

and that only one fifth of agricultural cooperatives are functional - the rest are frozen. The number of cooperatives registered after occupation is 101, of which only 25 are agricultural, which indicates greater emphasis on non-agricultural cooperatives.

Evaluation of agricultural cooperatives

The performance of West Bank agricultural cooperatives is much more modest than might be indicated by previous data. A recent study has revealed that the number of active agricultural cooperatives is in fact 30 encompassing 4222 member farmers, and that the efficacy of their services is only minor in comparison with the tasks laid before them.¹

Counting on 500 West Bank villages and some 35000 workers employed in farming, agricultural cooperatives cover less than 7 percent of all villages and reach 9 percent of agricultural workers. The total number of full-time workers employed in this kind of cooperatives was 79.² According to available data on the finance of 22 active cooperatives, their average share capital was JD 9264, ie. JD 76 per member farmer.³ In general, the Oxfam study portrays a poor picture for the West Bank's agricultural cooperatives and demonstrates that their role in developing agriculture is limited at the present.

The modest performance of agricultural cooperatives is the outcome of several complex variables, some of which are incidental, and others are more deep-rooted. Many researchers on the cooperative

1. N Khraisheh and Jon Ebersole, West Bank Agriculture Cooperatives, (Jerusalem: a study sponsored by Oxfam, 1980) p 13.

2. Ibid, p 27.

3. Derived from the same source.

movement in Jordan, including the present researcher, have come to the conclusion that group work is not necessarily favourable nor a particularly successful activity in local communities in the West Bank. Rural folklore, as manifested for example in proverbs and literature, casts suspicions on group work, while on the other hand it explicitly favours individualistic approaches to solving problems. This conviction is further accentuated by the frequent failures in cooperatives, which are caused mostly by conventional problems of poor management, shortage of finance, and governmental interference. It was not surprising therefore to notice that the record of cooperatives prior to occupation contained far more failures than successes. In contrast, private initiatives in agriculture (and in other lines of business) were far more successful.

The onset of occupation gave cooperatives a distinctive comparative advantage, in that cooperatives became the most practical option available to governments and organizations interested in reviving the local productive base in the occupied territories. Alternative options, which usually exist in a sovereign state, have simply become inaccessible. On the other hand, occupation has generated a new set of problems which are still more serious and less manageable than cooperatives had to cope with prior to occupation. The crux of the new situation is that cooperatives, and ironically in compliance with Jordanian rules, are subject to thorough official control. By regarding itself as the legitimate heir of the Government of Jordan, the Military Administration has been keen on exercising its "inherited" rights to their limit. Furthermore, West Bank cooperatives have also to cope with other kinds of