

FAO-Italian Cooperation

Building resilient livelihoods through the value chain

WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP





Context

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS), vulnerable families are deprived of their basic needs for survival and their ability to cope is placed under severe strain due to recurrent conflict and restrictions over natural resources, markets and services. Palestinian movement of people and goods into and within large rural areas of the West Bank is significantly restricted, greatly impacting the food security and livelihoods of the population. Impediments to construction and infrastructure investment; confiscation of land and natural resources; and the direct destruction of homes, crops, livestock assets and infrastructure are the main challenges facing those dependent upon agriculture and herding for their livelihoods. Unable to produce food or earn income, many are becoming dependent on external aid.

Small-scale farmers, herders and fishers are among the hardest hit populations, despite the potential of agriculture to reduce reliance on imported food, minimize vulnerability to international price hikes and increase economic access to food by enhancing employment and income. The loss of Palestinian land, limited access to markets, demolition of key agricultural assets (including water structures), and the separation of farmers from their fields and fishers from the sea continue to sever the rural poor from their livelihoods.

Herding communities living in Area C of the West Bank face particularly stringent restrictions on their movement, limiting their access to rangeland and water resources. Further, herders have had to purchase and transport expensive fodder and tanker water due to the lower quantities available as a result of environmental challenges such as drought. Those who are not connected to a water network pay four times the price of water provided by local municipalities. The result of this confluence of different shocks has led to food insecurity in more than one-third of all herding households living in Area C.

FAO - Italian Cooperation partnership

Since 2004, the Italian Cooperation office in Jerusalem has been a reliable and dedicated partner to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through nine different projects, FAO and the Italian Cooperation have worked together to address multiple challenges faced by Palestinian families preventing them from protecting their agriculture based livelihoods and from securing sufficient quantities of nutritious food. As of 2013, total contributions from the Government of the Republic of Italy, through the Italian Cooperation Office in Jerusalem, amounted to over USD 9.3 million, serving roughly 5 000 households and 28 000 individual beneficiaries.

This response has helped thousands of families increase their resilience to the array of shocks which they are privy to. By maximizing and safeguarding our beneficiaries' remaining assets and resources, their livelihood opportunities are expanded as a result of this reinforced foundation. This replenished and strengthened asset base not only serves to improve agricultural practices which boost household income, but also it enhances the chances these farmers have of retaining access to their lands.



Addressing the needs of herders

“Fixing a broken value chain”



From survival...

Funds from the Government of the Republic of Italy, through the Italian Cooperation office in Jerusalem, supported project interventions to enhance and improve the livestock activities of herders in the West Bank by providing skills, techniques and infrastructure, as well as marketing activities. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development in order to create more favourable terms of trade for herders is the core purpose of these activities.

Emergency fodder distribution:

Emergency fodder distribution during a drought period and high international cereal prices (which in turn affect local feed prices) helped to mitigate the negative impact of high feed prices by protecting herders from selling their livestock. When the cost of feed is reduced, cash is increased, creating more positive economic terms for herders. Sustainability was built into the emergency intervention by distributing fodder through feed centres. Feed centres are community-run and designed to allow herders to purchase collectively and take advantage of economies of scale, allowing them to move up the value chain by cutting out middle men.

Veterinary assistance:

In order to maintain the health of their flock, herders' access to veterinary services was increased by the establishment of mobile veterinary centres and provision of veterinary kits. Moreover, through mobile centres, preventive monitoring of epidemic spots was utilized to avoid a disease outbreak affecting livestock in the West Bank.

Did You Know...?

- Small ruminants provide the main source of income for thousands of Palestinians in rural areas and Bedouin communities in the West Bank. These communities rely heavily on livestock to improve their diets and food security, earn income for basic requirements or investments, and accumulate animals as a buffer in the event of an emergency.
- Restricted access to land on the eastern slopes of Jerusalem has deprived over 25 000 poor families of traditional grazing areas. The household-level economies of shepherds have been severely affected by the building of the separation barrier and the confiscation of land for the establishment of settlements, military areas and national parks. In the past several years, available pastures have also been further reduced by recurrent drought and overgrazing.

Project interventions focused on sustainability, centring on immediate actions that would strengthen community resilience to shocks in the long term. By addressing the central economic aspects of herders' vulnerability, the stabilization of their livelihoods is advanced, allowing them to continue herding activities without resorting to negative coping mechanisms (debt, selling assets, etc.) with long term consequences.

Increasing domestic fodder availability:

Hundreds of dunums of land have been planted with drought-tolerant shrubs, not only increasing the availability and diversity of animal feed at the community level, but also contributing to rehabilitating rangeland for years to come. A water treatment unit was built in order to ensure irrigation with recycled water to the rehabilitated lands. In the long term, rangeland rehabilitation should reduce herder's reliance on imported fodder, increasing the sustainability of their livelihoods.

Artificial insemination:

Overall, herders will see an increase in the productivity of their flocks thanks to the establishment of reproduction centres to conduct the artificial insemination of sheep. The reproduction of small ruminants was monitored by specialized experts working with FAO's local partners.

Enhancing market value chain for women:

Beneficiaries from women's associations were supplied with equipment and trained in dairy processing, packaging, labelling and marketing activities. These women produced a diverse array of dairy goods for entry into new markets, in addition to their existing ones. Supporting the

manufacturing and marketing of cottage industry products such as dairy, dried fruits, juice and syrups for the local Palestinian market through commercial channels promoted women's economic empowerment and provided them with meaningful professions.

Project Results

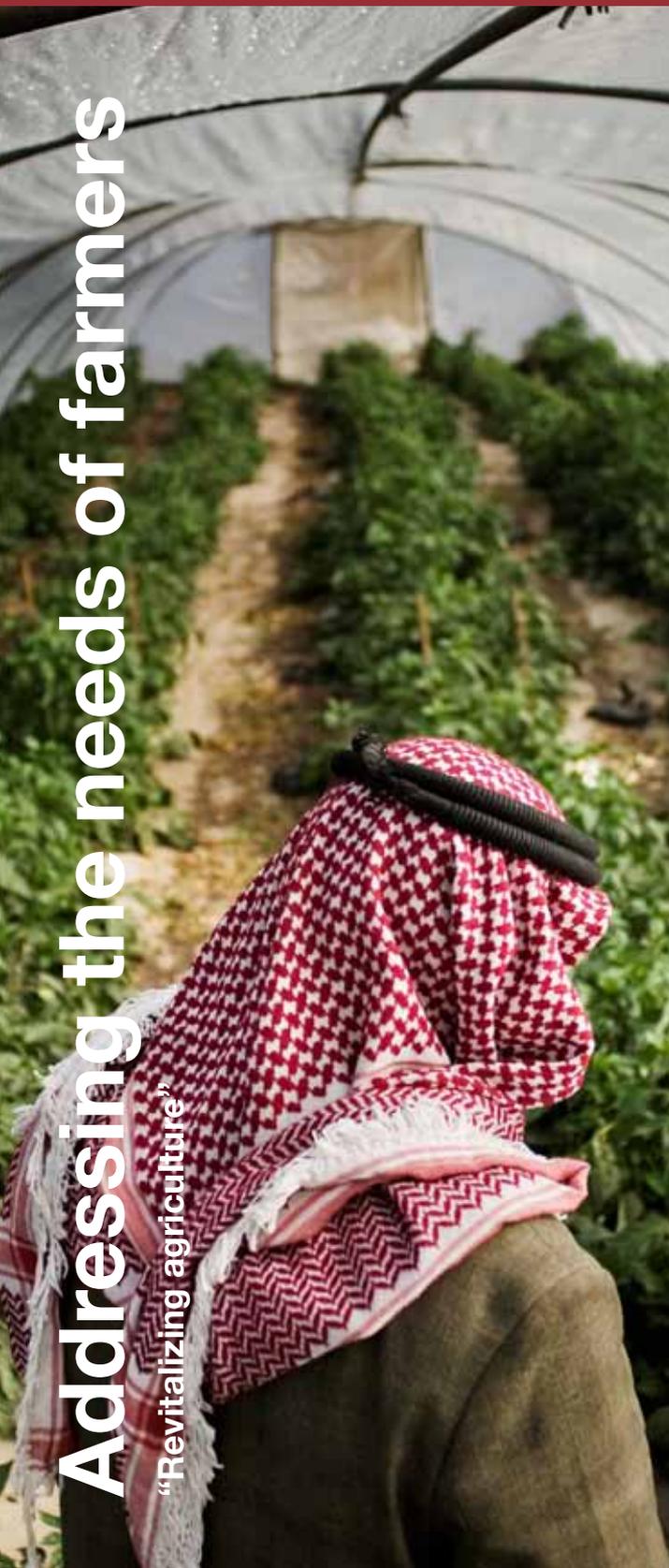
- ✓ **Distribution of fodder and rangeland rehabilitation:**
Over 1 700 herders received approximately 2 800 tonnes of fodder. Hundreds of dunums of rangeland were rehabilitated and planted with drought tolerant shrubs in order to aid herders in their efforts to maintain their flock size.
- ✓ **Improved livestock health and productivity:**
New livestock feed and reproduction centres constructed and upgraded in the West Bank and East Jerusalem led to a significant improvement in animal health and a higher yield in produce, serving over 100 herders and producing over 2 000 animals, enabling herders to continue their livestock activities.
- ✓ **Increase in favourable terms of trade for herders:**
Beneficiaries reported that the artificial milk from feed centres allowed them to feed their flocks earlier in the season and therefore sell the resulting produce for higher prices. Project interventions also facilitated the entry of cottage industry products made by women's associations into the local market.

- In the past, breeders were able to feed their herds through grazing on open pastures for many months of the year. The cumulative effect of Israeli-imposed restrictions on movement and the confiscation of land now have required some herders to feed their flocks with fodder throughout the majority of the year at additional expense, placing a serious economic strain on their households.
- As the price of agricultural inputs has risen, many herders are entering into levels of debt beyond their expected annual earnings, through buying agricultural inputs from merchants on credit. Often, this cycle of debt forces them to eventually liquidate their flock or land, thereby abandoning their main source of income.



Addressing the needs of farmers

“Revitalizing agriculture”



From risk reduction...

In order to support the livelihoods of farmers in the West Bank, FAO has implemented projects funded by the Government of the Republic of Italy, through the Italian Cooperation office in Jerusalem, focused on crop diversification, alongside strengthening production and water availability.

Efficient use of natural resources:

In order to better position beneficiaries involved in market activities, especially the efficient use of natural resources such as irrigation optimization, replacing old orchards with new varieties and vegetable crop diversification must be utilized.

Mitigating the impact of severe conditions on farmers' livelihoods:

By increasing availability of natural resources through the installation of rain water cisterns and grey waste water treatment units, tending home gardens can be carried out very close to the home and with relatively little physical effort, allowing beneficiaries to improve household food security and income while caring for their families.

Improving water access and management in areas affected by recurrent weather shocks:

After two years of winter droughts, vulnerable communities living in the West Bank were impacted severely, particularly those relying on crops for their livelihoods. Degraded pasture land and depleted rainwater cisterns had forced farmers to purchase tanker water, greatly increasing their production costs. A database for the comprehensive analysis of water demand and availability was created; along with a feasibility study of potential interventions to be carried out in the medium and long term. This helped identify ways to alleviate transport costs and difficulties in accessing water, while strengthening institutional management in order to cope with the continuing crisis.

Did You Know...?

- Between 2006 and 2011, recurrent drought affected the already fragile eco-systems and vulnerable livelihoods of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The situation has been further exacerbated due to market inefficiencies resulting in high input prices—particularly for animal feed and water—and low profits for producers since 2008. As a consequence, hundreds of poor families have been forced to liquidate their livestock assets in order to provide cash for basic needs and to repay debts. In most cases, this means their main source

To further improve rural livelihoods by supporting agricultural activities in the West Bank with the end goal of sustainability, projects funded by the Government of the Republic of Italy, through the Italian Cooperation office in Jerusalem, have focused on rehabilitation leading to long-term development in the Palestinian agriculture sector.

Rehabilitation of agricultural livelihoods:

To boost agricultural livelihoods, project interventions included the construction and rehabilitation of greenhouses, reservoirs, irrigation systems and pest management equipment. Land preparation is also an important aspect of such interventions, and plays a central role in decreasing the ongoing processes of erosion and degradation of natural resources due to agricultural practices. Introduction and/or dissemination of improved practices are expected to have a positive impact on the environment and the natural resource base.

Capacity building:

Many farmers across the WBGs continue to lack knowledge and training in various aspects of agriculture, including: crop management; pest management; the efficient use of resources and animal health care; and reproduction. This deficiency of expertise is compounded by a lack of equipment and resources among farmers, and a scarcity of up-to-date research facilities.

Enhanced marketing skills:

To support grassroots farmers’ organizations in their efforts, multiple interventions have either been implemented or are ongoing, including: a market research analysis whose objective is to identify potential buyers and their locations;

level of demand, preferences; immediate or current prices and seasonal variations; supply and demand trends; risks and skills required; and a stakeholders’ workshop to identify a strategy and action plan to improve market linkages of the farmers’ associations and their products.

These market appraisal activities enable group-based beneficiaries to receive training responsive to their marketing and basic business needs. Beneficiaries learn to develop individual and group marketing plans and participate in stakeholder workshops that address marketing constraints of potential products.

Project Results

- ✓ **Enhanced quality of produce:**
Improved the quality management of 12 grassroots farmers’ cooperatives (approximately 300 farmers) in Hebron and Dura districts.
- ✓ **Increased water availability:**
18 water cisterns were rehabilitated, providing water to 35 vulnerable families. 17 water tankers were provided to 17 Bedouin communities in the Jericho governorate, supplying them with much needed water for agricultural activities. A communal waste water treatment unit was built for irrigation and 148 home gardens were set up, covering a total surface area of 32 480 square metres.
- ✓ **Database produced:**
A database aiding in the comprehensive analysis of water demand and availability was compiled, identifying ways to alleviate water transport costs while strengthening institutional management.
- ✓ **Training:**
121 women from 11 women’s groups received training in production and marketing activities. Additionally, training in best practices for horticulture was provided to 132 beneficiaries.
- ✓ **Capacity building:**
Thousands of farming households have benefited from improved skills, techniques and infrastructure—boosting long-term agricultural development efforts.

of income will be abandoned, making them more vulnerable to external shocks and increasing their food insecurity.

- In 2011, the agriculture sector was the third largest employer in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with 11.9 percent of the workforce. This means that in addition to its strategic importance to Palestinians, such as improving access to nutritious food and reducing rural poverty by improving livelihoods, the sector plays a crucial economic role.

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