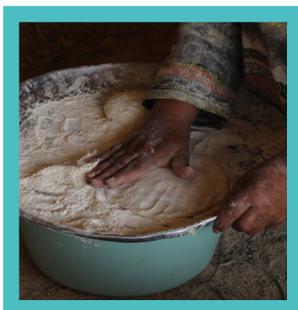




Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



HARNESSING PALESTINIAN ASPIRATIONS

STORIES FROM AN FAO-CANADA PARTNERSHIP



In partnership with
Canada

HARNESSING PALESTINIAN ASPIRATIONS

STORIES FROM AN FAO-CANADA PARTNERSHIP

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Government of Canada. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Jerusalem, 2021

INTRODUCTION

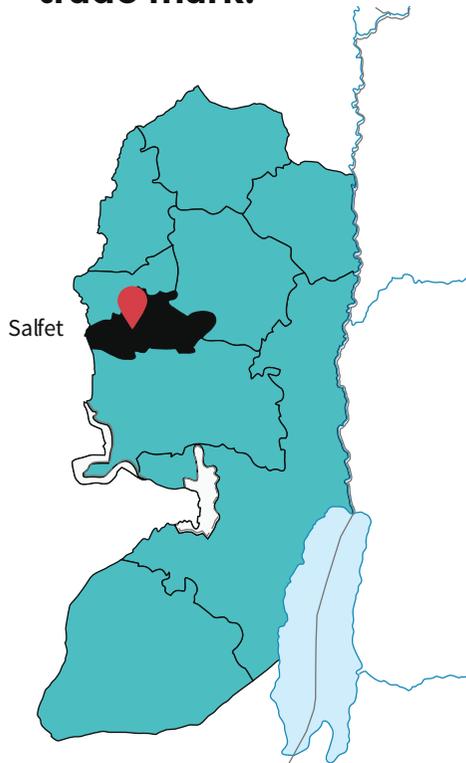


Economic growth and food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is strongly associated with agricultural and rural development, as well as access to economic opportunities and decent work. Currently operating at roughly one quarter of its potential, the agricultural sector remains one of the most resilient strategic sectors in the Palestinian economy. However, without optimal use and proper management of land and water resources and market opportunities, this sector cannot achieve its potential.

Under its project "Supporting Economic Growth Through Optimized Agricultural Value Chains in the West Bank," FAO, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and with financial support from the Government of Canada, is working to improve sustainable income and labour productivity in agribusiness value chains, in particular through increasing access to sustainable land and water resources through rehabilitation of roads, wells, and other agricultural infrastructure; introducing innovative and climate-smart practices to small-scale farmers; establishing new as well as upgrading existing post-harvesting facilities; and strengthening managerial and marketing capacities of farmers' and women's cooperatives.



“Our production is at a new level now; we have opened new lines, increased our production, and even created our own trade mark.”



Salfet



IBTESAM FADEL MOSA

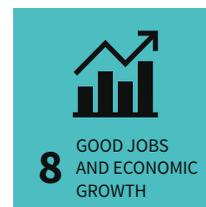
helping to redefine women's roles in agrifood value chains

Ibtesam hails from Salfet, a Palestinian city in central West Bank, where she is part of a women's agricultural cooperative that produces zaatar and tomato paste. Al Ibda Cooperative is one of the women's cooperatives that have increased their agricultural productivity through in-kind and technical support from this project.

The role of women in the Palestinian agriculture sector is significant, contributing to the economy and increasing productive capacities and the achievement of economic balance with regard to production and consumption. However, this role is rarely recognized. Although contributing largely to household, farm and factory work, Palestinian women do not control most agricultural revenues. This marginalizes their role in production processes, limiting their participation in the economy. Consequently women become the most vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion and discrimination due to their reduced level of income and limited access to and/or control over productive assets.

To strengthen the position and involvement of women and women's cooperatives to have equal access in value chains, this intervention has provided support to hundreds of Palestinian women under 15 women's cooperatives, focusing on building the production skills, market orientation and general capacity of women's cooperatives to run profitable small- and medium-sized businesses that are fully competitive in the local as well as international market.

Al Ibda Cooperative was able to receive a tomato paste filling machine and zaatar seedlings to increase its production. Today, the cooperation has its own trademark for both tomato paste and zaatar.



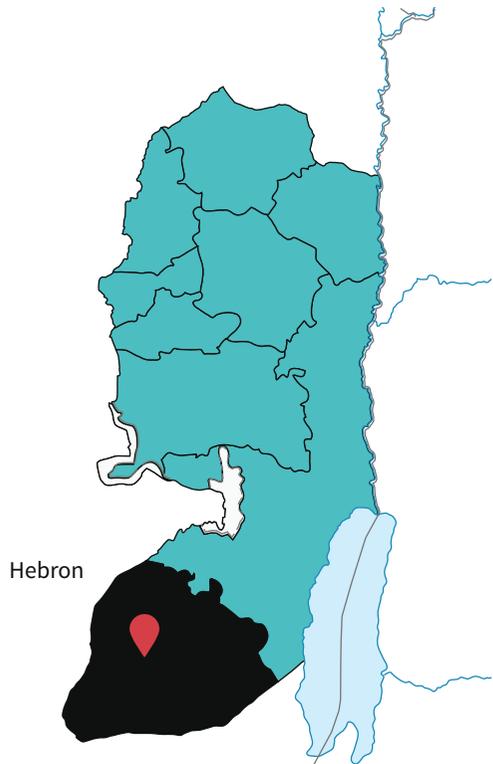
Ibtesam and other members of the cooperative
©FAO 2019/Alaa Bardeneh



Looking at dried tomatoes at an exchange visit
©FAO 2019/Alaa Bardeneh



“We keep learning how to do things better and to improve our business.”



HUDA SULEIMAN SHADEED

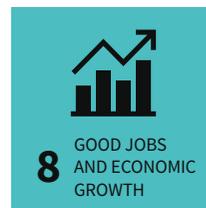
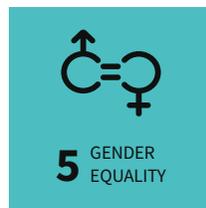
showing how collective action can transform lives

Fifty-three-year-old Huda used to be unemployed, spending her time at home with no consistent stream of income to support her livelihood. While Huda produced different products ranging from zaatar and makdous, her production was small-scale and informal, operating from her home. In 2004, Huda joined Dura Cooperative, which was made up of other nine women producers who wanted to formalize their trade and create a viable business through adding value to agricultural products.

With support from this project, Huda and her business partners from the cooperative were supported with a rainwater collection cistern and a drip irrigation system. Each member of the cooperative received seedlings to cultivate two dunums, which has enabled them to produce enough to cover their household's food needs and generate income. The cooperative was able to comply with quality standards, allowing them to formalize their business.

Today, the cooperative, based in Hebron, has become a thriving business producing vegetables such as zucchinis, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, and others. The support received from FAO allowed Huda to build business relationships between the cooperative and private businesses and other producers. With the expansion of their business networks, the cooperative opened a small grocery shop to sell their value-added products. Additionally, they have started constructing their own building which includes an office, a shop and a warehouse.

Huda hopes to lead Dura to more success in the near future. She plans to create full- and part-time employment for the local women in Hebron, as well as mentor others like herself interested in moving from informal to formal production.



Preparing maftool (a traditional Palestinian plate) for sale at the cooperative
©FAO 2019 /Alaa Badarneh

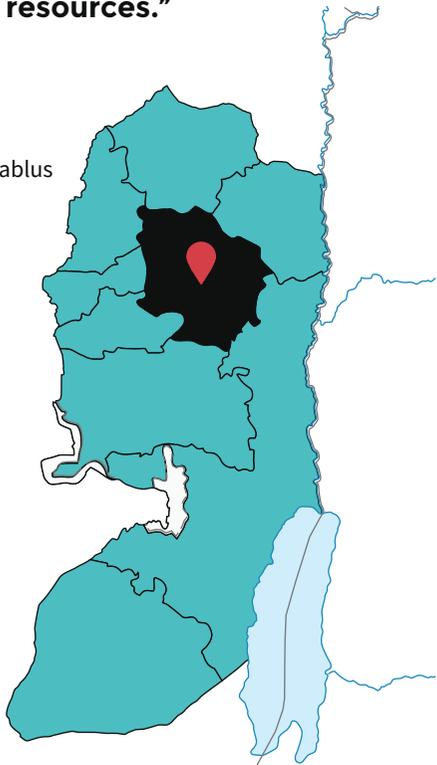


A display of maftool before packaging
©FAO 2019 /Alaa Badarneh



“I want to start a special organic market for the association where people can come pick their vegetables. I also want to have more time to be able to handle marketing internally; I have a lot of ideas and I will put them into action when I have the time and resources.”

Nablus



IMAN TURKMAN

Leading community members to improved livelihoods

Iman lives in Al Aqrabanya village in the northern area of the West Bank near Nablus city. After completing her university education in 2010, Iman created Al Aqrabanya Women's Association with other women from her village who were also interested in generating a sustainable source of income. Today, Iman leads over 50 women in the cooperative who are currently producing seedlings of lettuce, parsley, beans, avocados, spinach, and more.

Under this intervention, Al Aqrabanya was supported with the construction of a packing house to decrease post-harvest losses. Iman recalls how before the construction of the packing house, the association used to lose a significant amount of their production due to rain and heat damage. The packing house allowed the association to eliminate production losses that approximated around 30 percent before its construction. Improved packing has also allowed the women to enhance the quality of their products, allowing them to increase their selling price while still remaining competitive. As a result, in 2019, the association was able to sell products worth USD 14 500 - the highest revenue they have been able to achieve

since the start of their business. Additionally, the packing house constructed for the cooperative includes a breastfeeding shelter, enabling all cooperative members including mothers with infants to be actively involved in the cooperative activities. The cooperative also received seedlings of different kinds of vegetables, which enabled them to increase their production, revenues, and widen their scope of work.

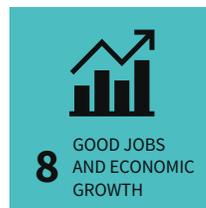
Iman believes that women-led associations are the key to empowering Palestinian women and young generations. She continues to look out for opportunities for capacity-building activities for fellow members to enhance the quality of their production and improve their livelihoods.



Iman arranging parsley leaves into ready-for-sale bundles ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis

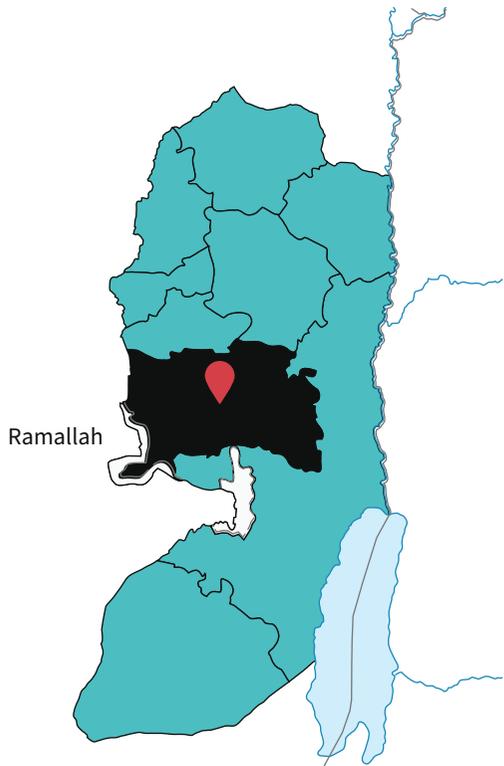


Iman's mother, also a cooperative member ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis





“I believe that the products from Palestinian women have the ability to compete in international markets.”



©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh

HANEEN HAMAID

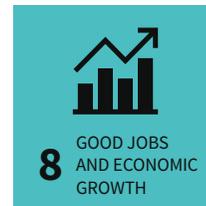
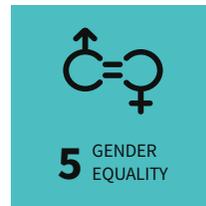
breaking market barriers for young agro-entrepreneurs

Twenty-seven-year-old Haneen is passionate about women's empowerment. It is this passion that drove her to start a business that sources products from women's cooperatives to process and package them for distribution. Today, Haneen produces and markets more than 30 different products. Despite having no business background, Haneen's company has grown over the past years, expanding to various lines of business including a nice market of specialty packaged Palestinian gift boxes that she markets to corporate companies.

Haneen, however, is one of the many young Palestinian agro-entrepreneurs that operate in an increasingly challenging business environment. Access to land, water, inputs and expensive labour raises the cost of production of Palestinian products. This, in turn, causes high prices that affect the competitiveness of these products, particularly in regional and international markets where they have to compete with similar products from countries with lower production costs. In spite of these challenges, there is a growing demand for Palestinian products on the regional and international front, and Haneen, like many entrepreneurs, had long-held hopes of reaching external markets and supplying Palestinian products to the world.

Under this intervention, Haneen had the opportunity to work closely with the Palestine Trade Center (PALTRADE) to expand her business. Through the partnership, Haneen attended a three-day business-to-business meeting in Qatar, where she was able to export over 20 different products sourced from women's cooperatives to Qatar.

Although Haneen's dream of putting Palestinian products on international shelves has started to play out, she still has big plans for her business. She plans to move to a bigger factory, double production, and improve on her packaging and marketing to meet the new demand in foreign markets. Most importantly, Haneen hopes to continue ensuring that the hard work and diligence of Palestinian women is represented on the global map.



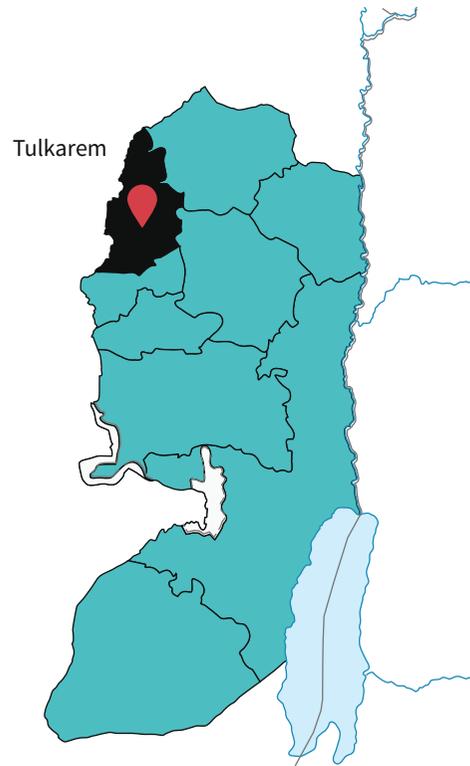
Homemade Palestinian food ©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh



A display of Haneen's packaged products for sale ©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh



“Without water, there is no agriculture.”



Tulkarem



©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh

ABDELQADIR AL-ALI

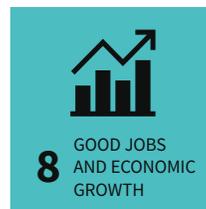
supporting sustainable farming practices

Accessing and distributing water has proved to be a considerable barrier to agricultural development in Tulkarem, where groundwater is the main source of water for Palestinians, providing over 90 percent of the water supply. Under the project, 32 different water conveyance systems in the West Bank were rehabilitated, enhancing the efficiency of 147.6 km of water pipes for domestic and agricultural use. In Attil, FAO repaired 2 km of old and damaged water pipes with high density polyethylene pipes in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the targeted farmers. Although the new pipes were installed in March 2017, the positive effects are already being experienced among the community, benefitting farming households including men, women and children. Three hundred dunums are currently under open field cultivation in Attil, 50 of which are new, following the introduction of the improved irrigation system.

“The old pipes were installed in 1959. I used to lose over 30 percent of the water I was supplying to farmers through leaks. Now almost 100 percent of the water is reaching the farmers. I can supply more farmers with a higher quality of water. I’m very pleased. The new pipes are underground, whereas the old pipes

ran over ground and required a huge amount of maintenance. I used to spend NIS 2 000 a month on repairs. The new pipes should last for over 50 years, requiring very little maintenance,” explained Abdelqadir. Because of the rehabilitation action, the irrigation efficiency was improved through eliminating water leakage by an average of 36 percent in Attil. To ensure appropriate water distribution and better water resources management, a Water Users Committee in Attil is currently being established. In addition to helping targeted farmers reduce their production costs and increase their income, the rehabilitated water system is also an important intervention towards strengthening farmers’ resilience to climate change, especially women and children, who are usually those most affected by climate change, given they have fewer production and coping opportunities.

The direct impact of the pipes rehabilitation is expected to improve the livelihood of not only Abdelqadir and his family, but it is also expected to have a domino effect through job creation for more individuals and their families.



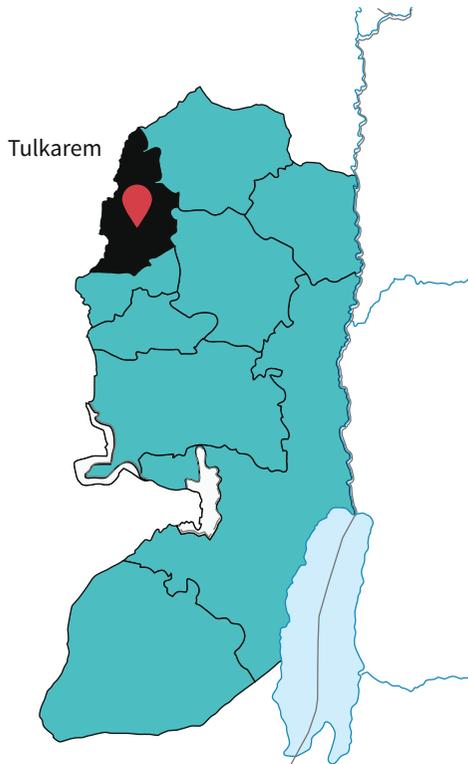
Abdelqadir collects cucumbers from his farm
©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh



Abdelqadir checks his water conveyance system
©FAO 2019/Alaa Badarneh



“I can finally sleep long nights knowing that my sons are not in danger trying to find work every single day, they are farming the family’s land and living with pride.”



Tulkarem



©FAO 2020/Hend Younis

AHED MASARWEH

strengthening tradition through innovation

Born and bred in Tulkarem, sixty-year-old Ahed grew up in a farming family and has been a farmer all his life. Today, Ahed, his wife and three sons rely on farming as their source of livelihood. However, like many other farmers in the West Bank, access to water has been a problem for as long as Ahed recalls. The absence of sustainable water resources and the continued water woes caused Ahed to discontinue farming his land. As a result, Ahed's sons were forced to drop out of school and seek employment opportunities in the unstable West Bank job market.

After the installation of new water pipes in Tulkarem under this project, Ahed resumed his farming activities and could make use of his land again. The water pipes have allowed Ahed and hundreds of other farmers to enjoy sustainable access to clean water for irrigation and to continue their productive activities

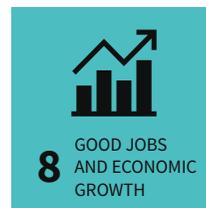
including farming cucumbers, eggplants, and avocados, allowing him to make enough income to cover the basic needs of his family. Two of Ahed's sons have since returned to school and even though they help their parents work the land when they can, they now have ample time to continue pursuing their education undisturbed. The impact felt by Ahed's family is not merely financial but also psychological: the family can now live more peacefully knowing that their livelihood is protected.



Ahed holding cucumbers harvested with water conveyance systems ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis

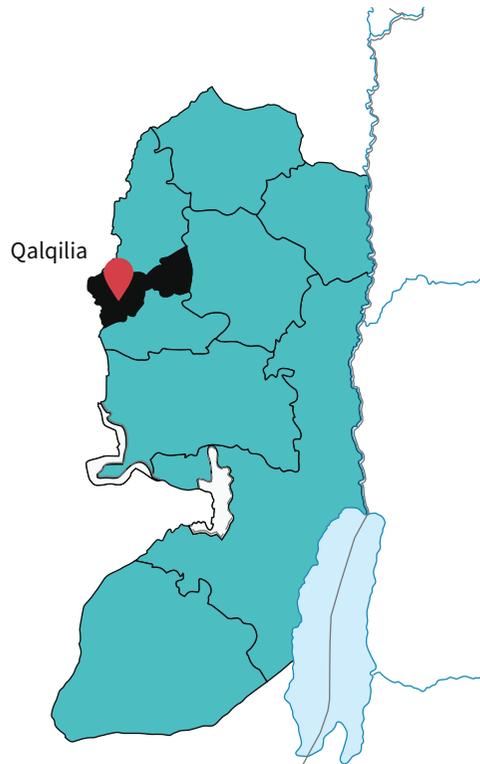


Ahed's cucumber field ©FAO2020/Hend Younis





“My daughter Ro’a dreams of becoming an agricultural engineer. With increased profits, I will be able to continue supporting her education.”



HANIYEH ABDELKAREEM

cultivating seeds of ambition

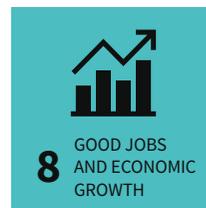
Haniyeh seems like an ordinary farmer living with her three children and husband in Qalqilia, in the northern West Bank. The family survives on a limited monthly income derived from growing and selling fruits and vegetables to nearby markets.

Haniyeh is dedicated to supporting her children's needs and ambitions. Her two sons, Abed and Khaled, are avid volleyball players, and she is determined to enable them to follow their passion for sports. Her daughter, Ro'a, is in high school and dreams of becoming an agricultural engineer. "When she was a little girl, she used to always tell me that she wanted to be a horticulturist when she grew up, and her father and I will continue to do the best we can to support her to become whom she wants to be," Haniyeh says.

While fruit and vegetable varieties are a relevant sector in the West Bank, it lags behind comparable countries in the region despite sharing similar soil and climate. This is a result of limited access and availability of agricultural inputs particularly seeds, which farmers purchase at inflated costs due to the relatively high cost of imports.

To help support small-scale farmers facing these obstacles, the intervention provided seedlings to 119 farming households for new fruit tree varieties producing avocados, apricots, almonds, and figs. Haniyeh received 160 seedlings of avocado, enough to cover her landscape.

With her newfound success, Haniyeh is expecting her family's income to double. This will enable her to continue supporting her children's dreams and ambitions. Haniyeh is without a doubt planting hope in those around her.



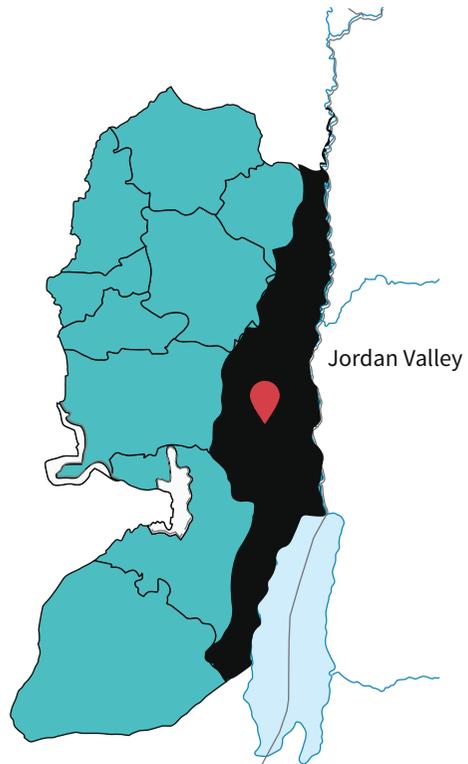
Haniyeh's son checking the avocado quality before harvest ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis



Haniyeh in her avocado field ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis



“Being able to make my own money has empowered me, it has changed how I look at life and how I am going to make decisions about my future.”



Jordan Valley



OULA ALMOUGHRABI

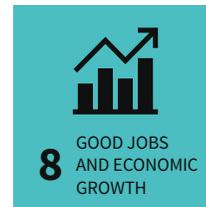
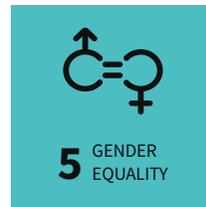
promoting equitable economic development

Thirty-year-old Oula lives with her mother and her older brother, who used to be the sole breadwinner of the family. Since completing high school, Oula had never had a formal job. Oula's story is not surprising, as Palestinian women account for just 17.4 percent of the formal labour force compared to 69.1 percent for men - one of the lowest levels of labour force participation in the world.

Under this project, FAO trained over 500 women to build their capacity for employment in the date sector in Jericho and the Jordan Valley. Owing mainly to their compatibility with the local climate, date palms are of particular importance to the Palestinian agricultural sector. Over the years, date palm cultivation in the West Bank has expanded considerably, creating job opportunities and livelihood options for female and male farmers. Oula was one of the young women that participated in the packaging and sorting training offered by FAO. Afterwards, Oula was able to find work in a date factory in Jericho.

After her first season working, Oula became financially independent. She started saving and planning on how to invest her savings. "I know now that I want to have a small business to support myself one day, and I know that the money and experience I am gathering will enable me," she said. Oula shares her story with pride. Her potential and capabilities are unlimited and it made all the difference for her when she started to recognize this fact.

"My family has always been kind and generous, but nothing compares to feeling like you are a member that contributes to supporting the family. Now I am able to help my brother cover our expenses, and we are finally able to continue building a better home," she said.



Women working in dates post-harvest packaging alongside Oula in Jericho ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis



Dates packaging team in one of Jericho's biggest post-harvest hubs ©FAO 2020/Hend Younis

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

© FAO, 2021

Cover: ©FAO 2019–2020, Alaa Badarneh and Hend Younis



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO license

FAO encourages the use, reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product. Except where otherwise indicated, material may be copied, downloaded and printed for private study, research and teaching purposes, or for use in non-commercial products or services, provided that appropriate acknowledgement of FAO as the source and copyright holder is given and that FAO's endorsement of users' views, products or services is not implied in any way. All requests for translation and adaptation rights, and for resale and other commercial use rights should be made via www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request or addressed to copyright@fao.org.

Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Coordination Office for the West Bank and Gaza Strip Programme,
Mount of Olives St. 26, Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem
Website: www.fao.org | E-mail: FAO-PAL@fao.org



©FAO 2020/Hend Younis