

JVFA chairman calls for applied crop rotation plan, marketing studies to ease farmers' problems

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Valley Farmers' Association (JVFA) has been in existence for 10 years this month, but its chairman of the board says that its objectives are far from being achieved. JVFA Chairman of the Board of Directors Adel Shamaileh said "the association still faces difficulties in helping the farmers handle matters connected with the production and marketing of their produce."

In a recent interview with the Jordanian News Agency, Petra, Mr. Shamaileh said that the JVFA lacks funds needed to extend a helping hand to the farmers. At present the JVFA is in possession of JD 14,000 that came from farmers' subscriptions and donations, but this falls far short of required sums that would enable the association solve the farmers' problems, he said.

According to Mr. Shamaileh, the Jordan Valley, which provides Jordanians with 70 per cent of their needs of vegetables and fruit, should be made to produce more by applying the "rotation of crops method" and by introducing "agricultural patterns". These two factors, if applied, could easily bring about a balance between supply and demand of agricultural products and ensure a growth in output, he said.

Fertilisers, loans

The JVFA at present sells fertilisers and seeds to farmers at prices far less than those in the local markets and offers them long term loans with much less interest than could be obtained elsewhere with the purpose of helping farmers continue their work and to encourage them to produce more, Mr. Shamaileh said. Also, the JVFA plays a part as mediator between the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) and the farmers to settle any disputes which may arise, he added.

Mr. Shamaileh voiced appreciation to the government for establishing an agricultural company with a JD 10 million capital which, he said, will devote its work to purchasing and marketing Jordan Valley agricultural produce. But, he said, this company does not mean that the current agricultural policies should be maintained.

The Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) has suggested certain types of "agricultural patterns" that could be adopted in the Jordan Valley to regulate and increase production, and until such patterns are applied the produce will remain fluctuating and the profits uncertain, Mr. Shamaileh said.

He said that Minister of Agriculture Mohammad Al Bashir has displayed deep interest in applying agricultural patterns "and we hope that practical steps can be taken soon in this direction." In Mr. Shamaileh's view, the basic agricultural patterns should be preceded by a study on the quantities of agricultural products required for the local market, another study on the quantities of crops that can be exported, and a third study on the quantities that can be processed or stored on a regular basis.

Factory breakdown

Asked on the reasons for the disruption in the work of the tomato paste factory in the Jordan Valley region, Mr. Shamaileh said that due to poor rainfall in the last winter season, the tomatoes were much in demand in the local market. The farmers, instead of selling their produce to the government, as was agreed, sold it directly in the market and obtained very high returns and profits that offset previous years' losses. Later, the factory started receiving farmers' tomato crops and later broke down, but the farmers were ins-



A farmer in the Jordan Valley inspects his citrus grove

tructed to send their crops to the paste factory in Amman, which they did, Mr. Shamaileh said.

Referring to government help for the JVFA, Mr. Shamaileh said that the government offered the association loans and financial grants that enabled it to carry out part of its task. "But I call on the government to make a reassessment of the JVFA's programmes and to study its needs because such a study would reveal the real size of assistance that the association needs in order to shoulder its various responsibilities, Mr. Shamaileh said.

The JVFA now groups 4,760 members and the funds they raise are quite inadequate for meeting the requirements of the association, Mr. Shamaileh pointed out. He said that in his policy statement to parliament, Prime Minister Ahmad Obaidat promised to give due care and support for the agricultural sector and to the JVFA, Mr. Shamaileh said. "We hope that help will come and it will boost Jordan's agricultural sector, and thus the association can help the government solve farmers' problems, Mr. Shamaileh said.

Marketing policies

Referring to the projected Agr-

icultural Marketing Company, Mr. Shamaileh said this company will be entrusted with purchasing farmers' produce at prevailing prices. This company cannot pay more than the market prices to the farmers since, like other companies, it wants to make a profit, Mr. Shamaileh pointed out. "But once an agricultural pattern system is applied, outputs can be assessed in advance and reasonable prices for them fixed," he added.

Mr. Shamaileh urged the government to follow a system which crops from the West Bank and the East Bank would not be marketed simultaneously in Jordan. He said that flooding market with crops from both banks is bound to bring a loss for farmers on both sides of the Jordan River. Jordan Valley crops ripen earlier and are ready for market one month before those of the West Bank and therefore there must not be any problem marketing both crops at different times, Mr. Shamaileh said.

However, if the West Bank produce can be delayed a bit more it would yield better profit, and this coordination is also necessary for marketing the crops both here and in Arab Gulf states.