



## Falling in love again

According to Bakir Hammad - member of Farkha cooperative- it all started in 2000 – 2001 when the farmers had large quantity of olive oil and had to sell it for 6 and 7 shekels per kg in the market; a price that didn't even cover half of the production cost. "We had to look for a solution and this is where PARC intervened and introduced us to the idea of group pressing; to produce high quality olive oil to be able to market and export to the international markets in partnership with Al Reef. We did that and succeeded" said Bakir. Al Reef began selling olive oil at 14 and 15 shekels and our member increased from 9 to 17 members. Farkha cooperative has 450 donums of organic olive oil farms and became officially an organic registered cooperative in 2005.

"When the idea of organic production was introduced to us, we thought of it as a trend that will eventually be unfeasible, but now we are living it, it's our way of living for the coming generation too" said Bakir.

**Farkha village is the first Palestinian village to officially become a member of the Global Eco village Network for a year now.**

Being able to market our olive oil at fair prices has given us the opportunity to give back to our community, said Bakir Hammad. Through olive oil premium payments, Farkha cooperative makes contributions to Farkha annual festival that takes place every year from 23/7 30/8; an event that has been taking place since 1991 and aims to enhance the voluntarism spirit, educate the youth, raise awareness on environmental issues and maintain the Palestinian culture, talented work and creativity. Last year we had 150 permanent volunteers and 350 part-time volunteers from all over the world (local, international) said Bakir Hammad. Through premium Farkha cooperative has been able to take a joint loan with three other cooperatives to purchase a press for olive oil (Eastern Bani Zeid Cooperative, Aboud Cooperative, Western Bani Zeid Cooperative) and through premium all these cooperatives pay the monthly payment of the joint loan. Also, through premium farkha cooperative has been able to help in developing the women club kindergarten.



***Pictures from inside the new joint olive press of the 4 cooperatives located in Al Nobani farms- Eastern Bani Zeid!***



Our relationship with Al Reef is not a commercial one. We feel like it's our own company. Every year in November they hold a meeting to set up prices in coordination with olive oil producing cooperatives to achieve fair prices for our produce based on the given circumstances, production and international markets. It's a complementary relationship; they discuss with us, inform us about the international market situation and through them we get to know the fair trade concept. Without Al Reef, there would be no security; because Al Reef connects us with great consumers who appreciate our olive oil, said Bakir Hammad.

***Eng. Mohammed Hmidat, the quality assurance manager at Al Reef Fair Trade during his visit to the joint press in October conducting organoleptic testing!***



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Olive trees are holy trees; they are the backbone of the household economy and life sustainability. The olive tree is a source and food security for our families, said Amina Hammad- Bakir's wife. Amina loves the olive harvest season and while plucking olive fruits she said; olive season has a special place in my heart, it's that magical time of the year when all of my family comes together and we get the opportunity to connect strongly with our land and ancestors.



Organic production provides us, our families and the world with healthy olive oil. It makes us love our land and motivates us to take care of it in addition to being able to market our olive oil at fair prices, *and this is how we fell in love again with our olive trees*, Said Bakir Hammad.

***Bakir Hammad's son Mohammed joining his family in the plucking of olive fruits, he can't miss out on this special time of harvest season!***