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## Final activities report Palestine: from july 2015 to june 2018

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## ENPARD SOUTH SUPPORT PROJECT II

# FINAL ACTIVITIES REPORT PALESTINE

FROM JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2018

**ESSPII team:**

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This national report is an integral part of the of the second Phase final report of the ENPARD South Support Project which was implemented from July 2015 to June 2018 in eight Mediterranean countries.

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## IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

The implementation of the **ENPARD South Support project (ESSP II)** has been part of the new agricultural strategy of Palestine. The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, particularly through the ESSP II Palestine focal point, Mr. Tareq ABULABAN, Director General of the Department of Agricultural Marketing, has on many occasions, underlined the interest of the Palestinian Ministry of agriculture to the ENPARD initiative and pointed out the strategic nature of this opportunity, offered by the European Union, to debate on Palestinian agricultural and rural development major issues with the support of European experts.

Palestine has implemented a *think tank* under the lead of the ESSP II focal point. It was composed of nine officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Research Center, the Palestinian Water Authority, the Palestine Trade Center and the private sector.

The *think tank* specified the work themes and organized, together with the CIHEAM-IAMM team, under the lead of Mr. Pascal Bergeret and the support of Mr. Aymeric Debrun, different activities like the launching workshop and thematic seminars.

Despite the limited resources of the Ministry of Agriculture, two workshops per year were organized in Palestine and the project implementation pace met the Palestinian partners expectations and allowed to mobilize a group of experts on technical and specialized topics.

## ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

A first mission, which aimed to launch the activities of the ESSP II in Palestine, was organized on December from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> 2015. It was an opportunity to meet the Minister of Agriculture His Excellency Dr. Sofian SOLTANE, as well as the head of the agricultural sector of the EU Mission for Palestine, Mr. Carlo MARSICO.

A multi-stakeholder meeting was organized and facilitated by the focal point, Mr. ABULABAN involved representatives of different ministerial departments and the Agricultural Research Center officials, as well as Agricultural Unions and the private sector. The meeting allowed identifying two thematic priorities:

- Production costs reduction through a better use of resources and an improvement of the production techniques in a context of land fragmentation,
- The increase of export to the European market and the quality of exported products.

## LAUNCH WORKSHOP

The launching seminar of the **ESSP II** in Palestine was organized on August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 in Ramallah. It aimed to present the identified themes and to address a transversal issue: **“How to take advantage of the privileged status granted by the European Union to Palestine in terms of agricultural products trade? »**.

The seminar was opened by Mr. Abdullah LAHLUH, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Stephan SALAMA, Advisor to the Prime Minister and President of the European Commission-

Palestine Joint Committee, and Mr. Pascal BERGERET, Director of CIHEAM- IAMM and ESSP II Country coordinator. It brought together 47 participants representing main actors of the agricultural sector.

Palestinian speakers emphasized in their speeches the importance of European aid in the context of reduced international aid to Palestine. They also stressed their will to increase agricultural exports, especially to the European Union under the trade agreement signed in 2012.

Subsequently, Mr. ABULABAN, presented the priority challenges identified during the ESSP II first meeting. These priorities were then broken down into sub-themes to be discussed during national workshops:

- Lower production costs and improved marketing;
- Improving the agricultural products quality for better value;
- Rural development through the regulation of the domestic agricultural market
- And, the supply of domestic markets.

The ESSP II focal point concluded the discussions by underlining the difficulties and barriers in the export and how much it is important, for Palestinian farmers and rural territories, to be able to export their products.

## MANAGEMENT OF THE WATER RESOURCES USE

Following the launching workshop, a national seminar on “*The socio-economic dimensions of water use in agriculture in Palestine*” took place on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and brought together about 40 participants. It dealt with two themes; first, the socio-economic dimensions of water use in agriculture and then, the re-use of wastewater to irrigate crops.

The discussions were introduced by four speakers identified by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and ESSP II teams:

- Enrico NERILLI, Irrigation specialist from the CIHEAM-Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, Italy, presented the European experience on the efficient use of water resources in agriculture;
- Jacques BERAUD, Water and Environmental Specialist in the Société du Canal de Provence et d'Aménagement de la Région Provençale (SCP), France, who presented two French case studies illustrating the use of treated wastewater in agriculture for the production of high value crops.
- Fadi DWEIK, From the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem presented “the Palestinian case study on the socio-economic dimension of water use in Mediterranean Agriculture”;
- Nasser QADUS, from the American Near East Refugee Aid, showcased “the use of treated water in Agriculture: socio-economic and legal aspects: a case study from Palestine”.

During the discussions, participants pointed out the need to adopt relevant regulations concerning water tariffs and water user associations. These regulations are essential for irrigation water good management. It is, as well, necessary to develop and implement good practices and innovations on water saving and unconventional use of water. Such techniques are available and have proven efficient on an experimental scale and need to be implemented on a larger scale. It is necessary to focus on water demand management through new modern approaches and to organize irrigation systems with improved physical and institutional infrastructure.

## **MARKETING AND VALORIZATION OF PALESTINIAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET**

The national workshop on “**The Marketing of Palestinian Agricultural Products on the European Market**” was organized in association with the Palestinian Trade Center (PalTrade) and was held from April 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Its main purpose was to discuss the opportunities offered by the new trade agreement concluded in 2012, which strengthens preferential access to the European market and the means to fully benefit from it by increasing the volumes of products identified as having high potential and by improving their added value and nutritional and sanitary quality.

The Palestinian partners had previously identified five groups of products: aromatic and medicinal plants, dates, capsicum, olive oil, cluster tomatoes and five export target countries: the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (before Brexit), Germany, Italy and Sweden.

On this basis, 6 European experts specialized in targeted markets and / or selected products have been identified, with various profiles (import promotion offices, agronomy researchers, consultants ...):

- Husam Al Dakak: Project manager at the German Import Promotion Desk for the fresh sector and external consultant specialized in supporting companies for production and exports to Europe exporting companies in Europe
- Catherine Hebling: Consultant at the German Import Promotion Desk, natural ingredients expert specializing in the training of exporters,
- Roberta Callieris: Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, Expert in socio-economic analysis in Mediterranean countries with a focus on agro-food marketing, market studies, consumer analysis, and supply chain analysis,
- Raymond Tans: Expert on Dutch horticulture and agriculture, consultant for companies and organizations to set up strategies for public affairs and lobby on EU and Dutch level
- Helena Hafgren: Market expert consultant for the Swedish National Board of Trade and the Open Trade Gate Sweden,
- Johan Blanche: Olive oil expert and consultant for Swedish importers and distributors.

The presentations showed that the target markets are very competitive, in particular regarding olive oil, dates or tomatoes in Italy and Germany, or in an early stage of development. But,

they have a high potential on premium gastronomic products like aromatic plants, olive oil in Sweden and Germany in particular. Innovation in presentation and packaging represents a major factor of sales development; original packaging, ecological, cool fresh products ... Even in highly competitive and saturated markets, marketing innovation is still a good means to gain market share.

Moreover, according to the experts, Palestinian products, while timidly present on the European markets, could benefit from the goodwill of many consumers that could help their position.

The experts showed the importance of storytelling, to build a story around the product highlighting its typicality, authenticity and originality, to establish an identity and create appetite for European consumers who are responsive to this type of marketing.

Finally, Palestinian exporters should also meet the demands of reliability, traceability and predictability expressed by European operators. The products must meet all the targeted countries standards as well as importers specific rules. Palestinian producers should also go beyond these requirements and place themselves into European niche markets such as organic and fair trade products.

At the same time, it would seem opportune to discuss the development of new products that Palestinian climatic and environmental conditions allow to produce: avocados (whose demand is strongly growing in European countries), pomegranates, raspberries, figs, exotic fruits etc. Such products are already successfully exported by countries with conditions comparable to those in Palestine and are particularly popular on the European market.

In conclusion, Husam Al DAKAK, Project Manager at the German Import Promotion Desk for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Sector, issued some tips and requirements to increase the Palestinian market shares in Europe:

- Join niche markets such as organic farming or fair trade;
- Establish business relationships based on trust, reliability and honesty by partnering with local operators;
- Enhance the Palestinian products strong history and identity;
- Develop a strong and long-term communication strategy to enhance the image and reputation of Palestinian products. The command of English appears here primordial;
- Better understand target markets through support programs and import promotion institutes.

Following this national workshop, the Palestinian government entrusted the Palestine Trade Center to further exploring export opportunities in certain markets such as Italy and the Netherlands.

It has not been possible to organize another national workshop before the end of the project. Nevertheless, ESSP II workshops allowed PalTrade to get in touch with Italian experts, namely the Italian consultancy firm Nomisma. It appears that PalTrade needs continued support in this area, beyond the ESSPII.



## KEY RESULTS

ESSP II has been part of the national Palestinian strategy for the agricultural sector, where water resources management is a priority, as well as the marketing of high value-added products, in particular to the European market where Palestine has privileged access.

Through the setting up of a *think tank* and the organization of 3 workshops, the project has created a new space for inclusive national dialogue on these topics, bringing together Palestinian agriculture and trade stakeholders, especially farmers and exporters. It also promoted inter-ministerial dialogue, particularly on exports to the European market.

Specifically, concerning the use of preferential access to the European market, ESSP II by mobilizing high-level expertise has provided information on 6 European products / markets, which can be used by the Paltrade. Following the workshop, the ESSP II put Paltrade in contact with European experts regarding export potential in the EU.

### ESSP II has succeeded to:

- Implement a *think tank* of 9 members associating the Ministry of Agriculture, research, Paltrade and the private sector;
- Organize 3 workshops (a launching workshop and two thematic workshops) bringing together more than 150 peoples;
- Produce a note on Palestinian agriculture and its challenges, two briefing notes, two workshop reports, disseminate four presentations on water management, two of which present European experiences and six presentations on European markets for Palestinian agricultural products;
- Invite 4 experts on water management among them 2 European experts and 6 European experts on the marketing of Palestinian agricultural products;
- Brought together Paltrade and European expertise regarding export potentials to EU.