



FAO'S ROLE IN EMERGENCIES:

- **PROTECT**—We protect the most vulnerable households from basic food insecurity and long-term reliance on food aid
- **RESTORE**—We restore the food security, local food production capacity, coping mechanisms, rural livelihoods and self-sustainability of rural communities
- **ENHANCE**—We enhance agricultural, livestock and fisheries production for a quick and lasting recovery

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

- FAO's Rural Women's Products Marketing Exhibition 1
- Successful FAO Projects: Jordan Valley and Gaza 2
- Joint Rapid Food Security Survey 3
- Hebron Drought Workshop 4
- New FAO Projects 4
- Livestock Workshop 4
- Initiative on Soaring Food Prices 5

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

AUGUST 2008

WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

FAO Exhibition Sees Rural Women Sell Their Products

As part of FAO's ongoing projects promoting gender equality in the West Bank, a Rural Women's Products Marketing Exhibition, "Khayrat Blady", was held by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture from 9 - 11 July, in the City Inn Palace Hotel in Ramallah.

The exhibition brought together all of the women's societies in the West Bank who benefitted from a recent FAO project promoting backyard agriculture and cottage industry among Palestinian women funded by Norway, as well as fifteen additional women's societies who took part in separate Ministry of Agriculture schemes.

The exhibition, which was accompanied by music and dancing from local youth groups and speeches from FAO and Ministry of Agriculture officials, gave the women the chance to display and sell the goods they had produced: the arrays of cheeses, pickles, breads, vegetables and cakes, as well as embroidery work, jewellery and other handicrafts, were quickly bought by visitors to the exhibition, to the satisfaction of the stall-holders.



The project beneficiaries were able to sell home-made cheese, breads and pickles, among other products

enhancing their cooperation and raising their visibility in the community. Exhibition organizer Intissar Esh-tayeh was extremely satisfied with the results, noting the successful sales and large amount of interest the exhibition generated. The women participants themselves stressed their enthusiasm to hold another similar event in the future, pleased by the revenue generated, the skills gained and the enhanced links between communities and between women's organizations.

FAO implements a number of projects promoting gender equality among Palestinians by increasing the agricultural opportunities available to women. Currently ongoing is a Spanish-funded project, which aims to improve food security by fostering cottage industry and backyard production among women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and through which the Khayrat Blady exhibition was funded.



The opening of the exhibition, with FAO Senior Project Coordinator Mr Luigi Damiani, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Dr Azzam Tubeileh, and the Minister of Women's Affairs Ms Khuloud Daibes

Current Donor partners:



FAO Project Updates: Improving Water Resources in the Jordan Valley

An extensive FAO project funded by the European Commission's Humanitarian Office to rehabilitate wells and improve water efficiency in the Jordan Valley was recently completed, directly benefiting 770 farmers in the area, and indirectly benefiting around 4,500 men, women and children. Farmers in the Jordan Valley have seen their situation drastically worsen since the beginning of the *intifada*, especially since water resource-use is unequally distributed among the Jordan Valley residents. This year in particular has further squeezed precious water resources, given the ongoing drought afflicting the area, which is compounded by the tight closure imposed on the Jordan Valley by the Israeli authorities. The worsening situation of these farmers has brought them to a point where their agricultural production is used mainly for their own and their extended families' consumption. The beneficiaries selected were therefore poor farmers, with low income and very limited access to water resources. The project benefitted them in a number of ways: 175 saw their wells rehabilitated, while 399 received a new irrigation system for their land, and 30 benefitted from the rehabilita-

tion of their storage ponds. Finally, 73 Ministry of Agriculture staff received intensive training. FAO is happy with the results of the project,



A project beneficiary adds fingerlings to his newly-rehabilitated storage pond

although difficulties were faced during its implementation: several wells failed to receive permission for rehabilitation from the Israeli authorities, and sadly had to be removed from the scheme. Nonetheless, this intervention will enable these farmers to utilise their water resources more effectively and efficiently, in turn helping to fight financial difficulty and food insecurity in the West Bank.

Emergency Support to Farmers in Gaza

The project OSRO/GAZ/604/SPA, funded by the Government of Spain, was also recently completed, and saw 568 fruit and vegetable farmers in the Gaza Strip benefit from the provision of agricultural inputs and irrigation equipment, greenhouse rehabilitation and training. It is hoped that the crops grown with the assistance of this project will help to alleviate the high food prices currently crippling the Gaza Strip, and will deter Gazan farmers from abandoning farming in the face of supply and export difficulties.



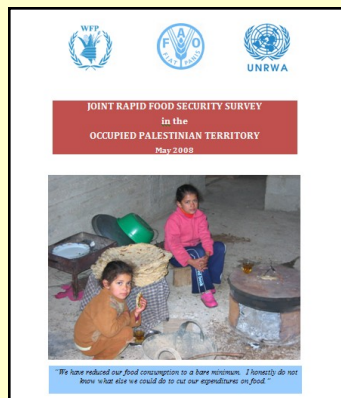
Project inputs are distributed



A Gazan farmer inspects his crops, irrigated with equipment provided by this project

Joint Rapid Food Security Survey in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt).

June saw the publication of the results of a Joint Rapid Food Security Survey in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the cul-



mination of extensive research conducted jointly by FAO, UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency) and WFP (the World Food Programme) to assess the economic situation and food security levels of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The survey specifically intended to assess the impact of the significant increases in basic food prices on poor people in the oc-

cupied Palestinian territory, measure the effects of the current closure regime on the Gaza Strip and profile population groups most vulnerable to risks and economic shocks, among other objectives. Covering 27 localities of various types, it is hoped that the comprehensive analysis contained within the JRFSS will enable UN agencies, NGOs and other actors to tailor their actions more effectively to alleviate poverty, address Palestinian needs and improve food security in the WBGS.

The content of the survey provided alarming reading, revealing that Palestinians in virtually all areas – and especially in Gaza – are being forced to spend more on food, whilst at the same time having less money available to them owing to rising unemployment, inflation and wage cuts, loss of assistance, declining business opportunities and changes in Israel's movement and access restrictions. Compared to the results of a 2006 food security and vulnerability analysis, a clear trend of socio-economic polarization can be seen, with



the poorest people becoming even poorer and the richest people becoming marginally richer. One of the most worrying findings of the survey is that the number of people who are too poor to procure enough food for their families has increased significantly among all population groups – refugees, non-refugees, people living in the West Bank and people living in Gaza. In 2006, 34 percent of the assessed population was food insecure, compared to 38 percent now. The number of people on the brink of becoming food insecure has also risen from 12 percent to 14 percent. Food insecure families have reported reducing the quality, quantity and diversity of the foods they consume, which could lead to nutritional problems.

FAO's food security team, currently supported by Spanish and Norwegian funding, conducted additional analysis to profile the food insecurity levels of different groups, published as 'Working Paper 5: Household Food Security Profiling,' and these results were more encouraging. FAO research revealed that in rural areas, where people have the possibility to grow their own food and sell some of it to buy other commodities, there has been a noticeable improvement in food security since 2006, rising from 30 to over 42 percent of the population. This proves the effectiveness of promoting agricultural projects and of assisting more Palestinians

to undertake agricultural ventures: it is clear that food security can be improved - even within the current atmosphere of economic degeneration - by investing further in agriculture and helping more people to grow food for themselves and for sale. Nonetheless, the survey results showed that improved rural conditions are still only relative to urban and camp areas, and that there exist pockets of rural destitution in the WBGS, such as south Hebron, where farming families have been badly affected by drought, the separation wall and other security measures.

duce food and create vital income and employment opportunities for the struggling population."

Both publications can be read online in English and Arabic at:

www.apis.ps



These areas need investment and international attention to help them attain the improvement in food security enjoyed by more fortunate farmers in other areas. "FAO is currently assisting over 6 000 vulnerable farmers and herders," said Luigi Damiani, FAO's Senior Project Coordinator in Jerusalem. "Strengthening agriculture in the WBGS is urgently required to pro-

FAO is keen to stress that investing in agricultural projects does not divert resources from the urban poor, but rather is a crucial and effective opportunity to create long-term food security from which the whole population can benefit. It is clearly desirable to foster sustainable livelihoods and food security within a society, and minimise the need for short-term food handouts. The results of the RFSS suggest that one of the most reliable and effective ways to do this is through the agricultural interventions and projects.

Hebron Drought: Workshop 16 July



The severe climatic conditions of the past year are having a worrying impact on Palestinian agriculture and farming communities all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but particularly in the Hebron area. The frosts of January and the ongoing drought, which saw only 55 percent of the average rainfall over the last winter, have greatly reduced crop and pasture productivity, pushing thousands of Hebron farmers and herders whose agricultural activities are heavily dependent on the

rain season towards debt and food insecurity. This adds to the strain already felt from international rises in food and fodder prices as well as land, water and market access restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities. To address this situation, a workshop was held by FAO in Hebron on 16 July for affected farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and other interested parties, in order to identify and develop methods of intervention and promote coordination among stakeholders. Following speeches by the Hebron Governor Dr. Hussein Al Araj, FAO Jerusalem Head Mr Luigi Damiani and Ministry of Agriculture official Mr Adbullah Lahlouh, a presentation was given outlining and evaluating the situation, and a discussion held among participants. It is hoped that the conclusions reached at the workshop will provide a valuable starting base for efforts to mitigate the effects of the climatic conditions. A national conference to discuss the drought and rising costs is also envisaged, at which strategies and methods to combat the increasing hardship facing the sector can be fully developed.

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FAO embarks on four new projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

FAO continues to embark on new projects to assist the food insecure and rural communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. New additions to the portfolio include a Norwegian-funded scheme to run Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools for 320 young Palestinians, to help them gain agricultural and life skills; two projects, funded by Italian and Canadian donors, to assist small ruminant farmers in the region by providing agricultural inputs and training; an Italian-funded assistance scheme for Gazan fishermen; and a backyard-farming project for female-headed households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, also funded by the Italian Cooperation.

Livestock in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Workshop 19 June

A Livestock Workshop was organized by FAO Jerusalem, and took place in Ramallah on 19 June 2008. The workshop involved all the relevant stakeholders (herders' associations, the Ministry of Agriculture, national and international NGOs working in agriculture and livestock, UN Agencies and donors) and focused on: Animal Production, Animal Health and Livestock Diseases, Sustainability of the Livestock Sector, Emergency and Development interventions. Presentations were made by the MoA (Overview of the Livestock Sector in Palestine), International and local NGOs: PLDC, ACTED, UAWC, CISP (Problems faced by the livestock sector and SR breeders, sustainability and challenges), FAO-HQ (From extensive to semi-intensive breeding system; EMPRES and SR diseases in Middle East), and FAO Jerusalem (Livestock development and emergency interventions; APIS).

Material and presentations given during the workshop are being collected by the project staff and will be printed in a local publication to be distributed among all stakeholders working in livestock sector in West Bank and Gaza Strip.



In the past year, the price of basic food commodities for an average household (flour, sugar, rice, oil, pulses and milk powder) increased dramatically in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the Consumer Price Index for food rocketing by around 15 percent between January 2007 and June 2008. The prices of locally produced fruits and vegetables increased between 40 and 300 percent over the last season owing to a late frost followed by a regional drought. Added to this, agricultural inputs are also experiencing price hikes, meaning that many Palestinian farmers are struggling to support themselves and their families and still send their crops to market. In the Gaza Strip, early signs of malnutrition have been reported by UNICEF.

Following a request by the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO has embarked on two consultancies funded by Spain and Norway to address the problems caused by this phenomenon. Firstly, a study has been commissioned to review the extent and impact of soaring food prices on food security and the role of the agriculture sector in the response. As well as highlighting the importance of agriculture in Palestinian food security, it will examine the possible impact of longer-term climate change and short term shocks like frost and drought, including on staple food supply and prices. The study will also identify strategic

priorities in the short- and medium-term, with a view to formulating appropriate policies on agriculture, food production and trade.

Secondly, plans are afoot to form a "National Food Security and Safety Council", which will institutionalize food security policy-making mechanisms within the PA and allow a better and more precise response to the food price crisis. As such, a study has been commissioned by FAO to review existing evidence and make recommendations on the establishment, mandate and membership of this Council.

It is hoped that these two pieces of research, which are expected out in September, will help both FAO and the PA to respond in the most effective and tailored manner to the worsening food security situation faced by Palestinians in the light of continuing price increases and climate change.



Project update

FAO is currently implementing seventeen projects across the region, benefiting more than 8000 households, or 48,000 individuals, and with a budget totalling over \$13,000,000. These projects are funded by the Governments of **Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Canada, and Sweden**.

FAO's main objective in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is to provide a safety net for food insecure farming/herding households whose traditional livelihoods are endangered and whose coping mechanisms are overstretched. Food security information and analysis is also a key area for FAO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, promoting inter-agency cooperation to address social protection concerns.



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