

Palestine Fair Trade Association

www.palestinefairtrade.org

*“When the last day of your life comes, plant the seedling that’s in your hand”
Palestinian Proverb*

In the year (2013) nearly 8000 saplings have been planted by 559 farmers in various villages Including Faqo’a, Alyamoun, Rummaneh, Kufradan, Alaraqah, T’enek, Jalkamous, Anin, Kuforra’l, Aqabah, Sabastyah, Asirah, Biet Imrean, araboneh and Nesf Jbeal.

Since the program started in 2006, the number of participating farmers has increased. While the trees have provided significant financial benefits to the farmers and their families, perhaps the most important contribution has been the renewed sense of hope and commitment to the land.

Aside from its economic empowering effect on small scale farmers, tree distribution has multifaceted impact on rural farming communities in Palestine.



In what follows are some testimonial accounts from farmers

Hassan Abdullah Yassin - a farmer from the village of Anin, like most farmers in his town, suffers from continuous crop loss due to inability of access to his own olive fields because of the Israeli segregation wall that imprisons the whole village, separating farmers from their own lands and their own trees. Hassan Yassin, also known as "Abu Abdullah", lost over 25 donums of his olive fields in 2002 when Israel built its separation wall in his town, and since that year, he started to look for alternative sources of income to compensate the loss of income from his confiscated lands. Abu Abdullah joined the Palestine Fair Trade Association in 2007 after he heard about the Fair Trade Program from other farmers in his town.



From the revenue of fair trade, he rehabilitated a piece of land he owns that is located right beside the wall, that he calls "Um Al Karasen", and filled it with olive trees he received from PFTA this year, For Abu Abdullah, a simple act like planting a tree is in his opinion, a form of resistance, because in planting trees, he is insisting on his attachment to his land, while Israel tries to uproot this attachment. In his own words he says "In a simple act like planting an olive tree, we are insisting on our entitlement to the land, and our right as Palestinian farmers to exist and live off this land."

Established in 2006, the Anin cooperative is one of the biggest olive oil producing cooperative due to its large membership of over 50 farmers selling the majority of their productions to Canaan Fair Trade.

Um Hikmat, Siham Mustafa

After living in Brazil for over 22 years, Um Hikmat returns to her hometown” Deir Ballout” in 1998 to go back to the farming life she always loved. As a strong and very determined woman, Um Hikmat serves as a role model for many Palestinian women in her village. Challenging conventional limitations she divorced her husband and moved into her family home where she runs her independent venture as a farmer and a member Deir Ballout women’s coop. After being elected the woman coop leader of her town, Um Hikmat has been becoming more and more involved in connecting women from different villages together in order to learn from each other ways to improve their lives.

In 2001, as Israel was building its segregation wall, large pieces of land that belonged to Um Hikmat's family were confiscated, and other pieces were threatened to be confiscated. In addition to that, over 120 olive trees were uprooted by Israeli Bulldozers from a piece of land she called Al Jabal Alazraq "The Blue Mountain", under the excuse of building a 'military road' near the borders of the town. This year, The Palestine Fair Trade Association granted Um Hikmat "100" olive trees through Trees for Life Program, which she planted on the same piece of land where trees were uprooted! Um Hikmat now hopes to increase her production of organic olive oil, and hopes to keep planting olive trees regardless of all the challenges.



Arabboneh secondary School:

Arabboneh is a small village that is located a little North East of Jenin, with a population of only 900 people. Until this day, the people of Arabboneh depend on agriculture and farming as a main source of income for their families. The school of Arabboneh which includes around 155 students, benefited from Trees for Life by receiving 50 olive saplings which they planted in an empty 4 Donums area around the school. Mr. Abed Almon'em Zaki, the school's principal said: "The goal from planting these olive trees is to raise the awareness and knowledge of the students on the importance of agriculture and the olive tree in Palestine. The revenue generated from these trees during the olive harvest season, will benefit the students and the school in many of its academic programs and activities."



Trees for Life program is funded by PFTA's olive oil buyers, and a network of solidarity organizations in Europe and North America. PFTA farmers extend sincere thanks and gratitude to these organizations and the individuals who contributed through them to the livelihood sustainability of Palestinian farmers specially Zatoun–Canada, zaytoun-united kingdom and the US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation – USA.



The Trees for Life program, which is implemented by the Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA), www.palestinefairtrade.org, provides olive and almond saplings to Palestinian fair-trade and organic farmers. While the program covers the majority of the cost, the farmers pay a symbolic percentage as a demonstration of their commitment. PFTA General Assembly, which is composed of elected representatives of farmer's coops, elects a committee of farmers called Trees for Life Committee. This committee is responsible for identifying sapling recipients, distribution, and implementation. The local Trees for Life committee works within the priorities set by PFTA and targets young families, starter farmers, small farmers, women farmers, Schools, and farmers who have recently cultivated lands that have been impacted by the Israeli wall or have been subject to field or tree destruction by the Israeli military.

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Trees for Life 2013.

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