

Farmers' Market Brings Hope



U.S. Brig. General Lang, Sheikh Khodaer Abdhosaen, director of the Central Euphrates Farmers' Market, and Deputy Governor of Babil Province Iskander.

On June 12, 2009, the Central Euphrates Farmers' Market (CEFM) opened the gates of opportunity to farmers from the North Babil Province. The \$2.8-million farmers' market financed by U.S. Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds and U.S. coalition forces will benefit more than 10,000 producers in the region. The market has a large depot with 20 indoor stalls, 20 outdoor stalls, a cold storage room, a cafeteria, and a separate building with offices and a conference room.

The keynote speaker for the grand opening of the market was U.S. Brigadier General Jerry Lang, Deputy Commanding General for the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division. The Brig. General said, "We hope this model of cooperation demonstrated here today will help us bring more farmers' markets to the rest of Southern Iraq."

Rodrigo Brenes, USDA/FAS Agriculture Advisor for the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Babil and advisor to CEFM, explained, "This market is centrally located on Highway 1 and connects Basra with Baghdad and Mosul, making it a main hub for wholesalers and providing the opportunity for significant growth of a vibrant corridor for fresh fruits and vegetables for Iraqi consumers."

Since 2003, USDA has deployed 35 advisors to Iraq as part of the PRT effort. In a region



Brig. General Lang and Rodrigo Brenes USDA/FAS Agriculture Advisor for the Babil PRT.



Iraqi boy, Mustapha, sorting tomatoes.

known to the world as "*Babylon, the Cradle of Agriculture*," USDA, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development continue to work jointly with Iraqis to build a brighter future for the country.