

### 5.3 Fertilizers

In addition to irrigation, fertilizers, whether chemical or natural, play a major role in enhancing soil productivity. Both were used in Palestine.

The use of chemical fertilizers continuously increased as intensive methods, especially irrigation, expanded. The increase can be seen in the figures on imports, which were the sole source until the 1940s when they were produced locally and even exported. Imports of chemical fertilizers increased from 1,177 tons in 1922<sup>24</sup> to 6,120 tons in 1930, and were between 10,000 and 14,000 tons for the rest of the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> Most of the chemical fertilizers were used by the European farmers, while most Arab peasants who used fertilizers primarily employed natural manure mainly because of the high cost of chemical fertilizers.

In the late 1930s, the cost of imported chemical fertilizers was about £P 8.50 per ton, increased to about £P 12.50 in 1940 and 1941,<sup>26</sup> and jumped to an average of £P 27.50 for 1942 and 1943.<sup>27</sup> Although fertilizers are highly divisible inputs and need not be acquired by cooperation among a group of cultivators or a whole village or villages as in the case of, for example, tractors, and were one of the relatively cheapest methods for increasing soil productivity, these prices were beyond the means of most Arab peasants. They could be afforded

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<sup>24</sup>*Abstract 1944/45*, 75.

<sup>25</sup>*Abstract 1939*, 68-9; *Abstract 1942*, 49.

<sup>26</sup>*Abstract 1942*, 49.

<sup>27</sup>*Abstract 1944/45*, 69; all prices are nominal.