

Area and distribution

As in the case of olives and grapes, almonds are grown in all districts, except the Jordan Valley. According to sources in the Department of Agriculture there were (in 1980) 75430 donums of almonds which produced 1074 tons (see Table VII-9).

Table (VII - 9)

Area and production of almonds by district (1980)

<u>District</u>	<u>Area(donums)</u>	<u>Yield (Kg/don)</u>	<u>Output (tons)</u>
Total	75430	14.2	795.2
Hebron	4578	16	73.2
Bethlehem	1254	16	20.1
Jerusalem	770	20	15.4
Ramallah	7396	20	147.9
Jericho	-	-	-
Nablus	15500	2	31.0
Tulkarm	21797	10	218.0
Jenin	24135	12	289.6

Source: Files of district offices of the Department of Agriculture.

The data indicate an obvious concentration of almonds in northern districts, particularly in Jenin and Tulkarm, where more than half of all almonds are grown. It should be noted, however, that there is nothing special about those districts as far as almond growing is concerned, since almonds can be grown with almost equal success in most other districts.

Almond acreage and output have witnessed violent fluctuations in recent years, as indicated in Table (VII-10). This is

underlied by two major phenomena, namely, marked variations in yield and occasional uprooting of extensive almond orchards.

Table (VII - 10)

Recent trends in acreage and output (1978 - 80)

	<u>Area (donums)</u>	<u>Yield (kg/donum)</u>	<u>Output (tons)</u>
1978	76953	101	7749
1979	64184	74	4773
1980	75430	14	795

Source: Files of the Department of Agriculture.

Yield variations are attributed mainly to the almond's pronounced susceptibility to sharp weather variations, which quite often coincide with the blossoming season in February. Hail storms and strong winds, both are common at that time of the year, may inflict drastic damage on sensitive almond blossoms, and possibly reverse what could have been a promising season. In this regard almonds are as vulnerable as olives, while grapes are less susceptible to such weather variations than either.

Variations in area reflect another distinctive feature of almond culture, namely its relatively brief period of bearing. Large areas are added annually simply by direct sowing of almond seeds. On the other hand many orchards are pulled out for such reasons as heavy insect damage or conversion to other more remunerative kinds of trees through grafting (mainly to plums).

Economic and nutritional significance

Almonds are versatile in terms of their forms of consumption. Some (or all) of the crop can be picked green, 2-3 weeks after flowers