



The Agriculture Calendar and Food Security:

Understanding the agriculture calendar for the major crops cultivated in Palestine would help with recognizing the surplus and shortages in crop production per season. This is considered an essential step to policymakers to evaluate the sustainable agriculture strategies set at the national level to better manage the cultivation season at the farm level. Once the crop production shortages are known per season, agriculture plans can be set by the government to fill the gaps (towards self-sufficiency); e.g. propose a plan to diversify the cultivated crops by geographical regions taking into consideration the environmental/ land characteristics, and weather conditions of the different geographic regions in the West Bank. This will reduce the gap between imports and exports of agriculture products at a national level and thus the pressure imposed on the Palestinian government to cover the exporting expenses.

Filling the gaps of the agriculture production along the different agricultural seasons is of priority to the Palestinian case since it recently became a trend among Palestinian farmers to cultivate certain type of crops (mainly cash crops) at the same season; thinking that such a decision will ultimately improve their profit. But this practice has negative consequences on different levels: (1) Locally produced crops available in the Palestinian markets are limited to small range of crops that are locally produced, while the rest of the crops in demand are imported from Israel or abroad; thus increasing dependency on foreign markets and the prices of displayed crops at the market; (2) This also increases the competitiveness among the Palestinian farmers who decide to cultivate their lands with the same type of crops at the same agriculture season. In most cases, production is in excess in the markets causing competitiveness at pricing level. This is especially because export is limited and restricted due to the political situation and the cold storage of Palestinian post-harvesting facilities is very weak.

When farmers diversify their crop production (each season), they ensure better sales for their products as the local market will be opened to absorb all types of crops of demand. This will also benefit the farmers and their households since they will experience lower risks in marketing their products. Once diversified crops are available in the local markets, in a sustainable manner across the agricultural year, a balance between demand and supply would be ensured and thus the prices of products will become more reasonable; especially that it is known that locally produced products are much cheaper than imported ones. This will provide an opportunity for Palestinian consumers to access locally produced food more affordably all year round.