

extent, in any one year, of a surplus production beyond the needs of the household.

5.5 Seed Improvement

Given the relatively low yields of cereals and legumes, improved seeds could have played an important role in increasing output even without the use of any other intensive methods. In the 1930s, the government made some effort in that direction. The government raised improved seeds of wheat and barley at agricultural stations and sold them at market prices or distributed them free “in deserving cases.” The same was done in the case of oats, vetch, and maize. When the government had to purchase the improved seeds, it was sold at cost price.⁴⁰ It is not clear who and how many cultivators benefited from this.

The latest information available notes the distribution of improved wheat and barley seeds in 1944. However, it appears that these government efforts had “little or no general improvement in the quality or yield of the crop.”⁴¹

This is, yet, another example of the inadequacy of government efforts to ameliorate the conditions of Arab peasants. As for the European settler farmers, besides whatever benefits they accrued from government efforts of seed improvement, they had the advantage of the more substantial efforts of the Zionist scientific agricultural institutions.

⁴⁰Brown, “Agriculture,” 136-7.

⁴¹*Survey I*, 344.