




**State of Palestine
Ministry of Agriculture**

**5th MEETING OF THE COMCEC
AGRICULTURE WORKING
GROUP
March 5th, 2015,
Ankara/Tyrkey**

Farmers' Organizations in Palestine: (Main Actors)

- **Local NGOs (≈ 25 Active)**
- **International NGOs (≈ 15 Active)**
- **Cooperatives (+ 280)**
- **Agricultural Councils ≈ 10
(paragovernmental)**



**This Presentation focuses on
Agricultural Co-operatives in
Palestine**

Factual Background

Pre-1948

- First co-operative (for tobacco farmers) was established in Acre in 1924 under British Mandate.
- However, unorganized cooperative work had started before this year due to strong traditional family and community ties.
- First law for cooperatives issued in 1933. By 1948 about 244 Arab Cooperatives were registered.
- Majority of these cooperatives focused on agriculture, rural development and transportation.

1948-1967

- In the 50s and 60s, the number of registered cooperatives reached 487 in the West Bank (WB) and the Gaza Strip (GS).
- This significant increase came as a result of Jordanian (in WB/ Law of 1956) and Egyptian (in GS/ law of 1933) cooperative development policies that encouraged people to organize in cooperatives.
- On the eve of 1967 war 418 cooperatives were registered in WB out of 719 Cooperatives in the whole Kingdom of Jordan.

After 1967

- The Israeli occupation authorities imposed a set of restrictions and procedures that hindered collective action, including cooperative work.
- However, Palestinian, Arab and international organizations continued to support cooperatives.

Under the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)

- **Legal Framework:**
- General Directorate of Cooperatives/ Ministry of Labour (MoL) is the official body responsible for registering and supervising cooperatives.
- Jordanian Cooperative Law No. 17 of 1956 still applies in the WB, and Egyptian Cooperative Law No. 50 of 1933 and the Cooperative Regulation No. 1 of 1934 are still operational in the GS.
- Recognizing the need for a new law that meets and copes with the challenges and development aspirations of the cooperative movement in Palestine, the General Directorate of Cooperatives, in collaboration with ILO, has finally drafted a new law on cooperatives in 2010.
- Draft Law was forwarded to the President's Office for approval in June 2010.
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Legal Framework:

The Draft Law envisages the establishment of the General Commission for Regulating Cooperatives (GCRC), a semi-autonomous policy and service structure, including all line ministries (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture) and stakeholders. GCRC has a planning, coordinating, facilitating and regulatory role. Its key objectives include:

- Lay down policies and annual, mid-term and long-term plans for the cooperative sector.
- Strengthen coordination and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions.
- Ensure the implementation of the new law on cooperatives and its subsequent by-laws and regulations.

Current Situation of Palestinian Agricultural Cooperatives

Facts and Figures:

- Total number of active cooperatives in Palestine is approx. 610. Of them 543 (88%) are in the WB, while 76 (12%) are in GS.
- Around 283 are farmers' cooperative (**263** in WB & **20** in GS).
- Value of Assets of cooperatives (excluding members' properties) is estimated at \$137 million. Agricultural cooperatives' share is 18%.
- Of the total agricultural holdings, approx. 23% are cooperative holdings.
- Production value of cooperative agricultural holdings is estimated at \$233 million, which accounts for 28% of the total agricultural production.

Facts and Figures

- Around 46% of active cooperatives operate in agriculture.
- Approx. 19 thousand workers (22% of agr. labour force) are employed in these holdings.
- Agr. Cooperatives work mainly in 5 sub-sectors (livestock 32%, crop production 29%, agr., services 25%, olives 10%, rural development, saving and lending 4%).
- 7% of Cooperatives' members are women (totaling 1400).
- 39% of cooperatives have exclusively male members.
- 12 cooperatives are exclusively women cooperatives. No. of their members (345).
- Most cooperatives have mixed membership.

Support from the government to the agricultural cooperatives

- Most funding comes from donors, sometimes in coordination with govt. competent bodies, but in many cases directly to the cooperative.
- Role of MoL: registration, legal supervision, developing Strategies and action plans in cooperation with stakeholders, training, institutionalizing, etc.
- Role of MoA: technical support, Agr. extension, provision of production inputs (seeds, seedlings, fertilizers, etc) and water and irrigation structures such as cisterns, involving Coops in implementing several projects, including in the area of land development, whose beneficiaries are mainly small-scale farmers, and who are members in cooperatives, as well as assisting Coops through the provision of other services.

Challenges

- Weak relations between state and cooperatives.
- Weak cooperative spirit (cooperative principles/ values) among coops.
- Weak admin. & financial skills.
- Some are donor-dependent/ donor-driven.
- Weak representation in Agr. Cooperative Union ($\approx 80/ 283$).
- Law representation for women.
- IOF restrictions, violations and attacks.

Recommendations

- Approving the new cooperative law (GCRC, Coop. Institute, Coop. Development Fund)
- Institutionalizing cooperative education and training (Coop. Institute) to enhance cooperation principles and values.
- Institutionalizing financial support (credit services through Coop. Development Fund).
- Replicating good practice case studies at the national, regional and global levels.
- introducing special support programmes for women cooperatives.
- Promoting regional and inter-regional cooperation toward cooperative development.
- Membership in the ICA (exchange expertise, skills, etc)
- Govt. insurance coverage for IOF related damages.



Thank You So Much