

CHAPTER VIII

ECONOMICS OF RAINFED CROPS AND VEGETABLESA - Field Crops

Field crops do not occupy a prominent place in West Bank agriculture. This is attributed largely to the scarcity of land fit for low-cost mechanized farming. The area under field crops has further declined, as we discussed earlier, because of the closure and confiscation of large stretches of crop land during the past 14 years. Counting on the average for the last three years, field crops occupied about one third of all cultivated land and contributed around 6 percent of gross agricultural income (see Table VI-5) in Chapter VI).

Field crops are grown in all parts of the West Bank, except in the Jordan Valley where they cannot be rainfed due to insufficient rainfall and it does not pay to grow them under irrigation. Table (VIII-1) shows that one third of all field crops are grown in Hebron district and one fourth in Jenin. Both of these districts have relatively large stretches of fairly level land which are fit for mechanized farming. Likewise, in other districts field grains are grown in hilly slopes or valley bottoms where the slope is sufficiently gentle. The general trend among farmers is to prefer growing grains to fruit trees if the quality of land permits intensive field crop production. The data collected on profitability tends to give credibility to their choice.