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an EU funded project

QUALEB becomes the first public sector entity to be ISO 9001 certified

At a recent ceremony in the Ministry of Economy & Trade, the Quality Programme was presented with the ISO 9001 : 2000 certification by AFNOR International, the French based ISO certification body. The certificate refers to the management of project services, related to the conformity assessment chain and co-ordination across private and public sectors, in order to ensure safe products / services and develop a quality culture and infrastructure. The certificate further states that AFNOR International certifies that all measures covering the above mentioned activity and location were implemented to meet the requirements of the International standard.



• Ali Berro, Director, Quality Programme receives the ISO Certification from Nassib Nasr, General Manager AFAQ AFNOR International, with the quality team.

our internal operations as well as the services that we've been providing to the Lebanese private and public sectors'.



The Quality Assurance Manager, Abir Rammal noted the importance of the QUALEB ISO team that included Nancy Ephram and two Graduate trainees, Maria Hatem and Perrine Posbic, who met weekly. Individual procedures were developed under the on-going supervision of Demetri Georgiou and getting started in the process proved to be the biggest headache for Abir who stated - 'the best moment for me was of course achieving a

At the awards ceremony, attended by all of the QUALEB team, Mr. Nassib Nasr, General Manager of AFAQ AFNOR International, congratulated the QUALEB team on its achievement, noting the significance of the certification for the Quality Unit, implementing an EU funded project, hosted in the Ministry of Economy & Trade. Receiving the ISO Certificate, Dr. Ali Berro, Director of the Quality Programme thanked all the team and its commitment to the process, highlighting the significance of becoming the first Lebanese public sector entity to be ISO certified and the importance of the internationally recognised Conformity Assessment Body.

Needless to mention, this success was achieved through lots of efforts on the part of QUALEB but in particular by the Quality Assurance Manager, Abir Rammal supported by the International ISO Expert, Demetri Georgiou, who together undertook the internal quality journey. "The key objective of the Quality Programme is to develop the quality infrastructure, while contributing to the enhancement of Lebanese enterprises, laboratories and public institutions. It was also important that QUALEB should be part of the upgrading process and fully embrace one of the ISO standards leading to quality enhancement, by developing its own Quality Management System". commented Demetri Georgiou, 'The quality journey toward certification was a joyful experience to all of us in QUALEB, since it endowed us with a generous justification of our efforts to improve



• Ali Berro receives ISO Certification from Nassib Nasr, with Abir Rammal Quality Assurance Manager, Georges Fayad QSE Consultant and Lead Auditor and QUALEB International ISO expert, Demetri Georgiou

successful audit without any non-conformities while the advantages relate to working in an organised and structured environment which gives credibility to the services provided by QUALEB'. She concluded 'the most important issue for me is that we now have a formalised standardised approach to our work'.



• Dr. Ali Berro

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, the initial Quality Programme will have almost come to an end. We started in October 2004 for a period of 38 months which was to end in December 2007. However, during that period our country has seen some serious problems at the international and national political levels. That was reason enough for an extension of the project period for another eight months to August 2008, to complete some of the work and to achieve the goals set for the initial Quality Programme.

What did the Quality Programme achieve? That is a legitimate question to ask and I will try to give you some answers. We have delivered a lot of support to a number of selected laboratories, both in terms of new equipment, training on methods and preparation for accreditation. These laboratories can now supply Lebanese companies with a wider choice of tests at a higher level of expertise, with full international recognition of their competence. That must make life easier for Lebanese companies.

Speaking of companies, we have given encouragement to the Lebanese business community to embrace the concept of better quality of products through the application of quality management principles. With the help of the Quality Programme, more than 30 companies have achieved a certified quality management system. Furthermore, we keep beating the drum on the importance of quality and working, according to internationally accepted standards. For that purpose, we have held numerous seminars and training courses and distributed much information material.

We have created a new legal basis for the safety of products in this country, which will come into effect once the Parliament has passed the relevant new laws. This will positively affect both producers and consumers. Lebanese manufactured products will come closer to international health and safety requirements and that will help both exports, while also protecting the internal market from unfair competition, while Lebanese consumers will benefit from greater safety.

The Quality Programme has helped in developing and building up a number of institutions that will be of service to the Lebanese economy. The national standardisation body, LIBNOR, has become more integrated into international standardisation activities through its memberships of ISO and CEN. It can now better connect Lebanese industries with the ongoing technological developments in their fields. A modest beginning has been made with metrology. That will make it possible for national industries and laboratories to have some measuring instruments properly calibrated in Lebanon, instead of sending them out of the country at high cost.

We do realise that while we have achieved some good results, we are at the same time, very aware of the amount of work that still needs to be implemented in ongoing activities, while adding new aspects and tasks. However, the co-operation that the Quality Programme has received from all its stakeholders is very positive and that gives us the confidence to continue with our work. Gradually, all of us will give Lebanon an operational quality infrastructure, by working closely together and we will see the development of a true quality awareness and culture.

Ali Berro, PhD
Director, Quality Programme

A lesson in co-operation - Environment Core Laboratory at AUB & QUALEB

QUALEB, the Quality Programme has astutely taken an unprecedented initiative in Lebanon to support several institutions, enabling them to improve the quality of their products / services in order to be competitive, both locally and globally, in recognition of the importance of quality in today's market place. To facilitate this process, it was determined that the laboratories should have enhanced testing capabilities and be accredited; 'thus the labs will be well prepared to offer the required testing procedures to the Lebanese industry, allowing it to achieve its objectives of improved quality products and consequently enhanced domestic and international marketability' according to Ghazi Zaatar, MD, Director, Environment Core Laboratory, AUB.

Established in 1997, the Environment Core Laboratory (EVL) at the American University offers inorganic, organic and microbiological analytical testing services on a variety of matrices

continued Dr. Zaatar. This has been greatly facilitated and tremendously encouraged by QUALEB. This was implemented using several measures to allow the lab to meet all ISO 17025 standards and accreditation requirements. This support of QUALEB also enhanced laboratory staff skills in food microbiology and chemistry applications.

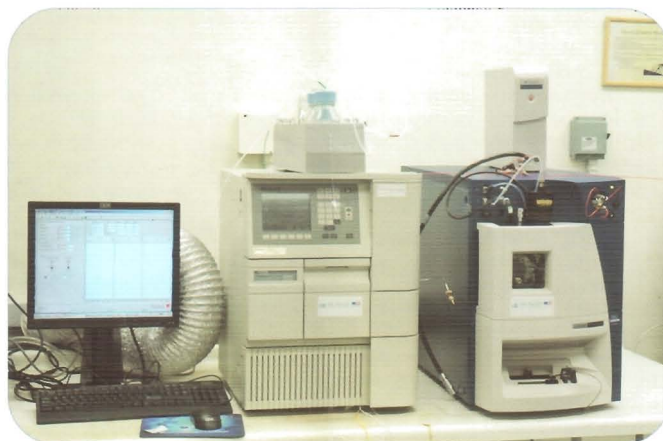
During 2006, several analytical and support instruments (i.e. HPLC-MS/MS system, post column derivatization system, nitrogen chemiluminescence detector, biological safety cabinet, microwave digestion system, incubators, solid phase extraction system, acid cleaning automated and acid purification systems, freezers, refrigerators, shakers, water & ultrasonic baths and many other food analysis support equipment) were acquired, which were essential for improving the efficiency and quality of the laboratory operation in the area of food testing.

A series of instructive general and advanced ISO training workshops (such as quality system details, method development and validation, internal audit, calibration, traceability and uncertainty of measurement) was also delivered. This was further supplemented in 2007 and 2008 by several sessions of hands-on technical training, offered by several European consultants, covering the auditing of pre analytical, analytical and post analytical phases of testing, including laboratory records and a documentation system.

By enhancing EVL analytical capabilities and expertise in food matrices, the laboratory shall be in a good position to support the needs of the growing food industry in Lebanon. In addition, it shall serve as an asset to the Consumer Protection Office at the Ministry of Economy & Trade through the identification of food products with contaminants residues at or above maximum permissible levels, preventing its entry into food supply. This will result in increasing confidence in domestic products and contribute to a reduction in the number of violations to food standards, with greater opportunities for export.

Through all these constructive measures and the continued support of QUALEB, EVL is now ready for accreditation and the visit by the European accrediting body is expected shortly. Unfortunately this has been delayed because of the political events in the country over the past year but with the promise of a brighter future for Lebanon, EVL is hopeful to be part of it and to contribute to the economic growth of the country and its industry. The valuable support by the Quality Programme should not go unrecognized in this remarkable endeavor.

Ghazi Zaatar, MD
Director, Environment Core Laboratory
Chairman, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine
American University of Beirut



• LCMS Liquid Chromatograph System

such as water, waste water, solid waste, leachates, compost, soil, sediments, fresh and processed food, fruits and vegetables, biological tissues, stones and alloys. Since its inception, EVL's has taken a number of measures in providing affordable, reliable and defensible data to the public and private sectors. Moreover, a comprehensive quality improvement programme has been implemented, in accordance with the ISO 17025 standard. For over 5 years, the laboratory has successfully participated in international inter-laboratory analysis comparison programmes namely AQUACHECK

(Environmental Chemistry, International AQUACHECK, Cyprus Branch) and FAPAS (Food Analysis, Central Science Laboratory, United Kingdom).

'Accreditation of these services has been determined as a priority in the strategic planning of the EVL',



• Dr. Ghazi Zaatar

'Not enough pressure exerted by client companies on laboratories to become accredited', according to Mikael Krysell, a Swedish Laboratory specialist, originally from Gothenburg in Sweden working with QUALEB on ISO 17025 Laboratory Accreditation. He continued, 'after working with the QUALEB project in Lebanon for more than one year, I have been asked to try to put the Lebanese approach and the local Lebanese habits in an international perspective - that is to say how I find my work as a laboratory consultant in Lebanon, compared to working in other places around the world. I have a great deal of previous experience from project work in similar projects in Eastern Europe, in the NIS of the Caucasus region, in south-eastern Asia and in Africa. To nobody's surprise, working in these different regions can present many different challenges indeed'!

Let me first clarify that I really enjoy working in Lebanon. It is an exciting country, with outstandingly friendly and helpful people, a good climate and most things are well organised - for a consultant coming here, life is in most ways, easy. The contrast is stark to some other countries I have been in, where things not directly related to work may cause problems or be distressing. In most parts of Africa, one is constantly under the threat of catching malaria and other disease while in many countries, poverty strikes one upon arrival (and may take some time to get used to - if one ever can). In other locations, just passing through the customs, without having your PC confiscated, can be a formidable task. These problems do not, luckily, exist in Lebanon.

When it comes to work-related items, i.e. the people and the laboratories that I work together with, Lebanon stands out in many ways and mostly positively! The people working in the laboratories are generally well educated and specialised in their respective fields, while only in Eastern Europe will one find similar levels of technical and theoretical knowledge. In some countries this is a major problem, as I may have to start by teaching the staff how to calculate an arithmetic average value and not even be sure that they remember how to do it the next day. The challenges are definitely different in Lebanon.

A specific problem for Lebanon is of course the brain-drain - due to the political instability, many Lebanese, not least the well educated people, move abroad. Many countries have similar problems, not least the poorer ones, but the specific situation for Lebanon is that people generally have a good education, speak both English and French fluently and thus, find it easier to get approval to move to other countries, compared to most other citizens.

Lebanese laboratories, like in other countries, vary from relatively poorly equipped and understaffed, to laboratories with most modern



• Microbiological check of bean sprouts of Kfarchima Laboratory

facilities and well-trained staff. However, if you as a reader, have the feeling that your laboratory is in a bad situation, then I can tell you that in comparison to some laboratories I have seen in Africa and in the former Soviet Union, all your laboratories are wonderful! There are a few places also in Lebanon that are not really adequate and in immediate need of upgrading. But so far, I have not seen poisonous snakes in

any of the laboratories, as I did in Africa.

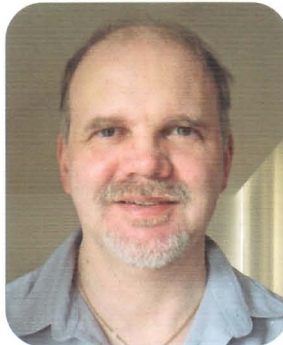
So, how has the progress been in view of all this - as we have seen, most things work in Lebanon. There is a functioning infrastructure, the power supply (electricity) is, at least almost reliable, staff are generally well educated though sometimes there are too few and the laboratories are in general, adequately equipped. Several laboratories have also made fast progress, have shown great interest in the QUALEB programme and have worked hard in order to reach accreditation as fast as possible. In some

other laboratories however, it has to be clearly stated that progress has been a disappointment so far. There are many explanations for this, like lack of staff, lack of proper facilities etc., but the feeling is that the main explanation is the same as in other countries and here, Lebanon is just like any other place where I have been working - for some institutions, there is not enough pressure from clients to become accredited. In my experience, it is very uncommon that laboratories who do not feel the benefit and the usefulness of becoming accredited actually manage to go through the long and tedious process of writing up all the documents, implementing all the quality procedures and also pay the direct and indirect (proficiency testing etc.) fees. And this is certainly

not specific Lebanese, but rather more a universal problem!

The solution? Well, if we compare to Europe, where almost all laboratories are accredited, the big difference is that we have the legally binding EU directives and national legislation that puts pressure on the laboratories to become accredited, in combination with the fact that competition is so high between laboratories, that the clients simply do not turn to non-accredited suppliers! It will thus be of the utmost importance to further develop Lebanese legislation and to support COLIBAC, in order to make accreditation a more natural step, driven by customer demand, for the laboratories to take.

**Mikael Krysell, PhD,
Chemist, Laboratory Specialist**



• Dr. Mikael Krysell



• Karsten Wienecke

Karsten Wienecke is a German freelance Food Chemist, Consultant for testing laboratories, Technical Assessor and Lead Assessor, who has been working with QUALEB, on and off since December 2006 – 'Quality Info' asked him to set out his perspectives on the country, the people and his work here with the Lebanese Laboratories. Here is his story.....

Let me say at the outset that Lebanon is a really nice country and nearly all the people here are friendly and helpful. I have worked in Lebanon since December 2006, for more than 150 days and I have felt myself secure here at all times. There was not one single moment where I was really afraid that something evil would happen to me. The honesty in the country is remarkable e.g. - If you loose your money on the street or forget your mobile in a café, somebody will surely run behind you and will bring it back to you. This is not the most natural thing in the world and particularly in European countries. It seemed to me that it could be an outstandingly good example how people of different cultures and backgrounds and of different origins can live and work effectively and peacefully together.

I have been working as a consultant in Germany, in some Arabic countries and most of the Eastern European countries, as an assessor in the European Union and countries in other parts of the world like Iran, India, Mongolia, Ukraine and Turkey. The work of an assessor is not comparable to the work of a consultant in that this work is much easier. You only have to point out non-conformities and if you give some hints and recommendations you have done much more than is necessary. If I compare the work here in Lebanon with my activities in other Arabic countries, it is I believe, that the problems are often the same or just even comparable, with some small differences.

The slight differences may be in the way of living, the motivation of partners and the available equipment and facilities. In general, I can say that the staff of the laboratories I have been working together with, are very good professionals and well educated. But in some cases, the education seems to me to be very theoretical. Sometimes, the real practical experiences of business are missing. Perhaps, this is a problem caused by the Lebanese education system itself, as you have on the one side, a very good quality academic education delivered by the large number of excellent universities while on the other side, the practical oriented professional education for laboratory technicians is missing.

So, from my point of view, what is really missing in some of the laboratories are the staff, with the

ability to do the practical work. Because of that situation and with a number of the laboratories in the project having a university or governmental background, some of the staff have difficulties in understanding how to build up a quality management system and a routine testing laboratory, in an efficient and economic way. I should also add that ISO/IEC 17025, has been written with even more for routine, than for scientific research laboratories.

But the biggest problem for me in Lebanon and here, is unique, when compared with all the other countries I know, is the unstable situation which leads to the point where well trained staff are leaving the country and Accreditation Bodies and Consultants refuse to come. For the people that are remaining in the country, this situation is sometimes blocking their mindset, as they seem to be unable to focus on the work needs in the middle to long term.

Of course, it may be that also in the project, some minor weak points have occurred because the project is also affected by the economic realities of life in Lebanon. Somebody said to me "You have given us a car without wheels" because some spare parts or supporting equipment was missing from our equipment needs. I will take this nice example and ask: Isn't it better to have a new Mercedes without wheels than having no car at all?? If someone would give me a new Mercedes



• Concrete cylinders for mechanical tests (crushing) at ACTS

for some 10,000 \$ without wheels, as a present, I would take it immediately and buy some old wheels for 50 \$ and be happy indeed!

I wish from my heart that Lebanon will find a peaceful way leading to a prosperous future. Peace is the foundation for the 'Lebanese House' and lots of work remains to be done related to the Quality Programme and related topics like market surveillance, export and import controls etc. So the local experts and their expertise are needed here in the country, at this time more than anything else. I have enjoyed my time here and look forward to the days when I return as one of your many tourists.

Karsten Wienecke, Food Chemist, Consultant for testing laboratories, Technical Assessor and Lead Assessor, who has been working with QUALEB since December 2006.

QUALEB participates in EU training modules

Members of the QUALEB team recently attended training modules addressed to Beneficiaries, at the EC Delegation offices in Beirut, delivered by EC Brussels consultants, Melinda Wezenaar and Ronand Pêcheur in support of its longstanding collaboration with partner countries of the MEDA zone. The training focused on practical issues, primarily related to contractual and the financial management of EC funds.

The training was delivered in four modules as follows:

- Introduction to ENPI (European Neighbourhood Partner Instrument) and implementing modalities
- EC procurement rules for service contracts
- EC procurement rules for supplies contracts
- Programme Estimate (with case study)

The training was highly appreciated, offering the participants with many insights into the practical workings of the EU. Many Lebanese Ministries and EC funded projects attended the programme.



• Group of participants at EU Training Modules



• Mohammad Dokmak

ACTS (Advanced Construction Technology Services), is a material testing, geotechnical and consulting organisation, having offices and operations in several countries throughout the Middle East, approved by many national and international organisations like SASO, SONCAP, etc. The company has a major involvement in testing the majority of construction materials (concrete, cement, asphalt, bitumen, soil, aggregate, water, admixtures, etc.) and has recently introduced a paint laboratory for testing paints, emulsions, latexes, road marking and other related coating materials.

In relation to quality issues, ACTS was ISO certified (ISO 9002:1994) in 1998 and is currently certified to ISO 9001:2000, in its Central Laboratory in Beirut along with its Branch laboratory in Doha-Qatar. The company is anticipating to shortly receive the ISO 17025 accreditation, for about 65 of its tests, after it has been successfully externally assessed by the Hellenic Accreditation Body (ESYD). The development of the quality system for this purpose has been supported by QUALEB through training courses, equipment and direct consultancy in the laboratory and ACTS gratefully acknowledges the extremely valuable support given.

Why ACTS went beyond ISO 9000 to ISO 17025?

Firstly, the ISO 17025 standard can be considered to be the technical complement to ISO 9000 and any organisation operating in compliance with ISO 17025, also meets the requirements of ISO 9001:2000. While the ISO 9000 requirements are generic and can be applied to any type of business, the laboratory requirements of ISO 17025 are very specific to testing and calibration laboratories and were developed specifically to guide laboratories to cover every aspect of laboratory quality, from sample preparation and analytical testing to record keeping and reporting.

Secondly, both the accredited laboratory and the customer will benefit from the ISO 17025 accreditation, as summarised in the table below.

Benefits for the accredited laboratory (e.g. ACTS)	Benefits for the customer (e.g. industries, manufacturers, traders etc.)
Saving cost and time through improved efficiency and the elimination of the need for re-testing.	Saving cost and time through getting accurate results (the 'right first time' concept), no need to repeat the test or delay the project due to invalid results - and through the elimination of the need for shipping and testing at accredited laboratories in different countries
The laboratory will be more confident about the results generated	More confident about results as laboratories accredited to ISO 17025 are technically competent and able to generate valid results, at an acceptable and agreed quality level and to appropriate quality standards
Comparability, results and reports that are internationally recognised.	Test results and tested products will be internationally recognised and comparable to other accredited laboratories - this will also eliminate the need for duplicate testing in other countries
The reports will meet the challenges of the WTO	Reports issued by the laboratories accredited to ISO 17025 are recognised by WTO member countries - the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), an obligation of WTO, includes ISO 17025 accreditation as an essential requirement for testing and calibration laboratories

The availability of accredited testing and calibration laboratories will have an impact on the Lebanon as whole - it is a step forward for the country to meet the WTO challenges, with which industry, manufacturers, traders, etc., will be able to get their products accepted worldwide, according to the requirements of the WTO.

Furthermore, the quality control of imported products by accredited national laboratories ensures that technically sound and safe products reach the consumers within Lebanon. Also, the quality control of locally manufactured products ends, with building consumer confidence in the quality of the national products, leading to a boosting of such products and the promoting national industry.

Mohammad Dokmak
Assistant General Manager
ACTS



• One of the machines provided by QUALEB

South Lebanon Water Establishment faces up to the challenge of ISO accreditation



• Ahmad Nizam

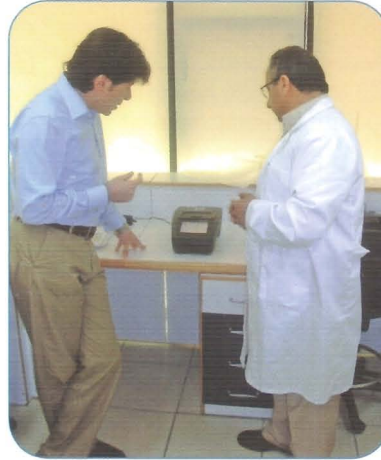
The safety and quality of the water distributed to all Lebanese citizens, is an extremely important issue at national level, due to the possible negative effect on public health. Thus, the operating laboratories of the South Lebanon Water Establishment, place great importance on their ability and competence, to carry out their required tasks,

according to the international standards. Laboratories do not only consist of spaces, equipment and individuals, but must also focus on specifications and standards, for the importance of the product itself.

Within the framework of specifying its objectives and tasks, the South Lebanon Water Establishment determined its key responsibilities in providing all consumers with a consistent supply of healthy water, compatible with the WHO (World Health Organisation) Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality.

In the light of its new structure, the Water Establishment formally developed a Quality Control Department. Furthermore, it determined in its first five-year business plan, which is currently being upgraded, a basic objective aimed at obtaining formal accreditation according to ISO 17025. This formal accreditation is also required by donor aid countries and organisations, providing grant aid and sponsorship funding and loans. Accordingly, the importance of the EU-financed Quality Programme is revealed, where it efficiently contributes to the execution of both vision and objectives of the South Lebanon Water Establishment and helps to achieve its goals.

The Quality Programme offered additional value-added benefits to the activities of the Water Establishment, providing modern equipment and manpower consultancy and training at the laboratory during the past months. Additionally, the lectures attended by staff, as well as the expertise and competence of the international experts, presented new



• Greek expert, Timos Lytras and Laboratory Manager Zohair Al Ra'ii discussing the Turbidity meter findings (unclearness of the water)

dimensions and improvements for the laboratories. The Quality Programme experts greatly contributed in improving the performance of the laboratories and manpower, in focusing on the objective of establishing a formal accredited quality programme for the Authority. New employees have been appointed to the Laboratory Department and the progress of the Quality Programme is a must for the period to come, where the Authority shall complete all the required procedures and train the new employees to reach established targets.

To be formally accredited according to ISO 17025, is no longer an unreachable dream

for the Water Establishment - it is rather an objective at hands reach, with the support and assistance of QUALEB, the Quality Programme, whose management team and expertise have had a major positive impact, not only on the performance and activities of the South Lebanon Water Establishment, but also on the performance of all the water authorities throughout Lebanon.

The work ethic and methodology, adopted by the QUALEB experts, were highly commendable, making it easier for the employees at the laboratories to understand the procedures required to reach the intended target of formal accreditation. We are looking forward for further co-operation with the Quality Programme during the period to come, in view of the need to ensure a high quality public welfare.

Head / Director General
South Lebanon Water Authority
Engineer Ahmad Nizam



• HE Minister Haddad with members of the QUALEB Team



List of 13 ISO Certified Companies supported by QUALEB (June 30th 2008)

Company	Products/Services	ISO Standard	Certification Date
Liban Cave Winery, Zahle	Wine	22000:2005	07th Feb. 08
Abdul Rahman Halab, Tripoli	Arabic Sweets	22000:2005	12th Feb. 08
QUALEB, Quality Programme	Quality Infrastructure	9001 : 2000	16th April 08
Al Rassoul Al Aazam Hospital	Hospital kitchens	22000:2005	17th April 08
Zaatar W Zait Restaurant	Food Services	22000:2005	19th April 08
Roadster Diner, HQ, Beirut	Restaurant	22000:2005	24th May 08
Al Kazzi Trading Establishment	Mixed roasted/coated nuts	22000:2005	13th June 08
Poppins-Daher Int. Food Co.	Breakfast Cereals	22000:2005	16th June 08
Mimosa Paper Co., Zahle	Paper Products	9001 : 2000	17th June 08
Assaha Trad. Village Restaurant	Restaurant	22000:2005	17th June 08
Pharmadex Pharma Co.	Pharmaceuticals	9001 : 2000	26th June 08
Alfa Interfood sal, Zahle	Canned Food products	22000:2005	26th June 08
Second House Products	Puddings, Ready Mixes	22000:2005	26th June 08

Minister visits QUALEB

HE Minister Haddad, paid a recent courtesy visit to the offices of QUALEB, to meet the team members and thank them for their efforts over the last three years. In reply, Ali Berro, Director, Quality Programme presented the Minister with a small memento, thanking him for his strong support to the activities of the Quality Programme, during his time as Minister of Economy & Trade.