

The presence of refugee peasants completely transformed the agrarian ecology of the region. Virtually all cultivable land was brought under production, including tens of thousands of dunums along the zour, the river basin of the Jordan -- until then remaining uncultivated (Government of Jordan, 1961:139). Hundreds of artesian wells were drilled by UNRWA and the Jordanian government, and later by private landlords. Methods of cultivation shifted towards intensive farming; fallowing was vastly reduced and double-cropping became widely practiced.

Intensive farming accompanied, as would be expected, the integration of Jordan Valley agriculture into the export market and the decline of subsistence crops. In 1954, when the first general agricultural survey was carried in the Valley, wheat and barley dominated other crops in dry farming land (on both sides of the Valley). In irrigated plots, however, the refugees made their impact by the introduction of vegetables, especially tomatoes, eggplants and watermelon -- crops which required a range of farming skills not available at the time to Valley farmers. Fruit plantations, then as today, occupied only a miniscule portion of irrigated land (6% in the East Ghor and 15% in the Western Ghor -- see Table 10:1, above), but were much more significant as a source of cash crops and as a basis for the expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture.

The diffusion of agricultural skills brought about by refugee farmers revolutionized, as noted, farming practices. An average crop-rotation scheme for a 20 dunum farm (Diagram 10:1), constructed by the Jordan Valley Agricultural Economic Survey (1954) indicates the primary importance of cereals, with wheat occupying 48 percent of the total acreage in the Jordan Valley then. Both wheat and barley were marketed internally, with a substantial proportion used to supplement the Palestinian farmer's