

The introduction of drip irrigation thus was a crucial factor which contributed to the reorganization of the labour process in Zbeidat. Because the drip system is an 'intermediate' technology, it is not labour displacing. Its net effect has been (a) to relieve the work of household members from the heavy work associated with the maintenance and repair of furrow canals, and (b) to increase the work load during the planting season, especially during the picking and harvesting season (January to April). During the peak harvest almost every household in Zbeidat employs external wage labour to help with the picking. One recent alternative to this has been a form of crop leasing (daman mahsul) to Israeli vegetable merchants.

On the negative side from the perspective of farmers, drip irrigation has created conditions of further dependency on Israeli technology, and on a new complex set of marketing arrangements. While the maintenance and replacement of the drip lines is itself not a very complicated process and within the mastery of Zbeidat farmers, their integration into a competitive market compels them to adapt to new varieties of seeds, salinity resistant seedlings, and insecticides, whose prices and development are completely out of reach by the small farmer.

Capital accumulation resulting from increased crop yield under drip irrigation is an uneven process. It is likely to affect medium-sized farms differently from small farms, and farmers with initial capital savings from those who started with borrowing. Little tangible difference can be seen, so far, in the conditions of those Zbeidat farmers who are predominantly sharecroppers and those who are primarily owner-occupiers. It is most likely, however, that in the coming years such issues as fragmentation of plots due to inheritance, plot consolidation, and differences in lifestyles and consumption patterns will create new divisions in the Zbeidat community, which so far have been dormant.