

Sumayyah Farhat-Nasir has estimated in her study that an average farmer needs to work, on average, six days per dunum of olives throughout the year -- picking of olives excluded.⁷ Picking requires an additional amount of labour-time ranging from 20% to double that needed for general care of the field, depending on the size of the tree, its kind (Roman or regular), and the cycle (masieh or shalatuneh) (Farhat-Nasir, 1980:48). Wage labour outside the village as well as migration of young men to the Gulf and the Americas, however, have led to widespread neglect of the olive crop. In 1974 most West Bank olive farmers spent between 15 to 29 percent of the needed days tending their farms; only ten percent of the farmers spent more than half the needed days (ibid.:49). Farmers in the Ramallah district, which has the highest rate of migration in the West Bank, exhibited a higher degree of olive negligence than all the other districts; their trees were in the worst condition and they used the most damaging techniques for picking olives (89% of olive farmers in Ramallah used the labour-saving method of beating the branches with a stick, as opposed to 33% in Nablus, 2% in Jenin, and 39% in Tulkarem--Farhat-Nasir, 1980:47, Table 13; 50, Table 16).

In Ras el-Tin only the better-off families who own more than 40 dunums can keep some of their older sons at any length of time on the family farm to take care of the fields, and unless they receive regular stipends from their immediate kin abroad only those families can afford to send their sons (and occasionally their daughters) to school beyond the ninth grade.⁸ It is usually only those families who pay the necessary extra attention to the land. This includes ploughing the orchards at least twice a year (and until recently three times a year, the third being in the spring, called tathleeth), weeding, fertilizing, and supplementing the olive crops with vegetables. Almost every household in Ras el-Tin is