

Adding to these figures the area of land with unclear title (1.5 million dunams), which Israel decided recently to classify state-owned, and the area owned by absentee owners (430,000 dunams), this puts under Israeli control around 65 percent of all West Bank land area.¹

Israel's assault on land resources in the occupied territories has had a deep and multi-faceted impact on West Bank agriculture. The major consequences of these policies are outlined below:

1. Putting large areas of land out of production through confiscation and security closures. Up to 1979 some 13 percent of all agricultural land was lost through such measures.² The situation has been particularly grave in the Jordan Valley and adjacent hills in the north, where 40 percent of arable land is farmed by 2000 Israeli settlers and 22,000 Palestinians are allotted the remaining 60 percent.³
2. Israel's arbitrary and sweeping land harrassments have left mounting fears among farmers regarding the security of their holdings. Most farmers have developed a stronger reticence towards all projects which demand large capital outlays in the form of long-term fixed assets. A prominent example of such projects is the reclamation of hilly land and maintenance of stone walls. This trend has been further reinforced, as we shall see later, by a sharply rising opportunity cost of labour and capital and gradual shift in the price structure against farm produce.

1. Ibid.

2. Economic Resources of the West Bank and their Impact on the Israeli Economy, op cit, p 11.

3. David Lennon, op cit.

Water

Water resources and politics occupy a particularly significant position on the agenda of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Both sides realize the far-reaching consequences of measures taken in regard to the utilization and control of available water reserves. This subject, evidently, is so important and complex that it needs continuous monitoring through specialized studies dealing with its technical, economic, and political attributes. This section, however, deals only with the politics of water use and explores Israel's water policies in the occupied territories. More will be written on water resources and their use in a later section.

Estimates of consumption

Total water consumption in the West Bank is estimated at about 100 million cubic meters (mcm) per year, of which 90 percent is used in agriculture.¹ Averaged on a per capita basis, overall water consumption in the West Bank is less than one third of the level in Israel (see Table III-5). Disparity in domestic consumption is even more dramatic.

1. Hisham Awartani, Water Resources and Politics, op cit, p 18.