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WP3: The bee waggle dance - collecting information for business clusters on the
honeybee products

O3.1 Existing situation analysis (study reports) on the economic potential of honeybee
handcrafting

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A3.1.3B Regional mapping of Bee sector policies: Case of West Bank/Palestine

The legislative framework governing the beekeeping sector

Laws related to bees date back to 1929, during the British mandate of historical Palestine. This indicates that this sector was prosperous since the beginnings of the last century and before it as well.

Law No. 9 of 1928 was enacted by the High Commissioner under the name "Bee Diseases Law", which enforces securing bees of diseases. The articles of the law deal with issues such as the mechanism of appointing inspectors, destroying and treating infected bees with foul brood, restricting bees importing, violations, penalties and other issues.¹

Regarding the current legislative system regulating the beekeeping sector, there are several regulating legislations related to this framework. The origin of the law and legislation goes back to the Palestinian Agriculture Law of 2003, which clarifies the responsibility centers and tasks assigned to them by various ministries and local authorities.

The body of the law stated that, after reviewing a set of laws -including Bee Law No. (26) of 1926, in addition to Article 56 of the law under the chapter on organization and development of livestock, that "the Ministry prepares a system for monitoring the health of animals issued by the Council of Ministers, provided that includes: Monitoring the health of animals, poultry, wild birds, fish and bees; and examining, isolating, vaccinating or disinfecting them".²

In Article (60) of the same law, the Ministry must prepare a special system for organizing beekeeping work, to be issued by the Council of Ministers, to include the following:³:

- 1) Exceptional measures necessary to protect beehives when epidemiological and disease risks threaten them.
- 2) Conditions for registering beehives, setting conditions and veterinary controls for importing or exporting beehives or queen bees, and fees due for these activities.
- 3) Determine all means to protect the health of the apiary, including diseases diagnosis and conditions for using the treatments and medicines related.
- 4) Establishing veterinary controls for importing bees and queens.
- 5) Measures to protect the vegetation cover and bee pastures, including regulating the use of pesticides to control agricultural pests that have negative effect on beehives.
- 6) Conditions for importing, exporting, and marketing bee honey or its products.

¹- Bee Diseases Law No. 9 of 1928. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/37SvnJM>

²- Palestinian Agriculture Law of 2003. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/3PgDcha>

³- Ibid



In 2008, Council of Ministers Resolution No. (13) was issued regarding the regulation of honeybee breeding work, which indicated in article number (2) that the beekeepers will be registered officially in the Ministry's records if they meet the following conditions:⁴

- 1) The beekeeper must own three hives or more
- 2) The beekeeper must fill out the form prepared for this regard by the Ministry.
- 3) The commitment of beekeepers to mark and number the hives with the number given by the bee department.
- 4) Beekeepers' commitment to the instructions issued by the Ministry.
- 5) The location of the bees should be in a place that meets the special conditions and specifications mentioned in Article (4) of this regulation.
- 6) Cooperate with specialized employees of the Ministry in implementing the instructions and facilitating their tasks based with the provisions of this system.
- 7) Update the Ministry with locations of the beehives, their numbers, their sale and purchase, their health status and any new developments.
- 8) Record keeping according to the forms prepared by the Ministry.

The law also raised the issue of transferring apiaries and the conditions resulting in Article (3)⁵, as it is based on the epidemiological situation of the place in which they are located, in addition to an official veterinary certificate issued by the official veterinary doctor. Seasonal instructions must issue to fruit and vegetable growers not to spray pesticides during the flowering season with substances toxic to bees.

Article No. (4) made a set of conditions that must be met at the site of bees, including:⁶

- 1) The apiary should be at least 50m away from the roads on which cars are traveling, so that there is calmness for bee colonies to carry out their usual activities
- 2) It is allowed to practice the profession of beekeeping within the boundaries of municipalities or village councils, provided that the bees are of a quiet type and in proportion to the number of hives and the area of the land, with approval of the concerned authority in the Ministry.

In addition, article (5) lists veterinary conditions and standards for import and export of beehives and queens, considering the applicable veterinary quarantine system. Article (6) outlined conditions for the import or manufacture of base wax, which requires the beekeeper to have a prior permit from the ministry. It added that base wax must be manufactured from natural sterilized beeswax, and the substance must be free from any foreign chemical additives and manufactured according to the standard hexagonal size of bees. Shipment must be accompanied

⁴- Council of Ministers Resolution No. (13) for the year 2008 AD Regulating Honeybee Breeding Business. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/3sCTPpK>

⁵- Ibid

⁶- Ibid



by a certificate of origin, and the wax must be 100% natural and does not contain any foreign substances.⁷ In addition, a set of technical laws that govern mechanisms related to work in the beekeeping sector and its derivatives was published.

In instruction No. (4) of 2012⁸ regarding the marketing mechanism for honeybees, Article (2) indicated that the beekeeper must register his apiary with the Department of Agriculture in his governorate, according to the approved form attached to these instructions. Article (3), specifically concerned with hive transfer from one location to another indicates that the beekeeper is obligated to obtain the following documents from the Department of Agriculture when transferring honey beehives from one location to another:

- A disease-free certificate from the responsible extension agent.
- Internal transport permit (according to the presidential decree).

Article (4), from the same instructions, states that the beekeeper must report the harvest of honey two days before the date of harvesting to estimate production. In Article (5), it is stated that the locations of the beehives are specified and their movement monitored as follows: honeybee extension agent takes honey sample for testing from the beekeeper's store. After testing, a report is submitted as follows:⁹

- a. The quantities of honey present in the apiary
- b. Honey production history.
- c. The source of honey (the name of the beekeeper and the location of the apiary).
- d. Theoretical evaluation of honey.

Since article (6) of the instructions is concerned with examining the honey sample, it states that the beekeeper sends the honey sample for testing, closed and sealed by the Department of Agriculture, to an accredited laboratory. The farmer will pay the costs of the tests. Article (7) is concerned with product display in the market; it says that before displaying products in the market, the beekeeper must do the listed tests.¹⁰

Table No. (7): Tests for beekeepers before displaying honey in the market

Number	The test
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⁷- Ibid

⁸- Ministry of Agriculture Instructions No. (4) of 2012 regarding the marketing mechanism of honeybee. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/3G1RDxx>

⁹- Ibid

¹⁰- Ibid

1	% Of ash
2	Converted sugar
3	Formol number
4	Glucose
5	Humidity
6	Acidity
7	HMF Furfural
8	Sucrose

Article (8) of the decision states that the beekeeper is obligated to bring the test results in a closed, sealed envelope from the accredited laboratory.¹¹ With the obligation to place the identification label on each product in accordance with Article (10) of the decision ¹².

Importing honey in any way from any external sources is prohibited according to the Minister of Agriculture, Riyadh al-Atari. This was enforced in a decision issued in July 2021, in order to protect the local product of honey from competition and increase the profitability of the Palestinian farmer. (Check Annex No. 2).

Amendments to the Agriculture Law No. (11) of 2005, state that the formation of agricultural councils, and the councils themselves, will refer to the Minister of Agriculture, and have full capacity to achieve their objectives under public monitoring. The objectives of forming the councils are¹³:

- Participating with the Ministry and other concerned parties in setting laws, policies, strategies, plans, general procedures and programs for development of the targeted sector.
- Contributing to the development, encouragement, building of sectors, and increasing profitability for developing all related processes.
- Encouraging scientific research, developing information and regulating work conditions.
- Arranging work conditions according to market mechanisms to ensure balanced prices for all stakeholders, and to organize, protect and defend sectors.

¹¹- Ibid

¹²- Ibid

¹³- Palestinian News and Information Agency - Wafa. Agricultural councils. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/3IAPqj8>



The structure of the agricultural councils was organized in four main sectors:¹⁴

- 1- Specialized councils' sector.
- 2- Agricultural service institutions sector,
- 3- Non-governmental institutions services sector,
- 4- The Ministry services sector.

Within the specialized councils' sector, ten councils were related to the main animals and produced crops, namely:¹⁵

- Olive council
- Grape and fruits council
- Palm dates council
- Vegetable council
- Grain council
- Milk and cow council
- Poultry council
- Horse council
- Sheep council
- Honeybee council.

Palestinian Honeybee Council

Despite the amendment that took place in 2005, for the formation of specialized councils, mentioned earlier, they are still pending until issuing a presidential decision to identify a clear budget for the councils, including the Palestinian Bee Council. Some informal information said that the law of councils has passed first and second readings, but not the third reading.¹⁶

In 2016, The Mediterranean Beekeepers' Forum was held in the West Bank, and hosted in the Red Crescent Society building in Al-Bireh, the Forum highlighted the importance of activating the Palestinian Honeybee Council.¹⁷

¹⁴- Ibid

¹⁵- Ibid

¹⁶- From an interview with Tahseen Odeh, mentioned before.

¹⁷- Ibid



Due to the absence of law, no budget was allocated to The Honeybee Council, thus the council is unable to be able to operate actively and to open a bank account. This council represents most beekeepers, males and females, in the West Bank.¹⁸

The Minister of Agriculture (at that time was Shawki Al-Eissa*), gave the council good support. Mr. Tahseen Odeh was elected at that time to be the first chairperson of the Honeybee Council, in 2016, but without any authority, no budget and no legitimacy.

Thus, the work of the Honeybee Council depends on the individuals who are running the council. Official stamp and papers were issued.¹⁹ They conduct regular meetings through members' relationships with the existing institutions, who donate halls to the Council to conduct meetings. The council launched a series of annual exhibitions of bee products, the last was the fifth annual bee exhibition conducted in 2021.²⁰

One of the main objectives of the Palestinian Honeybee Council is to promote the culture of honey consumption in Palestinian society. This objective is based on a study by the World Health Organization, which estimates that the individual body needs 500 grams of honey per year. The Palestinian individual consumption of honey does not exceed 175 grams per year.²¹ Thus, the Palestinian Honeybee Council adopted an idea of organizing honey consumption campaigns in Palestinian schools. The Honeybee Council has worked on these campaigns for a period of four years. Financial coverage of campaign expenses came from members' own contributions.²² In terms of membership, each Palestinian beekeeper who owns at least 10 hives is a member of the general assembly of the council, but this has not been applied until now.²³

Quality Charter of Palestinian honey

Within the framework of the Palestinian Standards Institution,* a set of tasks was assigned to the institution in terms of preparing mandatory technical instructions, in cooperation with various

¹⁸- Ibid

* A former minister, he held the portfolios of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture during Rami Ramallah's third government. He continued his position as Minister of Agriculture until the first Council of Ministers reshuffle in July 2015, while retaining his position as Minister of Social Affairs until his resignation in October 2015.

¹⁹- From an interview with Tahseen Odeh, mentioned before.

²⁰- Ibid

²¹- Ibid

²²- Ibid

²³- Ibid

* Palestinian Standards Institution (PSI) :was established in 1994 by a decision of President Yasser Arafat, and began its work in 1997 according to the Standards Law No. 6/2000, with financial and administrative independence, as it is considered the national body for standards in Palestine and the point of contact with the global infrastructure for quality, the role of the institution is to Seeking to insure high competitive ability for the Palestinian product, facilitating trade, contributing to protect the health and safety of the consumer

regulatory authorities. The Compulsory Technical Instructions Committee prepared Palestinian standards through permanent technical committees, consisting of representatives from all sectors of commerce and industry, scientific institutions, consumer and environmental protection associations, governmental bodies, in addition to the Palestinian quality mark, supervision mark, conformity certificates, and halal certificates in accordance with the certification systems approved by the institution.²⁴

Palestinian Standard Institute (PSI) is the official body issuing certificates of safe products, quality management certificates and individual service providers, in addition to a set of quality charters that are a reference guide for the food production process, such as the Quality Charter for olive oil and the Quality Charter for honey.

The beekeeping sector is completely and fundamentally subject to follow-up by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, but PSI is a legislative body, which provide services to the sector. PSI has prepared the technical specifications for honey.²⁵ In addition, it participates in providing mandatory technical characters for honey. Systems have been established for honey in two forms: Quality Charter Certificate, or/and Honey Quality Certificate.*

The difference between them is that for the Honey Quality Certificate, the beekeeper must apply administrative systems based on administrative specification No. 15 with the Palestinian specification for honey.²⁶ While in the Quality Charter Certificate, more strict conditions are required by the Palestinian specification. The charter means a “premium” quality, not only first class, but also higher than that.²⁷

Those who want to obtain the Quality Charter Certificate must show some cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture. MOA & PSI representatives will visit the pastures and hives and the environment that surrounds the apiary. If any pests or diseases are identified, the mechanism of the treatment used must be clarified. Visiting the place of honey extraction, and taking samples of honey for testing as a final product are implemented.²⁸

The plan is to establish a honey-tasting team that meets requirements to obtain the Charter Certificate. The final draft of the Quality Charter of Honey has been approved since 25 November 2018 by the committee of representatives of several bodies, which are the Palestinian Standards Institution, the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Palestinian Honey Council and the Federation of Food Industries.

and the environment, and representing Palestine in the international system of standards through preparing internationally harmonized Palestinian specifications and providing inspection and measurement services (metrology) and the granting of certificates and conformity marks and labels.

²⁴- Palestinian Standards institution (PSI). About the institution. Check the following link:
<https://bit.ly/3PssJvn>

²⁵- From Taghreed Shehadeh's interview, mentioned before.

* The technical specification for honey is older than the charter, and its number is 216

²⁶- From Taghreed Shehadeh's interview, mentioned before.

²⁷- Ibid

²⁸- Ibid

Quality Charter goals are producing Palestinian honey of high quality, which increases the production capacity of beekeepers, and increases the competitiveness of Palestinian honey in the local and foreign markets.²⁹ The Honey Quality Charter sets the conditions for the registration and general instructions about beekeeping and honey production, such as conditions for apiaries, hives, importing bees, queens and wax, as well as procedures for protecting apiaries and pastures, and methods for managing diseases and pests.³⁰ The Charter also describes honey as the product of the nectar of flowers of wild or field plants, or tree flowers.

Article (4) of the Charter, sets general requirements, while Article (5) sets conditions of breeding stages, extraction, production, packaging, transportation, storage and marketing. Beekeepers geographically (region, village, governorate) determine the amount of hives. The Honey Quality Charter sets out a set of instructions that must be considered. The Charter also sets conditions for apiaries, and importing bees, queens and wax.³¹ In addition to everything mentioned, the Honey Quality Charter deals with a set of measures to protect beehives and pastures, methods of controlling diseases and pests, in addition to beekeeping management, identifying diseases, pests and enemies of bees, and the mechanism of honey extraction³².

Two years ago, PSI decided to issue quality certificates for a period of two years, except for agricultural products because they need intensive monitoring.

For honey in particular, the certificate is given on harvest bases and institution test samples of each harvest. Test fees cost approximately about 700 shekels (about \$220) for each harvest, and the annual cost of the certificate about 1,300 shekels (about \$338) annually.³³

As mentioned earlier, the Charter is strict and needs more requirements, because it not only testing the production sample, but also tests the quality of the entire environment and the entire production chain. In addition, some tests are not required for the honey certificate.

For example, "Distase enzyme test", which indicates whether, the honey is fresh or not, is required by the Honey Quality Charter, and the percentage of "hydroxymethyl fural", which must not exceed 15, is also required. These tests have an effect on the safety and quality of honey.³⁴

The Honey Quality Charter is three years old; currently, it is in process of revision for updating and adding some missed points, such as honey moisture, where humidity must not exceed 18 %. While mandatory technical characters for honey allow humidity up to 22%.

The Charter is unique at a worldwide level.³⁵ The Charter as a document that is renewed whenever there is a need or trend setting more strict conditions. The standard of the Palestinian Charter is

²⁹- Palestinian Standards Institution. "Honeybee Quality Charter". Palestine, Ramallah, first edition; 2018, Page 1. Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/3jLZUez>

³⁰- Ibid, Page 7

³¹- Ibid Page 7-8

³²- Ibid, page 9

³³- From Taghreed Shehadeh's interview, mentioned before.

³⁴- Ibid

³⁵- Ibid



stricter than others around the world. Which gives Palestinian honey that was made through applying the charter specifications a high competition potential in international markets.³⁶

Palestinian Standards institute (PSI) was also able to adopt some international standards for beeswax specifications that beekeepers can benefit from. It has been translated from French into Arabic, and the Institution is in the process of adopting it through a specialized committee as a Palestinian standard.³⁷

Many producers used beeswax and re-cycled it into candles for lighting or other uses. As there is a recommendation for wax processing to have a center specialized in collecting wax and recycling it, an example that implemented this was the Jenin cooperative, which has an assembly line for wax refining, which needs to be expanded.

³⁶- Ibid

³⁷- Ibid