

The Food Safety Lebanese Commission: A National Priority

For decades, food safety in Lebanon has been managed through a fragmented system, with responsibilities scattered across various ministries and municipal authorities. This dispersion has often led to inconsistencies, gaps in oversight, and public concern about the safety of the food supply. The establishment of the Food Safety Lebanese Commission (FSLC) under Law No. 35 represents a pivotal turning point, aiming to centralize authority, harmonize standards, and strengthen protection for consumers. In the following interview with “Human & Health” magazine, Professor Elie Awad, President of the FSLC, outlines the mandate and critical role of this new central governing body. He discusses the Commission’s powers, its strategy for unifying a once-divided system, and the practical requirements for businesses. Professor Awad also provides a clear-eyed assessment of the current food safety landscape in Lebanon, the urgent risks at hand, and how the country’s framework compares to regional and international benchmarks. This conversation sheds light on the FSLC’s mission to transform food safety from a fragmented effort into a coherent, science-driven national priority.



Professor Elie Awad

- Setting unified national food safety policies and standards.
- Coordinating all ministries, agencies, and municipalities involved in the food chain.
- Applying a scientific, risk-based approach to inspections and regulation.
- Aligning Lebanese rules with global standards such as Codex, WHO, FAO, and WTO/SPS.

The Commission leads in many aspects such as:

1. One Lebanese Reference System

Unified inspection protocols, laboratory methods, and incident-response procedures ensure all actors follow the same national system.

• A Central Coordination Platform

Through an inter-ministerial council—including Health, Agriculture, Economy, Industry, other Ministries and the private sector—the LFSC ensures alignment and smooth information flow.

• Risk-Based Decisions

By centralizing data on hazards, sampling, border

Qu. Given that food safety responsibilities are distributed across multiple ministries and municipalities, what is the specific mandate of the Lebanese Food Safety Commission in coordinating these efforts? How will the Commission fulfill its long-awaited role as the central governing body?

• For years, food safety oversight in our country was spread across multiple ministries and municipalities, leading to duplicated efforts and inconsistent decisions. The creation of the **Food Safety Lebanese Commission (FSLC)** finally brings the coordination and leadership the system has long needed.

A Clear National/International Mandate

The FSLC is responsible for:

rejections, and outbreaks, the Commission prioritizes actions based on real public-health risks.

• Strong Oversight and Training

Inspectors across ministries and municipalities receive standardized training to ensure uniform enforcement nationwide.

• Crisis Leadership

During contamination events, the LFSC leads traceability, recalls, public communication, and coordination with health services—ensuring one clear national response.

Direct control

Preparing for a unique inspection and control. The FSLC ultimately becomes the long-awaited central body that unifies the system, strengthens public-health protection, and elevates the country’s food standards to international levels.

FSLC and Compliance

Qu. What are the core powers granted to the Commission by Law No. 35, and do you consider them sufficient to effectively regulate the market and ensure compliance?

- Law No. 35 grants the Commission strong and essential powers, the kind needed to regulate the food market, enforce standards, and intervene when public health is at risk. These powers form a solid legal foundation, but they are not enough on their own. Effective implementation requires several complementary pillars.

• What the Commission Still Needs to Succeed

- Adequate Resources

Legislative powers mean little without skilled inspectors, well-equipped laboratories, modern IT systems, and Lebanese National Traceability Platforms.

- Strong Enforcement Tools

Clear sanction regimes, mandatory recalls, the ability to suspend operations, and meaningful financial penalties are crucial to drive compliance.

- Solid Governance Structures

Central bodies must be fully operational, transparent, legally empowered, and supported by a stable budget.

- Advanced Data & Risk Analysis

A unified system is needed to analyze hazards, prioritize inspections, monitor trends, and coordinate responses across ministries.

- Clear Communication with Stakeholders

Agriculture, Industry, tourism, municipalities, traders,

consumers, etc. must understand their obligations, and see the Commission acting visibly and consistently.

FSLC and Food Businesses Control

• The first message to the business community is clear: compliance is not optional. Law No. 35 provides a strong legal foundation, and every operator, small, medium, or large is expected to fully meet its food safety and hygiene requirements.

To support this, the Commission will introduce:

- Detailed Regulations and Sector-Specific Guidance

Comprehensive implementing regulations and tailored guidance documents will be issued for each major food sector: dairy, meat, processed foods, catering, and more, translating the law’s provisions into practical, day-to-day requirements.

- Strong Capacity-Building Programs

Training sessions, audits, and self-assessment tools will help businesses adopt modern food-safety management systems such as HACCP and ISO 22000, reflecting the law’s risk-based approach.

- A Focus on Food-Safety Culture

Compliance is more than a checklist. Businesses must embrace preventive thinking, continuous improvement, and clear accountability to build a genuine food-safety culture within their operations.

- Effective Enforcement and Penalties

A graduated system of warnings, sanctions, penalties, and recall procedures will ensure that non-compliance carries real consequences, reinforcing that hygiene and safety obligations are mandatory and fully enforceable.

FSLC and the Reality of Food Safety in Lebanon

Qu. Current Food Safety Landscape: In your assessment, how concerning is the current state of food safety in Lebanon? This question is particularly relevant amidst public discoveries of non-compliant products and concerns about the motives behind some media reports.

• The truth is unmistakable: Lebanon’s current food safety landscape is deeply concerning. Recent discoveries of expired, non-compliant products, unwashed vegetables served to customers, disastrous cleaning status have only highlighted what experts have long known: the risks are real, immediate, and systemic.



- Immediate Public-Health Risks

Unsafe, unclean products continue to reach consumers, exposing them to contamination, chemical hazards, and mislabeled foods. Incidents such as the discovery of expired meat show how quickly these failures can escalate into outbreaks and public alarm.

- Structural Risks if the System Weakens Further

Without a stronger regulatory framework, Lebanon risks a growing burden of foodborne illness, reduced access to export markets, loss of consumer confidence, and even potential trade restrictions on Lebanese products.

- Reputational and Institutional Risks

Every case of non-compliance and every media revelation, such as incident cases, erode public trust. When confidence in institutions declines, enforcement becomes harder and industry cooperation weakens, creating a vicious cycle.

Qu. How does Lebanon currently compare to other countries in the region and the world in terms of

implementing and enforcing food safety standards?

• When measured against leading regional regulators, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt: Lebanon sits in the middle of the pack in terms of its food safety laws. The legal framework is solid, but the country still lags behind in implementation and enforcement, which is where the real impact on public health is felt.

- Closing the Gap

The path forward is clear, and the reforms are already underway. Lebanon will strengthen its position by advancing:

- Centralized governance, replacing fragmented oversight
- Risk-based inspections, focusing resources where risks are highest
- Digital traceability systems, allowing rapid tracking and recalls
- Visible, timely enforcement, ensuring rules are applied consistently.



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