

U.S. Country Commercial Guides



CCG Lebanon 2019

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Doing Business in Lebanon

Market Overview

While small in scope, Lebanon offers unique market opportunities for U.S. firms in a region that is building out key industry sectors and strategic projects. U.S. products and services enjoy relatively excellent receptivity and although the market is price sensitive, when it comes to quality, Lebanese consumers enjoy name brands, exceptional quality, and after sales support. For these reasons, several U.S. corporations have decided to opened offices in Beirut. In April 2018, the Lebanese government presented a multi-billion dollar Capital Investment Plan (CIP) at the Government of France hosted "CEDRE" investment conference. Lebanon received over \$11 billion in pledges from international donors for the first phase of the CIP (see Market Opportunities below for additional details).

The Lebanese Customs Administration reported that Lebanon's total imports in 2018 reached \$19.980 billion, of which \$1.438 billion (7.2 percent) originated in the United States. In 2018, the United States ranked as Lebanon's fourth largest trading partner behind China, Greece, and Italy. According to Lebanese Customs statistics, the major U.S. exports to Lebanon were mineral fuel and oil (\$445 million), vehicles (\$343 million), chemical industrial products (\$202 million), machinery and electrical instruments (\$130 million), prepared foodstuffs, vegetable products (\$70 million), and beverages and tobacco (\$58 million).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that Lebanon's growth will be below its potential in the near term, hovering around 1-1.3 percent for 2019. Inflation rose to six percent in 2018, and the IMF forecasts will remain below five percent in 2019.

Lebanon is a free market and highly dollarized economy. The average exchange rate is pegged at 1,507.5 Lebanese Pounds (LBP) to one U.S. Dollar. The country has no restrictions on the movement of capital, capital gains, remittances, dividends, or the inflow and outflow of funds. The Lebanese government's intervention in foreign trade is minimal.

Lebanon faces major fiscal policy challenges, notably a high deficit and a high level of public debt which rose to 150.9 percent of GDP in 2018 (IMF estimate). Debt service dampens government investment in vital public services such as power generation, roads, bridges, dams, and waste management. The business climate will remain sensitive to domestic and regional political and security developments. In particular, the Syrian crisis has negatively impacted the Lebanese economy, straining further its weak infrastructure and poor service delivery, and cutting off one of the country's major markets and reduced trade through the principal transport corridor to the East and the Gulf.

The U.S. government has neither a bilateral investment treaty (BIT) with Lebanon, nor an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation. The U.S. government signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with Lebanon in 2006, but the TIFA never came into force. Since 1999, Lebanon has had observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO) but has yet to accede to the organization. In 2002, Lebanon signed an association agreement with the European Union that entered into force in 2006.

In January 2017, Lebanon announced its intention to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global standard to promote transparency and good governance in the oil, gas, and mineral sectors. The government is currently working to meet EITI membership conditions and standards, which require active involvement of civil society organizations in industry oversight, as well as annual data on licenses, contracts, beneficial ownership, payments, revenues, and production.

There are several good reasons for U.S. companies to export to Lebanon. Lebanese consumers value U.S. products for their high quality, safety standards, and competitive price. English is widely spoken in the business community, and many Lebanese have first-hand knowledge of the United States through education or

work experiences. Lebanon has a developed banking sector which is well-managed, well-capitalized, and regulated with strong links to the international financial system. Payments for business transactions are often made in U.S. dollars, and nearly all Lebanese banks have U.S. correspondent banking relationships that facilitate financial transactions between U.S. exporters and Lebanese importers.

Market Challenges

Despite numerous regulatory steps to business entry, operation, and exit, the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business Report notes that it takes entrepreneurs 15 days to start a business in Lebanon, compared to the average of 21 days in the MENA region. However, the cost to start a business, at 40 percent of per capita income, is high compared to the regional average of 22.6 percent and the OECD average of 3.1 percent. Lastly, the process does not discriminate against foreign investors.

According to the 2018 Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Lebanon ranked 138 of 180 countries worldwide, making Lebanon among the 50 most corrupt countries in the world. Foreign and local companies have complained about numerous impediments, namely institutionalized corruption, bureaucratic over-regulation, arbitrary licensing, complex customs procedures, outdated legislation, an ineffectual judicial system, high taxes and fees, high telecommunication charges, slow internet speeds, poor electricity provision, inconsistent interpretation of laws, and inadequate protection of intellectual property.

Lebanon adheres to the Arab League Boycott of Israel. The Arab League's Central Boycott Office maintains a blacklist of U.S. firms that are believed to contribute to Israel's military or economic development. As per U.S. anti-boycott regulations, U.S. companies must refrain from certifying that their products do not come from Israel. If there appears to be any request that might be in support of boycotts, companies should contact the Bureau of Industrial Security (BIS) at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Market Opportunities

In April 2018, the Lebanese government presented a multi-billion dollar Capital Investment Plan (CIP) at the Government of France hosted "CEDRE" investment conference. Lebanon received over \$11 billion in pledges from international donors for the first phase of the CIP. Concurrently, donors supported Lebanon's reform plan to revitalize infrastructure, undertake fiscal consolidation and customs reforms, modernize public procurement, and adjust electricity tariffs alongside increased power generation. Among the CIP projects, the government identified 18 which could be implemented as Public Private Partnerships (PPP).

The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) is the Lebanese government's executive body responsible for soliciting contracts for major infrastructure projects and supervising their award and execution. CDR projects target the transportation, electricity, telecommunications, education, water, and sanitation sectors. These projects are posted online. The CDR will also lead the implementation of many infrastructure projects listed in the CIP.

Significant investment opportunities for international companies exist in the energy, water and wastewater, safety and security, franchising, healthcare and medical technologies, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sectors. More information about electricity and water projects can be found online at the [Ministry of Energy and Water](#) website.

The Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) and the Lebanese Petroleum Administration (LPA) launched the second licensing round for offshore hydrocarbon development and exploration in April 2019. Bids are due on January 31, 2020. Based on a 2010 U.S. Geological Survey study, the Levant Basin may harbor 122 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 1.7 billion barrels of oil. Lebanon, Israel, Syria, and Cyprus share these waters.

There are contracting opportunities for U.S. oil and gas service companies during the offshore exploration phase. U.S. firms have comparative technological advantages in upgrading Lebanon's ageing power plants,

installing Floating Storage Regasification Units (FSRUs), developing fuel terminals, and establishing storage facilities. More information about Lebanon's oil and gas opportunities can be found on the [LPA](#) website.

Market Entry Strategy

U.S. companies interested in doing business in Lebanon are advised to hire a Lebanese agent or distributor. While working through an agent is common practice in Lebanon, networking and lengthy investigations are equally important for finding an appropriate local partner.

The U.S. Commercial Service may assist U.S. companies to find the right partner through the International Partner Search (IPS) service. Information on this service is available on [Export.gov](#).

The Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) is the national authority responsible for promoting investments in Lebanon. IDAL covers eight priority sectors: agriculture, agro-industry, industry, technology, IT, media, telecommunications, and tourism. IDAL has the authority to award licenses and permits for new investments in specific sectors. IDAL's website ([IDAL](#)) is a one-stop-shop for investors and provides information on investment legislations, regulations, and starting a business.

Political Environment

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of Lebanon, please read [U.S. Department of State Background Notes](#).

Selling U.S. Products & Services

Using an Agent to Sell U.S. Products and Services

U.S. companies generally work with a Lebanese agent or distributor when doing business in Lebanon. The agent may take the form of a partnership, a sole proprietorship, a joint-stock company, or a limited liability company. The agent may act on behalf of the U.S. company to bid on government contracts and to market its products. The U.S. Commercial Service can assist U.S. companies with finding reliable agents through the [International Partner Search](#) (IPS).

Establishing an Office

A foreigner who would like to establish a business branch in Lebanon must first apply for a residency permit from the Directorate of General Security (Sûreté Générale in French) and a work permit from the Ministry of Labor. Foreign companies also require a license to operate from the Ministry of Economy and Trade. U.S. companies may operate through local branches, provided they obtain a “receipt of acknowledgement” from the Ministry of Economy and Trade and register in a local commercial court. For trade activity, the company must register at one of the four regional chambers of commerce and industry.

[The Investment Development Authority of Lebanon](#) (IDAL) has a one-stop shop service to issue permits and licenses in investors for all the key sectors.

Franchising

Franchising in Lebanon has experienced notable growth since the late 1990s with the successful establishment of international brand names across the country. According to the Lebanese Franchise Association (LAF), the franchising sector employs nearly 100,000 employees, or an estimated nine percent of total workers in the country. There are approximately 744 companies in the franchising sector in Lebanon constituting around 6% of total companies operating in Lebanon. The industry contributes close to \$1.5 billion to the national economy, or about four percent of the entire GDP. Approximately 44 percent of franchises in Lebanon originate in Europe, 38 percent from the United States and Canada, and 13 percent by local Lebanese franchisors.

Franchising opportunities are extensive in the food service industry. Major U.S. brands present in Lebanon include Burger King, Chili's, Domino's Pizza, Dunkin Donuts, Hardee's, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald's, P.F. Chang's, Pinkberry, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Subway, and Raising Cane's. Major challenges for franchisors and franchisees include uncertain security conditions, high cost of rent, and difficulty to access financing.

Lebanese consumers value U.S. brand-names in clothing and professional service companies. These include Berlitz Languages, Florsheim, Century 21 Real Estate, Coldwell Banker, Hertz, Avis, New Horizons, RE/MAX International, Ziebart, and Regus.

Hotel franchises also witnessed growth in Lebanon. Many local hotels are partnering with international chains to the benefit of local proprietors who capitalize on the chains' name recognition and international reservation networks. U.S. brands Hilton and Sheraton compete in Lebanon with major international chains, such as Four Seasons, Movenpick, Crowne Plaza, and InterContinental hotels.

The Lebanese Franchise Association (LFA) was established in 2006 in response to the needs of a fast-growing franchise industry, with the mission to develop franchising in Lebanon, and to promote Lebanese franchises worldwide. LFA hosts the annual Beirut International Franchise Forum (BIFEX), which offers significant opportunities for U.S. businesses to meet franchisors and potential franchisees from around the Middle East. More information is available on [LFA's](#) website.

Direct Marketing

Lebanon's annual advertising expenditures consistently rank amongst the highest in the region. After having peaked in 2010 at \$161.4 million, advertising spending slumped in the following years as Lebanon's economic situation worsened. However, a gradual recovery occurred in 2014 when annual advertising expenditures rose to \$160.1 million.

Television advertising represents the largest share of total advertising with a value annually exceeding \$50 million. Out-of-home and cinema advertising represents the second largest share of total advertising, exceeding \$25 million, of which cinema advertising remains below \$2 million per year. Newspaper advertising represents approximately 15 percent of total advertising spending and exceeds \$20 million per year. Magazines account for seven percent of total advertising expenditures. Digital advertising has steadily expanded over the past several years with over \$15 million in spending, and radio advertising surpassed \$5 million.

International fairs offer additional marketing opportunities. Please visit [Trade Fairs in Lebanon](#).

Joint Ventures/Licensing

Joint ventures in Lebanon are established through the following six steps:

- 1 - Completion of preliminary legal tasks
- 2 - Payment of share capital
- 3 - Registration at the Trade Register
- 4 - Registration at the Bar Association
- 5 - Payment of duties at the Ministry of Finance
- 6 - Release of capital

Please find detailed information at [IDAL's](#) website.

Selling to the Government

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to "Project Financing" Section in "Trade and Project Financing" for more information.

The U.S. Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars to developing countries for projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help U.S. businesses participate in bank-funded projects and advocate on behalf of U.S. bidders. Learn more by contacting the Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank.

The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), a public authority established in 1977, is the government body responsible for major public infrastructure projects in Lebanon. The CDR reports to the Council of Ministers (i.e. cabinet) and coordinates its sector-based actions with the relevant ministries. Generally, the CDR publicly solicits offers before awarding major construction contracts.

Ministries may solicit for services valued below LBP 100 million (\$66,357). Ministries publish these requirements online and in local newspapers. However, for works that exceed the threshold, the public tendering department is responsible for launching these tenders, unless the cabinet authorizes the relevant

ministry to launch the tender directly. U.S. companies can apply directly for these tenders or can rely on local agents to bid on their behalf.

Lebanon does not abide by the World Trade Organization (WTO) - Government Procurement Agreement (Lebanon is not a WTO member). Lebanon lacks unified public procurement legislation, and a modernized law is being drafted for parliamentary consideration.

Distribution & Sales Channels

Most imported products enter Lebanon at Beirut Port or Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (RHIA). Foreign exporters rely on local companies to clear imported products and to distribute them domestically. Most consumer goods are distributed through modern retail stores, shopping malls, department stores, and supermarket chains.

Major shopping malls and department stores in Lebanon include ABC Malls, Beirut City Center, Beirut Mall, Beirut Souks, CityMall, and Le Mall. The main supermarket chains include Carrefour, Le Charcutier Aoun, Fahed Supermarket, Metro Superstore, Monoprix, and Spinneys.

Express Delivery

Local and international express delivery companies are common and reliable in Lebanon. LibanPost provides national postal service.

There are several local and international freight service companies such as Expeditors, FedEx, Beirut Cargo Center, UPS, Aramex, TNT, and DHL that provide air, ocean, and ground transportation shipments to and from Lebanon. Air shipping time from the United States to Lebanon is estimated to be between one to three days, whereas ocean shipping time from the U.S. to Lebanon is in the range of 25 to 45 days.

Selling Factors & Techniques

The Lebanese market is generally considered to be open and price sensitive. Sales materials can be in English, French, or Arabic. Many European and Asian brands have gained market shares, but Lebanese consumers value high-quality U.S. products for their quality, technology, and innovation.

Lebanese companies usually request exclusive representational rights when signing agency agreements with foreign companies. U.S. companies should partner with an exclusive agent to represent their products in Lebanon. Moreover, U.S. companies should seek local legal counsel when doing business in Lebanon. A list of local lawyers is available at the [United States Embassy](#) website.

eCommerce

Due to slow internet speeds and high connectivity costs, eCommerce has not significantly penetrated the Lebanese market. Nevertheless, eCommerce ventures have emerged in retail fashion, food and beverage, banking, electronics, and ticketing. eCommerce platforms accept credit cards and cash upon delivery.

Trade Promotion & Advertising

Lebanon is considered a regional hub for the advertising industry, with offices serving most of the Arab region. Lebanon enjoys a sophisticated domestic audience and a thriving media sector. There are eight television stations in Lebanon, over 40 printed and online newspapers, and more than 20 magazines, and 20 radio stations.

Television remains the favored medium of advertising and captures half of the advertising market. Other media used for advertising include print, billboards, social media, and radio.

There are more than 12 Arabic-language dailies in Lebanon, as well as the English-language Daily Star (The Daily Star) and the French-language L'Orient Le Jour (L'Orient Le Jour). Most newspapers are also available online.

The major trade fairs organizers in Lebanon are listed below:

- [Biel Center](#)
- [Seaside Developments](#)
- [Confex International](#)
- [ESquare](#)
- [Hospitality Services](#)
- [Iktissad Events](#)
- [International Fairs and Promotion](#)
- [Promofair](#)

Major business magazines include:

- [Lebanon Opportunities](#)
- [Executive Magazine](#)
- [Arab Ad](#)
- [Le Commerce du Levant](#)

Pricing

Imported goods are subject to customs duties and a value-added tax (VAT) of 11 percent. The Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Economy and Trade sets the price of local Lebanese flat bread. Other types of bread are not affected by this price control. The Ministry of Energy and Water sets the prices of petroleum derivatives, and the Ministry of Public Health sets the prices of pharmaceuticals. The Technical Center for Price Control at the Ministry of Economy and Trade surveys supermarket prices of consumer goods every two months.

Sales Service/Customer Support

A number of leading Lebanese companies have sales service and customer support units. Lebanon has a Consumer Protection Law, and the Consumer Protection Directorate at the Ministry of Economy and Trade has a call-center hotline (1739) to receive consumer claims.

Protecting Intellectual Property

In any foreign market, companies should consider several general principles for effective protection of their intellectual property. For background, please access our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and [Stopfakes.gov](#) for more resources.

Although Lebanon is not a member of the WTO, its intellectual property rights (IPR) legislation is generally compliant with Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) standards. However, IPR enforcement is weak. Counterfeit products found in the local market generally fall in the following categories: alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, apparel, luxury consumer goods, CDs/DVDs, and pharmaceuticals. There is no evidence that counterfeits have substantially affected imports or production of these categories of goods. The Ministry of Economy and Trade's Intellectual Property Protection Office (IPPO) has led efforts to improve the IPR regime but suffers from limited financial and human resources, and insufficient political will within the Lebanese government. IPR enforcement by Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF) and Customs is relatively weak. The

understanding of IPR within the Lebanese judiciary has improved in recent years but gaps remain in awareness of the economic repercussions of IPR violations, judicial prosecution of IPR cases, and strong court decisions with punishments prohibitive enough to deter future infringements. The Ministry of Economy and Trade's new draft laws and amendments to existing laws designed to improve the IPR environment await parliamentary approval.

IP Attaché Contact Lebanon

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Due Diligence

U.S. firms should conduct due diligence on potential business partners in Lebanon. To verify the bona fides of Lebanese companies, U.S. firms may request the U.S. Commercial Service [International Company Profile](#) (ICP) service. The ICP report includes factual data on the Lebanese firm's management, business activities, product lines, financial condition, credit-worthiness, trading experience, market coverage, and business connections in the country, as well as an embassy evaluation to help U.S. firms assess risks, reliability, and capability.

Local Professional Services

- [Khalil Masri & Fils Sarl](#): Risk advisory, information provider, studies and valuation, recovery
- [Kompass](#): Leading worldwide business directory
- [5 Index](#): Database information services

Principle Business Associations

- [American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Sidon and South Lebanon](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Zahle and Bekaa](#)
- [Association of Lebanese Industrialists](#)
- [Lebanese Franchise Association](#)

The primary role of those associations is to represent the interests of the private sector, contribute to the formulation of economic policies and the elaboration of legislation that impacts business activity, develop partnership and dialogue between the private sector and the government, and provide a broad array of services to enterprises.

Limitations on Selling U.S. Products and Services

There are no limitations on selling U.S. products and services to Lebanon.

Web Resources

[U.S. Commercial Service](#)

[U.S. Embassy in Lebanon](#)

[Council for Development and Reconstruction](#) (CDR)

[Investment Development Authority of Lebanon](#) (IDAL)

[Ministry of Economy & Trade](#) (MoET)

Leading Sectors for U.S. Exports & Investments

Apparel

Overview

Traditionally, Arab tourists and Lebanese expatriates drive robust retail apparel sales in Lebanon. However, regional instability and the Syrian spillover has led to a decrease in the number of Arab tourists visiting Lebanon. According to the Lebanese Franchise Association (LFA), sales in the clothing and fashion industry decreased by 10.67% in 2018 compared to 2017.

According to Lebanese Customs statistics, U.S. apparel exports to Lebanon reached \$11.73 million in 2017, compared to \$11 million in 2016, constituting around two 1.4 percent of total apparel imports to Lebanon. A range of U.S. brands are available in the Lebanese market, including American Eagle Outfitters, GAP, Gymboree, Juicy Couture, Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs, Nautica, Nike, Polo Ralph Lauren, Rock and Republic, 7 for All Mankind, Steve Madden, Tommy Hilfiger, Tory Burch, True Religion and Under Armour.

Table 1: Apparel Chart

	2016	2017	2018	2019
			(Estimate)	(Estimate)
				(Projection)
Total Local Production	\$210 million	\$210 million	\$210 million	\$210 million
Total Exports	\$56.44 million	\$44.33 million	\$33.24 million	\$33.24 million
Total Imports	\$516.521 million	\$521.504 million	\$525.420 million	\$525.420 million
Imports from the U.S.	\$15.11 million	\$11.73 million	\$9.78 million	\$9.78 million
Total Market Size	\$670.687 million	\$687.681 million	\$702.606 million	\$702.606 million
Exchange Rates	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Units: \$ millions

Source: Lebanese Customs statistics – Section 11 / Chapters 61, 62

Leading Sub-Sectors

Demand for casual wear in Lebanon is high. Consequently, the demand for U.S. apparel is expected to grow, as many Lebanese consider U.S. brands to be the leader in casual wear, according to industry specialists.

Lebanese buyers regularly travel to the Magic Apparel Show in Las Vegas and the Coterie Show in New York to explore the latest trends in the U.S. fashion industry.

Opportunities

The U.S. Commercial Service provides a wide range of services, including [Gold Key Service](#) (GKS) and [International Partnership Search](#) (IPS), which help U.S. companies explore opportunities in Lebanon. Moreover, the U.S. Commercial Service organizes events and exhibitions, including "Taste of America," to promote U.S. products and services in Lebanon.

Web Resources

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[Lebanese Franchise Association](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service](#)

Contact for the Commercial Section that covers the apparel sector: Naaman Tayyar, Head of Commercial Section, Email: Naaman.Tayyar@trade.gov.

Automotive

Overview

The size of the automotive market in Lebanon grew decreased by 8.12 percent in 2017-2018, with total imports valued at \$1.883 659 billion. U.S. automotive exports to Lebanon increased by 5 percent in 2017-2018 to reach \$362 343 million, representing 19.20 percent of total Lebanese automotive imports.

Table 2: Automotive Chart

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019 (Estimate)	2019/2020 (Projection)
Total Local Production	0	0	0	0
Total Exports	\$14 22 million	\$22 23 million	\$21 30 million	\$21 30 million
Total Imports	\$1.732 883 billion	\$1.883 659 billion	\$1.542 188 billion	\$1.542 188 billion
Imports from the U.S.	\$326 362 million	\$362 343 million	\$315 222 million	\$315 222 million
Total Market Size	\$1.718 861 billion	\$1.861 636 billion	\$1.521 158 billion	\$1.521 158 billion
Exchange Rates	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Units: \$ millions

Source: Lebanese Customs statistics – Section 17

Leading Sub-Sectors

Demand for Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) in Lebanon is growing. According to private sector sources, around 10 percent of cars imported into Lebanon are SUVs. Demand is expected to increase due to the SUV's ability to withstand poor road quality conditions throughout the country. The Lebanese buy U.S. SUVs because of their competitive price, high quality, and long record of success in the market. Moreover, the demand for U.S. automotive parts such as brakes, clutches, engine lubricants, and safety accessories is increasing because of the demonstrated quality advantage of U.S. parts as compared to foreign competitors.

Despite the slowdown in the automotive sector, this sector is still considered a leading sector for U.S. exports given that U.S. automotive exports ranked second in 2018 in terms of total automotive exports to Lebanon behind Germany and ahead of Japan.

Opportunities

The U.S. Commercial Service provides a wide range of services, including [Gold Key Service](#) (GKS) and [International Partnership Search](#) (IPS), which help U.S. companies explore and identify opportunities in Lebanon. Moreover, the U.S. Commercial Service organizes events and exhibitions to promote U.S. products and services in Beirut.

Web Resources

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service](#)

Contact for the Commercial Section that covers the automotive sector: Naaman Tayyar, Head of Commercial section, Email: Naaman.Tayyar@trade.gov.

Medical Equipment

Overview

According to the Lebanese Customs Authority, Lebanon imported medical equipment valued at \$366 million in 2018, of which \$73 million, or 20 percent, was of U.S. origin. Total medical equipment imports to Lebanon increased by 4 percent in 2018 compared to 2017. Local experts expect medical equipment imports into Lebanon to increase in 2019, partly due to the growing pollution and the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, many of whom require medical assistance.

Table 3: Medical Equipment Chart

	2017	2018	2019 (Estimate)	2020 (Projection)
Total Local Production	\$1 million	\$1 million	\$1 million	\$1 million
Total Exports	\$18 million	\$17 million	\$18 million	\$18 million
Total Imports	\$352 million	\$366 million	\$378 million	\$378 million
Imports from the U.S.	\$74 million	\$73 million	\$84 million	\$84 million
Total Market Size	\$335 million	\$350 million	\$361 million	\$361 million
Exchange Rates	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Units: \$ U.S. Dollars, LBP Lebanese Pounds

Source: Lebanese Customs statistics – Section 18

Leading Sub-Sectors

According to local experts, U.S. medical equipment products are characterized by their high quality and competitive value.

Opportunities

Lebanon is an ideal location to establish a regional office to cover the Levant, including Iraq. The Lebanese market has traditionally been used as a platform for testing U.S. products prior to introducing them to the rest of the Levant market.

The U.S. Commercial Service provides a wide range of services including, [Gold Key Service](#) (GKS) and [International Partnership Search](#) (IPS), which help U.S. companies explore opportunities in Lebanon.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Public Health](#)

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service](#)

Contact for the Commercial Section that covers the medical equipment sector: Naaman Tayyar, Head of Commercial Section, Email: Naaman.Tayyar@trade.gov.

Pharmaceuticals

Overview

With more than 50 pharmaceutical importers, Lebanon is the leading market for imported pharmaceutical drugs in the Levant. The pharmaceutical market in Lebanon is valued at over \$1.3 billion, with potential annual growth of more than five percent. Patented drugs constitute around 50 percent of the market, and over-the-counter (OTC) and generic drugs constitute around 25 percent each. Lebanon-based pharmaceutical production is weak due to high local production costs. As a result, imports constitute over 95 percent of the total available pharmaceutical products in the market.

According to the Lebanese Customs Authority, total pharmaceutical imports into Lebanon reached \$1.329 billion in 2018, of which \$151 million were imported from the United States. Local production covers seven percent of market demand and is mainly focused on manufacturing drugs under license for international companies. Lebanon's main sources of pharmaceutical imports are France (13.9%), Germany (14.25%), the United States (8.24%), Italy (7%), Ireland (5.43%), and Switzerland (6.88%).

High production costs, a weak regulatory framework, and counterfeit drugs are the main challenges facing the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon.

A large portion of Lebanon's population receives health care from the Ministry of Public Health, which purchases pharmaceutical from local importers, offers them to patients, and reimburses hospital bills.

Table 4: Pharmaceuticals

	2017	2018	2019 (Estimate)	2020 (Projection)
Total Local Production	\$19 million	\$19 million	\$19 million	\$19 million
Total Exports	\$52 million	\$57 million	\$36 million	\$36 million
Total Imports	\$1.288 billion	\$1.329 billion	\$1.230 billion	\$1.230 billion
Imports from the U.S.	\$143 million	\$151 million	\$144 million	\$144 million
Total Market Size	\$1.255 billion	\$1.291 billion	\$1.213 billion	\$1.213 billion
Exchange Rates	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5	LBP1507.5

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Units: \$ U.S. Dollars, LBP Lebanese Pounds

Source: Lebanese Customs statistics –Chapter 30

Leading Sub-Sectors

According to local experts, U.S. pharmaceutical products have an advantage over European and Asian products in the biotechnology, high-tech, anti-cancer, and cardiovascular fields. Moreover, new leading American drugs that are not yet manufactured in Europe are typically well received in Lebanon.

Opportunities

There are no specific opportunities or trade events in Lebanon geared to promote U.S. pharmaceutical products. The U.S. Commercial Service provides a wide range of services, including [Gold Key Service](#) (GKS) and [International Partnership Search](#) (IPS), which help U.S. companies explore opportunities in Lebanon.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Public Health](#)

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service](#)

Contact for the Commercial Section that covers the pharmaceuticals/drugs sector: Naaman Tayyar, Head of Commercial Section, Email: Naaman.Tayyar@trade.gov.

Agricultural Sector

Overview

According to Lebanese Customs statistics (chapters 1-24), Lebanon's total agricultural imports reached \$3.496 billion in 2018, of which \$141 million, or 4 percent, was purchased from the United States. Major U.S. agricultural exports to Lebanon include edible fruits and nuts (\$34 million), miscellaneous edible preparations (\$25 million), and cereals (\$9 million).

Web Resources

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

Contact for the Commercial Section that covers the agriculture sector: Naaman Tayyar, Head of Commercial Section, Email: Naaman.Tayyar@trade.gov.

Customs, Regulations & Standards

Trade Barriers

Barriers to trade affect less than one percent of Lebanon's import/export goods. However, numerous Lebanese government agencies may impose licensing requirements such as technical, veterinary, or phyto-sanitary (plant health) certificates. A limited number of goods (e.g. weapons) are subject to more than one trade measure. All goods subject to import and export prohibitions could also be prohibited from transiting Lebanon. To determine whether a specific product is subject to non-tariff barriers, consult the Lebanese Customs Administration's [website](#).

For more information and help with trade barriers please contact:

International Trade Administration

Enforcement and Compliance

(202) 482-0063

ECCcommunications@trade.gov

[Trade Enforcement and Compliance](#)

Import Tariff

More than 83 percent of imported goods are subject to duties equal to or below five percent. The Lebanese Customs Administration's [website](#) provides a searchable database that displays import duties by tariff number.

With minor exceptions, European goods are exempted from customs fees in accordance with the European Mediterranean Association Agreement and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) agreement, effective March 1, 2015. In addition, goods from several Arab countries are also exempted from customs fees in accordance with the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) Agreement. Produce traders have reported that the Ministry of Agriculture does not grant import licenses for fruit.

Import Requirements & Documentation

Import processing requires the following documents:

- Declaration form based on the Single Administrative Document (SAD)
- Bill of Lading
- Packing list
- Commercial invoice (original)
- Delivery order (to prove ownership of goods)
- Quietus (a statement that all dues are paid) from the Social Security Office (must not have expired at the day of registration of SAD), required only for commercial and trade establishments
- Contract of sale between importer and seller in the country of exportation, or a letter of credit from the bank stating that the invoice value is paid or will be paid in a specified time limit (may be requested for value verification only in case customs officers doubt the invoice value)
- Certificate of origin issued by the authorized party of the country of exportation if the invoice does not mention the origin of the goods, or in case the importer wishes to benefit from preferential treatment if the exporter is not approved by the customs authorities of the exporting country
- Depending on the type of imported good, a number of other documents may also be required, including import licenses, certificates of conformity to mandatory standards, or phyto-sanitary certificates.

Export processing requires the following documents:

- Declaration form based on the Single Administrative Document (SAD)

- Packing list
- Commercial invoice (original)
- Export order
- Quietus (a statement that all dues are paid) from the Social Security Office (must not have expired at the day of registration of SAD), required only for commercial and trade establishments
- Certificate of origin issued by the Ministry of Industry and certified by the Lebanese Customs Authorities for exporting goods to Europe in accordance with protocol number 4 with the EU

Depending on the type of exported good, a number of other documents may also be required including export licenses, certificates of conformity, and export certificates for quality verification for all food products of plant origin, and agricultural health certificates.

Labeling/Marking Requirements

Labels should include the net weight of the product, the manufacture, production and expiry date, ingredients, and the country of origin. Labels should be printed on the imported goods in Arabic, English, or French. Products with labels in Hebrew are not accepted. For more information, please consult the [Ministry of Economy and Trade](#) website.

U.S. Export Controls

Lebanon is not subject to special U.S. export sanctions. In principle, all U.S. exports require a license, though in practice the vast majority of U.S. exports fall under a “general license” that allows exports without obtaining permission from the [Bureau of Industry and Security \(BIS\)](#) at the U.S. Department of Commerce. When doing business with Lebanon, U.S. exporters should consider the following U.S. export regulations:

- For a number of items, specific export licenses are required. These items include products whose high-tech nature implies that export may involve a national security risk. Contacting BIS will enable an exporter to determine whether or not a specific item requires a license. If a specific license is required, one of the considerations is the reliability of the end-user. Government agencies and companies with a solid business reputation are more likely to be granted a license.

U.S. companies should verify whether the U.S. government has prohibited doing business with a particular Lebanese company/ individual due to past export control violations or because they are subject to a U.S. sanctions program. U.S. companies should consult the BIS Denied Persons List and the Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control’s (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List, which are available online at the following links: [BIS List](#) and [Treasury List](#).

The International Trade Administration’s [Consolidated Screening List combines](#) export-screening databases from the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury into a single search tool. U.S. exporters may conduct electronic screens of potential international export partners using this database.

Temporary Entry

There are two types of permits for the temporary entry of goods into Lebanon.

Customs grants a regular temporary entry permit to foreign products that will be manufactured or under processing in Lebanon and then re-exported from Lebanon or displayed in free zones. This permit is valid for six months and is renewable, provided that the total period shall not be for more than two years.

The Director General of Customs may grant a special temporary entry permit for a range of products intended for temporary use. However, the period of the permit is limited to three months. Goods subject to the special permit, as noted in Article 278 of the Lebanese Customs Law, may include the following:

- Equipment and machinery used in public works, archeology, cinema, and journalism

- Items intended or used for maintenance and repair
- Items temporarily imported for display or use in public or private exhibitions, seasonal fairs, forums, theaters, artistic shows, and playgrounds
- Jewelry and ornaments intended for display in public exhibitions. Empty containers or packages to be filled in Lebanon and re-exported or full containers or packages to be emptied in Lebanon and then re-exported

The items should be re-exported or stored in the free zone or a public warehouse at the end of the authorized period of temporary entry status.

The products mentioned above may be temporarily imported for a period of six months by using “Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission” (ATA) procedure rather than regular entry declarations.

In addition, foreigners and Lebanese citizens whose place of residence is outside Lebanon may benefit from temporary entry for their personal effects and cars in accordance with Articles 282 and 283 of the Lebanese Customs Law.

Prohibited & Restricted Imports

Strictly prohibited imports include the following:

- Cedar seeds and seedlings (to protect Lebanese cedar species)
- Chemical additives used in bread making (health measure)
- Table salt not containing iodine (health measure)
- Waste/slag/ash/scrap of many chemical, mineral, and metal products (environmental measure)
- Clinker and black cement (protection of local industry)
- Passenger vehicles older than eight years and transport vehicles older than five years (environmental measure)
- Used medical and radiological apparatuses (health measure)
- Gas-fueled pocket lighters (safety measure)
- Wireless phone sets that function on the 900 Megahertz bandwidth (technical measure)
- Goods bearing false marks and labels indicating their origin (intellectual property)
- Goods manufactured in or originating from Israel (Arab Boycott measure)

Monopolized and restricted goods must be treated similarly to prohibited goods upon import and export. Such goods will be seized whenever a license, permit, or any other legal document is not attached or whenever irrelevant documents are attached.

Customs Regulations

Lebanon employs a harmonized tariff schedule for the valuation of goods and the levying of customs duties. In 2018, the High Customs Council proposed a reform strategy to improve operations. The reforms focus on 1) simplifying procedures, 2) accepting e-payments, 3) enhancing electronic data entry, and 4) establishing an online e-single window for coordinated service with all of Lebanon’s border agencies. When fully implemented, users will be able to register online, as well as assess and pay declarations directly from their bank accounts. Local customs agents may assist exporters to navigate the clearance process.

For further information on customs procedures, please refer to the Lebanese Customs Administration's [website](#).

Key contacts:

General Directorate of Customs

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-980060/1/2/3

Higher Council for Customs

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-988510/1

Standards for Trade

Overview

The Lebanese Standards Institution (LIBNOR) is a public institution under the Ministry of Industry. Established in 1962, LIBNOR is the sole authority in Lebanon charged with issuing, publishing, and amending Lebanese standards as well as granting the Lebanese Conformity Mark "NL." A number of state bodies (including the Ministries of Telecommunications, Energy and Water, Industry, Public Health, Environment, Agriculture, Economy and Trade, and Public Works and Transport) issue technical regulations related to products in the form of ministerial decisions and decrees issued by the cabinet.

Standards

LIBNOR has accepted and adheres to the World Trade Organization's TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) code of good practice for the preparation, adoption, and application of standards and is taking an active role in international standardization activities, even though Lebanon is not a member of the WTO. Programs for drafting standards are set annually. LIBNOR's Board of Directors approves the annual plans, submitted by LIBNOR's Director General, for preparing new standards or amending existing ones. The annual program for drafting standards is available on LIBNOR's [website](#).

LIBNOR is a member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), and an affiliate member of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN).

Testing, Inspection and Certification

The following laboratories are the main national testing bodies in Lebanon:

- The laboratories of the Industrial Research Institute (IRI), affiliated with the Ministry of Industry, test for all types of products. For more information, visit the [IRI](#) website.
- The laboratory of the Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) at the Ministry of Agriculture (for food products). For more information, visit the [LARI](#) website.
- The Quality Control Center laboratory at the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon (CCIAT). For more information, visit the [CCIAT](#) website.
- The Food Quality Center laboratory at the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture of Zahle and the Bekaa (CCIAZ). For more information, visit the [CCIAZ](#) website.

- The American University of Beirut; laboratory of chemistry and pharmacology. For more information, visit the [AUB](#) website.
- The French Medical Institute laboratory of chemistry and pharmacology at Saint Joseph University (USJ). For more information, visit the [USJ](#) website.
- The National Council for Scientific Research (CNSR); laboratory under the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission. For more information, visit the [CNRS](#) website.

LIBNOR is the sole authority to grant the right to use the Lebanese Conformity Mark (NL Mark). This mark attests to the compliance of products to Lebanese standards and is based on a scheme combining quality management system and product standards. The Industrial Research Institute provides certificates of conformity with standards and purchase requirements. Certificates of conformity or quality issued by foreign companies, such as SGS and Veritas, are also honored in Lebanon.

In addition, several ministries issue certificates of conformity. The Ministry of Agriculture has the authority to issue certificates of conformity for exported agricultural products. The Ministry of Economy and Trade issues conformity and export certificates at the request of the exporter. The Ministry of Public Health issues health certificates at the request of the exporter. There are no mutual recognition agreements with U.S. organizations.

The Lebanese Accreditation Council (Conseil Libanais D'Accréditation - COLIBAC), under the Ministry of Industry, is the only accreditation body in Lebanon. COLIBAC is not yet functional, and some of the Lebanese laboratories are accredited by foreign accreditation bodies. The IRI chemical and micro-biological laboratories are accredited.

Publication of Technical Regulations

Lebanese standards are voluntary, but when approving Lebanese standards based on the recommendation of the technical committees, LIBNOR's Board of Directors may ask for the mandatory application of a standard if it affects public health or safety. In this case, a decree from the Council of Ministers (i.e. the Cabinet) is published based on the request of the Ministry of Industry. There is no formal procedure for notification, as Lebanon is not yet a WTO member. U.S. entities can comment on technical regulations via e-mail to [LIBNOR](#). LIBNOR established a WTO/Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) point of contact for inquiries in 2012.

“Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify to the WTO proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. (www.nist.gov/notifyus) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country(ies) and industry sector(s) of interest, and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated web site are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.”

Contact Information

LIBNOR is the point of contact for inquiries in Lebanon on standards and technical regulations resulting from conversion of standards.

LIBNOR

Maatouk Bldg

City Rama Street, Sin El-Fil

PO Box 55120

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-485 927/8

Fax: 961-1-485 929

E-mail: info@libnor.org

[Website](#)

The standards point of contact at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut can be reached at [Export.gov](#).

Trade Agreements

Lebanon has traditionally been a country with a free and open trade regime. Efforts towards trade liberalization have focused on the European Union (EU), the WTO, and the Arab world.

Lebanon has neither a free trade arrangement nor a bilateral investment treaty with the United States. On December 1, 2006, the two countries signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), but the TIFA never came into force.

Lebanon gained observer status to the WTO in 1999, but the accession process has stalled since then.

Lebanon's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreement came into force in April 2006. The agreement provides for reciprocal free trade on the majority of industrial goods. It also liberalizes trade on a large basket of agricultural and processed agricultural goods. The Euro-Med Partnership aims at establishing a free trade area for the Mediterranean region; efforts to achieve this goal are ongoing.

Lebanon and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2004. In November 2010, Lebanon and Turkey signed an association agreement to establish a free trade area and reduce barriers to the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people between the two countries over the subsequent ten years. The agreement is not yet ratified. Lebanon also signed the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement, which gradually replaced the bilateral FTAs signed with Arab countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Sudan and the Gulf Cooperation Council states. A regional Economic and Trade Association Council between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Turkey was announced in July 2010. However, given the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, this agreement did not enter into force. Lebanon launched free trade agreement negotiations with MERCOSUR countries in 2016.

Lebanon has signed bilateral investment agreements with the following (in alphabetical order, as of January 2012): Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium/Luxemburg, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Korea (South), Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, OPEC Fund, Pakistan, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sudan, Sultanate of Oman, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Yemen. For more information, please visit the Ministry of Finance's [website](#).

Lebanon does not have a bilateral taxation treaty with the United States. A full list of all the countries with which Lebanon has signed taxation agreements can be found on the Ministry of Finance's [website](#).

Licensing Requirements for Professional Services

There are no specific licensing requirements to open a professional service/consultancy company in Lebanon.

Web Resources

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[LIBNOR](#)

[Ministry of Economy and Trade](#)

[Ministry of Finance](#)

[Ministry of Industry](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Industrial Security \(BIS\)](#)

Investment Climate Statement

“The U.S. Department of State’s Investment Climate Statements, prepared annually by U.S. embassies and diplomatic missions abroad, provide country-specific information and assessments of the investment climate in foreign markets. Topics include: Market barriers, business risk, legal and regulatory system, dispute resolution, corruption, political violence, labor issues, and intellectual property rights. The statements are available on <https://state.gov/reports/2019-investment-climate-statements/Lebanon>.

Trade & Project Financing

Methods of Payment

Lebanon does not restrict currency conversions or foreign fund transfers. Moreover, foreign exchange controls do not affect trade. Letters of credit finance approximately 40 percent of Lebanon's international trade, while direct payments account for the remainder. Credit rating and collections agencies do not currently operate in Lebanon. International rating agencies, however, do evaluate commercial banks and sovereign Eurobond instruments issued by the Lebanese government. Mastercard, Visa, and American Express are the primary credit or charge cards used in Lebanon.

Banking Systems

Lebanon has one of the most developed, well regulated, and sophisticated banking sectors in the region. The Lebanese Central Bank (Banque du Liban - BdL) regulates all financial institutions and money exchange houses. In November 2015, Lebanon passed Law No. 44 on Fighting Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (amending Law No. 318, dated April 2001). The law strengthened Lebanon's framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing, mandated suspicious transaction reporting, required financial institutions to obtain and maintain records of customer identification information, and facilitated access to banking information and records by judicial authorities. The government's Banking Control Commission (BCC) closely monitors bank credits, and all credit transactions are subject to timely and accurate disclosure. The National Institute for the Guarantee of Deposits (NIGD) insures up to LBP 5 million (about \$3,317) of Lebanese and foreign currency deposits in commercial banks. Bank financial statements are in compliance with international accounting standards. Independent auditors conduct audits on annual accounts, and most banks utilize internationally-recognized accounting firms.

Foreigners can open accounts in banks operating in Lebanon and obtain credit on market terms. However, due to the Internal Revenue Service's implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), Lebanese banks request additional information from U.S. citizens who would like to open accounts. Lebanese banks claim to be fully compliant with FATCA. Lebanese financial institutions note they meet international Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) standards.

Foreign Exchange Controls

Lebanon imposes no foreign exchange controls. The foreign exchange market provides free currency convertibility and free movement of capital. Per Circular No. 514 (Decision No. 12978), January 14, 2019 of the Central Bank of Lebanon, non-banking institutions (money transfer companies) receiving electronic money transfers from abroad must pay out these remittances in Lebanese pounds only.

U.S. Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Below is a list of U.S. banks operating in Lebanon:

CITIBANK N.A.

Berytus Park, Bloc A, 3rd floor

Park Avenue, Beirut Central District

P.O. Box 11-1535

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-962440

Fax: 961-1-962444

BANK of NEW YORK MELLON (The) (Representative Office)

Atrium Bldg, 3rd floor

Corner Maarad-Weygand Street

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-988788

Fax: 961-1-989001

JPMORGAN CHASE BANK NA (Representative Office)

Gefinor Center, Bloc B, 16th floor, Suite No.1601

Clemenceau Street,

P.O. Box 11-5133

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-739583

Fax: 961-1-739581

Below is a list of the largest banks (ranked by assets as of December 2018) that have correspondent U.S. banking relationships:

BANK AUDI S.A.L.

Bank Audi Plaza, Bab Idriss

P.O. Box 11-2560

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-994000

Fax: 961-1-990555

BLOM BANK S.A.L.

BLOM Bank Bldg.

Rashid Karameh Ave., Verdun

P.O. Box: 11-1912 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107-2807, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-738938

SOCIETE GENERALE DE BANQUE AU LIBAN S.A.L. (SGBL)

Sehnaoui Bldg,

Riad ElSolh Street, Beirut Central District

P.O. Box: 11-2955

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-980783

Fax: 961-1-980785

BYBLOS BANK S.A.L.

Byblos Bank Headquarters,

Elias Sarkis Avenue, Ashrafieh

P.O. Box: 11-5605 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107-2811, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-335200

Fax: 961-1-334554

FRANSABANK S.A.L.

Fransabank Center,

Hamra Street

P.O. Box: 11-0393 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107-2803, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-340180

Fax: 961-1-354572

BANKMED S.A.L.

BankMed Center

482 Clemenceau Street

P.O. Box: 11-0348 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107-2030, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-373937

Fax: 961-1-362706

BANK OF BEIRUT S.A.L.

Bank of Beirut Bldg

Foch Street, Beirut Central District,

P.O. Box: 11-7354

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-958000

BANQUE LIBANO-FRANCAISE S.A.L.

Beirut Liberty Plaza

Rome Street, Hamra

P.O.Box 11-0808

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-791332

Fax: 961-1-440183

CREDIT LIBANAIS S.A.L.

Credit Libanais Tower

Corniche El Nahr, Adlieh Roundabout

P.O.Box: 16-6729

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-608000

Fax: 961-1-608126

BBAC S.A.L.

BBAC Bldg., 250 Clemenceau Street

P.O.Box 11-1536 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107 2080, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-366630

Fax: 961-1-365200

IBL BANK S.A.L.

Al Ittihadiyah Bldg

Charles Malek Avenue, Rmeil

P.O.Box 11-5292 Riad ElSolh,

Beirut 1107-2190, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-200350

Fax: 961-1-204505

LEBANON AND GULF BANK S.A.L.

Lebanon and Gulf Bank Bldg,

Allenby Street, Beirut Central District

P.O. Box 11-3600

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-965000

Fax: 961-1-965699

FIRST NATIONAL BANK S.A.L.

Allenby Street, Marfaa 147 Bldg,

Beirut Central District

P.O.Box 11-435 Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-963000

Fax: 961-1-973090

CREDITBANK S.A.L.

Freeway Center,

Sin El Fil Blvd.

P.O.Box: 16-5795

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-501600

Fax: 961-1-485245

SARADAR BANK S.A.L.

Saradar Building,

Charles Malek Avenue, Achrafieh

P.O.Box: 16-5766

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-200770

LEBANESE SWISS BANK S.A.L.

Hoss Building, 6th floor,

Emile Edde Street, Hamra

P.O.Box: 11-9552

Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-346244

Source: Bankdata Financial Services

Project Financing

The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the government's executive body for redevelopment, has a total of \$2.8 billion in loans and agreements ratified by Parliament but not yet disbursed. An additional \$670 million in loans from international donors and development banks await Parliament's approval. The CDR has a limited absorptive capacity and targets annual spending at approximately \$750 million. About 15 foreign financing sources are involved in CDR's development plan, with 11 sources contributing to over 90 percent of the CDR's total foreign financing. Primary contributors include the World Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFAED), the Kuwaiti Fund (KFAED), the European Union (EU) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Islamic Development Bank, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), and the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Italy, and France.

Lebanon's banking sector also provides project finance facilities to Lebanese and international companies carrying out projects in Lebanon. The process involves reviewing the project at hand, carrying out a

commercial, financial, and legal due diligence on the borrower and sponsor before structuring the facility. Typical security packages include real estate mortgages over land and assets.

Multilateral Development Banks

The U.S. Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars to developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help American businesses participate in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders. Learn more by contacting the [Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank](#).

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector focused wing of the World Bank Group, has invested over \$1 billion in supporting Lebanese firms. The IFC also works to streamline business registration and improve access to finance for MSMEs (micro and small and medium enterprises) and women-led businesses. The IFC also provides assistance to develop the regulatory framework for the Tripoli Special Economic Zone (TSEZ). Moreover, the IFC supported local commercial banks in the initial issuance of "green bonds" for projects that have positive climate impacts. The IFC advises the High Council for Privatization and Partnerships (HCP) for the expansion of the Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport and has an advisory role with the Ministry of Energy and Water for the construction of two gas power plants.

The EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) began operations in Lebanon in September 2017. It focuses support for private sector competitiveness, sustainable energy supply, and the quality and efficiency of public service delivery. As of March 2019, EBRD has invested around 300 million Euros, primarily through top Lebanese banks, including a Green Economy Financing Facility, a green bond, an SME credit line, an equity stake in a local bank, and in trade finance. EBRD has also signed a direct corporate loan to a private electricity distribution services provider and is exploring investments in the power, agribusiness, manufacturing, natural resources, industrial zones, and municipal and infrastructure projects. EBRD forecasts a pipeline of Euros 1.1 billion over six years for CIP infrastructure projects and other sectors beyond the CIP. In 2018, EBRD launched its EU-funded Advice for Small Business program to provide businesses with the knowledge needed to reach their growth potential, ranging from strategy and marketing to financial management to energy efficiency improvements.

Financing Web Resources

[Trade Finance Guide](#)

[Export-Import Bank of the United States](#)

[Country Limitation Schedule](#)

[OPIC](#)

[U.S. Trade and Development Agency](#)

[SBA's Office of International Trade](#)

[USDA Commodity Credit Corporation](#)

[U.S. Agency for International Development](#)

[Association of Lebanese Banks](#)

[Banking Control Commission of Lebanon](#)

[Banque du Liban - Lebanon's Central Bank](#)

Business Travel

Business Customs

Lebanese business dealings are formal yet hospitable. Handshakes with direct eye contact are appropriate greetings. Punctuality is generally expected for business meetings, and the three working languages are Lebanese Arabic, French, or English.

Business cards are commonly used. Dress code is formal in most business and official settings. Gifts are common and are accepted on most occasions.

Travel Advisory

U.S. companies and visitors are advised to carefully assess the situation in Lebanon by consulting the Department of State Travel Advisories at [Travel State](#).

U.S. citizens are advised to maintain valid travel documents and enroll with the Department of State or the U.S. Embassy in Beirut through the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program [STEP](#).

Visa Requirements

Visas are required for entry into Lebanon and may be obtained at Lebanese embassies and consulates ([Lebanese Embassy in the United States](#)). Citizens of the following countries can obtain a free one-month validity visa renewable for three months upon arrival at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (Beirut-RHIA):

Andora-Antigua and Barbuda-Argentina-Armenia-Australia-Austria-Azerbaijan-Bahamas-Barbados-Belarus-Belgium-Belize-Bhutan-Brazil-Bulgaria-Canada-Chile-China Peoples Republic-Costa Rica-Croatia-Cyprus-Czech Republic-Denmark-Dominican Republic-Estonia-Finland-France-Georgia-Germany-Great Britain or United Kingdom-Greece-Holland-Hong Kong-China-Hungary-Iceland-Iran-Ireland-Italy-Japan-Kazakhstan-Kirgizstan-Latvia-Liechtenstein-Lithuania-Luxembourg-Macau-Macedonia-Malaysia-Malte-Mexico-Moldova-Monaco-Montenegro-New Zealand-Norway-Panama-Paraguay-Peru-Poland-Portugal-Romania-Russia-Samoa-San Marino-Serbia-Singapore-Slovakia-Slovenia-South Korea-Spain-St. Kitts & Nevis-Sweden-Switzerland-Tajikistan-Turkmenistan-Ukraine-USA-Uzbekistan-Venezuela.

More information is available at the [Lebanese General Security](#) website.

Travelers who hold passports that contain visas or entry/exit stamps for Israel will likely be denied entry into Lebanon and may be subject to arrest or detention. Even if their travel documents currently do not have Israeli stamps or visas, persons seeking entry into Lebanon who have previously traveled to Israel may still face arrest and/or detention if this travel is disclosed. The Government of Lebanon has the authority to refuse admission to U.S. citizens and to detain U.S. citizen travelers for further inspection. Travelers who have previously worked in Lebanon without the appropriate work visa may be denied entry, or subject to detention or deportation. Travelers who have overstayed their entry visa validity in Lebanon must adjust their status with General Security's Department of Passport and Immigration and receive an exit visa prior to their departure. Individuals who are detained pending deportation are expected to pay the cost of their own airline ticket and will remain under detention until they have gathered the necessary funds.

U.S. companies in Lebanon that require their foreign business partners to travel to the United States should allow for administrative processing which often causes delays in visa issuance. As a result, travelers should apply as early as possible for a U.S. visa. Applicants for U.S. visas should visit the [United States Embassy in Lebanon](#).

Currency

The monetary unit in Lebanon is the Lebanese Pound (LBP), also called the lira. There are no exchange controls, and U.S. dollars circulate freely. Cash and credit cards are the most common method of payment in Lebanon, but payment by check or bank transfer is also possible. Bank ATM machines are widespread, and cash may be withdrawn in Lebanese pounds or U.S. dollars.

Telecommunications/Electronics

International calls are expensive. The public phone network managed by public operator OGERO is generally reliable. Lebanon has two GSM networks that are owned by the government but managed by two private companies Zain (Touch) and Orascom Telecom (Alpha). Various private cellular telephones and fax facilities exist. Prepaid cellular cards are available at a monthly subscription fee of around \$25.00 (including internet service and 10 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) charges). Internet service is available for limited access, and is also accessible to visitors at many hotels and internet cafes. DSL, ADSL, HDSL and wireless broadband internet connections are available in most of the hotels in Lebanon, though the service is slower than what is commonly available in the United States. 4G services are available across the country, while 5G services are limited.

The standard voltage in Lebanon is between 220V - 240V, as in Europe. This requires a power converter since the standard voltage in the U.S. is in the range of 100V - 120V. The frequency in Lebanon is 50 Hz and the power sockets used are of type C / D / G.

Transportation

Lebanon lacks adequate public transportation, but private, un-metered taxis and shared cabs are abundant in and around the capital. Rental cars are readily available at a daily cost starting at \$25.00, depending on the type and model of the car. Although many international airlines serve Beirut, a 1984 U.S. Presidential Determination prohibits direct air links between the United States and Lebanon.

Language

Arabic is the official language in Lebanon, but French and English are widely spoken.

Health

Most pharmaceuticals and health-related products are readily available in the local market. American companies such as Abbott Laboratories, Eli Lilly, Janssen-Cilag, Pfizer, and Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) have representative offices in Lebanon. Private hospitals in Beirut and surrounding areas provide modern care, but doctors and hospitals normally expect immediate cash payment for services if a client does not show evidence of a locally accepted health insurance coverage.

Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays

Local time is GMT +3 from March 30 to October 26, 2019, and GMT +2 from October 27 to March 27, 2020.

Government offices hours are as follows:

- 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday

- 8:00 a.m. - 13:00 p.m. Friday

Bank counters are generally open on the following schedule:

- 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

- 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Saturday

Private office hours vary and some exceed the 40-hour workweek.

Public holidays in 2019 are as follows:

January 1:	New Year's Day
March 25	Annunciation Day
April 19:	Good Friday (Western)
April 26:	Good Friday (Eastern)
May 1:	Labor Day
June 4-5:	Feast of Ramadan (Al-Fitr)
August 12:	Feast of Al Adha
August 15:	Assumption Day
August 31:	Islamic New Year (Al-Hejra)
November 22:	Independence Day
December 25:	Christmas Day

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

There are no restrictions on the temporary entry of goods and equipment. Temporary importation of commercial samples, professional equipment and goods for use at trade fairs and exhibitions such as computers, repair tools, photographic and film equipment, musical instruments, industrial machinery, vehicles, jewelry, clothing, medical appliances, aircraft, race horses, art work, prehistoric relics, ballet costumes, and rock group sound systems require a temporary admission document known as the ATA (Admission Temporaire) carnet. This is obtained exclusively from the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIB - BML).

By presenting an ATA carnet to Lebanese Customs, the imported products and equipment pass duty and tax-free into the country for up to one year. At the end of the year, all the items listed on the carnet must be returned to the temporary exportation country. Video, audio disks, and tapes may be subject to search and seizure.

More information is available on [Lebanese Customs Administration](#) and [Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon](#).

Travel Related Web Resources

[Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon](#)

[Lebanese Customs Administration](#)

[Lebanese Embassy in the U.S.](#)

[Ministry of Telecommunications](#)

[Ministry of Economy and Trade](#)

[Department of State Travel State](#)

[U.S. Embassy in Lebanon](#)

[Lebanese General Security](#)