Main topics covered:

- Value chain creation in the agricultural sector to increase food security and resilience to human shocks in host communities (FAO, CIHEAM, ILO)

- Rural job creation and inclusion in Northern Lebanon in the context of the refugee crisis to improve labour market intermediation and the employability of vulnerable job seekers in refugee and host communities (ILO)

- How innovative agriculture (aeroponics, vertical farming) can fast-track agricultural production and employment in refugee areas, while providing refugees with transferrable skills that can be used upon their return to Syria (World Bank, FAO)

- Working on food security upstream of the refugee crisis in Syria by increasing resilience and food security in zones that are not or have already been exposed to a crisis (CIHEAM)

Best practices:

- Innovative and highly productive agricultural techniques (aeroponics, i.e. creating “climate in a box”, which allows farmers to grow different kinds of crops four or five times faster than can be grown conventionally) and sound planning of agricultural plots (for maximum water-harvesting and retention capacity) in collaboration with host communities, inspired by urban agriculture projects from around the world

- Municipalities can provide access to unused land: common spaces, rooftops, community plots, brownfield sites in cities, unused walls (vertical gardening)
Greywater reuse is low-cost can allow for significant water savings, while rainwater harvesting is one of the least costly means for water-scarce areas to stock rainwater during the less dry season for domestic and agricultural use.

**Lessons learnt:**

- Increasing local food security with low-energy and low-water input agricultural production is an important step towards increasing environmental and socio-economic resilience, particularly in the Middle East where water scarcity, desertification and volatile food prices threaten socio-environmental stability. Scaling-up agricultural production and skills amongst refugees and vulnerable populations in host communities can be a valuable pillar of rural and urban resilience.

- Agriculture can provide valuable means of trauma relief increasing wellbeing, while contributing to social cohesion by turning refugees into a non-competitive, productive force instead of a burden, which works with local producers struggling with labor shortages and rural exodus.

- Refugee-inclusive agricultural plots can increase local food security and boost the local economy while driving food prices down and remaining non-competitive for local populations. The volumes of food imported in Lebanon and Jordan particularly are such that if put in place properly, market outlets for refugees’ agricultural production will not compete with local produce and fuel tensions within host communities.

- Agricultural production can be launched rapidly (on a seasonal basis) provided limited and potentially low-cost material requirements are met. There are several challenges, notably land and water.

**Recommendations:**

- Food security is an essential component of regional security. Combined with climate change, food insecurity was an important factor leading to instability within Syria starting from the drought in 2006. Municipalities should therefore reflect on how they can increase their local food security and resilience (notably in terms of water) to be able to absorb incoming external shocks more effectively.

- Agriculture provides a wealth of transferrable skills that can be learned by refugees during their time in exile, and then put to good use upon their return. Indeed, production and income occur after a single season, and can thereby fast-track the recovery process for returning refugees.

- Agricultural produce can create extensive chains of value for refugees and host communities alike, which gain additional added value if they are certified as being inclusive (for vulnerable populations) or with low impact on the environment (environmental certification).

**Interest in follow up:** This working group generated interest amongst the audience to take part in the upcoming Community of Practice hosted by CMI.