



Confederation of Danish Industry



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ISSUE BRIEF, WG1

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Arab countries, excl. Turkey and Palestine have a trade deficit vis-à-vis the European Union that amounts to EUR 2.5 billion per year with regard to food. The deficit is among other a result of the demands that exporters are met with from the European Union and a lack of access to concurrent information on changes in the demands.

At the kick-off conference held in September 2010, the group of representatives from Arab-EU network identified the following focus areas that would aid in increasing exports to the European Union:

- Up-skill enterprises
- Packaging, quality, labelling, shelf life
- SME's & not large companies
- Private Public Partnerships

2. MAIN DELIVERABLE

The main deliverable by Working Group 1 is to seek enhanced access to the European market for exporters of agricultural and food products originating within the greater Arab free trade area.

The WG will work towards this goal using a variety of policy advocacy tools starting from the development of a position paper that will provide the foundation for the development of a policy strategy that eventually will be implemented by the WG following the acceptance by its members.

3. PURPOSE

The overarching objective is to achieve sustainable economic growth and development in the agricultural and food sector in the Greater Arab region by bringing down the costs and risk of exporting to the European Union.

The specific focus will be identifying measures that will enable exporters:

- To prove that they live up to the complex and often unpredictable phytosanitary and sanitary rules and regulations in the European Union
- To comply with the labelling scheme existing in the European Union

4. SUB THEMES

Phytosanitary and sanitary issues

- Traceability (eg.: Dairy products): EU should acknowledge traceability schemes on a company level rather than at a country level
- Collective vs individual punishment (eg.: Brown rot in potatoes, aflatoxin in nuts, Mediterranean flies, pesticide residues in vegetables and fruit): Bans and lockouts should target the individual exporter rather than the country of origin.
- Proper notification period: EU should provide advance notification of changes relating to standards and administration
- Subjective vs. fact based interpretation of rules and regulation: EU should apply same interpretation of standards
- Rejection based on “precautionary principle”: EU/country in question should enter into a dialogue prior to applying the precautionary principle

Labelling

- Limit the mandatory number of languages to three
- Standardization of nutritional information on packages

5. SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS

Dairy products (cheese, yoghurt, milk)

Meat Products (processed meat and poultry)

Processed agrofood (canned, jarred, frozen, dried, vacuum)

Agrofood / fresh produce (vegetables, fruit, roots)

Oil products (olive and vegetable oil)

Wheat / processed products of wheat (pasta, confectionary, cookies, bread, flour)

6. TIME SCHEDULE / WORK PLAN

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Action between meetings	13.: Deliver a range of cases covering as many as the topics as possible	Consult with EU Expert until end of January					
Meeting			End of February: WG2 in		WG3 in Lebanon		
Outcome						Policy statement Strategy and implementation plan	