

The total Arab cultivated area amounted to 6,972,000 *dunums*, of which about 251,000 *dunums* or 3.6 percent was irrigated.<sup>22</sup> If we exclude the area of unirrigated cereals, the irrigated area would rise to 15 percent of the total. However, as opposed to the insignificant role that cereal cultivation had in European settler agriculture, for the majority of Arab peasants, it was a major source for subsistence in which most of the production was consumed by the cultivators themselves.

Lacking any serious effort on the part of the government to develop irrigation, the major obstacle to the small Arab peasant was the unaffordable costs of irrigation. These costs varied according to the kind of soil, the crop involved, and whether water was to be purchased or from the landowner's own well. In the latter case, the costs included the digging of the well, which varied according to the terrain, the supply of pipes, and a diesel or electric pump. Both kinds had similar operating costs, but electric pumps were used mostly. One estimate was that the cost of electric power constituted 70 percent of the operating cost of the pumps, which, at the time, was 50 to 70 percent more expensive than electric power in California.<sup>23</sup> These costs were simply beyond the means of the great majority of Arab peasants.

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<sup>22</sup>These two figures are residuals of the total cultivated area of the country (see Table 4.1.A) and total irrigated area, respectively, after deducting the respective European areas.

<sup>23</sup>Nathan et al., 170.