

2. Excessive rockiness and high slopes impart profound constraints on the economic feasibility of agriculture on West Bank hills. Reclaiming land of a markedly rough topography requires vast capital outlays (often exceeding JD 100 per donum), which are not only difficult to raise but yield very low financial returns. Even when land is reclaimed, cultivation practices require intensive use of labour and draught animals, both of which are increasingly expensive inputs. This problem is further compounded by the inadequate amount of research aimed at adapting or devising forms of technology which are specifically suited for West Bank topography.

3. A major constraint ensuing from rough topography is the difficulty of constructing workable agricultural roads connecting farms with asphalted highways. This has complicated the process of modernizing production techniques and created a number of important marketing problems. The construction of agricultural roads is stalled by inadequate funding and implicit official opposition.

Given the rigidity of West Bank topographic problems, and considering the vulnerability of "deserted" land to Israeli acquisition, development planners will have to re-orient their priorities in the direction of more extensive exploitation of land resources. This admittedly, is one of the basic premises for the present research.

Land ownership

The average size of a farm holding is an important factor in determining its operational efficiency. The magnitude and direction of this relation, however, is not always clear. While there is

ample evidence to indicate that larger farm size in less developed countries often leads to lower productivity,¹ the converse holds true when the size of holdings gets too small. The definition of optimal size in a country, even as small as the West Bank, requires localized research involving a number of technical, economic and social attributes. In this section we shall only explore the basic features of land ownership and size of holdings.

Land ownership in the West Bank, as well as in most countries of the Middle East, is beset with two conflicting problems, feudal-size ownerships and excessive fragmentation. Averaging on the country as a whole, the size of holding in the West Bank is less than 38 donums.² This estimate is too crude, as it conceals wide differences in land quality and extreme variations in size of holdings.

Feudal land ownership had affected Palestine on a scale not much different from the other countries in the region under Ottoman rule for about four centuries. Due to a mixture of factors involving extreme poverty and Ottoman land bribes to favoured leaders and proteges (most of whom were Syrians and Lebanese), land ownership in Palestine developed along pronounced classical feudal patterns. By the turn of the century there were six families in Palestine who owned 23 percent of all cultivated land, while there were 16,910 families who owned only 6 percent of it.³

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1. Micheal P Mazur, Economic Growth and Development in Jordan (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p 6.
 2. Census of Population 1967, op cit, Publication No 2, p XV.
 3. A A'miri, Agricultural and Industrial Development in Palestine 1900-70, (Beirut: PLO Research Centre, 1974), p 53.