



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

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

Project Assisting Palestinian Women Completed Successfully

Activities for a Spanish-funded FAO project offering emergency support to female-headed households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which assisted 648 vulnerable families in the region, closed recently and were hailed as a success by the participants. The project invested Euro 480 000 in various activities promoting backyard farming, cottage industry and food processing, as well as strengthening women's associations and encouraging cooperative working.

Firstly, 99 beneficiaries received FAO assistance in establishing home gardens, which included water-efficient irrigation systems, and 59 of these who lacked a reliable water source also received either rain water harvesting cisterns or water recycling systems, to make the best use of the water available and prevent wastage.

By providing these women with training in the correct usage of the equipment, they have been able to



grow fruit and vegetables in their gardens, either for themselves and their families to eat, or to sell and generate some additional income.

A Gazan beneficiary working with the bees she received under the project



A beneficiary in Al Azzariyyah near Jerusalem takes home her two sheep

Another 40 beneficiaries in the Beit Hanoun area of the Gaza Strip received four beehives each, as well as protective equipment and training in beekeeping. The honey produced by these bees can then be sold by the beneficiaries. Elsewhere in Gaza, 137 women received one male and four female rabbits, two cages and fodder. The project had originally planned to distribute rabbits to only 60 beneficiaries, but savings in the project budget allowed FAO staff to expand activities. Recent visits to these women have confirmed that breeding activities are progressing well, with many women successfully raising rabbits to eat and sell (see Tahreer Abu Haddif's story, p.5).

Current Donor partners:



Project Assisting Palestinian Women Completed Successfully

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In the West Bank, 102 women from villages near East Jerusalem, Jenin and Hebron received two pregnant sheep and the relevant training in sheep rearing, milk processing and lambing. These women provided the sheep fodder themselves, but have been able to make a profit from sales of sheep milk products, as well as using the milk to enrich their diets and those of their families.

Finally, 270 beneficiaries from seven women's associations in the West Bank and two in the Gaza Strip attended a training course on food processing and preserving, teaching them to make jams and pickles, cool and dry fruits and vegetables, produce juices and syrups, and to package and label the products in such a way as to preserve their quality and make them suitable for sale. To help these women form marketing links with one another and with businesses in the area, two marketing exhibitions were organized: one in Ramallah in the West Bank in July 2008, and one in Gaza City in October 2008. A total of 53 women's organizations took part in these exhibitions, which were well attended and raised thousands of shekels, as well as providing valuable exposure and advertising for the women's activities.

The end of project activities was marked by a ceremony in the Hebron district attended by Director of the Municipality Salem Al Mahareq, General Coordinator of the Spanish Cooperation in Jerusalem (AECI) Lorea Uribarri and Project Manager Sandra Romero, and FAO staff. FAO Project Manager Intissar Eshtayeh said she was delighted with the success of the project, highlighting how important it was to recognize the role of women in Palestinian agriculture. "FAO has recently opened two new projects offering support and agricultural training to women heads-of-household, and we very much hope that the success of this project can be continued in those and future activi-

ties. This project has given these women the chance to make food for themselves and their families, as well as learn new skills and increase their income. We're very satisfied with the success of the project."



Project beneficiaries at the closing ceremony in Hebron

AECI Project Manager Sandra Romero said, "Empowering women in rural areas is an essential component of the sustainability of communities. Women in rural villages want to make a difference, to improve their future and their families. Spain has a strong commitment to developing Palestinian agriculture, and we think the impact on the beneficiaries of

this project was very positive, with immediate results."

The new projects, which are funded by the governments of Italy and Spain respectively, will continue the activities of this project, benefiting 750 households across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

FAO and Women

Since the beginning of its presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, FAO has placed great importance on developing the agricultural skills of women and acknowledging the crucial role they play in farming and food security. FAO incorporates women-focused activities in its projects wherever possible and has worked with more than 1 200 Palestinian women—mostly heads-of-household—since 2004.



Gaza Flash Appeal Update: Qatar Charity Donates USD 2.25 Million

Following the conflict in the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009, FAO warned that without immediate rehabilitation and aid, the Gazan agriculture sector could take years to recover. At least USD 180 million of direct damages were inflicted on agricultural property and assets according to UN estimates, leaving thousands of Gazan farmers, herders and fishers on the brink of bankruptcy. The crisis came following a prolonged closure of the Strip which has crippled the sector, limiting the import of crucial equipment and inputs and almost completely preventing the export of crops for sale abroad.

Within the framework of the Gaza Flash Appeal 2009, FAO and other agencies appealed for USD 30 million for immediate interventions to protect farming and fishery-based livelihoods and boost local food production, to be complemented by large scale recovery efforts. In addition, FAO intends to enhance programming and coordination of agriculture/food security interventions in the Gaza Strip. However, more than three months after the hostilities ended, less than 10

percent has been pledged to help restore agricultural capacities in the Gaza Strip.

However, the Qatar Charity recently pledged a total of **USD 2 250 000** towards FAO's recovery efforts in the Gaza Strip. This generous and quick response will allow FAO to begin an immediate intervention to restore the livelihoods and food production of vulnerable and conflict affected rural households. The project, which will last for two years, will work with 800 farming families—or 5 600 people—across the Strip, who will receive relevant inputs and training to kick start their agricultural production and improve household and regional food security. Monitoring and sector coordination will also be a focus of the project, together with other actors.

The duration of the project will allow FAO to address both short- and medium-term issues and formulate complex and articulate response plans. FAO very much looks forward to working with the Qatar Charity and wishes to thank them for their generous and timely donation to FAO's emergency activities in support of needy Gazan farmers.



*Destruction to property and assets in the Gaza Strip leaves the agriculture sector on the brink of collapse.
Photo: Iyad El-Baba, UNICEF-oPt*

Date Palm Project Expands Activities

A project which aims to improve farmers' livelihoods in the Jordan Valley by cultivating date palm production has recently been expanded to reach more beneficiaries across a wider area. The project, which started in January 2009 and is funded by the Spanish Cooperation, was originally intended to target only Jordan Valley farmers, but following initial research it was decided that four areas in the Gaza Strip are also suitable for the cultivation of dates, and would greatly benefit from the intervention. As such the number of beneficiary families has increased from 150 to 200, and now a total of 300 dunums of land will be developed for date production. In addition to this, 50 dunums of nursery will be developed in the West Bank for the Ministry of Agriculture, with whom FAO is closely collaborating on the project.



Medjoul dates: one variety which will be cultivated under the project

Activities planned in this 18-month project include the distribution of date palm seedlings, the installation of efficient irrigation networks, the provision of chemical fertilizer and the provision of equipment and tools for the nursery.

2008 APIS Report: A tool for agriculture Coordination

March 2009 saw the publication of the 2008 Agriculture Project Information System (APIS) report, providing a comprehensive catalogue of all agricultural projects being implemented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The document offers breakdowns grouped by location, theme and organization, as well as presenting useful information on gender disaggregation. The report is designed to assist the sector in developing policy, programmes and projects by highlighting and/or preventing overlaps, gaps and unmet needs.

APIS is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and funded by the Spanish Cooperation with FAO support.

The full report can be found on the APIS website at www.apis.ps

Food Security Monitoring Continues

FAO continues to monitor the food security status of Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, publishing recently the Joint Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA), together with WFP. The main objective of this rapid qualitative assessment was to guide possible adjustments of food security, agriculture and livelihood interventions in the Gaza Strip in the short- and medium-term, in response to the damage caused by the recent conflict. The aims of the report were to assess changes in Gazan households' food access, food consumption patterns, cash sources and coping mechanisms used to respond to the specific effects of the war; as well as examine the role of humanitarian assistance, the resilience of Gazan markets and the profiles of population groups requiring food, agriculture and other livelihood support assistance.

The full report can be found on the APIS website at www.apis.ps

Beneficiary Testimonies: Gazan Women



Tahreer Abu Haddif, front, displays her rabbits along with a staff member of the Rural Women's Development Society in Beit Hanoun, the Gaza Strip

Other beneficiaries of the same project in Gaza were, however, badly affected by the winter conflict. Hala, below left, and Ghaniyeh, below right, both saw their houses hit by the fighting. The beehives which Ghaniyeh received under project activities managed to survive and escape damage, and she continues to produce and sell honey. Hala's home also suffered serious damage in the fighting, and her rabbit units were destroyed. A total of 18 project beneficiaries also saw their rabbits killed in the conflict. FAO responded to this by organizing another round of distribution in March 2009, in which the 16 women who were not displaced were provided with



Tahreer Abu Haddif is a 43-year-old mother of eight living in Al Mawassi, near Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. In September 2008 she started participating in the Spanish-funded FAO project supporting women in backyard farming activities (OSRO/GAZ/703/SPA), under which she received training in rabbit rearing, as well as five rabbits, feed, cages and other equipment. Now, seven months later, she has bred three generations of rabbits, some of which have provided food for herself and her family and some of which she has sold. Two rabbits, she tells FAO staff, bring in twenty shekels, and in each generation she has bred five or six rabbits, "which is enough to pay for school books and pencils for my children."

"My first attempt at breeding the rabbits did not succeed, but after that I have had no problems. I am very happy with the training I received." Under the project, Tahreer received five sacks of fodder, which lasted for two months. "Since then I have bought the fodder myself, using some of the money I made from selling the rabbits I bred. Each sack is 95 shekels, which is expensive, but it is worth it to keep breeding the rabbits."

Tahreer belongs to the Rural Women's Development Society, who assisted FAO in selecting beneficiaries in the Gaza Strip.

new rabbit units. FAO staff hope that these women will be able to continue their activities as before, and that the breeding of rabbits and the meat this provides will assist these women and their families as they try to recover. The remaining two women were displaced in the fighting; FAO continues to monitor their situation and is trying to involve them in other projects as soon as possible.

Hala said, "It's a small thing, but I'm very grateful to have the rabbits. Right after the war it was difficult to get hold of fresh food, and I didn't know what I would do, especially since my house was hit. Now I can start breeding them again, at least we will have a source of food and I can sell some to earn money."

Hala, left, and Ghaniyeh, right, both saw their property destroyed in the recent conflict.



Feed Centre Opened in Tubas

A feed centre constructed in the northern West Bank town of Tubas under the project OSRO/GAZ/707/ITA was opened recently in a ceremony attended by project beneficiaries, FAO staff, members of partner NGO UCODEP and members of the Italian Cooperation who are funding the activities. The project, entitled “Emergency support to small ruminant farmers in the eastern slopes of the West Bank and Jordan Valley to maintain the productivity of their flocks,” works with 783 farmers in the West Bank to address their urgent need for fodder and to reduce their feed and veterinary costs by encouraging coordination and community purchasing. The feed centre in Tubas is one of three built under the project—the others are in Jericho

and south Hebron—and was built as an extension of an already existing community-based station and with the assistance of their qualified staff, trained by UCODEP. The design of the centre was improved by close cooperation between partners, contractors and FAO in order to guarantee full sustainability. The equipment was properly installed and the supplier provided training in managing the machinery to the staff.



Feed processing equipment in the new centre

The centre allows small ruminant farmers in the Tubas area to pool resources, reduce waste, save money on feed purchasing and thus limit their dependence on outside assistance. In the weeks following the ceremony, project staff have confirmed that beneficiaries are successfully using the feed processing machinery.

Right: The completed feed centre in Tubas; Below: UCODEP staff demonstrate the machinery to the FAO Project Management Unit



Below: the centre during construction. January 2009



FAO's Drought Response Plan

As the rainy season comes to a close, FAO and Palestinian experts confirm that the West Bank once again suffered from irregular and insufficient rainfall. Whilst not as severe as last year, the season of 2008-2009 saw the West Bank receive 78 percent of the average rainfall, with southern and central areas particularly hit, receiving just over half of the expected amount. Coming after several years of drought which have depleted ground water sources and forced up agricultural production costs, this latest poor rainfall poses a further threat to struggling Palestinian farmers.

As such, FAO, in collaboration with other UN agencies, international and national NGO partners and Palestinian authorities, have developed a drought response plan to address the immediate and urgent needs of the most vulnerable. The response focuses primarily on providing water and fodder to the 90 000 worst affected people, addressing the acute needs of farmers in the area. Additionally, FAO is working towards longer-term vulnerability reduction by setting up a drought task force with the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant partners, which will construct a monitoring and early warning system to develop drought preparedness and mitigation policies. It is hoped that this will allow the drought response to move from crisis management to risk management, monitoring and planning strategy in regard to the probability, incidence, magnitude and severity of a prolonged drought.

Project update

FAO is currently managing a portfolio of twenty projects across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, benefiting more than 8 000 households, and with a budget totalling over USD 17 600 000. These projects are funded by the Governments of **Canada, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain,** and **Sweden**. In addition, FAO's emergency activities in Gaza are funded by **Belgium** and **Qatar**.

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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