



## The World of the Palestinian Minister of Agriculture

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We gather here today, conscious and alert of the importance of reaching a broad consensus to eradicate hunger from the world by the year 2025. This comes at a critical time especially as we witness today the worsening of hunger in the world and face the biggest challenges in our contemporary history as the number of hungry people has increased due to the rise in food prices and it is expected that this number will increase by more than 100 million in 2009 due to the economic and financial crisis on the one hand and the political crisis due to occupation, siege, conflicts, and climatic conditions on the other.

The Palestinian agricultural sector is of great importance being that it is considered the main source of food, provides employment opportunities, and contributes significantly to the gross domestic product and national commodity exports. It is given much attention since it is facing the same problems faced by the rest of the world's farmers; climate change and drought which is afflicting the region in particular. The Palestinian agriculture sector plays an important role in protecting land and water from being confiscated by the Israeli occupation and settlers. In this regard, it should be noted that the practices of the Israeli occupation and its oppressive measures in the Palestinian territories directly affects the lack of food security to reach 25% of the population in the West Bank and 61% of the population in Gaza Strip, and the increase in unemployment rate to 15% in the West Bank and 36% in Gaza Strip.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip at the start of the year as well as the continuous siege have led to the destruction of almost the entire agricultural sector; where the value of direct losses and damages amounts to about 240 million dollars in the West Bank and 120 million dollars in Gaza Strip.

The Israeli occupation controls more than 85% of the natural grazing lands; where only 15% of these lands remain available for Palestinian Sheppard's to reach with their herds. There are currently 199 settlements controlling 232

settlement wells. Palestinian farmers are continuously attacked by settlers on a daily basis including physical assault, theft and looting of crops, cutting and burning of olive trees, attacks on livestock farmers, and removing of Bedouin tribes all under the protection of the army and under the eyes of the Israeli government.

The establishment of the Annexation Wall worked to isolate more than 18% of fertile agricultural land and has resulted in a negative effect on agricultural production and farmers from different socio-economic and environmental aspects.

The obstacles facing the movement of people and goods, border control and frequent closures of the crossings between West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the prohibiting of Palestinian trucks to access Israeli ports all impede the operations of export and import and contribute to the increase in cost and decline in quality of products and reduces their competitive opportunities. This has led to the dramatic decrease in Palestinian agricultural income.

As for the control of the Occupation on water resources in the Palestinian territories, the AMNESTY report issued in October 2009 points out that the Israeli occupation uses more than 80% of the aquatic rights of Palestinians and completely denies them their rights to using water from the Jordan River. The Palestinian citizen consumes about 70 liters of water a day which is much less than that recommended by the World Health Organization, while the Israeli citizen consumes about 300 liters per day. The report also states that the coastal aquifer in the Gaza Strip is the only source of water and is more than 90% polluted and not suitable for human use.

The World Bank report, on the other hand, pointed out that there is a possibility to raise the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP by 10% and create 110000 job opportunities, only in the case that the Palestinians get their aquatic rights through increasing the irrigated agricultural areas to 700 thousand dunums instead of the current 240 thousand dunums.

The Palestinian National Authority is making continuous efforts to ensure food security; where the Palestinian document titled "Ending the Occupation and Establishing the State" issued by the Board of Ministers in August 2009, included priorities and programs for the development of the Palestinian agricultural sector represented by the following:

First: To enhance Palestinian food security, by quantity and quality, and move towards self-sufficiency in (animal and plant) agricultural products which employs the maximum number of workers.

Second: To encourage economic crops and increase investment in the agricultural sector through:

- Increasing its competitive abilities, finding solutions for marketing problems, developing animal production, establishing systems for insurance and agricultural lending.

Third: To increase efficiency in the provision of agricultural services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, civil organizations, and the private sector and the active coordination and integration of efforts.

Fourth: To develop and manage natural resources and promote its optimal use through:

- Reclamation and rehabilitation of lands and agricultural roads
- Enhancing the efficient use of irrigation water and promoting the use of treated salt and waste water in agriculture.
- Establishing a project for creating a greener Palestine

In conclusion, we hope this summit, which is being held for the third time since the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, achieves its goals of reducing poverty and finding peace and security in the world. We emphasize the need to demand from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to set up a fact-finding commission on the status of food security and the difficulties facing the food security situation in Palestine and call on you to help and increase your consideration for Palestinian farmers and lift them from injustice as we reiterate the necessity to incorporate all observations and recommendations of the Arab League in the draft declaration to be issued from this summit.