

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRUIT TREES AND CROPS

The development of fruit trees occupies a prominent position in the suggested scheme for reactivating rainfed farming. The reasons for this strategic choice are several. There is no better alternative for exploiting West Bank rocky hills, whether from an economic point of view or in the light of their favourable impact on soil and water conservation. Furthermore, tree culture imposes less strain on the technological aptitude of peasant farmers and also leads to a deeper attachment between farmers and their land.

Development guidelines for fruit trees

The discussion on the economic setting of major rainfed fruit trees (see Chapter VII) points to a number of important features, which are summarized below:

A. Olives

Olives are by far the most important tree in terms of area and income. Furthermore, olive products (mainly oil) are much more important than all other types of tree produce as a staple diet for local communities. Consequently, a substantial expansion in production is not expected to cause a glut in local markets, because in the end producers are willing to store excess produce for future consumption in off-years. Being the most hardy and longest living of all fruit trees, and in view of the availability of a large supply of marginal land (classes III and IV), expansion in olive plantations is strongly advocated. This is further justified for political reasons, since the presence of a tree coverage could help complicate and impede Israel's settlement policies.

Taken on purely economic grounds, olives are still remunerative.