

Palestinian Baby Cucumbers

A Quality Option for Your Table



By Mohammad Merrie

Translated from Arabic by Rania Filfil

In a territory where land and agriculture are not only a source of food on the table but also a tool of resistance, Kufr Dan Agricultural Cooperative was established in 2010 to defend the rights of farmers in Palestine's Jenin Governorate. The cooperative is active in solving problems that face the agricultural sector in Jenin and owns a refrigerated vehicle to transport agricultural produce. It also established Kufr Dan Water Company, which owns a fully equipped water digger. Years of perseverance have given rise to numerous success stories, including mainly the production of baby cucumbers. For this purpose, the cooperative operates a conveyor belt to unstack cucumber boxes.

The project started with pilot production in 2014, and involved seven farmers who cultivated an area of 10 dunums (10,000 square meters). During this phase, the cooperative assessed the results and economic feasibility of the project. The end result: only one of the seven farmers succeeded, and he was chosen as a model. The land allocated to the project was expanded to 500 dunums, where cucumbers are produced to fulfill pre-signed contracts with local and international firms at the price of NIS 5 (US\$ 1.30) per kilo. This price has encouraged farmers from other localities — including neighboring Tulkarem, Toubas, and Baradalah — to join the project. The cucumbers are sorted on the Kufr Dan sorting line. Good planning has helped farmers improve their income and has protected them from price speculation. Furthermore, cucumbers are not a seasonal crop and can be cultivated throughout the year. The greenhouses produce baby cucumbers, which are then marketed for manufacturing purposes.



Palestinian cucumber.

The project focused on solving past problems, including manual sorting, which had not been fully efficient. Furthermore, farmers lacked any cool storage facilities to preserve the product until sale, which continues to be a serious concern since crossing points and export outlets remain under Israeli control and are frequently closed.



The cooperative has sought the support of specialized agricultural organizations following the proven economic feasibility of baby cucumber production and a sorting line. The project has helped farmers avoid having to let their produce rot because of improper storage or slow access to markets. Moreover, farmers have received assistance to produce according to applicable standards.

Future plans include the establishment of a small pickle factory and the penetration of new markets. Communication with specialized organizations has already been established to fulfill this ambition. The project provides a suitable alternative to Israeli cucumbers that have been invading Palestinian markets.

Mohammad Merrie is a farmer who lives in Kufr Dan Village near Jenin. Since the establishment of the Kufr Dan Cooperative, he has been elected four times in a row as the cooperative's president and director. The cooperative in turn established a private-sector company in order to market agricultural produce. The company holds fifteen active and pioneering associations in the West Bank that work in the field of agricultural development. Elected twice to head the management committee of the company, Merrie works voluntarily with pride to help local farmers excel while maintaining their dignity.



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