

Khalil Al-'Aloul is a Palestinian agricultural engineer from Halhoul, near Hebron, who is now working with UNRWA Project Development Department. During the year 1986 he prepared a paper on how to increase the area of cultivated land in the West Bank. This paper is published by the Arab Thought Forum - Jerusalem.

The paper begins with an introduction by the author explaining why he chose to undertake such a project, and how he believes it could help raise the participation of agriculture in the income of Palestinian families in the West Bank, and in protecting more land from confiscation. If this project is carried through, it would also provide jobs for a large number of unemployed Palestinians, and it would also provide an alternative to those Palestinian workers working in Israel.

For the land which cannot be cultivated with market crops or fruit trees, the author suggests that it could be turned into forests or pasture land. Based on an analysis of topography and climate, this paper shows how much of the West Bank's land could be used for agricultural purposes; for afforestation or as pastures. It also estimates the possible area of each of these categories and explains the importance of each.

A cost analysis is provided to show the required financial input in each of the land-reclamation methods and their relative appropriateness under each different topography.

The first chapter discusses the distribution of the West Bank's land according to its use, and a number of tables and graphs are supplied to show the distribution of land according to its use in the West Bank in general. According to this chapter, the total area of the West Bank is 5,877,963 dunums. Out of which 1,626,000 dunums are used for agricultural purposes, 240,000 dunums are forests, 140,000 dunums are residential areas, 70,000 dunums are covered with roads, and 50,000 dunums are historical sights. Moreover, 500,000 dunums of the West Bank are barren and covered with desert. This land cannot be used. Adding these up leaves 3,241,963 dunums of unused land in the West Bank. Part of this land is sometimes used as natural pastures.