



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Women in Agriculture: West Asia

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- ❖ The female share of the agricultural labor force in the Middle East and North Africa has significantly increased, from 34% during the period 1990- 1995 to almost 45% in 2011, while men's contribution has decreased from 66 to 55% during the same period.¹
- ❖ Some of the highest and fastest-growing rates of female agricultural labor force participation in the region are found in Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Syrian Arab Republic.²
- ❖ The Palestinian Authority estimates that 15.4% of the total employed in the West Bank is employed in the Agriculture Sector, and 7.8% in the Gaza Strip. Women compose 18% of the labor force and one fifth of them (22%) contribute to the agricultural sector.³
- ❖ Palestinian rural women contribute largely to extensive chores, factory work, and farm work. Despite this contribution, an estimated 40 percent of rural Palestinian women at working age carry out unpaid work, which means that their production is not covered in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁴
- ❖ The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations presently supports 84 women's associations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (approximately 900 women farmers).⁵
- ❖ In Jordan, women make up 15% of the agricultural labor force. ⁶
- ❖ A survey of women and agriculture in the Near East showed that most women engaged in agriculture in the region work on small subsistence farms in food production, care of small livestock and food processing.⁷
- ❖ In 2007, the National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas (NOWARA) was initiated in Lebanon by the Lebanon Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with the Italian government, for "the promotion of territorial development through the valorization of women entrepreneurship and the creation of innovative dynamics related to the work and employment of Lebanese women in the agricultural, agro food and rural sectors."⁸
- ❖ A 2010-2011 NOWARA study of 150 Lebanese villages found that approximately 48% of surveyed Lebanese women work in the agricultural sector, followed by education.⁹
- ❖ Women's share of Syria's agricultural labor force increased from 31.7% in 1980 to 60.7% in 2010, doubling in just 30 years.²

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/egm/Martini-EP-9-EGM-RW-Sep-2011.pdf>

² <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Labour Force Survey, Q2, 2010.

⁴ PCBS Labour Force Survey Rounds, 2000-2007.

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al807e/al807e00.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w6038e/w6038e07.htm>

⁷ El-Fattal, Lamia (1996) *Women in agriculture in West Asia and North Africa: a review of literature*. Working Paper No.10, CGIAR Gender Programme, Washington DC: CGIAR

⁸ http://www.nowara.org/?page_id=10

⁹ http://www.nowara.org/assets/infoAndResources/studies/Executive_summary_of_Study_Women_in_rural_areas_2011.pdf