

SUMMARY OF SOME CENTRAL CONCEPTS DEVELOPED IN THE MEETING

STRATEGIC VISION OF ARGENTINE FOREIGN TRADE. EXPANSION TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Argentine Lebanese Chamber of Commerce presented its series of Business Meetings 2021 to boost a business promotion platform between Argentina and Lebanon towards the Middle East and the world, through its network “Lebanese around the World”. In the public activity carried out online on Wednesday, July 28, with the sponsorship of important business entities, the President of the Chamber, **Dr. Gabriel Aramouni**, raised the general framework at the opening and pointed out that the Lebanese inherit the Phoenician tradition of thousands of years of history that define them as entrepreneurs and generators of solid commercial, economic, social and cultural ties. Through the network promoted by the Chamber, it is intended to cooperate with the growth of Argentine exports to these important international markets. **Dr. Marcelo Elizondo**, prestigious consultant and international economic analyst, president of the Argentine Chapter of the International Chamber of Commerce and member of the Chamber’s Advisory Council, and engineer **Leonardo J. Sarquis**, prestigious expert in Agribusiness, Minister of Agroindustry of the province of Buenos Aires from 2015 to 2019 and member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber. Numerous exporters, business leaders, producers from various provinces, official authorities and representatives of the Lebanese community associations participated in the meeting.

- The Meeting was focused on pointing out some characteristics of international trade in the post-pandemic scenario, what strategies should be adopted by countries that want to grow in the foreign trade and what opportunities the Middle East market offers to Argentina.
- This destination represents around 7% of the total exported to the world, which was translated into about 4,000 million dollars in 2020, with sales of 4,500 million projected for this year. Most of the Argentine supply is made up of primary and value-added agricultural products and, increasingly, also of other non-traditional goods, such as medicines, medical instruments, machinery and tools, and several items for animal health.
- **Marcelo Elizondo** pointed out that there are various transformations in international trade and the pandemic acted as an accelerator of certain changes that were already taking place. In the first place, technological progress became more dynamic, and so consequently, it brought changes in the ways of producing and marketing. In this sense, it was emphasized the knowledge economy, which accompanies the appearance of differentiated demands, pointing out that tariff barriers are no longer so relevant in foreign trade. Now there are more demands on the sanitary, productive, environmental and labor conditions in which any good or service is produced, according to the new technologies such as blockchain or traceability. Product attributes and other factors such as religious or cultural also come into play.

• **Dr. Elizondo mentioned** that Lebanon and the Middle East in general are destinations that have many opportunities for SMEs and regional economies, highlighting that there is abundant demand for products that we can offer and it is not necessary to have a large scale to supply it. An ecosystem of binding architectures must be developed, that is to say, alliances between SMEs that add their offer, or complement each other as goods + services, or tangible + intangibles. At the same time, it is essential to have allies such as the Argentine Lebanese Chamber that know the market, understand it and can provide technical assistance and accompany the landing at the destination.

• He also stated that there is another trend in international trade related to the opening in thematic terms, in which everything is being linked; it is no longer necessary to deal with sectoral niches, but by integrating combined proposals for complementary goods and services, thus adding greater differentiation and value. International trade anticipates quite a strengthened recovery and it is forecasted a growth of 8% for 2021. Argentina has a concrete opportunity to consolidate and expand its presence in the Middle East and worldwide, and therefore, it is essential to develop greater export capacity in our companies.

• Along the same lines, **Dr. Aramouni** commented that the new globality demands a clear, innovative, organic and long-term strategic vision, to capitalize on the concrete opportunities for the expansion of our foreign trade to the Middle East and the world, thus allowing us to increase sensibly our level of exports, which is essential and vital for the economy and growth of our country.

AGROINDUSTRY AND BIO BUSINESSES THE EXPORTING KEY

• **Leonardo J. Sarquis** pointed out that 7 out of every 10 dollars that enter the country come from exports of products related to Agro and that more than 25% are from regional economies and local productions. The Middle East requires, for example, nuts, legumes, dairy, herb, fruits, vegetables, among many others, and SMEs can respond to that demand, but that requires getting on the innovation train. In the world, there are funds for a total of 800,000 million dollars intended for finance innovative projects related to the Bioeconomy, which today opens up many opportunities for our country. We must support and promote “agtech”, that is to say, startups based on scientific and technological advances that allow greater efficiency and production and the possibility of working in micro-environments.

• He continued mentioning that international trade tends to focus on new parameters and production models, where sanitary quality, carbon footprint control and production with traceability are required. Although the pandemic seemed to restrict the demand for food, after August 2020 it recovered quickly and with these new demands.

• **Eng. Sarquis** emphasized that we must be more competitive and develop better conditions to optimize and expand our current capacity as a producer and exporter of agro-food. To do this, we must also have consistency in terms of clear rules, consistent policies and legal certainty. In this sense, public-private cooperation is



essential since none of the parties can achieve these objectives on their own. Argentina has to position itself in the world with greater openness and permanence and associate itself with blocks that open opportunities for us, such as the Middle East. We must export more and achieve more participation of SMEs, supporting them and promoting their development. Nowadays, Differential products of high quality and added value, technological innovations and services, biotechnology, bio-economy, bio-inputs, show us where to focus. Bio-businesses, with a strategic focus on caring for resources and on sustainable production models and commitment to the environment, exponentially expand our export possibilities.

- Regarding the Argentine Agribusiness, Dr. Aramouni highlighted that it is a huge powerhouse of opportunities that generates investments, genuine work and the essential foreign exchange that our country requires for its recovery and development. In this context, Agribusiness is the export key to expand into the Middle East market.

- After an active exchange of questions and comments with the attendees, Dr. Aramouni closed the Meeting by thanking the sponsoring institutions and made the resources of the Chamber available to facilitate promotion mechanisms, technical and commercial assistance and new business development actions to meet the multiple demands for goods and services that Argentina can provide to these relevant markets. Moreover, he held an upcoming meeting at the end of August focused on the specific export opportunities that arise through its business network Lebanese around the World.

ABOUT THE ARGENTINE LEBANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- Founded in 1977, the Chamber deals with the promotion and development of commercial, economic, cultural, tourist and social connections with Lebanon and its area of influence, strengthening the traditional ties that unite both countries.

- Through its business network **Lebanese around the World**, made up of various entities, business people and international Chambers of Commerce of this origin, it promotes a business platform among Argentina, Lebanon, the Middle East and the rest of the world. The objectives of the Chamber are connecting companies and institutions, detecting opportunities, providing market intelligence, and technical and commercial assistance. With these series of Business Meetings, it is proposed to contribute ideas, initiatives and projects to boost the insertion of Argentina in these important markets with high potential.

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