

Almond Season in Palestine 2016

The best almond season in the past 3 years

The past 3 years were very harsh on the small farmers of almonds in Palestine due to tough weather conditions, shortage of production almost all over the world and increased almonds prices that made it difficult to market it both locally and internationally. Despite the two hot waves that recently hit Palestine and the shortage of rain fall which was less than the average annual rate, this almond season is very promising and full of hope for Palestinian farmers. Many workshops with almonds farmers were organized through Al Reef and in cooperation with agronomist from PARC, with 32 representatives of almonds farmers from six different almonds production areas since the beginning of February 2016. These workshops aimed to discuss the reality of almonds sector in Palestine in the last 10 years, provide consultations and guidance to farmers regarding the right practices to increase the productivity of almonds trees, fight against diseases, reinforce the importance of cooperation among farmers and explore the challenges of almonds marketing. This season, almond trees productivity reached over 90% and almonds farmers can finally start to breathe the sigh of relief.



Have you seen our new packaging design?



The beautiful almond flower at the beginning of spring season!



Investment in new equipment!

Many families of almond producers have invested in new peeling equipment called the "peeling equipment". It costs 2200 NIS which equal between 570- 600 \$ where almonds are inserted, rounded fast and this causes the almonds hull to partially peel it's easily removed. Almond producers are very happy and excited for this new peeling equipment as it saves them a lot of time and physical effort and accelerate the peeling process.

A picture of Alayan Abu Ara from Aqqaba village - Tubas Governorate .





Four generation of almonds pickers !

Baheyte Ghannam is 80 years old and lives in Aqqaba village. She is very happy that this almonds season is going very well so far despite all the constraints that face almonds production. Being the great grandmother of the family with 45 grandchildren, Baheyte can't miss on this special time of the year where all the family gathers to pluck and peel the almonds. It's an important source of income and a family tradition that extended for 16 years now. It strengthens the bond within her 4 generation family members. "We have a lot of fun while peeling, we sing together, eat together and our favorite drink is tea with sage" said Baheyte. She didn't get the chance to go to school, so she can't read nor write, but she is very skilled when it comes to almond peeling. While holding a bunch of peeled almonds in her hand, she said: "I am too old to participate in the plucking, I can't walk like the old times but I participate in the peeling and help my family". There is no pension plan to support Baheyte so she is very vigilant towards the production of almonds as it's an important source of income for her and her large family.

Becoming a decision maker!

In a 6000 dunum village called Aqqaba, where 1500 dumums are planted with almonds trees, lives a very active farmer named Nabil Abu Arra. Nabil used to be a laborer in a stone and marble factory where the income he gained wasn't enough to put food on the table. While showing us around the almonds trees, Nabil said: The first time the almonds idea was introduced by PARC I was convinced that this was a great opportunity for me and thousands of almonds farmers especially with the support of Al Reef Company that is able to market the almonds internationally. I have been cultivating almonds for 7 years now, when I started, I started with nothing. I was in debt and rented a land and for the first 3 years I lived with debts. In the fourth year the production started and in the fifth year a satisfying production enabled me to repay the debt.



Almond trees blooming in spring



Nabil's wife engages in the peeling process. For her, it's a great way to gain income and be with her husband at the same time

Through fair trade, Nabil has been able to improve his economic conditions and now he has saved enough money to buy his own tractor for the plowing of the land. This will save him money and time as he has to wait for a long time for his turn to plow the land. "All my life now depends on almonds agriculture", it's the livelihood and vitality of our village where hundreds of families depend on almonds production" said Nabil . 60 families of 1500 family are fully and mainly dependent on almonds production in Aqqaba Village as their only source of income.

“What motivated me to cultivate almonds is the presence of Al Reef Company and their ability to market our almonds and pay us fair prices.” Now, we don’t worry about our marketing opportunities or the risks imposed on farmers by the free market. Al Reef has removed the uncertainty of what will happen after the harvest is ready”, said Nabil.



A picture of Nabil while plucking almonds in his field

Nabil has 3 daughters aged 22, 16, 11 years old, and through fair trade, he has been able to send his eldest daughter to continue her education in university. Two years ago, his youngest daughter suddenly developed an eye syndrome and after 3 surgeries, 2 failed, the last surgery succeeded and she has been fortunately able to recover. “Without fair trade I would have never been able to heal my beloved daughter” said Nabil.

“Before Al Reef and fair trade markets, we were followers of traders and decisions were imposed on us. Now we are empowered decision makers. Traders used to force their prices upon us, but today, no single trader may set a price before knowing the fair trade price. This has protected us from greedy traders and now they wait to know the fair trade prices and based on that, they set their prices. We wish if we could market all our harvest in fair trade markets as traders know that not all harvest is sold to fair trade and some of them wait until we finish the fair trade quantity and then they come and force their prices on us. For example, if we produce 50 tons of almonds, we sell 15 tons to fair trade markets; there are 35 almonds tons remaining that can get exposed to exploitation by traders” said Nabil.

“Being part of the fair trade chain, we get advice and instructions throughout the whole process and this gives us reassurance and security” said Nabil. He considers the almond tree a commercial tree that provides unlimited job opportunities for thousands of people, from seedlings purchase to almonds cracking. “The best thing about this is the independency where I don’t have to work for others; I work for my land, my family and community and I am finally a decision maker” said Nabil.

Cinnamon- roasted almonds

Quick almond recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 egg white
- 1 teaspoon cold water
- 4 cups whole almonds
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees F (120 degrees C). Lightly grease a jellyroll pan.
2. Lightly beat the egg white; add water, and beat until frothy but not stiff. Add the almonds, and stir until well coated. Mix the sugar, salt, and cinnamon, and sprinkle over the almonds. Toss to coat, and spread evenly on the prepared pan.
3. Bake for 1 hour in the preheated oven, stirring occasionally, until golden. Allow to cool, then store it in airtight containers.



Here are some “Did you know” facts about almonds:

1. Almond is misunderstood as a nut. It is rather a seed of a fruit that grows on Almond tree.
2. India is a country where almonds are considered as ‘Brain food’ for the children.
3. Almonds have a long storage life and can be refrigerated for up to 2 years. The longer shelf life is due to the fact that they are rich in Vitamin E.
4. The outer hulls of Almonds are used as a cattle feed all over the world.
5. Only 10 of the 30 varieties of almond trees are grown commercially.



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Contact Us:

Al Reef for Investment and Agricultural Marketing



**General Manager
Saleem Abu Ghazaleh
E-mail: Saleem@pal-arc.org**



**Address : Palestine, Ramallah, Al Ma'ahed Str, PARC Building
P.O Box: 25128 Shu'fat, Jerusalem
Phone: + 972 2 2963840
Fax: +972 2 2963850**

