

Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform

# NAPC

National Agricultural Policy Center

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# **Competitiveness of Agricultural Exports**

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## **Introduction**

Within the activities of the 2007 Agricultural Policy Forum series of the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) of the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and with the support of the FAO Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA, a seminar was organized on “Competitiveness of Agricultural Exports”. Professor J.M. Garcia Alvarez-Coque, Thematic Advisor of NAPC’ trade policies division, presented this seminar on 1 August 2007, at the NAPC premises in Damascus.

The seminar sought to analyzing and assessing the agricultural export competitiveness of countries in the context of globalization through looking at the whole value chain<sup>1</sup> of trade.

In his presentation, Prof. Alvarez-Coque introduced to the audience two approaches to asses the country competitiveness and the related indicators. He also presented an assessment of Syrian agro-food trade situation shedding lights on the major problematic factors that affect the ability of the country to attract foreign investments and to access the international markets. In addition, he focused on the governance rules among stakeholders in the value chains addressing to establishing good and strong relations in coordination with the nation wide reforms. Moreover, he discussed the supermarket revolution and the retailers’ strategies to create economic rents in the value chain. Then he traced the challenges the suppliers of fresh produces are likely to face as a result of retailers’ expansion worldwide.

The expert concluded addressing the aspects that need to be taken into account in order to build and improve the Syrian exports competitiveness. In addition, he pointed out to the place the NAPC has for acting in such framework, to set the needed stable and fruitful collaboration in different value chains, in order to upgrade the position of farmers and exporters companies in Syria and enabling to access the world markets.

## **Overview of the Presentation**

The NAPC Director Mr Ateih El Hindi welcomed the participants and presented the Professor Alvarez-Coque, pointing to his academic background, as a professor at Department of Economics and Social Science at Universidad Politecnica de Valencia, Valencia, Spain; having several published books and articles in this field.

Then he gave the floor to Mr Pirro-Tomaso Perri, Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) of the FAO Project, to talk on behalf of Ms. Salwa Moubarak Amber the FAO Representative in Syria.

The audience was combined of national and international attendants and included representatives of the MAAR and other Syrian Ministries and institutions, as well as of national and international organizations. (See Annex 1 for the list of participants).

Mr Alvarez-Coque started by expressing his gratitude to the NAPC for giving him this opportunity to share some ideas about agricultural exports competitiveness and to promote the debate about this issue. In addition, he commended the work of the National Agricultural Policy Centre (NAPC). He remarked that it is a very fruitful reality to enhance debate and discussion in the country to help the government and other actors in policies implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Different terms are used: value stream (Womack and Jones), value system (Porter), filiere (French school), and global commodity chain (Gereffi).

From the outset, he talked about the globalization of the market from a simplified picture in an attempt to allocate Syria in international division of world economies.

As he addressed there are winners and losers countries in referring to globalization. Some countries have really succeeded in international trade when they opened their economy. Many of those countries were able to do that with an active and supporting role, not absolute intervention, of their states..

Accordingly, the world could be classified into different categories or groups of countries:

- Developed countries: they have concentrated more on intangible activities (services and goods).
- Middle-income countries: they carry out tangible activities especially in products processing.
- Developing economies: their competitiveness is based on price competition and cheap labor. These countries have also taken some steps to be inserted in the international trade.
- Countries are really excluded from globalization and even marginalized, because they couldn't find their way neither as intangible producers nor as tangible not and even as cheap labor and price competition based products, especially in Sub Saharan in Africa.

Mr Alvarez-Coque located Syria in the third category stressing on the possibility to upgrade the Syrian position in the international trade.

### **How to assess competitiveness**

The speaker referred to two possible approaches used in assessing the country competitiveness: the first one, "the Standard Approach", is of more traditional and standard nature focusing on the outcomes of exports. The second, "the Structural Approach", is of more structural and macroeconomics nature looking at the structural sources of competitiveness.

#### *The Standard Approach*

The standard approach stands on the outcomes, results, and the revealed performance achieved by a country in international trade. Namely, it is used to assess a country competitiveness through its exporting ability sector by sector. Moreover, it is useful to assess a short-term success generated of temporary circumstances.

The indicators used in this method are per capita exports; share in world markets; and various measures of product and market diversification.

The expert indicated that Syria is an exporting country and it has attained impressive development in exports for some agricultural products, for example live animals and vegetable oils (olive oil).

As he assured, the Syrian agricultural products have interesting dynamics. Notably, the agricultural exporting activity in Syria is definitely an important sector. Whereas the agro foods exports almost total half of non-oil exports; as well as seven of ten exported goods are agricultural products. Importantly, due attention is to be given to agricultural production as an essential activity for exporting.

In assessing the Syrian agro-food competitiveness, Mr Alvarez-Coque referred to the international Trade Center (ITC) indices, based on UN data for (2001–2005), that follow

the traditional approach in assessing the competitiveness of a country. He recommended using these data as a very useful benchmarking to compare the Syrian situation with the performance of other countries in the world, slide (4).

As for the per capita exports and the share in world markets: in fresh food exports, the position of Syria has improved in the last five years; In processed food also Syria has improved, while its share in the world markets was stable.

The opposite is noticed for product diversification of fresh and processed food. A strong concentration of exports has achieved for few numbers of fresh food and processed products, while market diversification was stable for the fresh food but less for the processed.

The speaker clarified, this is possibly due to external problems such as the effects of political context, but hopefully a positive effect would come by the entry into force of the Syrian-EU Association Agreement (AA). The Agreement will open new market opportunities and stable framework for Syrian trade. Nevertheless, Mr Alvarez-Coque stressed that positive effects would last only in the short-term, but for the long run, Syria has to seek for a wider diversification of markets. As he suggested, sources of problematic factors of Syrian exports competitiveness should be taken seriously into account.

### *The Structural Approach*

The structural (systemic) approach focuses on assessing every acting factor only the competitiveness of a nation, and not in just of a given sector. Therefore, many influencing variables are involved.

The speaker addressed that according to structural factors the nations acting factors involve their services, products, territories, and their people. These factors would allow nations to be competitive in a globalization world. Unlike the traditional approach, this approach is useful for agriculture competitiveness over the long-term and allows drawing strategies for success. To apply the systemic approach the agricultural sector has to be considered as a separated part from the rest of the economy.

It is no longer right the idea of that reaching efficiency in one point of the system is enough to reach efficiency for the long term. Namely, it is not enough to reach a lot of efficiency in increasing yields in one agricultural product, because we have also to analyze all factors surrounding this product that allow for marketing and upgrading the quality of this product.

As he clarified, this approach is needed to avoid having the so called “Island- efficiency” that often leads to bottlenecks and systemic inefficiency. This trend is noticed when a country is very efficient in one point of a production system while the other points are not evenly efficient too, the rest of the system becomes a bottleneck.

The speaker also pointed out another contradiction of production growth that in many developing countries could actually be impoverishing. The paradox happens mostly in the agricultural sector, particularly in primary products. When a country focuses on increasing production in one product to achieve a spectacular growth, the prices goes down making the income also going down. It is a contradiction and even a west when invest in improving production and income growth that may not be kept for a long term (not sustainable).

The expert stressed therefore on the necessity to focus on all links involved and the related stakeholders in a production system to identify which activities are subject to

increasing or declining returns. Then it would be possible to aim at the whole value chain competitiveness not only one point of it.

### *The Porter's Diamond*

Mr Alvarez-Coque referred to the "Porter's Diamond" to illustrate the different aspects of the structural approach of competitiveness. As he explained, the PD is a simple perspective used for assessing relative competitive strength and position of nations, and by implication their industries competitiveness. Four inter-linked growth aspects form the diamond shape of Porter analysis: the factor conditions and demand conditions with structure and strategy of rivalry of their related and supporting industries.

In a country like Syria, the agricultural products rely on abundant labor and on natural resources that allow for producing good products. However, this is not enough, because there is a need for supporting industries and demand conditions. This includes the need to access the EU markets as well as to develop the domestic market for different products.

The original point of this approach, as the expert explained, is that the competitiveness of a nation or a sector depends on the sector structure, competition, strategies of firms, new entrance weakness, and on the way a small and medium enterprises are encouraged to start business. As he assured those are the top points in the PD to be strongly focused on.

Importantly, the expert put lot of emphasis on the government role to intervene for allowing conditions for competitiveness by supporting each part of the Porter's Diamond. Thus, it should act as competition director, innovation enhancer as well as demand stimulus. Again, he assured that it is not the matter of being efficient in agriculture; the matter is of working for agriculture and nation efficiency together. Since nation efficiency is a precondition for agricultural growth, coordination is greatly needed for growing together.

### **Stages and Problematic factors**

As for the position of Syria in the world, Mr Alvarez-Coque referred to World Economic Forum (WEF)<sup>2</sup> (April 2007) assessment for 124 countries in the world. The WEF assessment was based on interviews to businesspersons in each country.

In this analysis, the world economies are classified under three main groups related to three main stages of economy development: factor driven economies, efficiency driven economies, and innovation driven economies. Moreover, the WEF analysis identified the basic problematic factors, which could be considered also as factors of competitiveness, for each stage (slide 7). As for example, the transition countries are classified between efficiency and innovation driven economies.

Mr Alvarez-Coque addressed that it is the first time that the WEF has produced data resources for Syria. Thus, this is a major achievement where Syria is inserted into a kind of benchmark context and it is a good guideline to locate the country.

In this assessment, Syria is classified under the factor driven economies group that includes 48 countries, whereas this category is based on the structural factors as main indicators. Accordingly, the basic requirements that are determinant for Syria are

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<sup>2</sup> The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** is a Geneva-based foundation whose annual meeting of top business leaders, national political leaders aims to create the foremost global partnership of business, political, intellectual and others.

institutions, infrastructure, good macroeconomic environment, and health and primary education.

The efficiency enhancers' factors are also important for Syria. They are linked to higher education and training, market efficiency, and access to technology.

The innovation driven economies include the most developed economies such as Sweden and Norway. In this group, efforts should be focused in business sophistication and innovation. This is also important as factors of competitiveness for Syria but not as much as it is for Sweden and Norway.

#### *Problematic factors for Syria*

In particular, the businesspersons ranked the following problematic factors that Syria should pay attention to: government bureaucracy, access to financing, corruption, inadequately educated work force, foreign currency regulations, supply of infrastructure, restrictive labor regulations, and tax regulations.

The speaker addressed that combating corruption is not just a factor for being more competitive or not, but it is a part of ethics. Therefore, it has some influences on the way the world is looking at the country. In addition, we should take care of educating the work forces and keep working on foreign currency regulations, supply of infrastructure such as ports and airports, as well as on labor and tax regulations.

Of course, there are also positive points in the WEF evaluation of Syria. As for example there are relatively good health services for population comparing to other countries, and good participation of women in the work market.

He assured that we do not only need to work on agriculture development and technology improvement, but furthermore we have to work together in coordination with the nation wide reforms. This is because these aspects definitely affect the ability of the country to attract foreign investments and access the international markets.

#### *Syrian rank in GCI*

The speaker shed lights on the Syrian rank out of 48 factor driven economies according to Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI), (slide 9). In this assessment, the comparison is made among countries of the same group.

Syria is ranked fifth for the basic requirements and second in health and primary education, while it is ranked thirty seven for market efficiency and thirty one for technology access.

This information is very valuable to the country to be considered therefore as guidance of weakness factors to get more attention.

#### **The issue of governance in value chains**

Governance rules among stakeholders in the value chains can be defined. As observed, the relation among different actors of the value chain exhibits some organization rather than being random. Usually, the value chains are governed by rules that affect the products specifications, processes and logistics. These rules encompass the activities, actors, roles, and functions up or down the value chain.

Moreover, the expert pointed to a more sectoral-based factor, which is of special importance for Syria, that the state has to work in establishing good and strong relations to announce the value chain of the country exports to the world.

### **The traditional marketing**

In this regard, he referred to a study, conducted in 2003 by the NAPC, on export promotion for marketing fruits and vegetables of Syria. The study showed that the problem is that the relation between domestic actors and foreign traders and even the retailers is guided by traditional rules, which involve high marketing costs. This traditional value chain was and still highly based, in some parts of the system, on commissioners (slide 11). This type of chains makes a relatively long and sophisticated distance between farmers and foreign markets, as well as it affects the capacities of exporting Syrian products to other countries. Therefore, we have to work for shortening the path between Syrian farmers and foreign markets.

### **The supermarket revolution**

In the third part of his presentation, Mr Alvarez-Coque moved to talk about one of the structural changes in the world markets induced by globalization. It is the supermarket revolution for retailers, and its differences from traditional marketing.

A paradigm shift in the way firms sought to compete started in 1990s, whereas the nature of competition moves from firm against firm to supply chain against supply chain. This revolution is already happened in the EU, and it is newly taken place in the Arabic Gulf states where the retailing is increasingly concentrating.

Currently, there are several giant retailers firms in the world. These giants firms have lot of information about markets and consumers more than any government. They increasingly have more power and put their weight on the global trade. Thus, not only the trade policies matter, but also decisions of the lead companies. In 1992, they were located in eleven countries only, while now they have expanded to more than eighty countries in the world (slide 13). They also have succeeded in increasing their presence in the developing world.

Out of twenty biggest retailers, the major one is Wal-Mart (USA) with 220 billion US\$ revenues (slide 12). Another big retailer company for agro food is Carrefour with 60 billion US\$ revenues. As announced lately, Carrefour is looking to set a partnership in Syria as possible markets for expansion.

#### *Supermarket strategies*

Mr Alvarez-Coque gave some insights on the supermarkets strategies assuring they are effectively integrating world.

The retailers are competing to differentiate their stores in consumers' mind. So in order to establish consumer confidence they increasingly focus on customers demand trying to have customer loyalty programmes. They also focus on fresh items as a way to catch the customers. This is seen here in the new Syrian supermarkets where there is a great focus on fresh products such as fruit, vegetables, meat and fish.

A paradox is appearing because supermarkets have to act in extreme competitive environment, especially the giant firms. In comparison to producers, there are a few giants firms in the world and they are strongly competing taking as a strategy the cost reduction of supply chain and to have more flexible and faster decisions at a lower cost.

Obviously, companies are seeking to construct ever more efficient and responsive supply chains, as the nature of competition moves from firm against firm to supply chain against supply chain. However, many of these firms don't have an isolate strategy; they

want to have closer collaboration with suppliers in order to target customers and to lower costs in the total value chain not only in one side of it.

The giant' supermarkets have achieved sustainable competitive advantage through the management of efficient and effective supply chains in collaboration with their customers and suppliers. Therefore, exporting activities focus on introducing suppliers in a value chain in collaboration with supply chain. Supply chain collaboration is now the preferred business model for retail food chains. Business success therefore will be derived from companies managing and enhancing the total performance of the supply chain. The retailers are increasingly "powerful buyers" and they depend upon on fewer, larger, and more dedicated suppliers. Some retailers prefer to be consistent and specialized in high quality products ensured by quality systems. They also seek to do business with a suppliers' captain who is able to support big quantities. So it is important to having suppliers big enough to deal with the giants firms.

One of the supermarket side effects is the diminishing relevance of the role of wholesalers in many countries. These markets, which characterized by low prices, are spread out every where in the world. However, they are still important as a last choice of producers for selling.

Another aspects is the strategic emphasis on 'own label' for retailers' firms. This requires strategic approach to supply chain relationships for 'destination categories', particularly for fresh produce, meat, and ready-meals. This is because there is a growing concern and awareness about food production related issues of safety, welfare and environmental impacts, as well as about food composition in concern to diet and health.

#### *Critical Success Factors (CSFs)*

The expert turned to talk about the critical success factors to deal with retailers and delivery requirements. Starting with quality and safety, he clarified that safety is necessary and quality is beyond safety, whereas a producer get a premium when he offer differentiated products.

In addition, suppliers need scale, uniformity, frequency, and continuity. They also based on customers loyalty and reliability that including a lot of risk because normally there is asymmetric frame among the actors/ stakeholders. For example, sometimes one supplier has two or three customers or one customer has ten or fifteen suppliers. Thus, there is asymmetry in suppliers' negotiating power and the extension of losing reliability is very high. Because it is not just decreasing prices if the suppliers lose that loyalty and relations, but they put weight on the market.

#### *Impact on fresh produce suppliers*

The retailers' strategies strongly impact on fresh produce suppliers; the speaker summarised these impacts as the following:

- First, the retailers have the power to switch volumes between suppliers while it is very difficult for them to change customers.
- Suppliers are forced to accept low prices in order to get volume growth. If the suppliers want to sell they have to be reliable and to meet the standards of the retailers. Notably, if they don't conform to these standards they have to accept lower prices. The case here is these standards are the retailers' targets or objectives or they are just an instrument used to reduce prices.

- Innovative growers increase their cooperation with buyers and other members of the supply chain. Even if the suppliers don't like retailers they have to collaborate with them to see the ways of placing their supplies in the market.
- Preferred suppliers have investment costs related to changing production practices. This is even harder because usually the retailers try to transfer the cost of implementing production practices to producers.
- Supermarkets favour farmers who are EurepGAP and other certifications compliant.
- Supermarkets tend to favour large scale farmers not small farmers leading to social implications.

## **Conclusion**

Mr Alvarez-Coque concluded the key work of his presentation assuring that we have to establish good frameworks for cooperation along the value chains. This is not easy, because as he addressed a lot work has to be done to build and improve the nation competitiveness. As well as, we need to improve the linkages between stakeholders in Syria and the others in the world markets. And this is a shared responsibility involving the government and every one.

Usually, stakeholders in value chains are interested in cost reduction, quality upgrading and risk management. Having a kind of stable collaboration could be considered a way to reduce risk. Therefore, we need to understand what enables cooperation forms to perform successfully; and realize why, where, and when cooperation can be valuable.

Moreover, he summarized the key points for dealing with export competitiveness. Essentially, focusing on systemic approach, economy-wide aspects, and rules of governance within the value chain are highly needed.

Finally, he pointed out to the significant role that could be played by the NAPC in performing in this frame. The NAPC contribution would allow making the position of farmers and exporters companies in Syria stronger through having a stable and fruitful collaboration in different value chains in order to upgrade the Syrian position as high as possible in the world markets.

## Summary of Discussion

The audience actively participated in the forum by adding information and offering cues for debate. The main points of the discussion can be summarized as follows:

- To motivate the agricultural sector to create better opportunities and enhance the productivity, agricultural subsidies may be needed as other countries in the world that grant support to their farming sector. What is needed also is that subsidies should be targeted to specific goals, farming groups or projects in order to gaining efficiency.
- The external factors that affect the ability of Syrian agricultural exports to compete in the international markets mainly are the international agreements such as the EU-Association and the WTO. In this regard, the lecturer expressed his wish that Syria joins such agreements as soon as possible as they provide with a framework for policy reform in the country.
- Concerning the complementation between local and foreign markets, foreign markets are essential to help Syria to develop its economy. On the other hand, local market has to be encouraged to defend local products. This is not a matter of protectionism; it is a matter of promoting local products, which are part of the Syrian culture. This is also a factor of attraction of tourism to the country.
- About the methods that could be useful for stopping export of a certain product, though it is highly demanded internationally, the expert commented that he cannot provide clear hints about how to organize exports. As he clarified, the country can have their own strategies to control exports by preventing from exporting low quality products and setting the corresponding standards. However, public authorities cannot stop exporting if they want to comply with WTO rules. Private companies instead can organize supplies in a way to optimize their foreign sales.
- The expert suggested, as a best way, that producers might protect themselves from trading troubles through the cooperation in its wider sense. Cooperation can take many legal forms and these have to be evaluated by the Government. Some of these forms make use of foreign stakeholders that can reach agreements with Syrian farmers. In addition, some cooperatives in Europe would be interested in collaborating with farming associations in Syria.
- As for the negative impacts of supermarkets proliferation in Syria on small retailers, Mr Alvarez-Coque addressed that introduction of big retailers in Syria will be a fact in the next years. They are indeed a factor of country's modernization. However, some legal provisions can minimize their social negative effects, while their social positive effects can be maximized by helping Syrian farmers to act in a coordinated way. There are also traditional forms of markets that Syria can modernize by taking into account foreign experience in enhancing local markets.
- Looking for addressing the critical points, the World Economic Forum and UNDP surveys don't give us a list of solutions but they just present the problems, which is important by itself. The country has to undertake the solutions, but to recognize the existence of the problems is in fact a part of the solution.
- About the other dimension "import competition" and the capacity of the country to be competitive with imported goods, taking into account that Syria will be obliged to open its markets to European products in the contest of the European Association Agreement (according to the reciprocity concept).

The lecturer addressed that reciprocity involves a big challenge for the Syrian farming sector. In present times, cereal prices are relatively high so this could reduce the negative impacts of trade liberalization on this kind of commodities. In the long term, the results will be positive for the Syrian economy if the trade agreement allows the Syrian sectors to be competitive. There is also a need of not forgetting the distribution of benefits and costs of the association by supporting the weakest part of the Syrian population.

- About the capacity of local farmers to compete with the foreign farmers as for example the Chinese or Brazilian: Mr Alvarez-Coque clarified the local farmers are currently in a weaker position to compete because they are not organized. However, because comparative advantages exist the Syrian farmers will not be excluded if they act coordinately through organizations to collaborate with retailers.
- To a query on the possibility to exclude the wholesale traders from the marketing chain: the expert stressed that wholesale markets are still important and efforts have to be made to enhance their facilities and their role in Syria. However, the key word is to encourage direct links between producers and retailers to avoid commissioners. Apart from such collaboration, Syrian products have to differentiate and increase their value added.
- Concerning the fact that Syrian water resources are increasingly declining and deteriorating (from 8 billion cum. in the last year to 5 billion this year), the lecturer emphasized that modernization of irrigated areas can help to make an efficient use of water. Nevertheless, in the long term, it is better that water be devoted to high value crops to get better returns to the country.

## **Annex (1) List of Participants**

### **Agricultural Chambers' Federation**

Ala'lo, Mohammad, President

### **Agricultural World Magazine**

Abuajib, Ola, Editor Trustee

### **Arab Region Center for Advisory Studies & Agricultural Development (ARCADS)**

Bakour, Yahia, General Director

### **French Embassy**

Kaadan, Wael, Agricultural Attaché  
Shibib, Kinda

### **Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

- Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA

Al-Matar, Asma, Translator, and Liaison Assistant

Alloush, Shahed, Secretary

Al-Saleh, Reem, Administrative Assistant

Bridge, Oliver, FAO Junior Consultant

Monotti, Chiara, FAO Junior Consultant

Perri, Pirro-Tomaso, Chief Technical Adviser

Keilani, Nasouh, Computer Technician

Tedesco, Ilaria, FAO Junior Consultant

Romano, Donato, FAO Consultant

Cafiero, Carlo, FAO Consultant

- Project of Irrigation Systems Rationalization at Rass Elein

Ghali, Danieli, Consultant

### **General Commission for Agricultural Scientific Research (GCASR)**

Ziadeh, Rola, Economic Studies

Genadi, Usama, Economic Studies

### **Ministry of Agriculture & Agrarian Reform**

- Agricultural Affairs Dept.

Abu Assaf, Hayat, Horticultural Division

Alatar, Fatat, Horticultural Division

Ishak, Yosra, Horticultural Division

Libzo, Zora, Horticultural Division

- Agricultural Economy and Investment Dept.

Abassa, Bibers, Economic Studies Section

Alkassar, Hosam, Deputy Director of Studies and Economic Evaluation Sector  
Ahmad, Bashar, Economic Studies Section  
Ayoub, Majd, Deputy Director  
Sewar, Hassan, Chief of the Costs Study

- Agricultural Extension Dept.

Alhasan, Rajae, Chief of Social Studies Circuit  
Alshawa, Haytham, Chief of Human Resources Development Circuit

- Agricultural Marketing Dept.

Alkhabase, Mohammed, Chief of Quality & Marketing Structures  
Khazma, Mohammed, Director  
Kabani, Falak, Circuit Chief  
Kadah, Nasima, Circuit Chief

- Albadieh Development Project

Abedruhman, Nasma, Chief of Planning Circuit

- Plant Protection Dept.

Ismael, Isam, Pests Management Section

- Planning and Statistics Dept.

Falooch, Ghazi, Statistics Section

- Project of Fruit Trees Development

Authman, Amira, Financial Division

- Journalistic Office

Alsahnaoui, Ali, Journalist

- **National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC)**

Al Hindi, Atieh, NAPC Director

*- Technical Staff*

Al Ashkar, Haitham  
Al Hamwi, Bashir  
Al Saadi, Usama  
Al Mojahed, Hassan  
Alzoughbi, Samira  
Ammouri, Noman  
Atieh, Basima  
Babbili, Mahmoud  
Baghasa, Hajar  
Nahas, Bashar  
Dahash, Yahia  
Haj Shareef, Mahmoud  
Hamza, Raid  
Hayder, Firas  
Husni, Wafica  
Karkout, Me'dad  
Melli, Nadia

Mulahasan, Abir  
Nehme, Nawal  
Rahal, Maamoun  
Shehadeh, Widad  
Soubh, Samira  
Salameh, Arowa

*- Support Staff*

Almagrabi, Najlaa  
Dawod, Manahel  
Homs, Mutaz  
Horani, Maha  
Hothaifa, Gehan  
Issa, Mahlobi

### **Ministry of Economy & Trade**

Baba, Samar, Studies Circuit

### **National Farmers Office**

Almustafa, Ahmad, Chief of Farmers Section

### **Stakeholders**

Alaghawani, Ihsan, Former Official

### **Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)**

Aldighly, Imad, Representative

### **Syrian Television**

Subeh, Ghassan, Editor

### **Teshreen Newspaper**

Taleb, Basem, Editor

### **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**

Siraj, Aldin, national team member of competitiveness

### **University of Damascus**

- Faculty of Agriculture

Al Atwan, Samaan, Professor, Agr. Economics Division

Kasem, Abdo, Professor, Agr. Economics Division