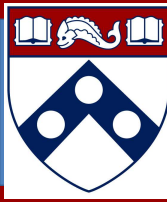


“The Land of Sad Oranges”: The Politics of Israeli-Palestinian Citriculture

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PURM



Origins of Citrus in the Palestinian Region

- Oranges were introduced to Jaffa, a port city, in the 10th century
- Also known as *shamouti* oranges
- Other citruses were introduced and cultivated as well: the Balady citron, grapefruit, and Palestinian sweet lime
- Citrus would not gain significance until the mid-1800s, however



Success – and Growing Concerns and Issues

- Between 1922-1930, citrus accounted for 54% of Palestine’s exports, but there were growing concerns
- For a while, the quality of Jaffa oranges overcame these concerns, but this would change
- Other nations (like Spain) had cheaper labor, lower shipping costs, and shorter distances to European markets
- Palestinian citrus products sold for a fraction of the price of competitors in Florida and California, leading to far lower profit than what was needed to sustain the industry
- 1933 brought especially bad luck to the industry:
 - Regulations were implemented to hurt Palestinian orange exports
 - Lack of rain, abnormally warm weather, insect infestations → fruit “of bad colour and poor flavour”

Israel’s Attempts at Salvaging the Industry

- Although Israel continued exporting Jaffa oranges for many years, the industry would never be the same
- The government attempted to revamp some of the confiscated groves for production but their success was limited
- Farm owners no longer had access to cheap Arab labor and any possible revenue was still extremely low, providing little to no incentive for any Israeli farmers to rejoin the industry
- Israeli military operations continued to render more and more groves unusable
- Palestinian farms were also unable to have any significant exports/profit and internal conflict about this within Israel would continue well into the 21st century: many Israeli officials tried to protect Palestinian exports and let more oranges through the border because Israel had a stake in Gazan produce, but the border officials themselves did not adhere to these orders. In fact, tons of oranges were left to rot at the border because they were not allowed through.

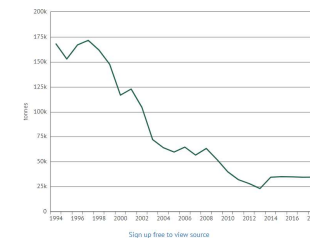
The Rise of Jaffa Oranges

- By 1845, Palestine began exporting significant quantities of oranges both because demand increased and also because previously planted groves began to bear fruit.
 - Demand increased worldwide due to the newfound knowledge of the immunization properties of Vitamin C
- Exported 200,000 oranges in 1845 – this number would grow rapidly in coming years
- Mostly limited to wealthy Palestinian landowners
 - High production costs with delayed yield
- By the early 20th century, Palestine was exporting up to 38 million oranges annually
- Orange groves were owned by Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and they all employed one another as well

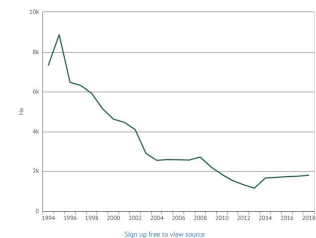
The Beginning of the Decline and the Decline

- Spain overtook Palestine as the chief producer of oranges
- Growing tensions between Arab Muslim farmers and Jewish farmers
- Overseas markets began declining due to tariffs and because Palestine was a mandated territory and could not demand reciprocity of trade
- Profitability began declining greatly
- All of this was then exacerbated by World War II and British post-war efforts to reignite the industry did not help much
- Once Israel was established, the turmoil in the region caused irreparable damage to the industry
 - Establishment of kibbutz led to Muslim and Jewish farms no longer hiring workers of the opposite religion
 - After the Nakba in 1948, Palestinian orange groves were confiscated and made Israeli property; however, many were also destroyed

What is Palestine citrus fruit production?



What is Palestine citrus fruit area harvested?



Symbolism

- The Jaffa Orange became and continues to be a symbol of the Palestinian people’s ancestral homeland and their nostalgia for hopes of independence
- The title of this project comes from the short story by Ghassan Khanafani, which was about Palestinian exile and used the Jaffa orange as a major symbolic element
- When Israel was formed, some Jewish immigrants began using the Jaffa orange as a state symbol which many have argued was appropriation
- Despite this, Jaffa oranges still have a strong public connection to Israel because Israel continued exporting them for many decades