

5. Poor agricultural roads. Roads connecting vineyards with neighbouring villages are commonly narrow and too rocky to permit truck or tractor accessibility. This increases cultivation costs and seriously impairs the quality of fruits while they are en route to destination markets.

6. Lack of irrigation water. Unlike Israel, West Bank vineyards are practically all rainfed. Although it may slightly impair quality, irrigation of vineyards helps raise productivity by over 60%. This suggests that it may be economically sound to promote irrigated grapes in West Bank areas where water is available. The researcher learnt from Israeli farmers in the Jordan Valley and coastal areas that early maturing grapes constitute a lucrative source of income which compares favourably with other forms of intensive farming.

b. Problems related to marketing:

In addition to the chronic problems associated with marketing of perishable farm produce, exporting of locally-produced grapes is faced with difficulties arising mainly from the weakened bargaining position of the West Bank in setting the terms of trade with Israel and Jordan. The following is a summary of major grape marketing problems:

1. Problems of middlemen. Commission charged by middlemen often exceeds 10%, and sale procedures are sometimes insufficiently competitive, to the disadvantage of producers. As typical of agricultural marketing at large, channelling of produce through middlemen poses serious problems which are very difficult to solve, more so in the absence of a national authority.
2. Poor auxiliary services. Packaging is still poor, whether in regard to types of boxes used (wooden and too large) or cheating

when filling boxes by placing superior fruits at the top and poorer ones below. Cold storage facilities are not available, although their service would help materially in evening variations in supply and demand. Processing of excess produce into other products, (such as syrup, jam, juice and malban,) is performed by using primitive equipment, which in turn reflects on the quality of products and their market potential. The local wine industry is severely hampered by religious inhibitions, although its potential is certainly large due to the suitability of the local variety of grape.

3. Unsatisfactory terms of trade with Israel and Jordan. Israel restricts the flow of West Bank grapes by quotas and permits entry only late in the season after its own produce is disposed of. Most recently, exporters to Israel have been asked to pay a royalty of about JD 4 per ton to the Israeli Fruit Marketing Board, in order to safeguard against a potential drop in returns earned by Israeli producers.

The flow of grapes into Jordan, on the other hand, involves too many routine complications, which are both time and money-consuming. This reflects badly on the market potential for a perishable commodity such as grapes. In particular, "security inspection" procedures on both sides of the frontier bridge over the Jordan cause a lot of undue delay and damage.

Almonds

The almond is the third most important rainfed tree in the West Bank. Although generally less important in the economic life than olives and grapes, almonds are gaining increasing significance, both in terms of area and contribution to farm income.