

Fair trade in the West Bank and Gaza

Fair trade provides a sustainable source of income for farmers and for craftspeople working in community based groups.

Environmental Concern

No chemical fertilisers or pesticides are allowed and recyclable materials are used whenever possible. Farmers must use natural and traditional Palestinian farming methods, which have a history of being environmentally friendly.

Sustainable Development

All aspects of production are done locally by Palestinians in order to create more jobs. All other supplies required for production (such as bottles, boxes, labels, etc...) are also acquired locally where possible.

Maintaining Cultural Identity

Fair trade products are based on cultural traditions and cultural identity. Part of the aim is to protect traditional production methods. Palestinian handcrafts have now become a symbol of the Palestinian people and their striving for a normal way of life, in the face of Israeli occupation and Israeli denial of Palestinian culture and history. Making beautiful crafts also helps people psychologically to survive during long hours and days when they are not permitted to leave their homes because of curfews.



PRODUCTS

Agricultural—Olive oil, olives, almonds, couscous, thyme (za'atar), sun-dried tomatoes, bourghul wheat, sesame seeds, tahini, capers, and honey

Other—Olive wood carving jewellery, cushion covers, book marks, key-rings, bags, calendars, cards, candle



Aseela was established in 2004 in Bethlehem by a group of women who came together. Aseela's vision is to produce top quality olive oil products that are distinctly Palestinian. The women wanted their products to reflect the local tradition that continues to thrive in their everyday customs - the abundant use of olive oil, flowers, spices and herbs in food, body care and medicine.

ASEELA WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE

People outside Palestine hear only about violence and poverty. We wanted to show the world something beautiful from our country, by making great products from our excellent olive oil

Wafa Khatib, a resident of Dheisheh refugee camp and co-founder of Aseela, says:

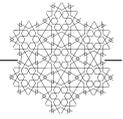
OASIS

Oasis is a paper recycling and greeting card production workshop in the village of Beit Sahour. It is the only income-generating project in the area that provides an opportunity for adults with mental disabilities to work meaningfully and productively.

The director of Oasis, Mahera Nassar, says:

By coming to Oasis the lives of our members transform positively, as they used to spend their days idly at home, having nowhere to go, nothing to do. Now they participate in the meaningful activities and have social opportunities. It also lightens the immense burden of the families who have to care for them





TREES FOR LIFE

The olive tree is a defining feature of the Palestinian landscape – in the past, they were everywhere. This has made it into a symbol of Palestine and explains the Palestinians' attachment to it as an expression of their rootedness to the land.

The trees have practical uses of course. Palestinians harvest olives, and the olive oil is used not only in food, but also for lighting and in soap. Even if peasants own only a small piece of land, they plant five or ten olive trees.

Over the years, the Israeli army has uprooted hundreds of thousands of olive trees. This destroys people's livelihoods. The army uproots centuries old olive trees to increase visibility for soldiers, to make way for settlements (which are illegal towns for Jews only built on Palestinian land), for roads that only settlers can use, and has uprooted 100 000 so far for a barrier/wall which Israel is currently building illegally.



The Trees for Life project provides Palestinian farmers with 25-50 new olive tree seedlings to renew their ruined olive groves. Priority is given to: 1) small farmers, 2) young starter farmers, 3) women that own their own land 4) farmers who have lost trees due to the Israeli army

Palestinian citizens of Israel

There are Palestinians inside Israel itself as well. Even though Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, about one in five of the population is Palestinian. Palestinians are not Jewish – they are Muslim or Christian or Druze – and so are seen and treated as outsiders.

Government spending is much lower in Palestinian areas than Jewish areas and many Palestinians live in poverty. They have worse housing, education facilities and health care than the national average. Many of their homes have also been destroyed and much Arab land has been confiscated by the state to be used for projects that primarily or exclusively benefit Jews. Now only 3.5% of Israeli land is under Palestinian ownership even though they are a 20% of the population.

Fair trade for Palestinian citizens of Israel helps to break the cycles of poverty and unemployment which arise out of the discrimination which they face.

SINDYANNA OF GALILEE



This organisation, run jointly by Palestinian and Jewish women, strives to develop Palestinian farming and protect Palestinian land against the confiscation by the State. Sindyanna focuses on the promotion of products from olive, the only agriculture sector inside Israel that remains distinctly Palestinian.

LAKIYA: NEGEV BEDOUIN WEAVING

Some Palestinians are Bedouins living in villages that existed before the state of Israel was established in 1948. These villages are not recognised by the Israeli state, so they receive no government services such as water access, electricity, health clinics, and sewage facilities.

Lakiya is a project for Palestinian Bedouin women to make money. About 150 women are provided with an opportunity to develop the tradition of spinning and weaving, and to acquire new skills.

