

## SNAPSHOT

### South Dakota State University Faculty, Dr. Ashraf Hassan, Works with Dairy Industry in Lebanon



*Dr. Hassan conducted a cheese workshop for dairy industry professionals in Lebanon, the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Land O'Lakes International Development.*

Associate Professor of Dairy Science at South Dakota State University, Dr. Ashraf Hassan, recently completed a successful two-week volunteer abroad assignment in Lebanon. His visit was made possible by the Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Middle East and North Africa (MENA) program, which is being led by Land O'Lakes International Development and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). While on assignment in Lebanon, Dr. Hassan helped a small dairy company gain a competitive advantage by improving sanitation and expanding their products to include cheddar, feta, soft mozzarella, pizza, braid, and Gouda cheeses.

"I look at such volunteer assignments as opportunities to help small producers and support the mission of our Dairy Science Department and South Dakota State University," explained Dr. Ashraf Hassan. "I also learned about the dairy industry in different parts of the world. Dairy products and the export of their ingredients plays an important role in the US economy."

Prior to working with Dr. Hassan, the Lebanese company manufactured local white cheeses and an organic, strained, salted yogurt called Labneh. It's one of very few companies in Lebanon that manufactures organic local dairy products, and Hassan knew adding organic international cheeses would give them a competitive advantage.

"My objective was to adapt the cheese making protocols to fit within the facilities available in the plant, without putting a burden on the company to invest in new equipment," he said. Hassan shared plant sanitation and manufacturing best practices to help the company reduce cost, shorten its processing times, and eliminate major sources of contamination.

The host explained, "I was very happy when Dr. Hassan came and saw my cheese production site and equipment. I was afraid he [would] turn his back and leave [because]

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**—Dr. Ashraf Hassan, F2F  
Volunteer**

it had so many hygiene problems—plus we didn’t have the technical knowledge about new types of cheese production—but he was extremely helpful in assisting me through the progress.” He says Dr. Hassan’s assistance will enable him to expand his product line and, hopefully, increase sales.

While in Lebanon, Hassan conducted a cheese-making workshop at a medium-sized dairy company organized by the Lebanese’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In addition to the time Hassan spent with the dairy industry, he also visited the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

“My goal was to explore collaborative possibilities and create opportunities for SDSU Dairy Science faculty and students,” he said. “It’s very important to share the needs of the dairy industry around the world with our dairy manufacturing students who will lead the dairy industry in the near future.”

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