

Key Facts:

- Due to the low quantities of water available to Palestinian farmers, only 6.8% of the cultivated land in the West Bank is irrigated;ⁱ half of the total agricultural production in the West Bank is from this irrigated land.ⁱⁱ
- Israel consumes at least ten times more water for agriculture than Palestinians,ⁱⁱⁱ irrigating more than half of its cultivated land.^{iv}
- Nearly 63% of agricultural land in the West Bank is located in Area C*, most of it is in the Jordan Valley and the majority remains inaccessible to Palestinians due to land control policies of the Israeli government.^v
- Illegal Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley grow crops that require large amounts of water, such as bananas, using mostly water pumped from wells in the West Bank; settlers in the Jordan Valley use 81 times more water per capita than Palestinians in the West Bank.^{vi}
- Up to US\$500 million of Israeli settlement products, most of which are agricultural, enter the Palestinian market every year;^{vii} the total Palestinian agricultural production only reached US\$342 million in 2011.^{viii}
- It is estimated that if Palestinians were allowed a fair share of water resources and if restrictions in area C were lifted, an additional agricultural production worth \$1.22 billion could be generated yearly.^{ix}

*Area C makes up 60% of the West Bank and is under the full civil and security control of the Israeli government.

Before 1967, agriculture was the biggest employer of Palestinian labor by sector and Palestinian agricultural exports were comparable to that of Israel's.¹ Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, land confiscation and restrictions on access to land and to water resources imposed by the Government of Israel were among the factors that led to the decline of Palestinian agriculture. Cultivated areas shrunk by 30% from 1965 to 1994, and Palestinian

agricultural production diminished from over half of the Palestinian GDP in 1968 to 5.5% in 2011.²

Israel controls all sources of water in the West Bank. Farmers have access to only a fraction of the water they need given the severe restrictions Palestinians face for developing the water sector in particular the digging of new wells.³ Between 1967 and 1990, the Israeli military only granted three permits for new agricultural wells.⁴ There were approximately 750 wells in the West Bank in 1967, of which 413 were operational. By 1990 only 364 were still operating.⁵ In the fertile Jordan Valley, farmers were essentially barred from accessing the water of the Jordan River through the creation of closed military zones. The low quantity of water available forced Palestinian farmers to increasingly rely on rain-fed crops, which are on average 15 times less profitable than irrigated crops.⁶

The Oslo Accords reinforced a discriminatory permit regime that further restricts Palestinian farming. In the 63% of agricultural land in the West Bank located in so-called Area C, farmers are required by the government of Israel to obtain permits for all construction and repair of infrastructure such as wells, water reservoirs and irrigation networks.⁷ These permits are rarely issued, but the Israeli authorities routinely issue demolition orders for structures that were built without one. Today, 99 Palestinian agricultural wells are in need of urgent repair, maintenance or rehabilitation, which is prevented by the Israeli authorities, and thus remain unused.⁸ Demolitions of Palestinian water/sanitation infrastructure, such as water cisterns and storage tanks, have been more

i. Brown, O. & Crawford, A., *Rising Temperatures, Rising Tensions: Climate change and the risk of violent conflict in the Middle East*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, (2009)
 ii. FAO, *Aquastat: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries_regions/wbgs/index.stm (accessed November 2012)
 iii. World Bank, *Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development*, (April 2009)
 iv. The Israel Export & International Cooperation Institute, *Israel's Agriculture*: http://www.moag.gov.il/agri/files/Israel's_Agriculture_Booklet.pdf (accessed January 2013)
 v. MA'AN Development Center, *Spotlight 10: The Status of Palestinian Agriculture in the Jordan Valley*, (2012)
 vi. B'Tselem, *Dispossession and Exploitation: Israel's policy in the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea*, (2011)
 vii. Oxfam, *On the brink: Israeli settlements and their impact on Palestinians in the Jordan Valley*, (2012)
 viii. PCBS, *Palestine in Figures 2011*, (May 2012)
 ix. ARIJ & Ministry of National Economy, *The economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the occupied Palestinian territory*, (September 2011)
 1. David Butterfield et al., *Impacts of Water and Export Market Restrictions on Palestinian Agriculture*, ARIJ, (January 2000)

2. UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory*, (July 2012)
 3. EWASH, *Down the Drain: Israeli restrictions on the WASH sector in the OPT and their impact on vulnerable Palestinian communities*, (March 2012)
 4. Glover, S. & Hunter, A., *Meeting Future Palestinian Water Needs*, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, (2010)
 5. Ibid.
 6. ARIJ & Ministry of National Economy (2011), Ibid
 7. MA'AN Development Center (2012), Ibid
 8. E-mail correspondence with Joint Water Committee (PWA) on 15/1/2013.

frequent in recent years than in the past. In 2012, 18 Palestinian water wells used mainly for irrigation were demolished, compared to 21 in 2011 and 12 in 2010.⁹

Impact of Israeli settlements on Palestinian farming:

Israeli agricultural settlements flood the Palestinian market with produce, against which Palestinian farmers are unable to compete.¹⁰ In some cases, Israeli over-extraction of water destined for settlements has dried up Palestinian wells and springs, many of which were used for agriculture, such as in the Palestinian community of Bardala.¹¹ Israeli settlers have taken over local springs, thereby preventing Palestinians from using them for agriculture.¹²

When completed, the Israeli separation Wall built inside the West Bank will cut off Palestinians from 530 km² of mostly fertile agricultural land and from areas that would yield an additional 90 million m³ of water annually.¹³ In the part of the Wall from Jenin to Qalqilya, the Israeli government has taken over at least 36 groundwater wells.¹⁴



Abu Azzam is one of the largest agricultural producers in Jayyous, a Palestinian agricultural village that has been severely impacted by the construction of the Wall in 2003. Over three-quarters of Jayyous' agricultural land and six wells are now behind the Wall; only 100 of the 900 Palestinian farmers have Israeli permits allowing them to cross through "agricultural gates" that are opened only three times daily for limited periods.

"Many farmers abandoned their land because they were too poor to pay for the diesel for pumping water from the wells," says Abu Azzam, referring to Israel's refusal to allow farmers to use cheaper electric pumps. Moreover, the quotas imposed by the government of Israel on the water quantity available to Jayyous farmers prevent him from growing more profitable crops than he currently does; between 1983 and 2012, the quantities of water available to local farmers have only been increased by 10%. "This is not fair because it doesn't meet our needs," complained Abu Azzam. Jayyous now buys its water from nearby Azzun village, but in the summer the local population faces periodic water shortages.



Top: Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley practice intensive farming that demand large quantities of water. Bottom: Palestinian farmers nearby struggle to make a living due to Israeli restrictions that deprive them from sufficient access to water.

9 Figures supplied by the Displacement Working Group in the OPT on 6/2/2013

10 Oxfam (2012), Ibid

11 PWA, Water Supply Report 2010, (March 2012)

12 OCHA, How dispossession happens: the humanitarian impact of the takeover of Palestinian water springs by Israeli settlers, (March 2012)

13 Clemens Messerschmid, "The Last Sip: Water crisis in Palestine" [Arabic], (2011)

14 Defense for Children International/Palestine Section, Fragile Childhood: an analysis of the human rights violations against Palestinian children in 2003, (April 2004)

This fact sheet was produced by the EWASH Advocacy Task Force: a sub-committee of the EWASH group (www.ewash.org).

Founded in 2002, the Emergency Water and Sanitation/Hygiene group (EWASH) is a coalition of humanitarian agencies working together to coordinate interventions, respond to needs, share information and do advocacy on the water and sanitation sector in the OPT. Members include local and international NGOs and UN agencies. Visit www.ewash.org for more information.

This factsheet was endorsed by the following organizations:

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