

Tarabut

Where Dialogue Turns into
Collaboration in Iraq's Food Sector





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Tarabut brought together key actors from across Iraq's food and hospitality ecosystem for a focused gathering designed to move the sector beyond conversation and toward collective action. The event convened business owners, industry leaders, digital payment providers, platform operators, and representatives from restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, and food services in a shared space for dialogue, exchange, and collaboration.

More than a one-off event, Tarabut was conceived as the foundation of a **growing, independent sector community**, one that recognizes that many of the challenges facing Iraq's food sector are shared, interconnected, and best addressed through coordination rather than isolated efforts. Through expert insights, open discussion, and real market perspectives, the gathering highlighted both the scale of the sector and the urgent need for stronger organization, data-driven decision-making, and cross-sector partnerships.

By creating a platform where stakeholders could openly discuss market realities, operational challenges, and emerging opportunities, Tarabut demonstrated how structured networking can unlock innovation, support growth, and strengthen resilience across the food and hospitality industry. The gathering marked the first step in a series of biannual engagements aimed at building long-term collaboration and a more connected, future-ready food sector in Iraq.

As **Aser Hassan**, CEO of Al-Rasheed Platform, noted during the discussions:

"Tarabut is a framework for organizing work, aligning visions, defining demand, and reducing waste. We come together not to seek privileges, but to be part of decision-making, because we are the first to be affected by these decisions."



Opening Perspective

Ali Taher

Executive Director
Makers of Baghdad

Key quotation:

"E-commerce sales account for only 2.5% of Iraq's food market, a low figure compared to neighboring countries, but this does not signal failure. It reveals a massive investment opportunity waiting to be unlocked."

Key insights:

- Iraq's food sector is one of the country's largest and most resilient economic engines.
- The gap between market size and digital adoption presents strong opportunities for innovation.
- Structured networking platforms like Tarabut are essential to move from fragmented efforts to collective solutions.
- Community-based models, such as Wifra, demonstrate how collaboration accelerates growth and opportunity creation.



Digital Payments & Financial Inclusion

Hayder Abdelameer

Deputy Managing Director
Qi Card

Key quotation:

"The transition to non-cash payments in the food sector is no longer optional; it is a health, operational, and economic necessity."

Key insights:

- Qi Card began by addressing salary payment challenges in partnership with government banks.
- The company now focuses on high-impact sectors, particularly restaurants and transport.
- Cash dependency limits transparency, efficiency, and scalability.
- Qi Card operates behind the scenes to connect merchants, restaurants, suppliers, and customers.
- Growing transaction volumes indicate a gradual but real shift toward cashless ecosystems.



الملتقى الأول
لقطاع الأغذية في العراق
نقاش واقعي يجمع رواد وخبراء
القطاع الغذائي

Market Organization & Supply Chain Transparency

Aser Hassan

CEO

Al-Rasheed Platform

Key quotation:

"Tarabut is a framework for organizing work, aligning visions, defining demand, and reducing waste. We come together to be part of decision-making, not to demand privileges, because we are the first to be affected by these decisions."

Key insights:

- Merchants are a frontline pillar of food security.
- Iraq imports over 90% of its food, making coordination critical.
- International examples show that sharing demand data stabilizes markets.
- Fragmentation weakens the sector; organization strengthens everyone.
- Al-Rasheed's role is to connect market actors directly and transparently.



Restaurants as Growth Drivers

Anas Al-Sarraf

Founder, Iraqi Restaurants Association

Key quotation:

"With data now available, we expect the traditional wholesale intermediary model to decline, shifting toward direct supplier relationships."

Key insights:

- Iraq now has more than 11,000 restaurants nationwide.
- Restaurants have become one of the largest consumers of food products.
 - Card payments reach up to 90% usage in some restaurant segments.
- Baghdad leads restaurant density, followed by Basra, Karbala, Mosul, and Najaf.
- These figures signal strong opportunities for fintech, logistics, and technology providers.



From Ideas to Execution

Abdelfattah Saleh

Value Chain &

Market Systems Specialist

Key quotation:

"Innovation fails not because of weak ideas, but because of weak execution frameworks."

Key insights:

- Tarabut bridges the gap between ideas and real-world implementation.
- Market organization naturally reduces inefficiencies and unnecessary intermediaries.
- Sector actors already operate daily in the market; Tarabut connects reality with strategy.
- Practical coordination is more impactful than theoretical solutions.



Panel Discussion Highlights

Challenges and Opportunities in Iraq's Business Chains

The panel brought together experts from food services, retail, hospitality, franchising, and technology. Discussions focused on specialization versus scale, service quality as a competitive advantage, franchising as a growth pathway, and the role of digital systems in improving efficiency and customer experience. Audience interventions added depth, emphasizing cost management, workforce development, and collaboration as essential pillars for resilience in an evolving market.



Mohammed Al-Kharsan

Co-Founder, Iraqi Franchise Association

A founding partner in the Iraqi Franchise Company, he has over 15 years of experience connecting brands with investors and building successful franchise models. He also serves as a consultant and board member for several companies, including Al-Sanawbar Company, owner of the Bin Redha Alwan brand.

Key quotation:

"Any successful concept with a clear operating system can be transformed into a franchise, especially in restaurants, cafés, hotels, and healthcare."

Key insights:

- Franchising requires structured financial, operational, and legal systems.
- Iraq ranks among the top Arab markets for franchising potential.
- Local concepts have proven more resilient than imported trends.
- Service quality is the foundation of any scalable brand.

Meeting

Connect

Discussion



Mehmet Turkmen

Executive Director, Product Development,
Qi Group

Executive Director of Product Development in the Food Sector, Key Group. He possesses multidisciplinary executive experience combining commercial and technical aspects, with local and international expertise in product development and building innovative solutions that meet market demands.

Key quotation:

"We developed ETEX as a fully integrated restaurant management system, from inventory to checkout, designed to work even with unstable internet."

Key insights:

- Qi Group adopted a B2B-to-B2B2C approach.
- Restaurants showed the highest readiness for digital transformation.
- ETEX integrates operations, payments, and customer experience.
- Training and support are as important as technology itself.



Faisal Al-Nujaydi

Founder & CEO, Bait Halab

Founder and owner of the Modern House of Aleppo project, Al-Jadriya branch, and managing director of the Taste Makers Company. He owns and operates the exclusive franchise for the Vanilly brand in Al-Jadriya.

Key quotation:

"The Iraqi customer today wants clarity, consistency, and identity, not long menus or decoration alone."

Key insights:

- Specialized restaurant concepts are gaining momentum.
- A strong identity reduces costs and strengthens marketing.
- Décor alone will not sustain restaurants in the coming years.
- Consistency across branches defines successful brands.

**Rabie Al-Sabbagh**

Assistant Procurement Manager, Heart of the World Hotel

Assistant Procurement Manager at the Heart of the World Hotel in Baghdad. Holds a bachelor's degree in commerce and economics (specializing in accounting) and has 6 years of experience in procurement and supply chain management.

Key quotation:

"Service is the real differentiator; it drives profitability, sustainability, and the most powerful form of marketing: word of mouth."

Key insights:

- Competition in the food sector is positively impacting hotels.
- Service quality outperforms décor in long-term value.
- A satisfied guest becomes a brand ambassador.
- Professional competition raises standards across the sector.

**Mohammed Abdulla**

Executive Vice President, Amira Supermarkets

The Executive Vice President of Amira Supermarkets has over 8 years of experience in managing and developing retail chains, with a focus on improving operations, expanding branches, and enhancing performance efficiency in the food retail sector.

Key quotation:

"Wholesale markets will not disappear, but their role will evolve as organized retail reaches consumers directly."

Key insights:

- Iraq's food sector is one of the main engines of the national economy.
- Retail has shifted from informal operations to data-driven systems.
- Human capital remains a critical challenge.
- The future points toward zero-cash environments and professional retail careers.

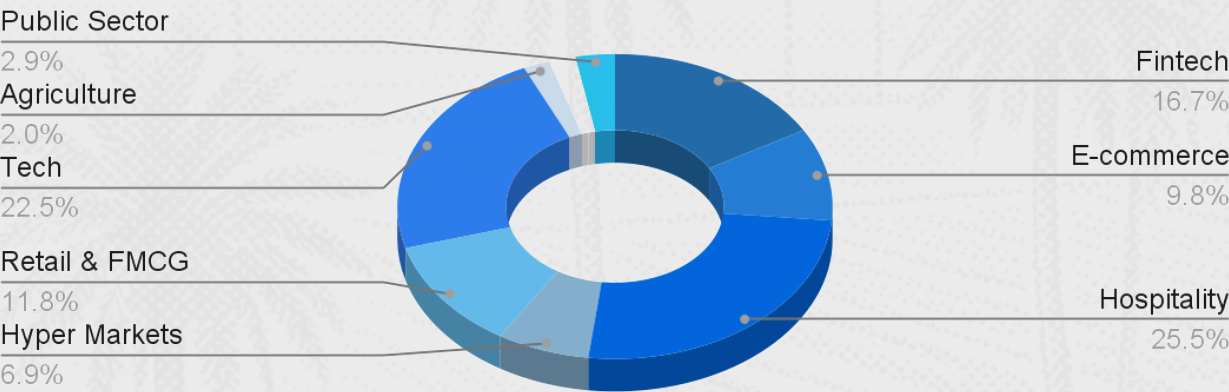
Who Attended Tarabut?

Tarabut brought together a focused and diverse group of 90 attendees, representing the key pillars of Iraq’s food and hospitality ecosystem. Participants included business owners, senior executives, decision-makers, entrepreneurs, and sector experts, creating a balanced space for practical dialogue and cross-sector exchange.

Audience Composition by Sector

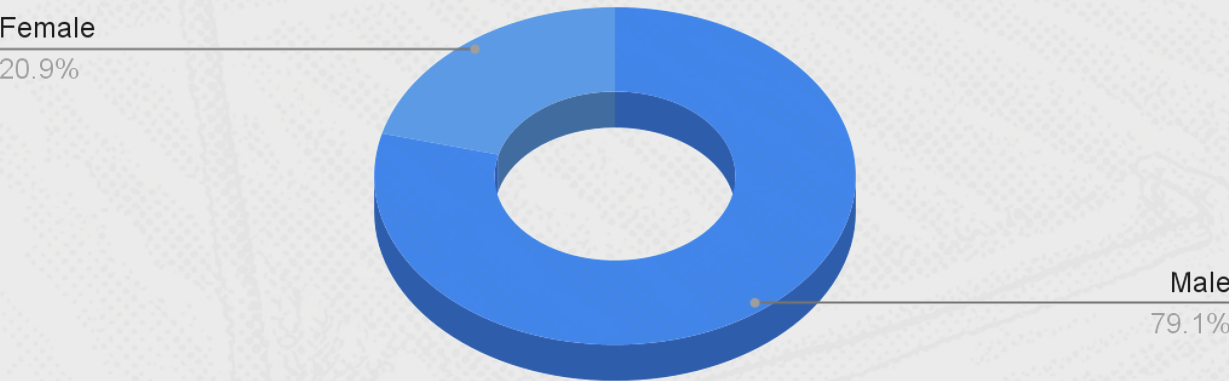
The audience reflected the interconnected nature of the food sector:

Audience Composition



Audience Composition by Sector

Tarabut also reflected growing diversity within the sector:



The gender distribution at Tarabut highlighted the low representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles, reflecting the male-dominated nature of Iraq’s food and hospitality sector. This gap points to the need for targeted support, inclusive policies, and dedicated platforms that empower women and enable their active participation in shaping the sector’s future.

Overall, the composition of attendees reinforced Tarabut’s role as a cross-sector platform, bringing together market operators, enablers, and decision-makers in one space to foster collaboration, shared learning, and long-term community building.

VIP Guests

Tarabut welcomed a distinguished group of VIP guests representing government institutions, private sector leaders, platform operators, and ecosystem builders. Their presence reinforced the importance of cross-sector dialogue and highlighted growing interest from decision-makers in shaping a more organized, innovative, and resilient food sector in Iraq.

Name	Business Name	Job Title	Category
Hayder Abdelameer	Qi Card	Deputy Managing Director	Fintech
Aser Hassan	Al-Rasheed Platform	CEO	E-commerce
Anas Al-Sarraf	Iraqi Restaurants Association	Founder	Hospitality
Abdelfattah Saleh	Value Chain & Market Systems Specialist		Agriculture
Mohammed Al-Kharsan	Iraqi Franchise Association	Co-Founder	Hospitality
Mehmet Turkmen	Qi Group	Executive Director	Fintech
Faisal Al-Nujaydi	Founder & CEO	Bait Halab	Hospitality
Rabie Alsabbagh	World Heart Hotel	Assistant Procurement Manager	Hospitality
Mohammed Abdulla	Amira Supermarkets	Executive Vice President	Supermarket
Hayder Abdulameer	Qi Card	Deputy CEO	Fintech
Bashar Ayad Jassim	AsiaPay	Government's Relation	Fintech
Waeel Khalid Hassan	Exchange for electronic payment	Director of Financial Inclusion	Fintech
Ali N. Al-Shimmary	ALAMEEN GROUP	Managing Director	Tech
Dina Alaa Mezaal	ALAMEEN GROUP	Vice president of Sales	Tech
Rana Mansour	FIRST FINANCE	Public Relations Supervisor	Fintech
Ali Hussein	Ben Reda Alwan	Cafe Sector Manager	Hospitality
Abbas Hasan	Bun Ridha Alwan	Purchasing Department Manager	Hospitality
Hussien H. Abdul Ma'ali	Grano Restaurant	Managing Partner	Hospitality
Saif Nazim Aziz	Lebanese falafel	Owner	Hospitality
Kawn Kbah	GraffiTi Burger	Operations Manager	Hospitality
Ahmed Riyadh	SUPERCHICKEN	Procurement Officer	Hospitality
Hasan Al-Nouri	Golden Star for Snacks Food Co.	General Manager	Hospitality
Mohammed Al-Batawi	Taawon	CFO	Hypermarkets
Mohammed Muthana	Ekur	Purchasing Group Manager	Hypermarkets
Rami Mustafa Khaled	Toters	Commercial Manager - Central	E-commerce
Hamza Wathiq	Toters	Government Relations Officer	E-commerce
Khalid Saadi	Jaamila	CEO	Retail & FMCG

Conclusion: The Beginning of a Collective Journey

Tarabut was not an endpoint; it was a starting point. The gathering marked the first step in a series of biannual events designed to strengthen collaboration, align market voices, and build an independent community capable of shaping its own future. By bringing stakeholders together around shared challenges and opportunities, Tarabut laid the foundation for long-term cooperation, innovation, and sustainable growth across Iraq's food and hospitality sector.



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