

**IPCRI**

מרכז ישראל/פלסטין למחקר ולמידע

مركز إسرائيل/فلسطين للأبحاث والعلوم

Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information

Promoting Agricultural Development in the West Bank

I. SUMMARY

This project is designed to assist farmers in Bardalah, a Palestinian community in the West Bank, introduce two new crops into their annual program and to enable them in marketing them outside the region. It is a pilot project. A team of specialists from Israel and Palestine, working with the local Farmers Co-Operative, will train selected members of the Co-operative, in growing herbs and different varieties of peppers commercially. At present the farms in Bardalah do not grow these crops commercially. Besides advising on the actual growing of the crops, the specialist team will give advice on dealing with disease, post-harvest techniques and marketing to countries outside the region. It is anticipated that if the project is successful it will be widely publicized and provide stimulus for other farming communities in the West Bank.

II. BACKGROUND

Agriculture in the West Bank is significant both economically and socially. Over twenty five per cent of Palestinians live from farming and related industries as compared with less than three per cent in Israel. However, many farmers are still practicing rain fed agriculture at subsistence level, and even where more modern approaches are being introduced there are still improvements that can be made. The large farmers' cooperatives that have been established in many parts of the West Bank are in the forefront of a move towards more effective commercial marketing of crops. Given the relatively low labour costs in Palestine there are great opportunities for growing and marketing produce that is in great demand not only in the region but in Europe, perhaps especially in Russia. To be commercially successful in Europe Palestinian farmers must meet demanding standard requirements. They can benefit greatly from the experience of Israeli agriculturalists in this respect.

IPCRI has for many years been involved in work with farmers in Palestine. Its most successful project was one which trained large scale farmers in Gaza so that they could meet the import standards of the European Union. This was financed by the European Union itself. IPCRI has also worked with Palestinian farmers on integrated pest management.

This project forms part of a sustained effort to assist Palestinian farmers to improve their economic situation and move away from dependence on local markets which, while significant, need to be supplemented by wider export business.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project aims to introduce two new crops into the program of selected farmers from the Bardalah Farmers Co-operative, to assist with the growth, harvesting, post-harvesting and marketing of the resulting produce to overseas markets. It is intended not only to assist the farmers who are actively involved in the project but to provide an example which can be adopted by other Farmers Co-operatives in the West Bank. It will be evaluated both by the quantity and quality of the crops grown, and also by the economic results achieved.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The co-operative in Bardalah has seventy-five members who between them own over 350 dunums of glasshouses. Twenty-five members will be selected by the co-operative to be actively involved in this project. Currently neither herbs nor peppers are grown in Bardalah. The specialized knowledge required for the project will be drawn from both Israel and Palestine.

Project activities for the period from September 2012 to April 2013 will be as outlined in the table below.

	Activity	Description	Date (Duration)
1	Initial Seminar	To be attended by project staff and farmers from the Farmer's Cooperative in Bardalah. This will inform attendees of the nature of the project and their role in it.	September (1 day)
2	Visit Bardalah	The farmers who will participate in the project will be selected during this visit to the village of Bardalah.	September
3	Purchase & Planting of Seeds	Selected herbs and pepper seeds to be purchased and planted by specialist team and Farmer's Cooperative.	October
4	Observation & Assessment	Three visits by the specialist team to observe and assess crop growth.	December to February
5	Seminar	Seminar to be given on winter plant diseases to project participants.	December (1 day)
6	Seminar	Seminar to be given on post-harvest techniques (sorting and packaging) to project participants.	January (2 days)

7	Seminar	Seminar to be given on marketing to project participants.	February (1 day)
8	Marketing of Produce	Marketing of produce will take place in the latter half of the growing season in cooperation with the Palestinian firm 'Harvest'. Produce will be marketed overseas and the requirements stipulated in the international program 'Global Gap' will provide the basis for the standards required for export.	February / March
9	Evaluation & Lessons Learned	A seminar will be held at the conclusion of the project to evaluate and discuss lessons learned. A report will be drawn up and distributed to participants as well as the Bardalah Farmers Co-operative.	March / April

The following points are to be noted:

1. Instruction will be in Arabic. However funds will be required for the translation of certain basic training materials from Hebrew to Arabic. Provision has been made in the budget for this.
2. Seminars will be held in several different locations. Visits to selected farms in Israel will be undertaken where the crops being introduced as part of the project are currently being successfully grown.
3. Seminars will be attended by approximately 25 farmers from Bardalah.
4. Dates given in the project outline above are season dependent and therefore only tentative.

V. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

The project will be managed by IPCRI which will recruit a team of three specialists, one Jewish Israeli, one Arab Israeli, and one Palestinian to undertake the planning of the project together with the teaching and supervision involved. IPCRI will provide management and administrative expertise and financial control. IPCRI will work in partnership with the Farmer's Cooperative from Bardalah and with the Palestinian firm "Harvest" which specializes in marketing.

The team of specialists will be led by Hillel Adiri, formerly a senior official in the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture who is currently advisor to the Dutch Government on agricultural development work they are undertaking in the West Bank and has served as a consultant to several overseas governments. The other members will be Dr. Nabil Ghanim, an Arab Israeli, and Dr. Tamin Hajani from the West Bank. A member of staff of IPCRI will work with the team as project coordinator.

The project team between them will undertake the planning of the project and the teaching required. In cooperation with members of the Bardalah cooperative they will undertake the selection of seeds and inspect the progress of the crops.

The commercial company "Harvest" which has both Arab and Israeli directors will assist with the marketing of produce.

VI. CONCLUSION

This project is perceived as being a pilot project designed both to improve the economic situation of the farmers involved by opening up for them new opportunities and markets and to promote understanding between the Palestinian and Israeli professionals and farmers involved.