



A plan for nutrition education in Lebanon  
by Nuha Ibrahim Farraj

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE in Home Economics  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

This study was to show the need for better foods and nutrition education in Lebanon. The need is urgent because of the growing imbalance between population and food supply. This leads to malnutrition, but can be helped if the public is informed as to how to use their available resources to the fullest.

It was recognized that one remedy for this deficiency in formal situations is to include foods and nutrition information in the curriculum of the elementary, secondary, college and university programs.

In informal situations the deficiency can be helped by including nutrition information in materials presented to the general public by the use of the presently available health and community centers as well as mass media.

Based on the nutritional status of the Lebanese population and areas lacking in information, a plan was proposed for education of the public. Ways to apply the plan to different levels and situations of education were shown. The plan can be used in its entirety in health or foods and nutrition classes and can be easily adapted to the student's level of understanding. It can also be integrated into other subject matter if there is careful program planning. Examples of activities and information that the student can comprehend at each level are presented.

Methods of presenting nutrition principles to the public through health, community centers and mass media were demonstrated as a further extension of the plan. Examples of how foods and nutrition education could be promoted through mass media were prepared. The advantages of each medium and their limitations were pointed out.

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Date May 25, 1971

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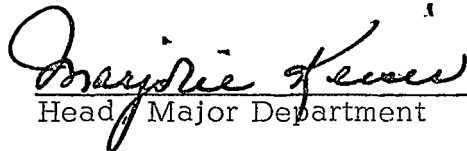
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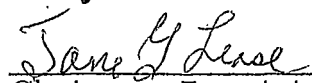
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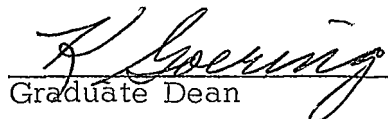
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## ABSTRACT

This study was to show the need for better foods and nutrition education in Lebanon. The need is urgent because of the growing imbalance between population and food supply. This leads to malnutrition, but can be helped if the public is informed as to how to use their available resources to the fullest.

It was recognized that one remedy for this deficiency in formal situations is to include foods and nutrition information in the curriculum of the elementary, secondary, college and university programs. In informal situations the deficiency can be helped by including nutrition information in materials presented to the general public by the use of the presently available health and community centers as well as mass media.

Based on the nutritional status of the Lebanese population and areas lacking in information, a plan was proposed for education of the public. Ways to apply the plan to different levels and situations of education were shown. The plan can be used in its entirety in health or foods and nutrition classes and can be easily adapted to the student's level of understanding. It can also be integrated into other subject matter if there is careful program planning. Examples of activities and information that the student can comprehend at each level are presented.

Methods of presenting nutrition principles to the public through health, community centers and mass media were demonstrated as a further extension of the plan. Examples of how foods and nutrition education could be promoted through mass media were prepared. The advantages of each medium and their limitations were pointed out.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Importance of Study

Lebanon, a developing country, is facing a population growth of 2.5 per cent a year. The food supply, on the other hand, is not increasing as rapidly, thus resulting in a serious situation in regard to the nutritional status of the population. Part of the solution can be increases in quantity and improvement in the quality of food produced. A more important factor will be better utilization of the existing food supply. Nutrition education will allow the public to make better use of the available resources and help them improve their nutritional status.

The causes of malnutrition in Lebanon are not always based on the economics of food production. A large percentage of available food is lost in the fields, in the villages, at home or in the market, due to lack of knowledge of food handling. Even more food waste is caused by choice in Lebanon. It is strongly influenced by custom, habit, religion, and prejudice, all of which stem from the cultural pattern, and often result in poor selection of food and poor nutritional practices.

All people, particularly those changing from production to a market economy, find themselves altering their food habits. This

sometimes leads to an improvement but frequently results in a deterioration of family diet. People living in an emerging economy do not always get the best value for their money. For instance, frequently they do not know how to buy food which will provide a balanced diet, nor do they have the knowledge of suitable weaning practices or of the general rules of good child feeding. They do not understand that the price of food on the market may have little to do with the food's nutritional value.

It is well understood that nutrition education is not the prerogative of a single discipline but comes within the scope of all workers who are in direct contact with families or who are carrying out programs in communities. It is a part of food and nutrition education, health education, and community development. Indeed it is a part of all basic education. A well planned and well organized effort in food and nutrition education is needed to induce people to improve their food habits.

#### Need for the Study

Nutrition education is universally needed regardless of income, geographic location, cultural, social or economic pattern or level of education. There is no instinct that guides man to select those foods which meet the nutritional needs of the body, and knowledge is not inherited. Each new generation must be taught what foods to select

and why, and how foods affect health. One cause of malnutrition in Lebanon is ignorance of what constitutes good nutrition and what foods will furnish it. Food and nutrition education at present does not play a significant role in the fundamental education of school children in Lebanon. The Nutrition Survey of Lebanon in 1962 stressed the importance of nutrition education to help alleviate the nutritional problem in Lebanon (1).

#### Objectives of the Study

With this in mind this thesis hopes to put forward an approach of how food and nutrition education can help the Lebanese to achieve better nutrition by:

1. Presenting information basic to foods and nutrition education needs in Lebanon.
2. Indicating ways in which this plan can be included in the school curriculum in Lebanon.
3. Pointing out methods of presenting food and nutrition education to the general public through community action and mass media.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### History and Background

"Lebanon is a country of some 10,400 square kilometers in area, with a population of 2,000,000 people, barely pinpointed on a world map, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, along ancient and modern trade routes, highways of land, sea and air. A land whose shores are washed by the bluest of seas. A narrow coastal strip alternating between sand and rock which has felt the stamp of conquering armies, and seen the departure of its own 'legions'. Two mountain chains run parallel to each other, with a fertile valley between; its fertility is in striking contrast with the barrenness of neighboring countries, watered by several rivers, none large. A temperate climate, kind to the inhabitants. A land of striking contrast, of rugged mountain folk and shrewd businessmen, a mixture of old and new, a terrestrial Garden of Eden. The importance of this land lies in its strategic position. From time immemorial, trade routes have wound their way through it, and its ancient galleys have plied the seas. Invading armies have trampled its soil and left their inscriptions carved in its rock. Its mountains have provided refuge for the persecuted, and the rocky soil has yielded a scanty living. Its inhabitants are a mixture of races and creeds, both peaceful and turbulent, unaffected by the passage of time. Past and present are one, and intermingle harmoniously." (2).

#### Background

Lebanon is a young country of ancient origins. The Phoenicians settled around Tyre and Sidon in about the thirteenth century B.C. (3). As a crossroads of east and west it has felt the impact of many cultures and races. Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans successively ruled the country in the pre-Christian era, and were followed by Arabs, Crusaders, Mamelukes and Turks. Between World Wars I and

II, Lebanon was under a French mandate. Independence was declared in 1941 and full sovereignty granted in 1943 (4).

Lebanon is a Republic in which a unicameral Chamber of Deputies, elected by the people for four years, elects the President for six years. The latter appoints the Prime Minister and heads of Ministries upon approval by the Deputies. The Chamber of Deputies has proportional representation by religion as well as by region. Of the several ministries with responsibility for some aspect of nutrition may be listed the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education and Fine Arts, Defense, Economics, Social Affairs and General Planning (1).

Administratively, the country is divided into four districts, North Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon and the Beka'a, as seen on the map of Lebanon (Figure 1). Each district is governed by a Muhafiz (mayor) appointed by the Minister of the Interior. Physically, this small country encompasses a varied topography and climate. East of the narrow, warm Mediterranean coastal plain, the Lebanon Mountains rise abruptly to peaks that in some places are over 10,000 feet and frequently snow-covered. Beyond the mountains lies the Beka'a Valley which is hot and dry in summer and cold in winter. The eastern border of the country with Syria is the crest of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. Precipitation is relatively high along the coast and the western slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, twenty to thirty inches a year. East of the mountains the rainfall is less. The rainy

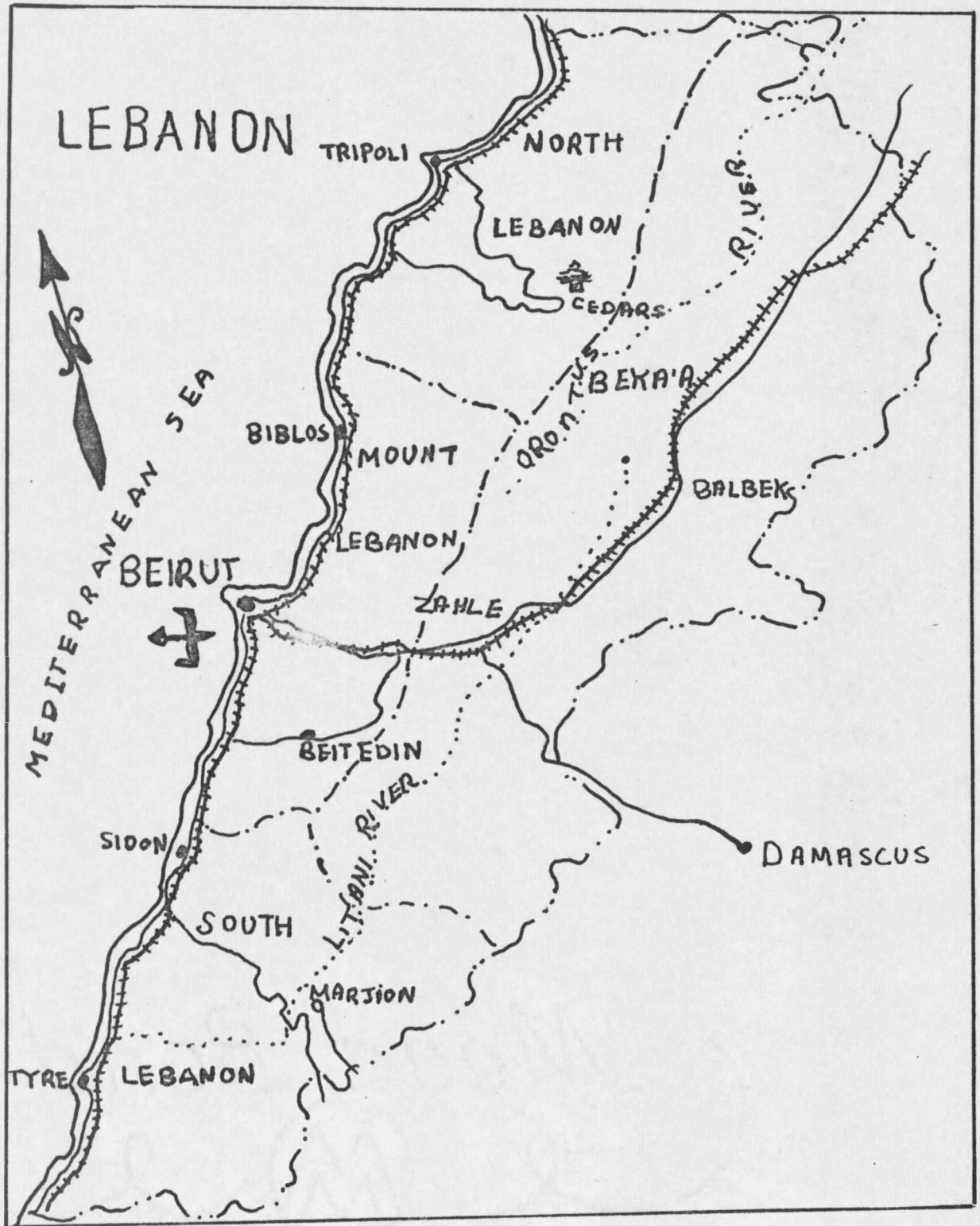


Figure 1 . -- Map of Lebanon.



season is November to March. Almost no rain falls from May to September when hot winds blow from the Syrian desert to the east.

The annual rate of growth of the population of Lebanon is about 2.5 per cent. Most of the people live in a village of a few hundred families and are often interrelated. About 137,000 Arab, Palestinian refugees live in 16 United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) centers throughout the country. Of this number 83 per cent receive the UNRWA rations and 94 per cent are Moslems (1).

Lebanese are predominantly Arab, although the population also includes groups of Armenians, Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians and Europeans. Many Lebanese emigrated to the Western hemisphere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to escape land pressures, and more people of Lebanese origin now live abroad than in the country. The official language is Arabic (Syrian dialect). French is the second language. There are about an equal number of Moslems and Christians in the country, the Moslems for the most part belonging to the Sunni or Shia sects. Most Christians are Maronites, although there are also Greek Catholics and members of the Greek and Armenian Orthodox churches (1).

Lebanon is a center of culture for the Near East. Its two outstanding universities are world-renowned, the American University of Beirut and the Universite' St. Joseph, frequently known as the French

University. The literacy rate in Lebanon is high, estimated at 65 to 80 per cent (5).

The economy of the country is based on trade and agriculture. Beirut, the capitol and chief port, is a leading commercial center for much of the Middle East, with a rapidly growing population, now over half a million. About five per cent of Lebanon's population might be considered well-to-do, 25 per cent middle class and the rest lower income. A survey of Beirut in 1964 indicated that half the families spent more than 50 per cent of their income for food. Living costs have risen about seven per cent a year since that time. Government policies in economics are designed to attract foreign capital and promote trade. Private enterprise is encouraged. These policies have helped maintain a stable economy (5).

Agriculture is second only to trade in its contribution to the national income. Approximately 50 per cent of the people are engaged in farming. Due to the mountainous terrain only about 30 per cent of the land is suitable for cultivation. Most farms are small and owner-operated. Relatively few have more than 25 acres, with scattered plots. Farmers often work part-time in construction or manufacturing to supplement their income. The two principal farming areas are the coastal plain and the Beka'a Valley. The wide range of altitude and climate makes it possible for Lebanon to produce a profusion of crops seldom found in one country of such small size. They include citrus

fruits, bananas, dates, olives, grapes, figs, apricots, peaches, apples, potatoes and cereals. Stock raising is much less important than crop production due to lack of pastures and fodder crops. Goats are the most common livestock (2).

Lebanon has about 2,400 miles of roads, of which 2,200 miles are hard-surfaced. Most are good roads. The chief highways are the coastal road, the Beirut-to-Damascus road across the mountains, and the road through the Beka'a Valley. Most transportation is by trucks, buses and cars. The railroads are used mainly to transport freight long distances. The two main rivers of the country, the Litani and the Orontes, flow through the Beka'a, the former southward and the latter northward. Beirut International Airport, the largest and most modern airport in the region, is served by a number of international airlines (4).

"The Ministry of Health reported in 1965 that Lebanon had 1,440 physicians, or one for every 1,062 of the population. At that time there were 132 hospitals, 608 nurses and hospital attendants, 450 registered pharmacists and 356 midwives. Most of the physicians, however, were located in the large population centers." (5).

Since 1952 the United States has taken part in a number of programs in Lebanon aimed at improving agricultural practice, water supplies and irrigation, rural electrification, highways and adult education. A few examples of this assistance are the Litani River

development project which when completed will provide electricity to rural villages, and bring agricultural information to farmers through extension service-type work. The U. S. Operations Mission has assisted in the organization of the Lebanese Management Association and, with the Government of Lebanon and the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, helped establish the Industry Institute which serves as a consultant for technical assistance to industries in Lebanon and Neighboring countries (5).

#### Education System in Lebanon

The historical and cultural background of Lebanon has had a tremendous impact on the state of education found at present in Lebanon. These forces explain the strong European influences existing in the various school systems and why the country is still struggling to build up a type of education which can, for the first time, respond to the needs and aspirations of the nation (6).

It was not only through direct foreign control that the Arab world came into contact with the West, but also through schools and universities set up by lay and foreign missions which started to show interest in the area at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They made a vital contribution to the spread of Western ideas. All these cultural, historical, economic, social and educational influences have been summed up very comprehensively by an "axis of cleavage" designed

by D. K. Wheeler (Figure 2). "The radial lines indicate transformation or socio-cultural changes that are in process and the ensuing conflicts, potential or actual, that are relevant to education and the promotion of the educational system" (7). Some of the questions that arise are closely related to the transition from colonial status to independent nationhood. Others relate to the transition from a traditional society to a more complex industrialized one. Both changes bring up questions concerning the extent that the educational orientation can be changed from academic to vocational, the place education can fit into national planning, and the extent to which it can be made universal. Other issues might be related to effects of technology and mass media, increasing urbanization, the manpower needs of the community, and the growth of the questions or issues are interdependent or might be considered so (7).

The preceding paragraphs are intended to give the reader a glimpse into the kind of educational conflict and problems that Lebanon and the Arab countries have faced and are still facing. These obstacles and challenges parallel those of developing countries all over the world, for they are all trying to resolve the conflict successfully by educating people to answer the country's needs.

At present the educational system in Lebanon is a mixture of public and private education, both sectors functioning separately within a broad national context. There is no evidence of a









































































































































































































































