

### TASK F3: CASE STUDY - Anaqeed Al-Khair Co-operative Farm

In a community that is made of several tribes in a string of villages that are now split by an international border (Jordan - Syria) it makes sense not to duplicate resources but to come together in clusters of villages (Fig.F7) that can share their experience, products, capital and resources. In the light of this the Badia Research and Development Centre provided the catalyst and funding to initiate a co-operative farm owned and run by a farmers' cooperative.

The farm was provided with office buildings, barns and equipment to enable it to rear sheep (as opposed to rangeland goats), handle bee keeping and honey production, and to coordinate the marketing of vegetable produce (tomatoes, aubergine, water melon and okra) grown by small holders. In addition they own a truck, workshop and brick-making facility. The farm employs 5 permanent staff and 70 seasonal staff. The farm aims to use the minimum of pesticides and fertilizers.

The principal periods of activity are:

February - July: Honey harvest.

April - May: tomato cultivation.

June - September: drying of sun-dried tomatoes (Fig.F5)

The keeping of sheep for wool, mutton, milk, and cheese was experimental in a bid to diversify the agricultural economy (Fig.F6). The initial herd was 200 - 300 sheep among the farmers. The natural rangeland grazing is inadequate for these sheep, which need to be fed in stalls all year around with imported barley. The Government used to subsidise the barley feed to the tune of 10kg/month/sheep. However the animals required 25 - 30kg/month/sheep and at 300JD/ton the cost of maintaining these flocks has become prohibitive. It is cheaper to import lamb from other countries. There has always been a demand for lamb at certain times of the year. For example for the celebration of Eid at the end of Ramadan the market in Mafraq handled 27,000 head of sheep in just three days and some of this was exported to Saudi Arabia. Barley was coming available on the black market but at very high prices and there is an urgent need to get the grain back onto the white market at accessible prices. However the orders from Saudi Arabia have declined in recent years and farmers have started to sell their sheep to cover their costs. Flocks in Jordan have fallen from 5million head to 3½million.

This situation has led the members of the co-operative to review their activities. The production of honey is of growing importance with Badia honey fetching good prices in Amman. In 2007 they produced 400kg, which sold at 15JD/kg.

For two years they tried raising camels that had retired from the Badia Police (the 'Camel Corps' that patrols the rugged international border). However they proved unsuitable for both meat and milk even though good camel milk is in demand in the city as a health food. The animals were really only useful for riding and so they plan to sell them and to re-stock with younger animals more suited to providing milk and meat.

A private cheese factory was established to take the sheep milk but as costs increased the farmers were forced to take loans from the cheese maker to cover their costs until things reached the point whereby the factory was receiving no milk at all.



**Fig.F5: The honey-making facility (right) and tomato drying floors**

**Fig.F6: Sheep flock being fed on imported barley**

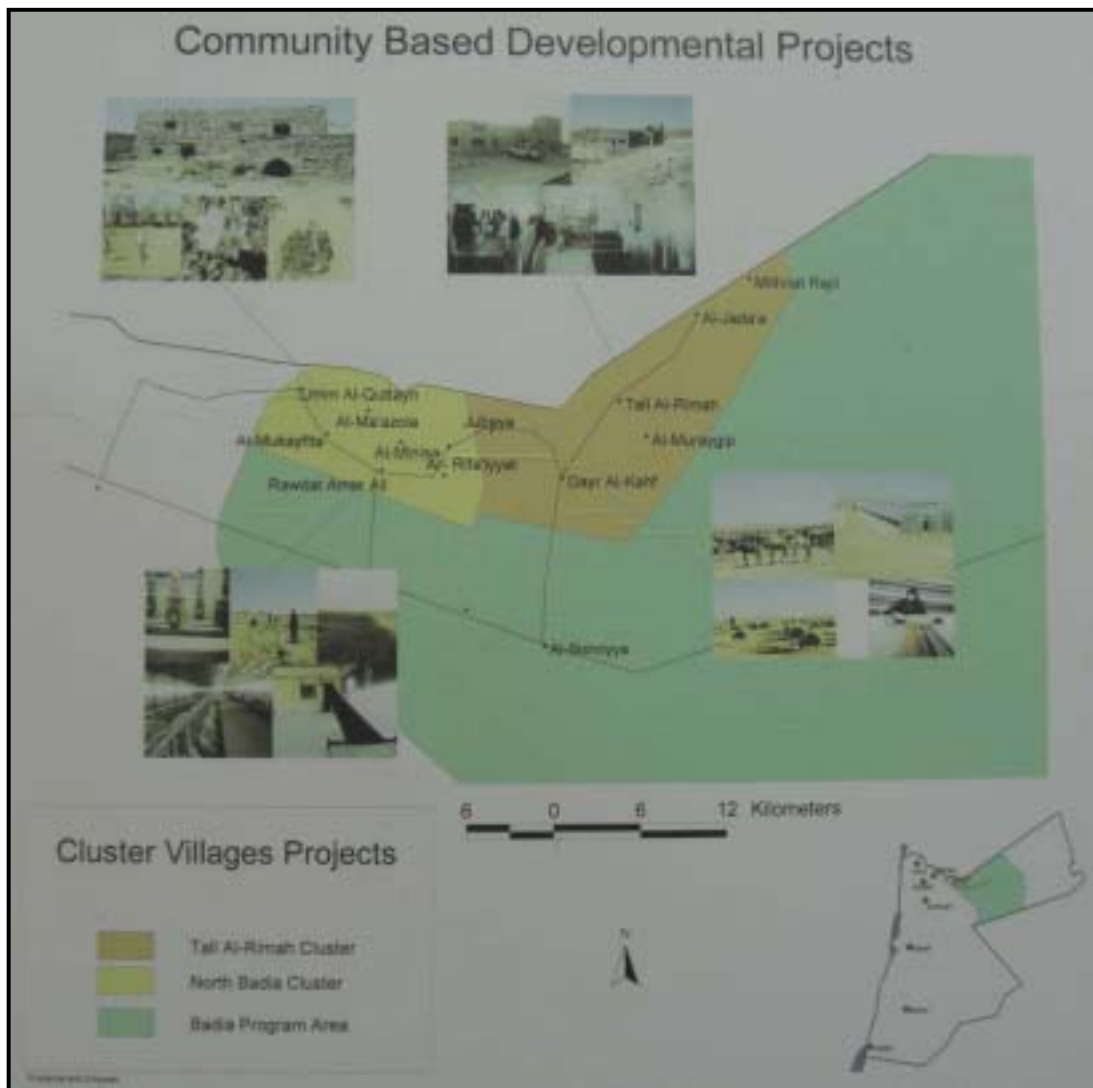


As a result of these set-backs the cooperative is now falling back on its ability to produce concrete blocks for construction and the availability of its truck to get market garden produce to market. The women have also been producing crafts for sale. Until recently their hand-made high quality goat hair tents were in demand but are now outsold by cheaper, poorer quality tents made in Syria.

**TASK:**

1: Divide into small groups. Each of you will be a farmer member of the cooperative. Hold a meeting to discuss the issue of falling sheep sales and to provide suggestions for alternative ways forward to make the Co-operative financially viable.

2: Report back.



**Fig.F7: Cluster Villages projects.**