



Chamber of Food Industries
غرفة الصناعات الغذائية

Employment Needs Assessment (ENA) Report

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List of Abbreviations

ENA	Employment Needs Assessment
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CFI	Chamber of Food Industries
Codex	International Codex Alimentarius Commission
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
ETPs	Enterprise-TVET Partnership
FEI	Federation of Egyptian Industries
FSA	Food Safety Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GoE	Government of Egypt
HR	Human Resources
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South
SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WFP	World Food Program

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Executive Summary

The Chamber of Food Industries (CFI) is a non-profit institution established in 1958 by a presidential decree affiliated with the Federation of Egyptian Industries. The Chamber is considered as the official representative of the food and beverage industry in Egypt with over 13,000 members registered. The food processing industry is one of the most strategic industries in Egypt given its high macroeconomic potential and large employment share.

Electronic questionnaires were distributed by CFI to 200 food processing companies with the aim of collecting primary data to analyze the current employment status of the sector, record the possibility and willingness to recruit non-Egyptians, identify the key skill sets needed for the sector, evaluate the performance of non-Egyptian workers, outline recruitment challenges, examine the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and identify practices of gender equality. The sample companies were chosen randomly to present a fair percentage from each sub-sector in the Chamber. The questions asked in the questionnaire revolve around stating the number of workers, segregated by gender, occupying technical and administrative positions in the food processing sector. They also examined whether the surveyed companies have had any previous experience in recruiting and training non-Egyptians, evaluation of the performance of non-Egyptians, and the possibility of recruiting non-Egyptians in their companies.

In terms of employment status, the study concluded that although most sample companies are willing to hire non-Egyptians – especially those who had previous experience of doing so – the number of non-Egyptians working in the food processing companies remains relatively low. This is due to several challenges, including, the lack of awareness among the food processing companies about the legal means of recruiting non-Egyptians in a way that is in line with the Egyptian Labour Law and avoids the lengthily bureaucratic processes of issuing work permits through using training contracts. Moreover, the high salaries or accommodation requested by non-Egyptians, especially refugees, in addition to lack of social integration between workers of different languages, social and cultural backgrounds, often discourage employers from hiring non-Egyptians. Another key finding is that the number of female workers in the food processing sector is low compared to their male counterparts. However, they continue to be highly demanded in the packaging and packing processes.

With regards to employment benefits provided, the study shows that most sample companies did not provide their employees with transportation services, which disproportionately impacts women, and reflects negatively on the turnover rates and employees' willingness to accept the job offer. As for the recruitment challenges facing the food processing sector, the surveyed companies cited high turnover rates as the main challenge facing the sector. CFI previous studies reveal that high turnover rates in the said sector are a result of unskilled labour, limited benefits provided to workers, and workers' willingness to leave their jobs at any slight increase in income offered by competitors (lack of loyalty to the workplace). The study also shows that the majority of surveyed companies do not have in-house training facilities and instead rely heavily on on-the-job training. In line with this, the training cited by the surveyed sample as most needed is technical skills development training, followed by food safety training, then personal skills training.

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In terms of channels of recruitment, the study reveals that most companies rely mainly on informal networking and relationships (peer groups, family members, exiting employees, etc.) to find jobseekers. Others use mosques and churches to reach out to potential jobseekers.

Although most of the food processing sub-sectors have been affected negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of production and employment conditions and status. Nonetheless, the food processing sector is showing signs of positive recovery as a result of the government's economic response plans and the gradual easing of the COVID-19 containment measures. The exact number of workers needed by the sector remains hard to determine due to the ongoing pandemic. Generally, however, new technical workers are preferred to be between the age bracket of 18-40 years, fluent in Arabic and have a minimum of two years of previous work experience in the food processing sector. Finally, the study also shows that most companies, explicitly or explicitly, adopt measures to ensure gender equality.

This study presents recommendations to CFI, CDS and the food processing companies (private sector). For the food processing companies, the study highlights the need to build in-house training facilities. Moreover, the private sector should adopt explicit policies that ensure gender equality and mainstream gender throughout the production process, all while working towards increasing female representation in their workforce. Additionally, the food processing private sector should build resilience against reoccurring shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by adopting preventative and proactive measures as well as addressing the root causes of the structural challenges facing the sector, for instance, by diversifying their sources of input supply. Finally, food processing companies should engage in sharing good practices and success stories about their experiences in hiring non-Egyptians with one another. As for the recommendations directed towards CDS and CFI, the study underscores the need to raise awareness to inform the food processing sector about the possible legal channels by which they can hire non-Egyptians, in order to overcome the institutional and bureaucratic barriers created by the Egyptian labour law. Moreover, CFI should tailor its trainings to match the training needs highlighted in this study in order to qualify potential candidates to successfully join the food processing workforce. Lastly, there is a need to encourage recruiters to utilize the formal channels of recruitment in their hiring process in order to leverage all available human resources.

1. Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Center for the Development Services (CDS) for the project titled "Socio-Economic Resilience of Migrants and Egyptians in Greater Cairo". The project aims to enhance the self-reliance of 1,200 refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, and Egyptian nationals living in Greater Cairo through facilitating their access to wage employment. This intervention is led by CDS, with the Chamber of Food Industries (CFI) as the sole service provider for this project. It embodies the developmental principle by paving the way for poverty reduction, gender equality, social integration of diverse communities living side by side, and experimentation with similar livelihood needs and aspirations. Moreover, at the heart of the developmental principle is the notion that forcibly displaced populations and migrants can be strong agents of sustainable peace and development when socially and economically integrated into host countries.

Within this understanding, this study is conducted to address the following dimensions:

- Analyze the current employment status in the food processing sector;
- Measure the willingness and record the possibility of recruiting non-Egyptians in the food processing sector;
- Identify the key skill set that recruiters in the food processing sector search for during the hiring process;
- Delineate the recruitment challenges facing the food processing sector;
- Outline the impact of COVID-19 on the food processing sector;
- Identify patterns of gender mainstreaming in the food processing sector;

1.1. Background

Egypt hosts a considerable number of asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants. According to the latest UNHCR statistics, the number of refugees and asylum seekers residing in Egypt stood at 261,701 in 2021 (UNHCR, 2021). Egypt adopts a non-encampment policy which results in a sizeable number of urban refugees and migrants settling and interacting with the host population; most of which are concentrated in Greater Cairo, Alexandria, and Damietta. The reality on the ground reflects the harsh socioeconomic conditions experienced by Egyptians, refugees, and migrants alike, with an unemployment rate of 7.3%, an inflation rate of 4.8%, and a poverty rate of 29.7% (CAPMAS, 2020). This in turn has forced refugees and Egyptians to eke out a meagre existence in the informal sector where they are subject to exploitation and abuse. The absence of livelihood opportunities and the dreadful living conditions under which these vulnerable populations live, deprives them from having access to basic services such as quality healthcare, education, and food security. The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated existing vulnerabilities and disproportionately impacted the aforementioned populations, particularly refugees living in protracted situations, all of which forced some to adopt negative coping mechanisms which accentuate their residual protection risks.

The majority of refugees in Egypt work primarily in the food, handicrafts, and readymade garment industries. According to a Market Systems Analysis conducted by UNHCR (2018), the food sector in Egypt is considered the most suitable area of intervention (Table 1), given its high macroeconomic and market potential, large employment share specifically for Syrian refugees, and higher income generation in comparison with the latter two occupations.

The food industry supply chain is made up of several interrelated yet sequential value-adding activities that encompass a wide range of actors – namely, agriculture production, food processing, distribution, retail, consumption, and waste disposal. The industry accounts for 10% of global GDP and remains the primary source of self-employment and wage employment in developing countries, employing approximately 1 billion people worldwide (UNIDO, 2020, p.4: World Bank 2021). The food sector in Egypt is considered one of the most attractive sectors given its high employment and entrepreneurship potential resulting from the steady growing demand for food products and the rapid change in food consumption habits (UNHCR, 2018). According to CFI's database, the formal food processing sector consists of 13,065 companies with a total employability share of 704,362 workers. Nevertheless, the sector faces several challenges, one of which is the high turnover rate due to high levels of unskilled labour and lack of loyalty to the workplace. It is thus believed that providing refugees, migrants and Egyptian nationals with tailored personal and vocational trainings that are in tandem with the needs of the labour market, enhances their competency and skills to join the food processing sector, which in turn would increase their employability and set the path towards poverty alleviation, self-reliance, and improved livelihoods.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis for the Food Sector in Egypt

Strength	Weaknesses
1. Potential for growth due to increases in demand	1. Quality level varies
2. Ease of entry to this sector	2. Public health issues
3. Availability of the skilled labor for this sector	3. Management and Administrative Authorities are weak
4. Labor intense sector (relies on a variety of labor and skills)	4. The way of presentation of the food is not up to standard in many cases
5. Popularity of the Syrian cuisine	5. Poor Quality Control systems
6. Brings a lot of value added to many other sectors	6. Many middle men are involved in the process
7. Allows for creativity and development of new products/ideas	7. Commercial fraud/cheating
8. Higher profit margin than other sectors	8. Many middle men involved in the process
	9. Pricing of products is random (no proper pricing system)
Opportunities	Threats
1. Expanding market	1. Changes in the subsidy system might increase the operational costs
2. Opportunities available for funds for small and medium enterprises	2. Bureaucratic processes for licenses
3. Education and geographical factors are positive for this sector	3. Compliance to international standards

Source: UNHCR Market Systems Analysis for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (2018)

1.2 Overview of the Food Processing Sector in Egypt

This section focuses primarily on the food processing sector in Egypt given its potential to expand further in international and regional trade, impacting positively on economic returns and generating new employment opportunities across the food industry supply chain.

The food processing sector is considered one of the leading manufacturing sectors in Egypt. It accounts for 56% of total industrial establishments (ILO, 2020, p. 48), with over 7,000 food processing and manufacturing companies, generating sales that exceeded \$17 billion in 2018 (Al-Habbal et al, 2018: GAIN Report, 2019). The food processing industry in Egypt consists of both big enterprises and several SMEs working on niche products for regional and local markets. The majority of food processing production takes place in Lower Egypt, especially in the Giza and Cairo governorates, which account for 78.3% of food processing gross output, while Upper Egypt plays an important role in the production of primary agriculture, contributing by 30.2% to agricultural gross output (IFPRI, 2018: UNIDO 2020).

GDP

The sectors' investment, which amounts to LE500 billion, contributes 24.5% to Egypt's GDP (Egypt Independent, 2021). Notwithstanding its deterioration during the 1970s and 80's, the sector regained its momentum during the 1990s mainly due to the introduction of reform policies, which attracted several multi-national companies such as Nestle, Kraft and Cadbury, and boosted local private investments (Said et al, 2018, p.12). The sector also experienced a period of slowdown, as a result of the political shocks caused by the 2011 and 2013 revolutions and the subsequent political and economic instability¹. Despite this, the food processing sector in Egypt has managed to expand rapidly over the past 10 years with an average annual growth rate of 20% from 2015 to 2020. This is largely due to Egypt's large domestic market, high annual population growth rates (2.0% in 2019), the country's agrarian nature, and favorable climatic conditions², as well as Egypt's advantageous geographical location with proximity to both Arab and European countries and direct access to sea and air shipping services. All of which All of this strengthens Egypt's position as a regional supplier of processed agricultural products.

Exports

Exports of food industries rank third in terms of Egypt's non-oil exports and accounted for 13% in 2020. Although the sector experienced a 10% decrease in 2015 from USD 2.9 billion in 2014 to 2.6 billion in 2015 before witnessing a slight recovery to reach USD 2.8 billion in 2018 (Al-Helewa, 2020, p. 47), the Egyptian Export Council for Food Industries announced that the

¹ Since then, business confidence has improved and Egypt witnessed a concurrent spur in foreign and national investment, as well as a decrease in inflation and poverty rates as a result of Egypt's ambitious Economic Reform Program.

² Egypt's soil and climactic conditions together with multiple growing seasons means that Egyptian agriculture can produce year-round and is rarely subject to seasonal constraints. This, in turn, is essential for the sustainability and productivity of the food processing sector.

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sector's exports in 2020 reached \$3.5 billion mainly through serving markets in the MENA region³. This is the same level of exports as in 2019 despite the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Egypt Today, 2021). The spur in food processing exports is partially attributed to a plethora of GoE stimulus interventions, such as the Government Export Support Program⁴ that was initiated in 2002 and the development of the Food Export Development Strategy⁵. Likewise, Egypt is party to several preferential trade agreements with various Arab, African, European countries and free trade zones such as COMESA, Agadir, and MERCOSUR (Al-Helewa, 2020, p.42). Given that the food sector has proven successful, the food and beverages sector was named a sector of interest in the new Investment Law issued in May 2017.

Employment

The Egyptian food processing sector is considered a vital labour-intensive sector with the potential of generating productive employment opportunities, whether directly through the sector itself or through additional employment in supplier sectors, most notably in agriculture. The sector contributes about 23.2% of the Egyptian employment volume (more than 7 million workers employed directly or indirectly through the food supply chain). As evident in (Table 2), the total number of workers in the Egyptian food industry (formal sector) registered at CFI in 2021 accounted for 704,362 thousand workers out of which 80% (563,489 thousand) are technical workers and 20% (140,872 thousand) are administrative workers. It is worth noting that females make up only around 56,789 thousand workers out of the total share of the food processing sector employment, whereas the number of female business owners stood at 1,572 thousand.

Table 2: Number of Employees Segregated by the Food Processing Sub-Sector

Divisions	No of Employees	Companies Number
Sugar, Confectionery & Chocolates	308461	2342
Milk & Dairy Products	77834	1200
Juices, Drinks and Water	40598	615

³ The MENA region is the biggest importer of Egyptian food processing exports. It imported up to 73% of the sector's total exports in 2013. "Saudi Arabia is the largest destination market for this sector with 10.4% of the sector's total exports, followed by Libya (7.4%), Jordan (5.3%), U.S.A (5.2%), Yemen (4.8%), and U.A.E (4.4%). "Aromatic oils, milling products, and cooked cheese are the most important exported sub-sectors, accounting for 25% of processed food exports, followed by processed strawberries, frozen vegetables, and juices and concentrate" (Al-Helewa, 2020, p. 47).

⁴ The program was initiated in 2002 with the aim of upgrading the value added of Egyptian exporters and strengthening their international market share.

⁵ The strategy is aimed at improving both the quality and quantity of local processed foods in order to increase exports, while also improving import substitution. The strategy is in tandem with Egypt's 2030 strategy that calls for industrial and export development, encouragement of SME and raising the efficiency of institutions and the Egyptian quality system.

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Meats & Poultries & Fish	69984	2525
Fruits & Vegetables	56941	1582
Oil and Vegetable fats	32177	501
Specialty Foods, Yeast, and Food Additives	9674	384
Different Food Products	91844	3840
Tobacco & Cigarettes	16849	76
Total	704,362	13065

Source: Compiled and Calculated from CFI Database

According to previous market research conducted by the CFI to identify the employment needs of the food processing companies and their willingness to recruit non-Egyptians (Training refugees in Egypt– funded by WFP), the food sector attracts a large number of Egyptian and foreign workers, both males and females. Females are highly demanded, especially in the packing and packaging process, given their efficiency and accuracy in the final phase of the product production. The research also revealed that food processing technical skills can be easily acquired by delivering tailored training courses to qualifying job seekers for entering the food sector's job market. Improvements in the productivity and quality of the food processing sector by means of creating a pool of skilled labour would not only positively affect the economic returns and generate additional job opportunities in the sector but would also result in potential developments in the agriculture sector. The research also underscored that food processing companies are indifferent about their worker's nationality. However, they put great emphasis on their ability to communicate in fluent Arabic. On the supply side, the food sector is considered one of the most attractive sectors for non-Egyptians given its high employment and entrepreneurship potential due to the steady growing demand for food products resulting from population growth and the rapid change in food consumption habits (UNHCR, 2018).

2. About the ENA Study

2.1 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assist in enhancing the skills of the project's beneficiaries so that they can enter the labour market and advance their careers. This is relevant, especially since the gap between the skills demanded by the food processing sector and the type of skills labourers acquire is widening. Accordingly, this timely study is important for designing tailored training that leads to positive transformation for the project's beneficiaries.

2.2 The ENA Approach

The study adopted an approach that identified the needs of Egyptian companies and factories working in the food processing sector, which assisted in determining the skills, capacities and knowledge needed to facilitate access of refugees, migrants, and Egyptian nationals to the

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private sector. In doing so, the study focused on the challenges and opportunities offered by the Egyptian food processing sector. Such an approach helps determine the demand, perceptions, priorities, and the employment and training gaps in the said sector, which is key to improving the overall productivity and effectiveness of the sector, increasing the competitiveness of their final products, all while leveraging on the potential of existing workers.

2.3 Study Methodology

The study relies on mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary resources. It utilized a review of essential documentations in order to gain a deeper insight of the respective context for guiding the preparation of the analysis tools as well as inform its results. It includes information from national statistics, newspapers articles, CFI reports, and International organizations' documents and reports.

The methodology also employs a participatory quantitative approach to data collection, using an online survey in the form of a structured electronic questionnaire developed on the SurveyMonkey online platform. The survey was distributed by CFI to its members, using CFI's database, to collect quantitative information from food processing companies, namely, targeting the HR departments.

An online survey was selected as the best method for the study based on the feedback CFI received from its target sample on their preferred type of interaction. According to the target sample, online surveys are time-efficient compared to other methods of data collection, i.e., interviews, phone calls or focus group discussions. Additionally, given the large sample size, online surveys were perceived by CFI members as the most effective method for the data collection phase. The questionnaire was designed to contain closed-ended questions with a distinct set of pre-defined responses, such as check list and 'yes/no' questions, that directly address the specific information needed for the study, avoiding being time-consuming for the respondents, which may discourage them from completing the questionnaire.

The ENA survey consists of 38 questions, that examine the employment needs for a sample of 200 companies, their experience with recruiting non-Egyptian employees, skill needed when hiring new workers, and challenges faced by HR departments when new technical workers. CFI designed the ENA questionnaire according to the study objectives, while avoiding certain questions which may be perceived as sensitive for the companies.

2.4 Description of the Study Sample

The study was carried out in February 2020 and lasted for four weeks, targeting 200 companies from the food processing sector with a fair sample representing the major eight sub-sectors of food processing in Egypt, including: 54 various food products, 10 specialty foods, yeast, and food additives, 41 meat, poultry, and fish, 20 milk and dairy products, 10 juices, beverages, and water, 9 oils and vegetable fats, 25 vegetables and fruits, and 31 sugar, confectionary, and chocolate (Table 3).

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Table 3: Number of Companies Surveyed Segregated by Sub-Sector

Sub-Sector	Number of Companies
Various Food Products	54
Specialty foods, Yeast, and Food Additives	10
Meat, Poultry and Fish	41
Milk and Dairy Products	20
Juices, Beverages and Water	10
Oils and Vegetable Fats	9
Vegetables and Fruits	25
Sugar, Confectionary and Chocolate	31
Total	200

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021.

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis utilizes the primary data collected, in addition to different national statistics and empirical studies as well as national and international documents and reports. In its approach and design, the ENA report aims to:

- Analyze the current employment status in the food processing sector;
- Measure the willingness and record the possibility of recruiting non-Egyptians in the food processing sector;
- Identify the key skill set that recruiters in the food processing sector search for during the hiring process;
- Delineate the recruitment challenges facing the food processing sector;
- Outline the impact of COVID-19 on employment in the food processing sector;
- Identify patterns of gender mainstreaming in the food processing sector;

For a better presentation of the report, the study will refer to asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants as non-Egyptians.

4. Findings of the Employment Needs Assessment

This section presents the employment needs assessment findings for the food processing sector. It covers the current number of Egyptian and non-Egyptian employees working in the surveyed companies segregated by gender, the adoption of gender-sensitive policies, the possibility of recruiting non-Egyptian workers (targeted by the project), the employment benefits provided by employers, as well as the companies' needs for technical workers in all the food industry sub-sectors. These findings will help identify the type of training needed for

the project's beneficiaries to join the food processing private sector. It also outlines the effect of the lockdown during COVID-19 pandemic on the food processing industry.

A. Employment Data of the Surveyed Companies

For this section, sample companies were asked to provide the CIF study team with the exact number of their current employees, segregated by gender and type of occupation (administrative, technical, or supporting staff). Based on the data collected from the 200 respondents, the current number of employees working in the target companies stands at 16,654 thousand employees, among which 13,444 thousand are technical employees and 2,252 thousand are administrative employees. This data reflects the high employment share and potential for the food processing industry; the data also shows that there is high demand for technical workers compared to their administrative counterparts. It is worth noting, however, that only 11 out of the total number of employees are non-Egyptians, indicating that there might be several challenges that reduce employers' willingness to hire non-Egyptians.

The data also reveals that only 1,621 thousand out of the total number of workers are female employees. This demonstrates that although the employment share in the food sector is expanding, the number of female workers remains relatively low. This goes hand in hand with the general pattern of widening gender disparity in Egypt's unemployment rate and the underrepresentation of female workers in the manufacturing sector. In fact, the female labour force participation rate for Egyptian women ranged between 20% and 25% throughout the 2000s, which is very low compared to the world average of 52%. Moreover, while Egyptian women represent only 23% of the labour force, their unemployment rate is estimated at 24.66%, whereas the unemployment rate among Egyptian males is estimated at 8.30% (Nazier, 2017).

B. Transportation Services Provided by Employers

For this section, sample companies were asked to state whether they provide their employees with transportation services to and from work. Previous CFI studies have revealed that one of the main factors influencing employees' decision to work in the food processing sector (supply side), particularly women, is the availability transportation services provided by the employer; the time and cost of commuting to and from work frequently play an important role in determining the employees' willingness to accept a job offer. As evident in Table 4, the majority of sample companies (186 companies) reported not offering transportation services to their employees, which encourages them to search for alternative jobs and result in high turnover rates in the food processing sector. Due to fear of harassment, lack of trust in the host community, and conservative traditions, the lack of transportation services has a disproportionate impact on the decision of women, particularly refugees, to accept a job offer. Female Syrian refugees, for instance, often prefer to work from home for the aforementioned reasons.

Table 4: Availability of Transportation for Employees

Answers	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	5.5
No	186	94.42
No answer	3	1.5
Total	200	

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

C. Previous Experience(s) with Hiring Non-Egyptian Employees

For this section, sample companies were asked to state whether they had employed non-Egyptian workers before? And if yes, whether they can mention their nationalities, type of occupations and evaluate their performance. Moreover, the sample companies were also asked if they had any plans to hire non-Egyptian workers and if they were willing to do so. And what are the main challenges that they face or fear to face in doing so?

By asking companies to share their thoughts on hiring non-Egyptian workers and if they are willing to do so, the data collected shows that approximately 83⁶ out of the 200 sample companies are ready and willing to hire non-Egyptian workers, whereas 11 companies are unwilling to hire non-Egyptian workers and prefer to hire Egyptian nationals. The sugar, confectionary and chocolate sub-sector showed the highest level of willingness and readiness to employ non-Egyptians, followed by the meat, poultry, and fish sub-sector. It is important to note, however, that 106 companies did not respond to this question as they needed to know more information about the legal process of recruiting non-Egyptians under the Egyptian labour law⁷.

⁶ The 83 companies are divided as following: (15) various food products; (5) specialty foods, yeast, and food additives; (16) meat, poultry, and fish; (9) milk and dairy products; (7) juices, beverages, and water; (2) oils and vegetable fats; (8) vegetables and fruits; (21) sugar, confectionary, and chocolate.

⁷ Although non-registered and registered refugees with blue or yellow cards are not allowed to work on a formal employment contract, enterprises employ them under internship or training contracts to cover job vacancies which they are not able to match with the Egyptian labour force. Moreover, migrants are allowed to work with a formal employment contract if they have proof of documentation, the private sector can employ them following a 10% Egyptian to foreigner ratio regulation, or if the private sector cannot find Egyptians who can or accept the job offer.

The data collected also reveals that around 11 (5.5%)⁸ out of the total 200 sample companies had already recruited/trained 13 non-Egyptian employees (Table 5), among which 2 Syrians, 3 Sudanese, 1 Palestinian and 7 originate from other nationalities. Most of which are employed in the juices, beverages, and water sub-sector.

Table 5: Number of Non-Egyptians Employed in the Sample Companies

Answers	Number of Companies
Recruited non-Egyptian employees	11
Did not recruit non-Egyptian employees	189
Total	200

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

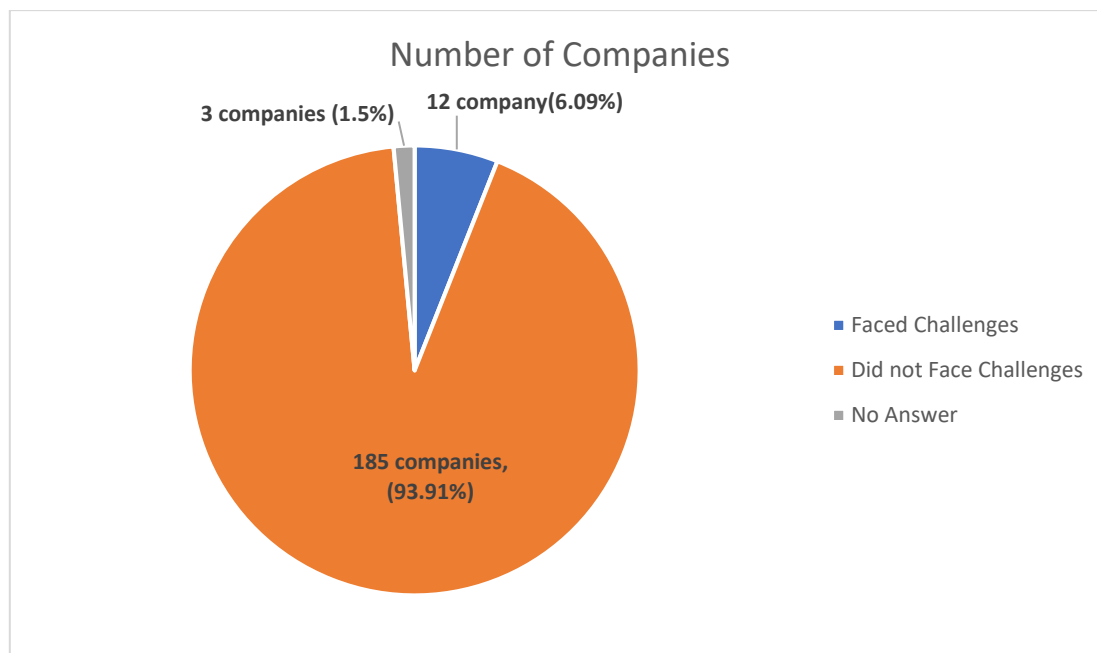
Non-Egyptians often occupy jobs in the following domains:

- Kitchen stewards
- Chief assistants
- Quality Assurance
- Care service

Most of the respondents (185 companies) stated that they have not faced challenges while recruiting non-Egyptian employees. This is perplexing, given that only 11 companies have actually experienced recruiting non-Egyptians as evident in Table 5. Those 11 companies mentioned that their recruitment of non-Egyptians relays on issuing training contracts, which is considered the main reason behind why they have not faced any challenge. This preserves their legal status under the Egyptian labour law. The rest of the 185 companies, however, claimed that they have not had the experience of hiring non-Egyptians before. However, they heard from other companies that there are no challenges in doing so. Three respondents chose to evade the question altogether, since they preferred to be discreet about declaring any opinion pertaining to the recruitment of non-Egyptians (Figure 1).

⁸ The 11 companies are divided as following: (3) various food products; (1) meat, poultry, and fish; (6) juices, beverages and water; (1) oils and vegetable fats.

Figure 1: The Number of Companies that Cited Facing Challenges in Employing Non-Egyptians



Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

Previous meetings and surveys conducted by CFI with food processing companies indicated that amongst the challenges mentioned by food processing companies when hiring non-Egyptians, are the following:

- Egyptian labour laws and regulation requirements for recruiting non-Egyptian employees and the legality of issuing employment contracts, act as a strong disincentive for employers to hire non-Egyptians. The Ministry of Manpower's Decree no. 146/2019 on foreigners' legal authorization to work in Egypt states that:
 - Foreigners must be granted a work permit from the Ministry of Manpower. The conditions to obtaining the work permit include that foreigners must have a minimum of 3-year experience, proof that the applicant is uniquely qualified, and that the proposed area of work cannot be performed by a national.
 - The hiring of foreigners in any enterprise is limited to a 10% ratio of foreigners to Egyptian nationals⁹.
 - Non-registered and registered refugees with blue or yellow cards are not allowed to work with a formal employment contract.
 - Employers who are hiring foreign technical workers must assign at least two Egyptians to work as their assistants.

⁹ Meaning that companies must ensure that the total number of foreign workers in the company must not exceed 10% of the total Egyptian workers employed and insured by the company.

- High salaries and accommodation requested by non-Egyptians; foreigners, especially refugees and asylum seekers¹⁰, often request accommodation or higher salaries to cover their accommodation costs, which in turn discourages companies from hiring them.
- Difficulty of social integration with Egyptians; This is one of the main challenges facing the recruiters. Different languages, cultural and social backgrounds, tend to have a negative impact on teamwork, resulting in reduced productivity.
- Hiring workers from different cultural backgrounds may at times result in increasing tensions and disputes among workers, accordingly employers prefer to either hire only Egyptian or limit it to one homogenous group of foreign workers.

According to Table 6, 64.97% of the sample companies believe that non-Egyptian workers, particularly Syrian refugees, and migrants, perform relatively well (good) in their jobs. As mentioned earlier, although most sample companies did not hire non-Egyptian workers, the vast majority believe that they would perform well once they were hired. This perception is developed as a result of the positive professional reputation that certain refugee groups hold.

Table 6: Evaluation of the Performance of Non-Egyptian Employees

Evaluation	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Weak	7	3.55
Good	128	64.97
Very good	52	26.4
Excellent	10	5.08
No Answer	3	

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

Table 7 reveals that only 42.13% are willing to hire non-Egyptian technical workers. In fact, the remaining 57.87% of respondents were unwilling to hire non-Egyptians due to the Egyptian Labour Law, which entails lengthy, costly, and time-consuming bureaucratic processes that discourage businesses from hiring non-Egyptians. Only 3 companies skipped this question since they claimed to have no feedback on this matter. This, in turn, highlights the need for more awareness about the legal means of recruiting non-Egyptians.

¹⁰ Who often live under harsh living conditions, are subjected to higher rents compared to their Egyptian counterparts and do not have savings.

Table 7: Possibility of Hiring Trained Non-Egyptian Technical Workers

Answers	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Yes	83	42.13
No	114	57.87
No Answer	3	1.5

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

D. Recruitment Methods and Challenges in the Recruitment of Technical Employees

For this section, sample companies were asked to state their turnover rates, identify the main challenges that they face and state their methods of recruitment. As illustrated in (Table 8), 71 of the companies surveyed recorded a turnover percentage of 10 to 20%, whereas 21 companies recorded 20% to 30% turnover rates, and 9 companies recorded a turnover rate of 30-50%. These rates are relatively high compared to the average food processing sector turnover rate, which stands between 4-8%. Only 18 companies claimed to have no turnover rates. This high turnover rate is often associated with the lack of skilled labour in the market and the absence of binding contractual obligations for the employees to remain in the job. Labourers are unable to keep their jobs because they are insufficiently skilled, so they either quit to work in another field or are fired by the company. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, labourers leave their jobs due to the absence of transportation services provided by employers. They tend to grow weary of riding more than one means of transportation on a daily basis, which is costly and time-consuming. Advantages and incentives, such as meals offered during the day for workers, transportation, and medical insurance, are considered very important for workers to gain their loyalty. The absence of these advantages lowers their loyalty and drives them to quit and search for a better workplace. The decision to leave a job is highly volatile to any slight increase in income offered by another employer. It is important to note that around 81 companies did not respond to this question because they considered this information confidential according to their company's policy.

Table 8: Turnover Rate in Sample Companies

Turnover Rate in %	Number of Companies
10% - 20%	71
20% - 30%	21
30% - 50%	9
No Turnover	18
No Answer	81

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

Companies face various challenges in meeting their needs for new technical employment as demonstrated in Table 9. Although, the vast majority of respondents (139 companies) did not respond to this question since they did not face problems in recruiting new technical employment; nevertheless, 90% of those who responded cited the poor skills of job applicants (Egyptians and non-Egyptians) as the main challenge they face in the recruitment process. Most applicants do not possess the basic skills needed in order to perform well on the job; there is a noticeable gap between the skills acquired by applicants during their vocational studies and the skills demanded by the food processing sector. Moreover, 84.48% of respondents claim that the unavailability of workers is one of the challenges they face when trying to hire new technical workers, which reflects the growing demand for technical labour in the sector. Food processing companies are inclined to employ non-Egyptian workers, if they accept the standard salaries offered by the company, speak the Arabic language fluently and agree to have training contracts.

Table 9: Challenges Facing Companies in Meeting their Needs for New Technical Employment

Type of Problem	Number of Companies	Percentage %
Unavailability of Workers	16	84.48
Poor level of Applicants' Skills	30	90,91
High Wages for Workers	8	24.24
Providing Accommodation for Workers	7	21.21
No Answer	139	

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

As demonstrated in Table 10, companies make use of different formal and informal channels and platforms to recruit their employees. This information is important in searching and finding job opportunities for the beneficiaries of the project during the job placement phase. The results illustrate that most companies rely mostly on informal networking and relationships as the most successful way to find and recruit new employees. For example, they may ask their peer groups or family members to recommend potential candidates for the available vacancy. Some recruiters also advertise their vacancies through mosques and churches. The second highest channel of recruitment is also informal in nature and depends largely on the recommendations and referrals provided by existing employees; employers ask their current employees to recommend and offer vacancies to their friends, neighbors or acquaintances who are skilled and experienced. Jobseekers are often more attracted to job

offers brought to them by family or friends because they are perceived as trustworthy. Employment fairs, on the other hand, were recoded as the least used and least preferred channel of recruitment by employers, primarily because they are unorganized and result in the recruitment of unskilled workers.

Table 10: Channels of Recruitment¹¹

Way	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Newspapers Advertisements	38	19
Internal Advertising	58	29
Reliance on Relationships	109	54.5
Reliance on workers or employees' recommendations	87	43.5
Recruiting Companies	16	8
Employment Fairs	8	4
Social Media	49	24.5

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

E. Skills Improvement for Employees

Engaging in an ongoing process of enhancing the human capital available is essential for a well-functioning and effective business. Most companies surveyed for this study do not have training departments, rather they depend largely on on-job training (96.4%) provided by supervisors while working on the production lines, whereas others provide short training courses facilitated by external trainers. In fact, only 19% of the companies surveyed have training facilities on their premises and have an annual training plan to enhance the skills of their labour force. The CFI contributes to such training by offering cost-share training that is funded by the CFI at a rate of 20% to 30% of the total training cost. Indeed, four of the sample companies depend on training offered by funding agents and development projects.

According to the companies surveyed, technical education graduates often lack the necessary skills to enter the private sector because their education focuses more on theoretical aspects rather than equipping them with practical experience and training required to facilitate their entry into the food processing sectors. These practical trainings help jobseekers gain real life experience and makes them aware of the use of modern technology in the sector.

¹¹ The number of companies presented in this table is higher than the target sample 200 because each respondent could choose more than one answer.

Table 11: *Training Methods offered by Sample Companies*¹²

Training method	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Regular Training Sessions	19	9.64%
On-job Training	190	96.45%
Other	4	2.03%

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

In order to be able to develop relevant and tailored training courses to increase the employability of the beneficiaries for the project, the sampled companies were asked to mention the types of training they believe are essential to qualify a potential candidate for employment. Table 10 demonstrates that 72% of the respondents believed that training courses designed to improve technical skills are of utmost importance. This is followed by food safety training (50%). This is further validated through CFI's previously conducted training needs assessment (TNA) with several food processing companies. It is important to note that each company choose the training needed according to its specific context and employment needs.

Table 12: *Training and skills Needed to Enhance the Employability of Technical Workers*

Training Program	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Food safety training	100	50.7
Technical skills development	142	72.08
Personal skills development	56	28.43
Other Training	27	13.71

Source: Compiled and calculated from CFI questionnaires 2021

F. Gender Sensitive Policies

A key characteristic of the labour market in Egypt is gender disparity in labour market participation and unemployment. The female share of employment is low in the manufacturing industry (8%), in comparison with the health and social work services (59%), education (48%) and agriculture (31%) (ILO, 2015, p. 6). Accordingly, there is a pressing need

¹² The number of companies presented in this table is higher than the target sample 200 because each respondent could choose more than one answer.

for governments to work on incentivizing the manufacturing sector in general, and the food processing sector in particular, to increase female representation in the composition of their workforce.

Most of the surveyed companies adopt indirect gender-sensitive measures, meaning that they do not have specific documents that contain rules and regulations concerning gender equality. In the study sample, only 44 companies reported having policies and rules put in place to promote gender equality. According to the CFI study team, the majority of sample companies abide by the requirements of Egyptian law to promote gender equality by means of ensuring equal pay, granting maternity leaves, and lactating hours during the first two years postpartum – which in turn creates an enabling environment for the realization of the Decent Work objective at the national level.

According to the study, females perform a wide variety of occupations in the sample companies, albeit few women conduct tasks that require manual labour, i.e., working in the company's storage. Previous CFI studies also reveal females often prefer to work during morning shifts, given that night shifts expose them to the potential danger of harassment and are perceived against widely held societal norms and traditions.

G. Impact of COVID-19 on Sample Companies

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates pre-existing challenges in the food processing sector and resulted in a 22.8% reduction in its overall production rates. Workers engaged in the food processing sector are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 exposure and to disruption of livelihoods (UNIDO, 2020, p. 4). On the business side, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged businesses on various fronts. First, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the local and international supply of quality and safe inputs (agricultural raw materials) as well as access to intermediate goods and equipment. This is partially attributed to the fact that the Egyptian food processing sector depends heavily on the supply of imported inputs (ingredients and raw materials), which were interrupted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, there is a need to build the sector's resilience against external shocks and structural risks by means of reducing its dependence on imported inputs, diversifying supply channels and localizing production of inputs (UNIDO, 2020). Second, customers' demand for certain processed foods has also decreased initially due to the COVID-19 response measures, which restricted mobility and resulted in the closure of schools, universities, kiosks, clubs, cafes, restaurants, and hotels. This in turn, reduced overall demand and adversely affected the economic performance of the food processing sector (UNIDO, 2020). Third, the COVID-19 pandemic has also negatively affected employment in the labour-intensive food processing sector, since certain companies, especially SMEs, were forced to reduce their labour force in order to compensate for budget deficits or as a result of the reduced numbers of work shifts. In addition, the need to implement safety and social distancing measures, has led to a reduction in the number of Egyptian and non-Egyptian workers, either by dismissing employees or

asking them to work from home. Additionally, the drop in sales has led to a reduction in salaries and halted the annual salary increase. As for the companies that were not affected, there was no change in the number of Egyptian and non-Egyptian workers.

It is worth mentioning that the degree of COVID-19 impact varied across the food processing sub-sectors; the juices, beverages and water sector and smoke division were more affected by the pandemic. Some of these sub-sectors had to work at half capacity while others had to close completely. On the other hand, certain companies were not affected by the pandemic, namely those that work with strategic commodities (rice, sugar, oil, pasta, dairy), companies that manufacture animal feed of all kinds, and companies that own restaurants.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inadequacy of Egypt's vocational educational system in providing the private sector with qualified and skilled employees. As a result, improved training and education for workers in the food processing industry, particularly on food safety and hygiene, is critical to reducing the risk of health hazards and promoting domestic and international marketing and sales. Likewise, a qualified workforce is key for increasing the efficiency of production and preparing businesses for the post-COVID-19 recovery (UNIDO, 2020, p.10).

Despite the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on industry, food processing companies took proactive and preventive measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis, namely by increasing the use of tele-communication technology. Moreover, the various measures taken by the GoE to ensure the safe and uninterrupted supply of food were essential for the sustainability of livelihoods and businesses in the food processing sector. For instance, the GOE, as a result of CFI's efforts, exempted the agri-food sector (effective from March to end of June 2020) from the mobility restrictions and curfews imposed as part of the COVID-19 response measures. Accordingly, the food processing sector was relatively less impacted by the pandemic compared with other industries despite the aforementioned challenges. Currently, there is a positive outlook for the food processing sector since the Egyptian government has eased restrictions on movements and allowed restaurants and hotels to operate normally. This, in turn, is expected to increase consumer expenditure. Accordingly, the export of processed food products increased by 2.2% at the end of the first half of 2020, after a decline of 5% in the first 5 months of 2020 (UNIDO, 2020, p.8-9). After asking the surveyed companies about the impact of COVID-19 on their business, it became evident that the economic performance of their respective companies is improving gradually and will begin recruiting new employees soon.

H. Future Needs for Skilled Technical Workers

The study reveals that companies lack a clear vision at this stage regarding the exact number of workers needed in the short-run until the COVID-19 situation improves. With this in mind, companies generally prefer to recruit skilled and trained blue-collar workers that are between the age bracket of 18-40 years and have at least two years of work experience.

Employment Needs Assessment

5. Limitations of the ENA

The limitations of the ENA study include:

- Not all companies answered all the questions, some skipped certain questions as they were considered as sensitive according to their internal policies.
- Some companies found the few open-ended questions time consuming and thus only answered the check list questions.
- Some companies were not comfortable disclosing information about hiring non-Egyptian workers, especially refugees.
- Certain companies did not address the survey at all. To overcome this, the CFI study team called them to ensure that they had received the survey and started filling it out.
- Because of the precautionary measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CFI study team was forced to use online survivors rather than face-to-face interviews. In-person interviews would have provided respondents with more room to express their opinions as well as share their thoughts and perceptions. These qualitative insights would have been useful to complement the quantitative data collected.
- The CFI team did not receive any responses from the tobacco sub-sector.

6. Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to analyze the current employment status in the food processing sector, measure the willingness and record the possibility of recruiting non-Egyptians, identify the key skill set that recruiters in the food processing sector search for during the hiring process, delineate the recruitment challenges facing the food processing sector, and highlight the impact of COVID-19 on employment in the food processing sector as well as identify patterns of gender mainstreaming in the food processing sector. In this vein, the main concluding remarks are as follows:

Employment Status

- The food sector is considered one of the most attractive sectors for Egyptians and non-Egyptian workers, both males and females. Although the study showed that most companies are willing to recruit non-Egyptian workers and perceive them positively, especially in the sugar, confectionary and chocolate sub-sector, the number of non-Egyptians working in the food processing sector remains relatively low (in fact only 11 out of the 200 sampled companies) had the experience of hiring non-Egyptians. This is mainly attributed to a number of challenges, including;
 - Lack of awareness about the legal process of recruiting non-Egyptians under the Egyptian labour Law.
 - Egyptian labour laws and regulation requirements entail a long, complex, and time-consuming bureaucratic process, which discourages employers from hiring non-Egyptians.

Employment Needs Assessment

- The high salaries and accommodation requested by non-Egyptians, especially refugees and asylum seekers, often discourages companies from hiring them.
- The lack of social integration between non-Egyptians and Egyptian nationals is one of the challenges facing recruiters.
- Food processing companies are inclined to employ non-Egyptian workers, if they accept the standard salaries offered by the company, speak Arabic fluently and agree to have training contracts.
- The number of female workers in the food processing sector is low compared to their male counterparts. Although females are highly demanded, especially in the packing and packaging processes, given their efficiency and accuracy in the final phase of the production line.

Employment Services

- The vast majority of sample companies reported not providing their employees with transportation services, which according to previous CFI studies, act as a great disincentive for workers. The time and cost of commuting to and from work often play an important role in determining the employees' willingness to accept a job offer and turnover rate in the sector.

Recruitment Challenges and Required Trainings

- Among the key challenges faced by the sector in general is the high turnover rate, which is a result of the lack of skilled labour, the absence of binding contractual commitment, low level advantages and incentives provided by employers, such as, meals offered during the day for workers, transportation, and medical insurance, and the decision to leave a job is highly volatile to any slight increase in income offered by another employer.
- Training job seekers and qualifying them is very important as it gives them a greater opportunity to join the food processing sector, especially in the areas of technical skills and food safety. The most requested training is technical skills development, followed by food safety training, and finally, personal skills development training.
- Most of the training provided by food processing companies is in the form of on-job training.

Recruitment Methods

- The majority of the surveyed companies rely on informal channels of recruitment (informal networking and relationships) by asking their peer groups, current workers and/or family members to recommend potential candidates for the available vacancy or advertise for their vacancies through mosques and churches.

COVID-19 and the Food Processing Sector:

- The revenues and production of most sub-sectors of the food industry have been affected by COVID-19. Additionally, the employment conditions and status of both

Employment Needs Assessment

Egyptian and non-Egyptian have been negatively affected by salary reductions or job loss. However, the food processing sector is now showing signs of positive recovery due to the government's economic response plans and that the COVID-19 containing measures have been eased.

Gender mainstreaming in the Food processing Sector

- Companies in the food processing sector often directly or indirectly adopt measures to ensure gender equality.

7. Future Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this section is directed to CDS, CFI, and food processing companies.

Food Processing Companies:

- Companies need to build in-house training facilities and participate in ToT courses in order to develop their own roster of trainers.
- Companies should explicitly adopt gender-sensitive policies and mainstream gender matters throughout the production processes in order to ensure gender equality.
- Companies should increase the representation of women in their workforce and create a conducive environment for them.
- Companies should build their resilience against reoccurring shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by adopting preventative and proactive measures as well as addressing the root causes of the structural challenges facing the sector. For instance, through diversifying their sources of input supply.
- Companies should engage in sharing good practices and success stories about their experiences in hiring non-Egyptians with one another.

CDS and CFI

- Awareness raising campaigns should be used to inform the food processing companies about the possible channels by which they can legally hire non-Egyptians, in a way that avoids the institutional and bureaucratic hurdles created by the Egyptian labour law.
- Develop and design tailored training, particularly in areas of technical skills and food safety training, to qualify potential candidates to join the food processing workforce.
- Encourage recruiters to utilize the formal channels of recruitment in their hiring process in order to leverage all available human resources.

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9. Annex

- PDF file contains online survey analysis.
 - PDF file with 200 companies' online responses.
- (This section is available in a separate file)

The Chamber of Food Industries (CFI)

This section of the report provides an overall understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the CFI. CFI is a non-profit organization established in 1958 by the presidential decree number 453, under the umbrella of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI). It is the official representative of the Egyptian Food Industry with a member base of over 13,000 companies¹³. Its mission is to promote the competitiveness of Egyptian processed food and beverage sector both domestically and globally. In this vein, CFI engages in a policy dialogue with the GoE to create a conducive business environment for its members and generate new investment and export opportunities. In line of this, CFI is responsible for tackling and mitigating the potential challenges faced by the industry. In terms of structure, CFI is headed by an Executive Director who is responsible for the management of the Chamber's affairs, in addition to a Management Board that consists of fifteen members, responsible for overseeing the conducts of activities.

CFI offers a wide range of services to its members including:

- Protecting the combined interest and welfare of members through lobbying on their behalf before different governmental bodies.
- Coordinating with the concerned authorities for laying out policies and preparing legislation related to the food and beverage industry, while providing opinion and suggestions on legislation.
- Studying the local impediments facing the development of the food and beverage industry, suggesting effective solutions, and updating its members on the latest international trends and standards.
- Organizing seminars and conferences to spread awareness about the Food Safety Agency (FSA).
- Strengthening the knowledge and skills for those working in the industry through providing skills development training programs for labourers and while making its library, which contains a wealth of information specific to the food industry, accessible to its members.

¹³ CFI members are those enterprises that engage in processing and/or packing activities related to the food and beverage industry. The members are clustered into nine divisions according to the type of product they generate: Sugar, Confectionery & Chocolates; Milk & Dairy Products; Juices, Drinks & Water; Meat, Poultry & Fish; Fruits & Vegetables; Oil & Vegetable Fats; Specialty Foods; Yeast & Food Additives; Different Food Products; and Tobacco & Cigarettes.

- Representing the sector in the technical committees for preparing the technical rules binding the National Food Safety Authority, in order to issue rules compatible with the industry.
- Providing consultations and preparing technical studies and reports for the food industry.
- Representing the Egyptian food industries in the meetings of the International Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) to express the sector's viewpoint in preparing the international standard.
- Studying the challenges of the specific sectors, developing strategies for their development, and submitting the necessary recommendations to the concerned authorities.
- Providing technical support to develop and enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Signing cooperation protocols with local and international bodies to provide various services to members.
- Spreading awareness of the latest global technical information on the food industry sector, international prices, and export, investment, and commercial opportunities.
- Contributing to the preparation, amendment and updating of the Egyptian standard specifications in the food industry sector annually through the specialized committees of the Egyptian General Authority for Standards and Quality.

CFI is keen on developing the skills and knowledge of those working in the food industry. Accordingly, the Enterprise TVET Partnership (ETP) for food industries was established in 2007. The ETP-Food is CFI's "House of Expertise" responsible for the development, implementation and supervision of activities related to TVET and Human Resources Development. ETP-Food mission is to become a catalyst in the creation, standardization, and implementation of a modern TVET system leading to the improvement of the labour competencies to meet the actual and future skills demand of the food processing industries. Relatedly, CFI in collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP), held a training course for Egyptian nationals and Syrian refugees living in Egypt, under a project titled "Provision of Livelihood Training Course in Food Processing". The training course successfully increased the competitiveness of the aforementioned beneficiaries in the job market, which in turn increased their employability in the food processing sector, which was evident during the job placement phase of the project. It allowed some of them to start their own micro-businesses, all of which set the path towards poverty alleviation, self-reliance, and improved livelihoods.
