



Press Release - European Union  
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## **EU launch €1,5 million project to improve water availability and demand management in agriculture in the West Bank**

**The European Union (EU) launched a €1,5 million project to improve the livelihoods and food security levels of poor rural families through improving the availability and management of water for agricultural purposes. The project is implemented by Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and is expected to be finalized at the end of 2012.**

Availability of and access to water is one of the biggest problems Palestinian farmers and herders face. Since 2007 the region has suffered from severe weather conditions and rainwater scarcity affecting agricultural productivity. In addition, constraints in accessing land and restrictions imposed on Palestinians for establishing or rehabilitating water wells have severely impaired farmers from realizing their potential. The project will construct and rehabilitate 450 rain feed water cisterns which will secure access to water for irrigation of crops, home gardens and livestock to 450 farming families in the West Bank and will offer them a feasible and affordable way to improve their livelihood.

"There is an unquestionable need for a comprehensive response to water scarcity and difficulties in accessing water for Palestinian farmers. This project comes in addition to the EU food security programme which has focused exactly on improving the management of water and wastewater in rural areas of the oPt to tackle these problems" said the Acting EU Representative Mr. John Gatt-Rutter. "We are particularly proud to launch this project whose asset lies not only in giving immediate access to water for the most impoverished rural families in the West Bank but also in directly involving the local community in doing so", he added.

The construction of the cisterns will be realized through a 'cash-for-work' method creating jobs for at least 900 skilled and unskilled workers. The beneficiary farmers will also receive tailored technical support and trainings to enhance their knowledge and skills in water management and good agricultural practices. The farmer families to be targeted will come from the governorates of Jenin and Hebron with priority to the most poor and vulnerable households whose farm is their sole source of income. Priority will also be given to families where women are the main bread winner.

"Without water security, there will be no food security" said the FAO Senior Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator Mr. Cyril Ferrand. "The ability to produce food is essential to reducing poverty and encouraging social and economic development. Unfortunately, the semi-arid nature of the climate in most parts of Palestine, coupled with limited access to water and increased variability of rainfall events are significantly affecting the resilience of small-scale farmers and herders. In such a context, every drop counts and there is an urgent need to promote sustainable management of water resources. This is the exact nature of the new project launched by FAO and the EU in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture" he concluded.

### **Background:**

The EU has been supporting rural development – with particular attention to the olive oil sector and the treatment of waste water for reuse in agriculture – for many years. In the coming years - through its food security programme - the EU will invest € 18.2 million in supporting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population in the oPt.

**Contact:**

**The Office of the European Union Representative**

Antonia Zafeiri, Tel:+972 (0) 2 5415 859, Mob: 054 8024 915

Shadi Othman, Tel:+972 (0) 2 541 5867, Mob: 0599 673 958

<http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/>

**FAO:**

**The FAO programme coordination office for the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

Cyril Ferrand, Tel:+972 (0) 2 532 1950/2757, Mob: 054 8026 703

[http://www.fao.org/emergencies/country\\_information/list/middleeast/westbankandgazastrip/en/](http://www.fao.org/emergencies/country_information/list/middleeast/westbankandgazastrip/en/)