

These criteria will be elaborated in a later section but it should be emphasized at this point that agriculture is by far the most important productive sector in the West Bank economy.

The importance of West Bank agriculture however, goes much beyond these indicators since it bears on important political and social considerations. This stems from the fact that agriculture is the largest reservoir and employer of the three most disputed resources on the West Bank: land, water and labour.

West Bank agriculture is characterised by the dominance of rainfed patterns of farming. This is most clearly exemplified by the fact that 95% of all cultivated land is rainfed, and only 4 - 5% is irrigated. The prospects of a sudden and substantial expansion in water resources available for Palestinian farmers is unlikely as long as Israel rules the occupied territories. This is one of the highly disputed issues on which Israel is unlikely to take, as long as it is not forced to, a flexible stand. Accordingly, the prospects for developing West Bank agriculture, at least in the context of a continued occupation, lie mainly in rainfed patterns of farming. This is why the researcher has focused his attention on this sector rather than on patterns of irrigated farming.

### Objectives

This study is an exercise in development under a very unusual political setting. Over the past fourteen years Israel has had an almost free hand in the West Bank. It has instituted a wide range of measures and policies which are underlaid by two major motives: a gradual encroachment of land and water resources and an eventual major evacuation of local residents. Israel has gone some way towards achieving both of these objectives.