

BEYOND SURVIVAL

Palestinian Private Sector Resilience in Times of Crisis

Stories of producers, cooperatives, women workers, and local businesses supported by Oxfam and partners

KEY FACTS

- 💡 176,000 private sector establishments before Israel's war on Gaza.
- 💡 522,000 workers employed by the private sector before the war.

Economic Justice Programme
Oxfam in OPT

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OXFAM

Private Sector and Oxfam in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

In a period marked by economic shocks, disrupted supply chains, and shrinking civic and economic space, especially across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Palestinian private sector is operating firmly in survival mode rather than growth mode. Despite these constraints, Palestinian businesses continue to play a critical role in maintaining resilience and protecting livelihoods. The private sector remains a source of jobs and income and a backbone of community stability when public and humanitarian systems are under immense strain.



Oxfam and its Palestinian partners have a long-standing history of working closely with private enterprises, cooperatives, producer groups and financial institutions at every level of the market system. This includes capacity-building, financial inclusion, blended and results-based financing, access to finance, innovation pilots, matching schemes for employability, and business-to-business exchanges that link local producers with local private sector and regional or international markets.

Over the past two decades, Oxfam has supported leading Palestinian exporters and importers companies, including: Al-Reef, Al-Ard, New Farm Co, Arduna, and many others in the West Bank and Gaza,

helping high-quality Palestinian products reach global markets. This includes olive oil, dates, herbs, processed foods, and non-food items, to reach markets across Europe, Asia, and North America.

International partnerships have also been central to strengthening the Palestinian private sector. Oxfam collaborates closely with Oxfam shops, and Zaytoun UK, a major fair-trade distributor of Palestinian products; Truly (Denmark), which currently sources Palestinian olive oil with plans to expand into new product lines; Arla (Denmark), whose food technologists supported local companies to improve recipes, nutritional profiles, and shelf life; and Aktopi (France), promoting Palestinian goods through fair-trade networks. These partnerships expand global market reach while transferring essential technical know-how to local businesses.



Private Sector status Before and After the War on Gaza.

The private sector in Palestine forms a major part of the national economy, directly contributing to economic development, job creation, and the improvement of livelihoods for local communities. Before Israel's war on Gaza, data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2024) indicated that the number of private sector (Micro, small and Large) in Palestine was approximately 176,000, including around 120,000 in the West Bank and 56,000 in the Gaza Strip. The private sector employed about 522,000 workers, with 349,000 in the West Bank and 173,000 in Gaza (PCBS, 2024).

After Israel's war on Gaza erupted in October 2023, the private sector deteriorated sharply. Many private establishments ceased operations or significantly reduced activities, leading to a near-total collapse of economic activity, accompanied by a marked decline in the sector's GDP and a rise in unemployment to levels that threaten economic resilience (MAS, 2024).

In the West Bank, the sector has also been severely affected by movement restrictions and trade limitations, reducing the productivity of some establishments and leading to a decline in workforce employment, especially among small- and medium-sized enterprises that constitute the majority of the private sector (MAS, 2024).

Without substantial support and without an enabling environment allowing access to Palestinian natural resources, unrestricted movement of people and goods, and fair import/export conditions, the future of the Palestinian economy remains uncertain and deeply constrained.



Oxfam's Approach to Private Sector Engagement

Oxfam's model is deliberately multi-layered. We work with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), cooperatives, agribusinesses, large private companies, and microfinance institutions to strengthen financial inclusion and reinforce value chains. We support farmers and producers to meet market standards, improve product quality, and secure new market opportunities. We also work with companies to adopt inclusive business models that benefit women, youth, and marginalized groups. This work is rooted in the belief that a functioning private sector is not only a driver of household income but also essential for community stability, resilience, and local development, especially in contexts marked by protracted crisis caused by Israel's illegal occupation.

Civil society including NGOs, INGOs and CSOs have played a crucial role in advocating for labor rights, ethical business practices, and inclusive economic participation and growth. Building on this foundation, Oxfam and its Palestinian partners have expanded their engagement with the private sector at multiple levels, working with MSMEs and larger companies across value chains, financial institutions, the chamber of commerce, and exporter. Guided by decades of partnerships experience in Palestine, Oxfam extended their work to the private-sector actors as part of a broader strategy for economic recovery and resilience.

By reinforcing connections between businesses and small-scale producers. Producers benefit from this support to meet market requirements, improving product quality, and enhancing market visibility. At the same time, private sector is assisted in adopting inclusive practices that recognize the contributions of women, youth, and marginalized communities. These efforts strengthen the sustainability of economic situation in Palestine including private sector.

Through the integration of multiple approaches, advocating for labor rights, promoting inclusive business, strengthening access to finance, and partnering with the private sector. Highlighting three examples out of many showing how small-scale producers are gaining support, improving market access, and adapting and surviving in highly challenging conditions.



Hassem's Journey in Transforming Waste into Opportunity

Hassem's story illustrates how targeted support can unlock local entrepreneurship and a factory into a community-level economic value.

Oxfam and its partners, RWDS and PFU, supported the transformation of a family business into a broader community-based model. This went beyond simply establishing a family business, it encouraged mutual benefits within the community supporting over 23 cooperatives and women-owned businesses in addition to establishing over 7 permanent job opportunities. The factory allowed Hassem to make a meaningful impact quickly. Since opening his factory in September 2024, Hassem has achieved remarkable results in just three months, earning a profit of 8,480 NIS, an important step towards long-term sustainability and market credibility.

Hassem produces high-quality compost using odorless lamb waste, along with other natural organic materials such as guava and avocado tree leaves. Practicing circular economy approach he signed an agreement with the Habla Municipality to collect hundreds of tons of agricultural waste (which would otherwise be burned, polluting the area) providing a sustainable solution to the issue of waste disposal. This collaboration not only reduces environmental pollution but also strengthens his factory's production capacity. Hassem receives the waste needed to create compost and the municipality receives free compost from Hassem when needed. Building on this success, Hassem expanded his work by partnering with local farmers to build a community-based, circular economy.

Hassem began sourcing agricultural waste—such as guava leaves, avocado trimmings, animal manure, and other organic materials—from local farmers. So far, three job opportunities at the factory have been established, one opportunity to distribute the final product, and three opportunities to collect the waste to deliver it to the factory.



In addition to the creation of job opportunities, an extended community benefit established by buying the waste from over 23 local farmers and women businesses, creating a positive impact for individuals, the community, and the environment.

For local farmers and women businesses, this initiative provides an opportunity to earn income from agricultural by-products that were previously discarded or burned. These women, often excluded from traditional markets, now have a reliable source of extra income, as Hassem purchases raw materials at a price of 6 shekels (1.65 USD) per bag, with an average of 50 and 250 bags per farmer. This financial support not only helps their families but also strengthens their roles in the local economy, promoting gender equality and social inclusion. In return, Hassem also offers a special discount of 20% to whom the factory buys the waste from.



**Watch Hassem's
full Journey**



"I couldn't believe that such an idea could have this impact within the community. It's working and I'm expanding my work."



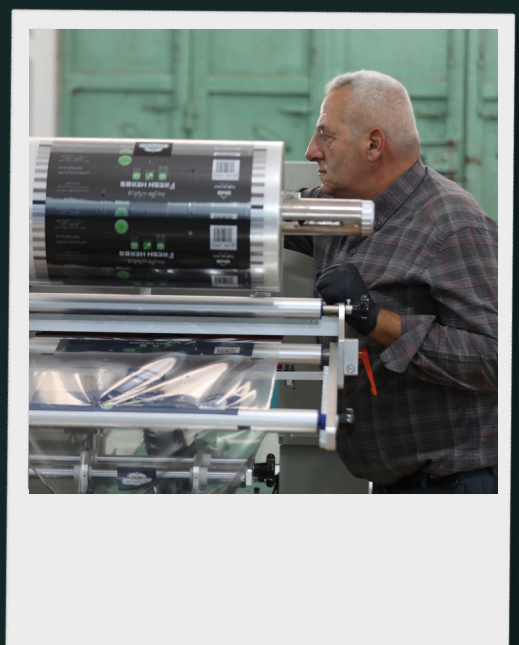
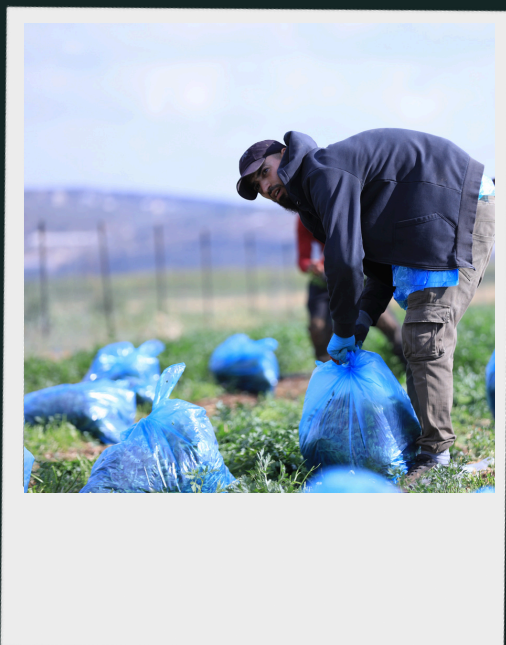
Marj Ibn Amer Leafy Greens Company: Driving Inclusive Growth in Jenin

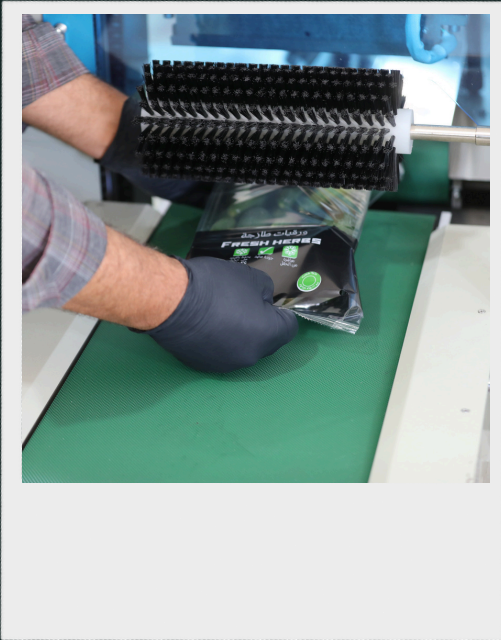
When Israel's war on Gaza began in 2023, Najm lost his job as a chef, hospitality industry came to a standstill. Like many others in the West Bank, especially in Jenin, Said faced the challenge of finding a new source of income in an economy under survival mode.

The idea for his new venture emerged during a shopping trip to Nablus, when he noticed that all packaged leafy greens were imported from Israel. Determined to fill this gap, he founded Marj Ibn Amer Leafy Greens Company in early 2024 - a Palestinian packaging business sourcing fresh produce from local farmers, packaging it, and supplying it to local supermarkets.

Initially, operations at Marj Ibn Amer were small, with just two employees and limited equipment to pack small quantities of parsley, arugula, and cilantro for nearby markets. Although the company wanted to expand its offerings to include a wider range of fresh vegetables, it lacked the proper machinery to do so. However, demand for high-quality, locally produced Palestinian vegetables was steadily growing, and the company continued to build its reputation and extend its reach with its packaged leafy greens. Recognizing the company's potential Oxfam, in partnership with PARC, supported the purchase of a modern packaging machine, increasing production and improving packaging quality. This upgrade allowed the company to expand its range to include baby cucumbers, hot peppers, carrots, and Molokhia. The company now works with three traders to supply products to 15 supermarkets and directly supplies more nine supermarkets, becoming a recognized alternative to imported Israeli products.

Additionally, the company's growth has translated into concrete social impact: the company was able to hire more staff, including women and youth, and expand its partnerships with local farmers, ensuring that economic opportunities reached those most in need. Permanent contracts were signed with two women (Shereen and Ghadeer Rabaya), providing them stability and formal employment.





"Shereen Rabaya and Ghadeer Rabaya, from Maythaloan village in Jenin, saw their monthly income nearly double—from 800 NIS to 1,720 NIS—enabling them to cover over half of their household expenses. Shereen was even able to pay her daughter's university tuition. The increased income greatly improved their families' financial stability and well-being.."

As the business expanded, Oxfam supported Marj Ibn Amer in making this growth inclusive, by establishing a saving fund[1] and gender-sensitive health and rest facilities, with gender-sensitive health and rest facilities, providing separate spaces for women and men. For local farmers, the company's reliable demand has strengthened market access and income stability.



"This isn't just about the company, it's about creating opportunities and security for everyone involved in our value chain."

Watch full story



[1] An employer-sponsored savings plan where both the employee and employer contribute a fixed percentage of the employee's salary each month. The accumulated amount is paid out to the employee upon retirement, or in some cases, upon resignation or termination.

From Fields to Factories: Oxfam's Role in Building Public-Private Synergy in Kufr Dan

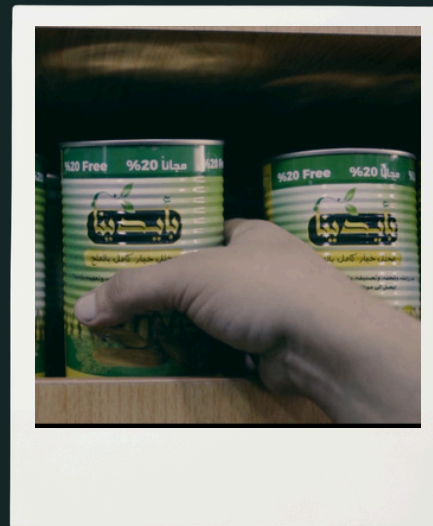
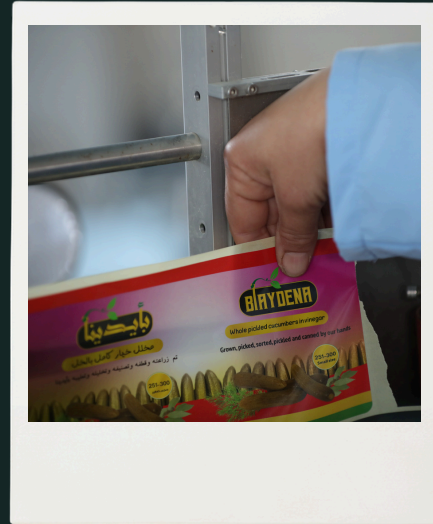
Kufr Dan Agricultural Cooperative was born out of a grassroots initiative led by 65 farmers from the town of Kufr Dan in Jenin Governorate. In response to the growing economic and environmental challenges facing Palestinian agriculture, the cooperative set out to support small-scale farmers in sustaining their livelihoods and strengthening their resilience.

In 2017, the cooperative faced significant losses due to unreliable commitments from Israeli processing companies and political disruptions that hindered market access. With support from Oxfam and its partner RWDS, the cooperative envisioned a bold expansion into the agricultural value chain.

This vision led to the establishment of PETC Garden Agricultural Marketing Company, a private shareholding company formed and owned by the cooperative and several local farmers. The idea was sparked by a simple yet powerful question from the farmers "Why don't we have our own Palestinian pickling factory instead of selling our produce to Israeli factories?", and from the need to escape dependency on Israeli processors and create a Palestinian-owned alternative. Oxfam stepped in to develop a feasibility and market studies and sent a technical delegation to Turkey to explore advanced pickling production lines. Upon approval, a modern production line was purchased with local contribution, reaching 85% of the total cost demonstrating strong community ownership.



The factory was built on five dunums of land provided by the Kufr Dan Municipality with a capital exceeding 550,000 Jordanian Dinars. The cooperative owns over 30% of the shares, with 42 out of 104 cooperatives members are women, while 16 of them directly invested in the factory for more investment. To further sustain factory operations Oxfam played a major role in Private, public interest by facilitating a strategic partnership with Al-Izdihar Company from Hebron, which acquired 49% of the factory's shares keeping the final say to the Cooperative and the management with the Al-Izdihar Company. This marked a successful example of public-private synergy, where farmers, local government, and private investors collaborated to build a sustainable economic example.



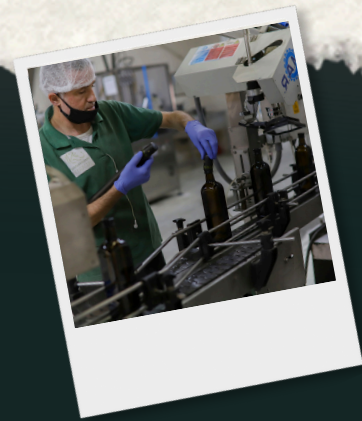
Watch full story



Across the West Bank, Palestinian businesses continue to adapt, rebuild, and innovate despite operating within highly restrictive and unpredictable conditions. The cases highlighted here demonstrate that when Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and cooperatives receive the right blend of support—finance, technical expertise, and fairer market opportunities—they can protect livelihoods, strengthen communities, and preserve the social and economic fabric of Palestinian life.

But resilience alone is not enough. No amount of entrepreneurship can replace the fundamental rights still denied to Palestinians: access to land and water, freedom of movement, and control over their economic resources. If structural restrictions caused by Israel's illegal occupation persist, the private sector will remain confined to survival mode instead of realizing its true potential for growth and development.

Oxfam and its Palestinian partners remain committed to standing with producers, MSMEs, cooperatives, and private companies who continue to create, work, and hope under extraordinary constraints. We extend our gratitude to all partners, stakeholders, and donors whose ongoing support enables Palestinian communities to safeguard their livelihoods and dignity in the face of systemic and long-standing challenges.



This work was made possible thanks to the incredible efforts of our partners: The Palestinian Farmers Union (PFU), the Agricultural Development Association (PARC), and the Rural Women's Development Society (RWDS), whose dedication on the ground continues to make a real difference.



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