

- a. Occasional outbreaks of Phylloxera which eventually destroyed vineyards in infested localities.
- b. Low yields caused by severe pest infections of powdery mildew and grape fruit fly. This problem has been particularly severe in the coastal areas because of high temperature and humidity.
- c. Profitability of grapes in coastal areas has been due to low productivity and competition with grapes produced early in the season and under irrigation on Israeli farms, whereas the impact of Israeli produce on the late maturity grapes of Hebron hills is negligible.

Economic and nutritional significance

Although the second most important rainfed tree, grapes contribute only 5-7% of the West Bank's gross agricultural product. However, the relative significance of grapes as a source of income goes much beyond that, due to the striking concentration of vineyards in a small area. The results of this study indicate clearly that grape production constitutes the major source of income for most farmers in the grape corridor extending between Hebron and Bethlehem.

Likewise, the localized importance of grapes in the diet of residents in Hebron and Bethlehem districts is high. Besides consuming them fresh as a dessert, large quantities of grapes are consumed in other processed forms which are well known in that part of Palestine (eg. syrup, raisins, and malban*). Grape products thus appear to provide local farm families with carbohydrates during the excessively cold winter months.

* Grape syrup dehydrated into soft sheets.

Consumption and exports

Grapes are consumed mainly fresh as a popular dessert, since only 5 - 10% of local consumption is taken in processed forms. Local consumption varies considerably, depending on production and marketing circumstances. Though not indicative of any negative trend in grape consumption habits, total consumption reportedly dropped from 32,000 tons in 1978 to 24,000 tons in 1979.¹ This was due to high prices of table grapes induced by vigorous exports to Jordan. In most years, however, local markets absorb 40-50% of total output.

Surplus West Bank grapes are exported to Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and Israel. All of these countries are producers of grapes, but Hebron grapes enjoy certain comparative advantages. Jordan is deficient in domestic supply while Israel produces mostly early to mid-season grapes, half of which go into wineries. Likewise, the Gaza Strip produces early grapes which are consumed early in the season, and then relies on West Bank grapes for several months.

The relative share of the above-mentioned export markets varies considerably from one year to another, depending mainly on protectionist considerations. Counting on the responses of middlemen and leading farmers who were interviewed in this survey, the crop of 1980 was channelled as follows:

West Bank	45%
Jordan	12%
Gaza Strip	17%
Israel	26%

Cultural practices

Like olives, grapes are not too exacting in their climatic and soil

1. Administered Territories Statistics Quarterly 1980, op cit, p 102, and 1979, vol 2, p 98.