ali Berro

The only way forward for Lebanon, is to serve its preferred markets with high quality goods. The key words in this respect are quality assurance and quality management. The core of this approach is that companies in manufacturing and services must work especially hard, to gain and maintain the confidence of their customers. Product and services confidence arise from the fact that the products and services actually do serve their specified need, not only at the time of purchase, but also throughout the future commercial life of the goods. Quality assurance is the goal and objective and quality management is a necessary tool towards achieving that aim. The Quality Programme is working on plans to address this need.

Nevertheless, quality assurance does not come by just applying the techniques of quality management. Quality Assurance techniques must be applied with wisdom and in the end, it is the quality of the management that will count most. With so many highly educated and trained people throughout the country, Lebanon must succeed in its mission, to becoming a centre of business excellence throughout the region.

Ali Berro
Director, Quality Programme

'Lebanese quality is not always satisfactory and consistent'

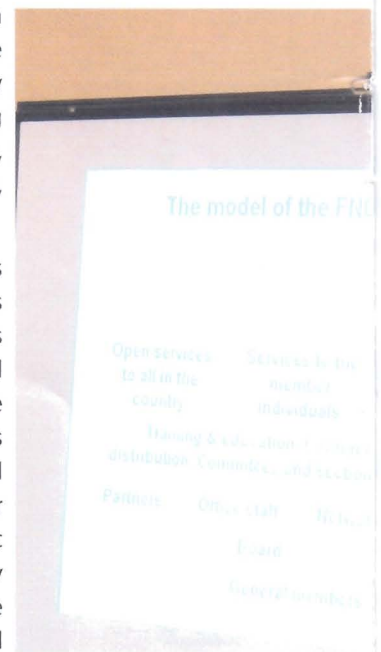
During a recent first time visit to Lebanon, I had an excellent opportunity to discuss what are the essential drivers for quality and its development throughout Lebanese society. I met a number of key figures and organisations, including leaders of various business companies and commercial institutions and also professors in key universities and professional syndicates. Arising from my own personal background and experience, I am well placed to make comparisons between what I have seen and heard about Quality matters in Lebanon and what I know to be the situation in other countries, e.g. in Europe, USA and Japan.

My core finding, based on the evidence of this one visit was that the existing quality situation in Lebanon is not satisfactory. There are some good examples of quality in Lebanese goods and services and in quality management, mainly in those organisations that operate in export markets to Europe or the US. One may also find similar good examples, in some of the foreign based organisations operating in Lebanon. Unfortunately, high quality goods and services in Lebanon are very often rather expensive.

In cases where organisations in Lebanon have started to use quality related methodologies, the approach has been rather narrow-minded, mainly based on striving for general quality standards and conformity assurance. However, international experience demonstrates, that competitiveness in international markets cannot be ensured by, for example, ISO 9000 certificates for management system conformity. The use of more advanced professional quality tools, together with innovation and integration, are what is needed for successful quality management. In Lebanese organisations, there is little if any evidence of this kind of thinking or approach, towards quality management.

Nevertheless, all the people I met during my visit, were very interested and supportive in a broad sense, for quality development within the country, including many small and large companies producing goods or services along with governmental and municipal organisations. Many compare the existing reality with this kind of national quality development, as a necessity or even an urgency and a big challenge for the country and its key authorities. In particular, a strong and multi-various co-operation in quality matters, must take place for the issue and challenge to succeed.

Many experiences prove that quality approaches are always closely dependent on the business culture (of organisations and business branches) and the general national culture. This is a key difficulty in radical quality development because cultural norms cannot be changed quickly. In order to achieve the necessary leverage for a high level of quality awareness throughout the country, it is essential that a strong National Quality Promotion Policy be evident. Also experience from other countries clearly demonstrates the need for systematic development of a national quality approach, which normally starts with the most active private companies, followed quite soon by the public sector becoming interested in professional



Juhani Anttila

quality methodologies. The public sector must embrace the national quality policy. If this does not happen at a national level, it will definitely impact on quality development issues in the private sector – for example, when the EU created the European Quality Promotion Policy via EOQ (European Organisation for Quality), European cultural characteristics and strengths were incorporated as key elements.

A cultural viewpoint can also have a positive impact as it means that each organisation and national body can base its quality development on its own individual strengths and fundamental cultural heritage. This is the only way to create an extraordinary and effective identity, e.g. 'Excellence Lebanon', leading to a successful quality vision which differentiates Lebanon from others. This can also be the way to competitiveness in the future for 'Managing for sustainable success through Quality', as stated in the new title to the next generation of the well-known ISO 9000 standards (2008).

Juhani Anttila, Finland

www.QualityIntegration.biz

'Quality is a major concern' for the Association of Lebanese Industrialists

As the readers of 'Quality Info' may already know, the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) has been promoting 'Quality' for many years. In fact, most of our activities are geared towards achieving the highest standards of quality in its broadest sense, even above and beyond the immediate goal of upgrading the quality of Lebanese manufactured products. For example, ALI has been involved in many initiatives to improve standards in all levels of education: secondary, vocational and university.



Fadi Abboud

Additionally, ALI has implemented a campaign to improve the Lebanese business environment, including the quality upgrading of Lebanese bureaucracy. Quality therefore, is a major concern for ALI and is at the core of many of our activities. That is why ALI supports the work of the Quality Programme and looks forward to deepening our co-operation with this important initiative.

'But before we delve deeper into the issue of Quality, let me set out a brief introduction of our association' commented Mr. Abboud. Founded in 1943, the Association of Lebanese Industrialists is a Lebanese economic organisation, representing industrialists from all over Lebanon. ALI advocates a policy of balanced industrial development for all Lebanese regions.

The Association seeks to create and maintain an environment which is favorable to industrial investment, growth and development. Considering that industry in Lebanon is mostly private, the Association's role becomes even more significant.

The ALI General Assembly elects from among its members a 24-person Board of Directors for a four-year term. The Board then elects a 'Bureau' made up of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary General, a Treasurer, a Secretary of Foreign Relations and four members.

The Board of Directors and the Bureau of the Board are assisted in policy formulation by the following constituent bodies:

- The Specialised Committees
- The Council of Industrial Regions
- The Council of Industrial Sectors
- The Export Promotion Council

بتحبّ لبنان؟
حبّ صناعتو

ALI has developed several projects in order to promote the important concept of Quality, among them the 'Quality Seal' project and the 'Awareness and Training for Food Industry' project. The overall objective of the 'Quality Seal' is to increase the share of Lebanese products and services in international markets through better conformance with technical requirements and international standards. Additionally, the safety and health of the local population will be better protected by quality control of locally manufactured products.

The overall objective of the 'Awareness and Training for Food Industry' project is to raise quality and safety awareness among agro food manufacturers and to build the capacity of their quality and production personnel, in order to improve the quality of agro food products, according to the 'Farm to fork' approach.

Furthermore, ALI is seeking the support of the Quality Programme, in creating an R & D Center and Incubator at ALI's premises in the Port of Beirut. R&D and innovation do not have to be the exclusive preserve of hi-tech industries. They can also be helpful in product development relating to our national cuisine, which is witnessing a boom in worldwide consumer demand.

'We all agree that success in export markets is crucial to the long-term growth of Lebanese manufacturers and the Lebanese economy. But this is based on the ability of manufacturers to innovate and to produce quality products according to continuously changing international technical specifications'. We trust that QUALEB will play an important role in improving Lebanon's quality infrastructure at the legislative, institutional and enterprise levels, leading to improved access to international markets', concluded the President.

Finally, I would like to thank QUALEB for the valuable support it continues to provide to ALI.

Fadi Abboud
President of ALI
(Association of Lebanese Industrialists)



'Product quality has improved in the long term'

The growing acknowledgment of the importance of quality in supporting the performance of our products has led to a re-appraisal of what quality really means to the consumer, claims Professor Toufic Rizk. It is clear that manufacturing definitions of quality, represent a cornerstone of any quality commitment by

Dr. Toufic Rizk

ensuring the consistency of the manufactured item. However, it is equally clear that manufacturing quality systems must be extended in certain respects, if they are to fully address consumer needs.

Manufacturing quality control is rightly focused on the physical integrity of the manufactured item rather than its performance in use. However, manufacturing guidelines are usually insensitive to the impact that consumer type, sensory, branding and pricing effects are likely to have on perceptions of the product by the customer. It becomes necessary, therefore, to complement manufacturing guidelines, with information on consumer requirements and sensitivities in relation to the product, to avoid the costs involved in over controlling or under controlling product attributes. To understand consumer requirements for product quality, we need to ask two basic questions, continued Professor Rizk:

- What attributes are taken to be important in the judgment of product quality?
- For any defined attribute, what is the ideal level requirement and what tolerance of variability exists around this ideal point?

A supplementary question of particular marketing relevance, must be whether or not these 'ideal point' and 'tolerance' measures, differ significantly by consumer type (e.g.: what is the % of customer groups that have different ideal point and tolerance values?) or by branding and costing variables.

Defining relevant quality attributes is not much more complicated than taking a serious commitment to talking with consumers on a qualitative group discussion basis. It is clear, at least in the U.K. context, that quality is seen as very relevant to product purchase and historical shifts in quality are discernible. A comparison of recent history to past history indicates a clear view, that product quality has improved in the long term. However within this trend, the perceived timing of a recent abrupt step-wise fall in quality, can be directly linked to the appearance of generic products in the marketplace.

*Dr. Toufic Rizk,
Dean, Faculty of Sciences, USJ*

'Industrial Research Institute works in close co-operation with QUALEB'



Established in 1953, the Industrial Research Institute (IRI) is a Lebanese Institution for studies, industrial research and scientific testing and analysis. IRI is a non-profit institution, linked to the Ministry of industry, with administrative and financial autonomy.

IRI is a reference institution that offers certification activities which cover system, product and certification of persons. The certification mark of IRI relies on quality, security and efficiency requirements of Lebanese, European or international standards.

Being recognised and authorised by the Lebanese government to conduct research, tests and analysis, IRI implements many decrees, related to agro food, paints, napkins, steel, electrical home appliances and LPG cylinders among others, to ensure the conformity of these products with Lebanese standards and guarantee their safety, prior to release on the market. Furthermore, IRI is the sole officially 'notified body' to deliver conformity quality certificates. In the absence of an operational accreditation body, the laboratories of IRI have been accredited by the German Accreditation body, DAP.

Through the wide range of its activities, IRI plays an essential role in supporting Lebanese private sector enterprises. This is achieved under a series of activities as follows:



Petroleum Laboratory

- Conducting studies and research for the establishment of new industries
- Investigating and disseminating information about available raw materials, in defining the use and establishing the best means of exploitation
- Providing international scientific level, reliable services in testing, analysis and granting certificates of quality or conformity to standards and purchase specifications
- Providing specialised technological, management and economic consulting services to existing industries and industrial development schemes

- Maintaining close co-operation with official institutions, industrial organisations, and economic development boards, on matters relating to the industrial development of the country
- Launching awareness campaigns through seminars related to quality and technology transfer, in collaboration with the Quality Programme, the Lebanese Order of Engineers and the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture

Moreover, along with its strategy of sustaining the Lebanese private sector, IRI is hosting three projects:

- Clean Production, which aims to achieve sustainable industrial and environmental development
- SPX (The subcontracting and Partnership exchange) which seeks to provide SMEs with advisory information and services and to promote subcontracting and partnerships
- ELCIM (European Lebanese Center for Industrial Modernisation) which seeks to support the business development and export growth of industries through the provision of technical and financial assistance.

Increased demand and market globalisation has forced SMEs in emerging countries, to comply with international standards and regulations. This is an essential element for survival. It is no longer possible to depend on traditional methods of production which usually lack the



Certification System

necessary quality standards, endangering the consumer and denying access of associated products to international markets.

Since the combination of national quality systems, accreditation and certification systems and conformity to international standards govern the issue of quality in the EU and the World Trade Organisation, it becomes essential to harmonise technical standards and certification procedures. This also leads to the removal of the non tariff trade barriers, thus guaranteeing free circulation of goods and services. In this context, the Quality Programme reflects a strategic initiative that will enhance and boost higher quality Lebanese products and services and consequently, facilitate the accession of local products to international markets.

Co-operation between the Industrial Research Institute and the Quality Programme is essential, given that their respective activities compliment each other. Training on New Approach Directives in European countries has already been initiated as a result of the co-operation in quality infrastructure, through participation of IRI in advisory committees and related subcommittees.

Furthermore, the Industrial Research Institute offers all its potential and training abilities in quality, testing, certification as well as accreditation fields, in supporting the Quality Programme, as both have the same ultimate objective, to support local enterprise along with consumer safety and protection.

Industrial Research Institute

'A very positive experience with lots of business generated'



Gulfood - Dubai, February 2006

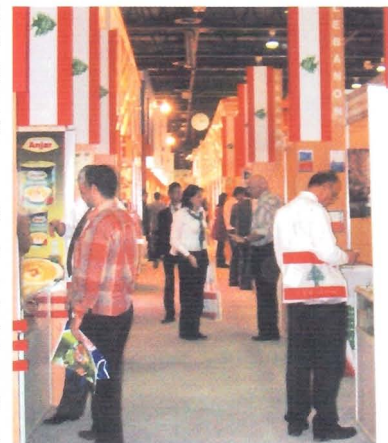
So commented many of the Lebanese exhibitors at Gulfood 2006 which is a reflection on the latest international undertaking by the Quality Programme - following the success of Anuga food fair in October 2005, the largest international trade fair for food and beverage, held in Cologne Germany, the Quality Programme, once again hit the road. This time to, Dubai, UAE, for Gulfood 2006, the 11th Gulf food, hotel and equipment exhibition and salon culinaire, which took place between 19th - 22nd February 2006.

One of the first visitors to the Lebanese National Pavilion was H.E. Mr. Hassan Berro, the Lebanese Ambassador for the UAE, based in Abu Dhabi, who formally opened the Lebanese National Pavilion, accompanied by the President of the Syndicate of Lebanese Food Industries, Mr. Georges Nasraoui and Ali Berro, Director of the Quality Programme. There was also an opportunity for the Lebanese industrialists, exhibiting at Gulfood 2006, to meet the Ambassador and to introduce him to a variety of their proud Lebanese products. Through active participation at a number of trade fairs, the Quality Programme hosted at the Ministry of Economy & Trade, has demonstrated a clear commitment to improving the quality standards of Lebanese food products.

Gulfood 2006 was host to around 1,800 exhibitors from 68 countries, 32,000 trade visitors from 145 countries. There were a total of 22 stands, making up the Lebanese National Pavilion, with the Quality Programme and 21 other Lebanese companies, from different food sectors including: tahineh and halawa, spices and herbs, juices, nuts, olive oil and a variety of canned and powder food.

This exhibition continues to be organised at a very high international level, with respect to its exhibitors, visitors, halls, activities and overall organisation. The fair inspired the many attendees, with cookery demonstrations, live cooking competitions, ice carving demonstrations, buffet and banqueting showpieces, pastry and sugar set pieces, bakery and confectionery innovations. One of the major activities conducted at Gulfood was the three-day Dubai International Food Safety Conference 2006, which set out many of the critical issues of Food Safety, throughout the Gulf region.

From enquiries made about the success levels of the fair, Lebanese exhibitors, noted that Gulfood 2006 was as good as expected, bringing a large number of new contacts and potential customers. This exhibition seems to keep on growing and improving every year and Lebanese exhibitors have again expressed their enthusiasm and motivation for the continuing support of the public sector. Distribution of Lebanese National Pavilion bags, with the Lebanese flag design offered by the Quality Programme, was also very popular, bringing further visitors to the 22 Lebanese exhibitors.



Gulfood - Dubai, February 2006

International Arab Conference planned for June, 2006

A major international three day conference, to be held under the patronage of the Prime Minister with the title, 'Arab Quality & Food Safety Conference – a step towards harmonisation', is planned for Wednesday 14th to Friday 16th June. The conference is jointly organised by UNIDO and AL IKTISAD WAL AAMAL. Up to 300/400 delegates are expected, of which 33% will be international visitors.

Many Arab League countries are expected to send high level representatives along with a number of international key-note speakers covering issues like Food Safety, Quality and Market Access issues. Further details will be published on the Quality Programme website as they become available:

<http://www.economy.gov.lb/MOET/English/Panel/Projects/Quality/htm>

Or call the Quality Programme on: + 961 11 743930 *
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NEWSFLASH

COLIBAC BOARD MEETS

The newly appointed board members of COLIBAC (Lebanese Accreditation Council) have been appointed (February 2006) and met formally for the first time under the chairmanship of Mr. George Khoury, acting DG, Ministry of Industry, in March 2006. The board is made up of representatives of both public and private sectors and is meeting regularly to develop and establish the procedures of the Council.



The international management expertise and support to the Quality Programme, is provided by a European Consortium, led by Tecnitas, France. The Consortium members are major players in the fields of Quality, Conformity Assessment, Standardisation, Certification and Accreditation.



Group Photo at ISO 22000 Workshop, March 2006

UNIDO and QUALEB working together

One of the single most productive and successful training modules to-date: stated many of the participants describing their experience at a five day workshop on 'ISO 22000 – Food Safety Management Systems', recently completed in Beirut, jointly organised by UNIDO and the Quality Programme. This activity offered private and public sector participants with an opportunity to upgrade their food safety skills. The training workshop was a first for Lebanon, as ISO 22000 was only published in 2005, containing many of the existing HACCP elements along with some key elements of the ISO quality management systems.



ISO 22000 Workshop, March 2006

"I am fully confident that all of you participants, will at the end of this week be able to plan, implement, operate, maintain and update a food safety management system, aimed at providing products that are safe for the Lebanese consumer". Commented HE Sami Haddad, Minister of Economy & Trade at the formal launching of the workshop.

The workshop was attended by a broad range of private & public sector participants representing a number of national public bodies, laboratories, private sector suppliers of food products, restaurants and universities. A key workshop objective was to become aware and familiar with the different food safety regulations and standards and the drivers behind food safety standards. In addition, the workshop objectives included differentiation between verification and validation, the ISO 22000:2005 requirements and ways in which HACCP, ISO 22000 and QMS can be integrated. Finally, all of the successful participants will be awarded an international certificate, following the successful completion of a training workshop related assignment, covering HACCP In-Practice Certificate, accredited by the UK Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the ISO 22000:2005 Principles and Practice Certificate, awarded by Lloyd's Registrar Quality Assurance.

The UNIDO regional representative, Mr. Cheikh Sakho focused on the regular co-ordination between UNIDO and the Lebanese Government, especially with the Ministry of Economy and Trade, while the President of the Syndicate of Lebanese Food Industries, Mr. George Nasraoui stressed the importance and need for industrialists to adopt international standards and technical regulations. "This is a significant development and up-grading of the training modules provided by the Quality Programme, in that it offers a formally recognised international qualification for a range of Lebanese Food Quality Managers" according to Ali Berro, Director of the Quality Programme.

The trainer, Mr. Ali Badarneh, is the UNIDO Quality & Business Improvement Expert in Palestine. He is an IRCA (International Register of Certified Auditors) registered Lead Auditor since 1998 and a LRQA (Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance) Lead Auditor for ISO 9000, ISO 14000, HACCP & ISO 22000:2005. Arising from the success of this jointly run training workshop, it is planned to run additional training modules in this vitally important and critical field, noted Mr. Bassel El Khatib, Director of the Lebanese Food Safety project at UNIDO. This has been a very productive and practical training workshop which will play a major role in upgrading the quality status of Lebanese food producers' concluded Mr. Khatib.