



PRESS RELEASE

The Islamic Development Bank, the OPEC Fund and UNDP/PAPP Launch the Integrated Agriculture Project in Tulkarem

Jerusalem, December 2, 2005 — UNDP/PAPP and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) recently signed a trust fund agreement to initiate a project in support of Integrated Agriculture Development. This US\$2 million project is being funded through IDB by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund – an intergovernmental development finance institution established by OPEC member states, which works towards strengthening cooperation between countries, overcoming poverty and promoting development.

This project will focus on the agricultural sector in the Tulkarem area in the northern West Bank, adopting a two-fold approach to simultaneously generate employment and enhance agricultural productivity. The project's aim is to develop agricultural infrastructure in the Tulkarem area, and will include land development, rehabilitation of water systems, and the construction of irrigation and agricultural access roads.

“The Integrated Agriculture Project is a continuation of IDB’s long history of support to the Palestinian people,” said IDB President, Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ali. “We have consistently worked to foster economic development and social progress in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and will continue to do so in the future.”

The Integrated Agriculture Development Project is regarded as highly important for the development of the agricultural sector in the northern West Bank. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), agriculture-related activities in the area constitute 42% of the West Bank’s total. However, the agricultural sector in the Tulkarem district has suffered from restricted mobility and damage to agricultural land and infrastructure. Since the completion of the separation wall in the area, the situation has worsened, resulting in wide-spread unemployment in the Tulkarem governorate. According to PCBS, estimates in some areas run as high as 60%.

“With OPEC and IDB’s support, we will work to assist the agricultural community, as well as tackle unemployment in the Tulkarem area,” said Ms. Minna Tyrkko, UNDP’s Deputy Special Representative in Jerusalem. “Through partnerships with local stakeholders, this project will combat the rising tide of poverty in the northern West Bank.”

The 24 month project – due to start in March 2006 – will be implemented through local partners including the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Agriculture, local non-governmental organizations working in the agricultural sector, and municipal authorities from the Tulkarem district. Upon the project’s completion, approximately 900 dunums¹ of land will have been rehabilitated for agricultural purposes; 800 households will be provided with agricultural inputs; 7,000 meters of irrigation networks and major wells will have been rehabilitated or laid; 80,000 workdays will have been generated.

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¹ 1 dunum equals ½ acre, or 1000 meters squared.