

*SEMINARIO: Food Security in the
MENA Region: civil society
participation and partnership*



Food Security

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Palestine as the West bank and Gaza strip is considered a structure of development and cultivated agriculture, which is also known for its largest active sector. It constitutes most of the Palestinian economy generating a large amount of domestic product of the west bank and Gaza.

The regression of the economy and the decline in the living standards are due to internal and external movement restrictions caused by the occupation, limited access to local and international markets, inadequate control over natural resources, facing many economic , technical obstacles and others related to legal and legislative enabling environment. All together negatively affect and threaten the food security, the access to safe nutritious food away from an active and healthy life.

Food security is defined as the capacity of the Palestinian **National Authority (PNA)** to provide access to the essential food needs to all Palestinian people at all times in natural & emergency conditions_in adequate quality, appropriate place & time and affordable prices.

There are multiple conflict-related factors that have contributed to the current situation of food insecurity. One of the most important obstacles is natural resources. As the irrigated farming is estimated in a percentage of the size of agriculture, there have been limited Palestinian agricultural land and this has been dependant on rain-fed crops. Moreover, there has been limited available water sources and low quality caused by over pumping and the ongoing of drought waves. In addition to the decline in soil fertility as a result of heavy consumption of fertilizers and erosion that have been used recently.

Occupation is one key factor obstructing agricultural development and stands as an obstacle in front of Palestinian food. There has been a recent increase in the number of check points, construction of the wall and settlements, bypass roads, military and buffer zones in Gaza. Moreover, there has been an increase of limited movement of

goods and services between the Palestinian areas, a prevention of fishermen in the Gaza Strip from fishing in the Palestinian water, and a prevention of patrons from accessing natural pastures. Additionally, an ongoing control of materials and inputs and a prevention of imports as well as a control over the main boarders away from international markets are practiced to weaken the abilities and capabilities of Palestinians to attain resources and improve food security.

With the devastating consequences brought up, technical problems are there to present another key obstacle. For example, there has been poor infrastructure for the food and agricultural researches and that of food production and storage sector. Furthermore, an increase of weak agricultural and industrial production activities along with the absence of seed banks and low productivity of livestock breeds are affecting the life of the Palestinians, limiting the sovereignty over food resources, and making the access to safe food intricate.

There are economic obstacles that present a wall to deteriorate agriculture and food security. There are poor available funding for projects related to food production and agro- business industries. There are no disaster response systems, (insurance systems) instead, there is a poor investment in this sector, and most importantly the national contingency plan is absent. There are small size investments and acquisitions, and that hinders their viability and competitiveness. On one hand, markets are small, unprotected, and on the other hand regulations are absent from local markets.

There are Obstacles related to legal and legislative enabling environment. There is a lack of legislations governing the production, distribution, and consumption of food process. There is no higher Council for food security. Lastly, there are also inconsistencies and duplication in the validity of authorities among the relevant responsible bodies in the production, distribution and food consumption sector.

Achieving Food Security is within the first strategic goal of PARC, “Enhancing the economic role by contributing in achieving food security and sustainable agricultural development” So in order to make sure sufficient quantities of food are available on a consistent basis, adequate resources are reached and independent food resources are controlled, PARC has been trying to overcome obstacles, whether obstacles placed by occupation, lack of resources, or the need for better economic supervision.

PARC was aware of the surrounding impediments and stood forward for many approaches:

- Individual level: strengthening household economy.
- Cooperative level: promoting collective and cooperative values.
- National level: promotion local products, quality control and certifications.
- Improving marketing opportunities and the competitiveness of Palestinian products (Fair trade and solidarity groups).

In addition to the previous approaches, PARC has been active in the fields of:

- Natural resources development and environment protection (Land productivity, local seeds protection, crops diversity, cash crops, etc).
- Capacity building programs for farmers' organization (male and female).
- Income generating projects (Saving and Credit program, Microfinance).
- Lobbying and advocacy campaigns.

Through interfering with those fields PARC first of all continues the reclamation and rehabilitation of lands and the improvement of soil strengthening in the face of desertification. Second of all PARC is trying to expand the use of water harvesting techniques, and also expand solid and liquid waste treatment technologies. PARC continues seeking to raise the land productivity and strengthening the opportunities for investing in early-detection systems for natural disasters. And finally fighting both the struggle for modern law of land uses, and also for agricultural calendar prioritize domestic markets.

Moreover, PARC Pressures to develop scientific research, building Bank of local seeds and efforts in organizing the young producers to enable them to play a bigger role in achieving fair returns, keeping in mind the encouragement of domestic patterns of production and development-level strategy for improving the various sources for families.

Finally, PARC Aims towards the development of urban agriculture in urban areas and specifically in the sector, besides Aims towards activating the National Council for food security, the newly formed.

PARC has worked in both West Bank and Gaza Strip to achieve food security through the following interventions:

- Land Development Projects.
- Water Projects for Agricultural Purposes.
- Projects' targeting.
- Rural women.
- Many Food Security Projects.

Finally, by trying to invest in production, generate employment opportunities, facilitate healthy available secure food, there are ongoing problems that confront Palestine and prevents them from achieving food security. However the partnership of different NGOs together, with Palestinians, generating cooperative systems and working methodologies can help developing a better future for food security, where all obstacles are conquered.

The responsibility of all parties, governmental, non-governmental organizations and private sectors, which are based on an integrative and participatory relationship with clear, specific responsibilities, and for the reason of the Palestinian historical privacy,

the NGOs played a vital role in the 80s and still play this role in achieving Palestinian food security by increasing food production locally and through provision of employment. However, they had a limited role in food quality control (a Governmental first class role).

Many alliances were formed through civil society institutions and participated in the formulation of strategic policies for achieving minimum food security and sovereignty by (NGOs and sector thematic working groups) where NGO's played a vital role in improving food security especially in the Gaza Strip where at the same time the Palestinian Government was not able to play this role.

Civil society organizations established a model emulated by many consortium programs in the development of land and water. There are broad prospects for this mutual effort of alliances to reach better results.

Private sector investment in agricultural sector is a challenging and a promising area (Climatic and crop diversity) and new initiative started in the field of agribusiness (Medicinal herbs, Global Gap products).

Conclusion and recommendations:

- The best way to achieve food security in Palestine is by the achieving a Palestinian State, ending the occupation and all procedures and practices which hinders the best use of land and water and also it access and interface with the outside world.
- Adoption of laws of agricultural environment care that contributes to food production. There are broad prospects for further production locally.
- Adoption of policies and procedures that ensure a focus on agriculture for food.
- Protection of the Palestinian product and increase the competitiveness through improved quality and provision of local and regional markets.
- Protecting and developing water resources (conventional and non conventional) for agricultural purposes.
- Activate the Israeli boycott programs and especially in the settlements, and that will provide thousands of jobs for Palestinians.
- Focusing on the development on the most marginalized and poorest areas, targeting it directly through developmental programs and projects to achieve equal development and especially the involvement of women in the production process.
- Promoting urban agriculture in refugee camps and along Gaza Strip.
- Activate trade agreements between the PA and the European Union to encourage and promote agriculture in Palestine.
- Encouraging private sector investment in the production chain (stores, cooling, transportation).