
The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector



A new study analyses the problems and prospects of the Palestinian agricultural sector, its importance and contribution to the overall economy, and the impact of constraints imposed by Israel's occupation.

Despite sharing a similar landscape, climate and nearly identical natural environments, Palestinian agricultural output and productivity have lagged behind that of Israel and comparable countries in the region. On average, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) the yield per dunum (1000 square meter) is half that in Jordan and only 43 per cent of the yield in Israel. UNCTAD recently published a study entitled "**The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector**" attributing an important part of the productivity difference observed among the three economies sharing the same agroecological zones to the constraints imposed by the occupation on Palestinian agriculture.

Israel's restrictions on the importation of fertilizers and the high cost of using inferior and inappropriate alternatives, lack of access to Palestinian land in Area C, which accounts for 63 per cent of the agricultural resources of the West Bank, the construction of the Separation Barrier, and the expansion of Israeli settlements, all combined have negatively impacted, and retarded the growth of, the Palestinian agricultural sector.

The agricultural productivity in the OPT has declined by 20 to 33 per cent since restrictions were enforced on the importation of fertilizers, the study contends.

Moreover, the study notes that, due to occupation constraints, the cost of exporting and importing borne by Palestinian agricultural, and other, producers is twice that of what prevails in the Israeli agricultural sector, while procedures for importation require four times the amount of time Israeli importers spend on similar activities.

Accordingly, while the sector contributes significantly to income, exports, food security and job creation for the Palestinian people, it has been operating way below potential and its relative and absolute contribution to national income and exports have been on a downward spiral.

The study concludes by emphasizing the resilience of the Palestinian agricultural sector and its strategic importance, and makes recommendations to the Palestinian National Authority and donors for a sustained agricultural recovery.

The recommendations include establishing a well-funded not-for-profit public agricultural development bank to share the risks inherent in the sector, providing credit and insurance to farmers, supporting marketing and post-harvest services and funding and guaranteeing investment in agricultural and water-related infrastructure.

[http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.asp?OriginalVersionID=1141&Sitemap_x0020_Taxonomy=UNCTAD%20Home:#1540/#Assistance to the Palestinian People](http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.asp?OriginalVersionID=1141&Sitemap_x0020_Taxonomy=UNCTAD%20Home:#1540/#Assistance%20to%20the%20Palestinian%20People)

[Complete document in PDF format](#) (Requires [Acrobat Reader](#))