

200,000 dunums are cultivable under irrigation. The region is situated under sea level, making it a natural greenhouse suitable for tropical crops and winter vegetables. Extensive drilling of artesian wells since the 1950s led to the transformation of this area from marginal grazing land into the cultivation of cash crops for export. The main crops planted today are citrus, vegetables (about 60% of the total area for vegetable growing) and bananas.

Since 1967, the Military Government has fenced off and confiscated vast areas of the Valley for use by Israeli settlements, confining Arab farmers to one-fifth of the cultivable plots (about 40,000 dunums). Moreover, drilling of artesian wells has been restricted or banned completely. In 1978, 17 Israeli tube wells in the Valley pumped 14.1 million cc. of water, equivalent to 30% of the total West Bank water consumption (Dajani, 1980:6; see also 'The Evolution of Agrarian Relations in the Jordan Valley', in Chapter 10 below).

- (d) The Northern Plains: this zone terminates the extension of the Marj Ibn Amer plains at the edges of the Samaritan mountains and constitutes the most fertile and agriculturally productive plots in the West Bank. Although it is the smallest of the four zones in size (10% of the total area, or about 0.57 million dunums), it nevertheless contains about 45,000 dunums of irrigated land (artesian wells) and receives, by regional standards, a high amount of rainfall (between 400-600mm. per annum). The Jenin and Tulkarem plains, similar in climate to the Maritime plains of historic Palestine, have a double cropping cycle of vegetables and winter grains, and contain substantial areas of citrus cultivation.

Aside from the few irrigated plains in the north and the Jordan Valley,