(about 10 years). Bitter and hard-shelled almonds net less but they survive longer and under conditions which Farek almonds cannot tolerate for long.

4. Comparative profitability, however, is influenced heavily by rapid changes in the price structure. If bitter almonds were to stop reaching industrial firms in Israel and Europe, possibly for some political reason, their prices would sink sharply to a non-viable level. Likewise, if Jordan received less imported Farek almonds, then the price of West Bank Fareks would soar to where it was prior to the opening of Israeli markets, about one third higher than current prices.

Problems

1. Insect damage. West Bank almond orchards are infested with several insects, some of which are so serious that they inflict heavy losses in produce and can result ultimately in the eradication of extensive plantations. Most serious of these pests are:

a. Almond wasp (Eurytoma amygdali)

This insect attacks soft fruits causing their wilting and eventual mummification. Due to a shortage of labour, farmers tend to leave mummified fruits (which contain dormant larvae) hanging on trees, which causes a wider dissemination of infection in subsequent seasons. The loss in yield can increase rapidly until it exceeds 50 percent of ordinary yield. Farek and other soft-shelled varieties are particularly susceptible to this insect, while bitter almonds are much less so. The best and most effective control measure is the collection and destruction of infested mummies. But the effectiveness of this practice depends largely on the collectiveness of control within a certain geographic area.

West Bank farmers are doing little in this regard.

b. Pear slug (Caliroa cerasi)

This insect infests almond leaves and it starts sucking their sap until attacked leaves are virtually desiccated. Infestation appears early in the summer, and by the end of it infested orchards look as though they are burnt. So far this insect is confined largely to the region of Anabta (Tulkarm district), but it certainly poses a major hazard to all other almond producing regions in the north West Bank. This insect can be effectively controlled by using systemic chemical sprays (ie. those which infiltrate into the trees' sap). Though relatively cheap and effective, the success of this measure depends largely on collective action. This is hampered by the lack of powerful spraying equipment and the poor technical aptitude of most almond growers. Such a situation might be improved by the introduction of modern spraying units which are able to render their services to farmers in the area against a reasonable charge.

2. Poor cultural practices. As mentioned earlier, the level of fertilizer use, pest control, and soil tillage is strikingly poor. Although there is a low ceiling on the amount of inputs which could be used feasibly when almonds are grown on very poor quality land, there is still room for fundamental improvements. An important step is the complete substitution of ploughing by chemical weed killers. This has been demonstrated as equally effective in controlling weeds, while being much cheaper than mule-ploughing. The use of fertilizers should also be actively advocated, though at rates much less than that recommended by extension agents, whose recommendations