

2.3.5 Jewish European Settlement

The organized settlement of Jewish European immigrants to Palestine started in 1882. These settlers, unlike earlier Jewish immigrants who came for primarily religious reasons, were imbued with political and ideological reasons. They came to “redeem the land” and “restore Jewish independence.” This was to be done, among other ways, by acquiring land for agricultural settlement.

However, given the urban background of Jewish European settlers, the majority opted to live in cities.⁹¹ In the early 1880s, a few hundred lived in agricultural settlements, and by 1890, the total came to only 2,415.⁹² By 1914, the total agricultural settlement population was estimated to be 12,000 of which 7,500 were engaged in cultivation.⁹³

Most of this time period can be characterized as one of agricultural experimentation in terms of what to produce, method of, and organization of production. Initially, the settlers primarily attempted to grow field crops using combined European and local Arab techniques. This was unsuccessful as were the few attempts, using more intensive methods, to grow vines and olives.⁹⁴

The failure of the settlements to provide enough yield to sustain a European level of living due, in part, to the lack of agricultural experience and sufficient

⁹¹Owen, *Middle East*, 270.

⁹²Walter Lehn with Uri Davis, *The Jewish National Fund* (London: Kegan Paul, 1988), 9.

⁹³Owen, *Middle East*, 270.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 270-1.