

For climatic reasons (dependence on rain fall), sesame was almost entirely produced in the northern district of Palestine. Sesame production, not unlike other commodity production, fluctuated according to market demands. In 1913, for example, when Eastern Oil Industries, Ltd. needed the seed, sesame cultivation was encouraged. In that year 142,000 dunams were put under this crop and 5,902 tons of sesame were produced (Abu-Rjeyli, 1970:72).

During the first World War, sesame production, like other crops, underwent a sharp decline, but it went up again during the 1920s. For a period of ten years, from 1921-31, an annual average of 3,000 tons of sesame were produced. (35)

However, in the late 1920s conditions were altered for the sesame producers. Expansion in the Jewish oil industry raised demands for the use of sesame seeds in the manufacturing of vegetable oils. To avoid using locally produced sesame, "Shemen Works" began to import sesame seeds from China. Considerable amounts were imported by this company. Between 1928-1930 an annual average of 3,200 tons of sesame seeds were imported. (36) In 1935, the net imports of sesame amounted to P.L. 20,589; P.L. 20,715 in 1936 and P.L. 24,407 in 1937. (37)

Of particular significance in these imports is the fact that the foreign seed was not cheaper than the locally produced one. In spite of the presence of legal measures which exempted the imported crop from duties, the locally produced crop was both less expensive and of better quality than its imported counterpart. Thus, for example, in 1929, the price of one ton of imported sesame seeds amounted to P.L. 23,278 mils, while the price of local seeds was 20,436 mils. Moreover, the locally produced crop was said to be of a higher quality than the