

## THE INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM) PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST

Agriculture in the Near East Region is important as it is the main income generating activity for a considerable part of the population and significantly contributes to the national Gross Domestic Products of its countries.

Fruits and vegetables are an important component of the agriculture sector as these are commonly grown for local markets and for home consumption.

At the end of 1990s, as a consequence of the Green Revolution, farmers have been confronted with the adverse effects of the intensification of agriculture especially due to overuse of chemical pesticides, which have had a negative effects on environment and public health.

In this context and to contribute to the achievement of food security and safety of the rural population in the Near East Region, the *Food and Agriculture Organization* started, in 2004, the *Regional Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programme in the Near East*.

The Project, *-funded by the Government of Italy*, has contributed, during the last eight years, to reduce the use of pesticides in a region known for its culture of heavy use of pesticides. The Programme has also reduced the cost of production and hence improved the net returns and the livelihood of the participating farmers (more than 15,000 farmers directly trained).

In addition, it has also succeeded in creating effective awareness among farmers on the harmful effects of pesticides on human health and the environment.

## GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES TRANSFORM LIFE OF RURAL FARMERS

### JORDAN

Ms. Asma Al-Eshoush is a Jordanian farmer. She is a 26 years old tomato grower in Ghour Safi, Karak Governorate. Before joining the Field Farmers School (FFS) on IPM organized by FAO, nobody in her family used to ask her for any technical help, there was no trust about her skills in agriculture.



After joining the IPM programme, she became a facilitator for a Field Farmer School composed by 15 women in her area.

“Thanks to the Programme I gained confidence, skills and information about strategies to cope with plant pests and diseases, and crop management in general. Before joining the Programme I was shy to stand in front of other farmers, I could not discuss with them about agriculture.

Now, I take decisions in my farm, I plan for future actions, I can recognize pests and diseases of tomato and I am able to find environmentally friendly solutions. By decreasing the amount of pesticide up to 55%, my family and I are saving a lot of money. We do not need to buy any vegetable and, most significantly, we started to plant other vegetables such as squash, peas, bean and okra to be sold in the local market and for our family consumption. With the income from the farm, we can buy other goods for the family and pay the input needed for the new planting season with no stress. What an improvement!”

### LEBANON

In Lebanon the story begins 45 years ago, in Srifa, Southern Lebanon, where Abou Shadi's father bought a piece of land, Arid Kassem. The men worked hard to grow his olive trees in this land and support his family with dignity. He used to spend most of his time in the olive grove taking care of the trees along with his family.



In 2005, after he passed away, Abou Chadi inherited the olive grove without having any skill to manage it properly. Therefore, the field conditions deteriorated quickly. In addition to this, during the war of 2006, the olive grove

was heavily bombed and most of the trees were burnt or severely damaged. The dream of Abou Chadi's father was reduced to ashes and he had no choice but to abandon regretfully the grove which had been during the years a good source of income.

Three years later, the FAO IPM Programme, in collaboration with local communities, identified Srifa as a target area to implement a Field Farmer School for olive growers to help them return to their normal life after the war. The Arid Kassem grove was selected for the IPM/FFS activities and was considered as an experimental field to host the FFS meetings. Abou Chadi, strongly motivated by the will of reviving the grove of his father, participated actively with his sons.

“Now I have more confidence in agricultural activities. I have learnt about insects, diseases and how to manage olive pests with environmentally friendly practices. I feel happy I found the way to come out from the ruins left by the war keeping my father's dream alive! I hope that one day we will be able to export from Srifa our products to let people around the world taste the quality of the olive oil produced thanks to the FAO IPM programme!”

### *SYRIA*

Mr. Mahmoud Mansour was a plastic house tomato grower in Al Aedia village of Lattakia province in Syria. He grew his tomato with traditional and locally known practices, – using methyl bromide as soil sterilizer, herbicides, insecticides and fungicides to control weeds, insects and diseases. Like other tomato growers in the area, he hardly realized the harm that his tomato growing practices were causing to the environment and human health. When informed and approached by the Plant Protection Department of the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, he agreed to join the FAO IPM/FFS programme.

The Farmer Field School is a community based, practically oriented field activity which provides farmers with the opportunity to learn using hands-on methods.

FFS promotes observations, discussions, analysis, decision taking, through experimentation (learning by doing) on good agricultural methods that farmers practice in selected fields.

‘I learnt the concepts of IPM and appreciated its immense advantages in reducing the use of pesticides which lead to an increased net return’, he says with a lot of sense of achievement and pride. I also realized its importance in improving the quality of fruits, protecting the environment, and the health of my family and neighbors’.



Led by his immense interest in IPM and his interest in learning techniques to further improve his crop, Mr. Mansour went further and learnt the grafting technique in tomato. He quickly mastered it and started its use in his own tomato plastic house. Encouraged by his results, he also started testing different tomato varieties to see their characteristics and advantages. He found that the grafted tomatoes were tolerant to nematodes and could increase tomato yields by 15-20%. Soon, he had all his tomato grafted.

He showed excellent interest and desire to popularize this technique to other tomato growers in his area and voluntarily taught the art of grafting to other farmers in his area.

On demand, he then decided to teach this technique to other farmers, on payment basis. Thus, he has played a major role in popularizing the use of grafted tomato in Lattakia province. Mr. Mansour is now voluntarily supporting and managing several private IPM/FFS in his neighborhood.

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Started in April 2004, in six countries in the Near East: Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, and Syria, with funding from the Government of Italy, the Programme has been a success in the region where the IPM methods have proven to be a model to be followed for a sustainable agriculture system and ensuring a reduction in the use of pesticides and communities exposure to toxic chemicals in the Region.

Following to the good results, the FAO IPM Programme was geographically expanded, in 2010, to four more countries in the Region, namely: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Iraq.

**IPM Website:** [www.ipm-neareast.com](http://www.ipm-neareast.com)