

Questions and Answers

This document will be regularly updated to address all received questions.

Last update: October 1, 2021

ARE – Request for Application (RFA005)

1. *What do you mean by Seal, is it similar to traceability virgin olive oil?*

Answer: Seal of origin and quality will have specific parameters and deliver on the content of its technical requirements including traceability and quality control. It will ensure that the olive oil that is branded or has the seal, comes from olives grown/ produced in Lebanon. And produced following a clear process that produces extra virgin olive oil.

2. *Does the Seal mean you have to say what exactly you do? Is it traceability from a certain location or it applies from all over Lebanon, will someone control where the olive oil comes from?*

Answer: The seal will trace olive oil back to Lebanese orchards. This protocol is not set in stone, we are soliciting a capable entity to review these technical documents and provide recommendations for edits and changes, if needed could include multiple sub geographical region if there is a clear benefit in that.

3. *Suggestion: Libnor, has established quality mark like a seal, in order to support, provide promotion and market its products especially for the Lebanese consumer.*

If we are to provide a seal, what kind of audience will benefit from this, exportation, or local market? If for both, in order to make good traceability and provide all kinds of value chain for olive oil, 1) a lab is needed for this project and 2) records are needed coming from farmers and farm for this lab, 3) we need to establish olive oil quality center for collection. In this case when the three matters are prepared, it will be clear that this bottle represents this batch, this batch represents this farm related to this farmer. Plus, we need to prepare a software like a server in order to collect all this data in and the quality sealing could be loaded to QR code linked to all the life cycle to be clear for the consumer/ exporter and anyone that wants to check this bottle.

Answer: the seal will target the export market and the domestic market. It is not geared to one market more than the other. It is the manager of this seal can adjust or fine tune its various elements or marketing strategy to target one or the other market. There are no requirements for that as a fixed point.

With respect to the olive oil center, that would be ideal, and we understand the value of such a facility, but the vision of this seal is one of a decentralized approach-based on our assessments to be validated by the applicant that should be financially feasible and operational and logistically practical. And we were able to achieve this delicate balance as long as the governance and traceability aspects are addressed.

With respect to traceability and QR code, that is the future and that has to be part of it, the documents were developed in 2013 and QR codes are not that common, the protocol refers to bar codes but the applicant in owning and managing the seal will have the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments and updates to the protocol to ensure higher success and competitiveness.

For the certification of Libnor, they provided certification about the quality of olive oil, or the samples provided to them. Here we talk about seal of quality and origin, we are interested in knowing this high olive oil quality is from Lebanese farmers, not sure that Libnor traces back to Lebanese olive oil, they say high quality bottled in Lebanon. The idea for seal for quality by Libnor, is good, but in this RFA we talk about seal of quality and origin, the farmers will be involved in the project, the firm will work with several farmers, and it will be their supplier to have Lebanese olive oil and after with the owner, as for the certification we will have a seal for quality and origin.

4. This step is in need for a lab for the analysis of the olive oil. The olive oil will be produced after following up with the farmer and the person that will hold the seal of quality will have good experience but with the absence of lab that is able to analyze all the requested parameters for certifying the quality of an extra version olive oil, need of a lab for doing several parameters that we still cannot do them in Lebanon.

Answer: As ARE we are not dictating or specifying how we want the seal to work, we developed the technical documents, and we invite you as interested parties in managing and owning the seal in reviewing them and request assistance as needed to ensure that the seal is commercially successful and help develop the olive oil sector in Lebanon. If there is specific laboratory lacking in Lebanon and identified as a need, applicants can mention that in their proposal for potential funding and support.

5. If it is possible for the deadline of October 8 to be extended, as the olive harvesting has started and there is limited time to work on the application, and this will allow to provide additional time to work jointly with the partners on a quality concept note.

Answer: please submit your request on grants email Grants@lebanonare.org , in order to process the request and proceed accordingly. Please include the extension period needed.

**6. With time the association will own the seal, and will work on specifications, audit, certifications, and everything. But 1) will the seal
2) the feasibility of the project, ARE can fund NGO or association that will work on this subject, but the figures in the study are no longer feasible nowadays and the grant amount provided is low.**

Answer: As originally envisioned the seal, the protocol will include a visual seal or stamp that will be/ could be fixed on the container but the actual modality (whether it will be through a sticker that is pre numbered, or more linked to the auditing of the volumes produced and then marketed) will be reviewed and validated by ARE and subject matter specialists.

7. Is there a possibility to ask for fund to establish a new lab for performing all analysis for the olive oil?

Answer: through this RFA we are looking to partner with a future owner and manager of the seal, that is the party responsible for the overall management and administration of the seal program. But the entity might identify or highlight the need to develop specific testing to laboratory upgrades in order to help the seal access specific markets. The primary applicant will not be the laboratory itself; the lab/ testing facility will be one of the stakeholders that the applicant will include in the proposal.