

The major limitation on a more prosperous plum farming relates to problems of marketing, particularly more so because it is essentially a market-oriented commodity. The introduction of a wider range of varieties and the possible establishment of a viable agricultural processing industry might help alleviate occasional surpluses in supply.

Production and distribution of certified seedlings on accredited nurseries would help accelerate rapid expansion in plum plantations.

E. Figs

Given the present price structure, figs are potentially more remunerative than most other types of rainfed trees. This is facilitated by a boost in the price of figs due to a sharp decline in supply and the strong demand in Israeli markets.

The most important cause for the marked decline in fig production is the rapidly expanding infestation with scaly insects, and to a lesser extent stem borers. The first of these insects is easy to control through regional campaigns.

The major line of policy in regard to fig culture, therefore, is to rejuvenate infested orchards. The next step would be the distribution of seedlings of desirable varieties at a commercial and household scale. A greater proportion of the increased produce could be consumed by the very large number of farm families who have become increasingly deprived of this commodity.

F. Apricots

Apricot culture is well suited to large areas in the West Bank, and it is a highly profitable tree, if problems of marketing and

pest control are attended to.

There is an unqualified consensus on the need for expanded growing of apricots. But emphasis should go on the dissemination of the Hamawi variety which can stand shipping constraints and commands prices well above those of the Baladi variety.

The major constraint for expanded production is the lack of seedlings and the need for a more effective control program of stem borers.

G. Introduction of new kinds of trees

The foregoing discussion has concentrated on six types of trees which dominate rainfed orchards. Due to a rather diversified climate and topography it is still possible and even recommended to introduce other types of trees which may prove particularly profitable in the present West Bank setting. This would help reduce the risks of seasonal variations in output (as in olives) and pest damage (as in almonds). Furthermore, some of them may prove more remunerative than traditional types of agriculture. Some of these trees are not totally new, like apples and peaches, whereas others are quite new and require further testing. This includes pistachio nuts, whose seeds are in strong demand and command very high prices.

The major limitation on a vigorous expansion of new types of tree plantations is the unavailability of needed seedlings. Another problem stems from the lack of satisfactory expertise in growing recommended "new" trees. Much could be done to help solve both problems.