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Planting the Future: Youth Agribusiness Partnerships Project



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Quarterly Report

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Cover Photo: *Planting the Future* project participants from all four cohorts at the AgriTech Exhibition in Tel Aviv in April 2015.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEF	Near East Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOWB	Olive Oil Without Borders
PARCC	Syracuse University Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration
PCARD	Palestinian Center for Agricultural Research and Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YAP	Planting the Future: Youth Agribusiness Partnerships

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the activities and impact of the Planting the Future: Youth Agribusiness Partnerships project during the project's seventh quarter, from April 1, 2015 – June 30, 2015.

During this quarter, the project team focused on supporting the development of business plans for participants in the palm sector and assisting beneficiaries whose plans were selected with the procedures necessary for project funding registration.

Key project activities and achievements during the quarter include:

- 24 palm cohort participants attended two joint debriefing sessions, one held in Israel and the other in the West Bank. These sessions allowed participants to learn new techniques, share information, collaborate with partners from across the border, and receive further support in completing their business plans.
- A second informational meeting was held in April at NEF offices for 11 leaders (5 Palestinians and 6 Israelis) whose business proposals were selected. The meeting's purpose was to offer the leaders guidance on the procedures to be followed after receiving their grants.
- 11 contracts were signed with 31 beneficiaries, representing 23 projects. Grant distribution for the start-up of these projects will begin in the next quarter.

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Planting the Future: Youth Agribusiness Partnerships (YAP) project aims to build lasting relationships of trust and collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians – with a focus on youth, including women – through joint cross-border agricultural enterprises that create jobs and generate income, promote technical upgrading, and increase access to markets. The Near East Foundation (NEF) and its partners – the Peres Center for Peace and the Palestinian Center for Agricultural Research and Development (PCARD) – aim to bring about systemic change in the agricultural economies to promote long-term, large-scale cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis. The project leverages the experience and relationships of NEF and its partners with communities in the Palestinian Territories and in Israel, particularly in the Jordan Valley and neighboring areas. It builds on the relationships (including among implementing partners), lessons, and achievements of NEF's USAID-funded Olive Oil Without Borders project

The project will (1) provide agribusiness and entrepreneurship training for Palestinian and Israeli youth, primarily those ages 21 to 35, (2) facilitate the creation of cross-border agribusiness enterprises (i.e., joint ventures or linked businesses) through small grants and technical assistance, and (3) leverage the relationships in these networks to promote reconciliation through communications and cross-border stakeholder workshops. The resulting businesses will anchor networks of farmers that extend across the border between Israel and the West Bank. They will deliver direct economic impacts through increased productivity, income, and cross-border trade. They will result in important social outcomes of increased trust and collaboration across the border.

The project focuses on sectors where there is demonstrated opportunity to improve productivity and market linkages. These include fruits and vegetables, dates, herbs, and small ruminants (particularly for dairy). In each sector, there are significant gaps in technology and productivity between Israel and Palestine, but there are also opportunities to expand production and markets in both areas. While productivity and markets are critical aspects of agribusiness development, there are also significant opportunities in areas such as input supply, quality assurance and certification, and post-harvest storage and handling.

III. ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Objective 1: Build knowledge of the agribusiness sector, business management skills, and business relationships between Palestinian and Israeli youth.

Activity 1.2: Provide training to 120 Israeli and Palestinian youth entrepreneurs in agribusiness and entrepreneurship.

During the reporting period, two joint debriefing sessions were held.

Follow-up Joint Debriefing Session/Study tour: On April 30, 24 palm cohort participants (16 males and 8 females; 9 Israelis and 15 Palestinians) visited two sites as part of a study tour. The first site was a date farm in Area B of the West Bank, which is under Palestinian civil administration with Israel retaining exclusive security control (with limited cooperation from the Palestinian police). The owner of the date farm explained the fertilization and branch-reduction methods utilized in his farming operations to the project participants.



Members of the Palm cohort tour a date farm as part of their study tour.

The cohort then visited Zehevli Nursery, a cloning palm nursery in Tiberius. The nursery is one of only five such nurseries in the world that reproduces palm saplings under carefully controlled conditions to improve the trees' vitality, fecundity, and resilience. The owner of the nursery demonstrated the cloning procedure while explaining the particular features of the processes involved. The participants were then able to observe actual re-produced saplings in the nursery greenhouses.

At the end of this session, business plans templates were distributed to the participants, and project manager Mohammad Joudeh gave the cohort guidance on how to fill them out.

Debriefing Session: On June 16, another debriefing session was held at Tsipora Restaurant in Jericho with 9 Palestinian participants in attendance. This session was held in order to assist participants with some of the difficulties they were experiencing filling out business plan templates. Mohammad Joudeh and Jihad Al Ibraheemi were on hand to address the participants' questions regarding protocols, procedures, and other project related matters.



Palm cohort participants listen attentively as palm-cloning techniques are explained at the Zeheveli Nursery.

Activity 1.3: Assist 120 training participants to develop 60 business plans for cross-border agricultural enterprises.

Palm cohort participants began submitting their business proposals at the end of June. The submission process is not yet complete and will continue through the month of July. Challenges regarding business plan submission are explained in greater detail in Section 5.

B. Objective 2: Strengthen cross-border economic cooperation in agribusiness to promote peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Activity 2.1: Support the creation of cross-border agribusiness enterprises – joint ventures or linked businesses – among youth through small grants and technical assistance

Business Plans

Near the end of June, Planting the Future project participants from the palm sector began submitting their business proposals. By the conclusion of this reporting period, 5 joint business proposals were submitted. Business plans included proposals for packaging of dates for cross-border sale and using palm tree hormones as medicine. The selection committee is currently reviewing and assessing the proposals according to the standard evaluation criteria.

Projects selected during the quarter include the following:

Project Title	Submitted By	No. of Grants	No. of Projects Represented	No. of Beneficiaries
1) New Improved Breeds of Sheep	Fadi Allari (Palestinian)	1	2	2
2) Agri Holy Land	Yair Rafael (Israeli) Masa Atiyeh (Palestinian)	2	1	2
3) Medical Plants Center	Adi Forty (Israeli) Reevan Balatiyah (Palestinian) May Abu Zahra (Palestinian) Mahmoud Atiyeh (Palestinian)	2	2	4
4) New Vegetables Varieties	Jamal Barham (Palestinian) Eyad Ma (Palestinian)	2	4	4
5) New Improved Breeds of Sheep	Faheid Rwesat (Palestinian)	1	2	2
6) Dried Fruits and Vegetables	Walid Khazni (Israeli) Sulaiman Daabes (Palestinian)	2	2	2
7) Friends of Walajeh	Dolev Shalev (Israeli)	1	2	4
8) Natural Oil Soap	Mazen Ali (Israeli) Maisa' Nasrallah (Palestinian) Wael Daraghmeh (Palestinian)	2	2	3
9) Sprout and Wheat Grass Juice Farm	Alaa' Khneefis (Israeli) Rozan Tanbooz (Palestinian)	2	2	2

Informational Meeting

Beneficiaries whose business proposals were among those that were chosen by the selection committee attended the second informational meeting held on April 20. The project team held the meeting at the NEF office for participants from the vegetables, herbs and small ruminants cohorts. 11 leaders (5 Palestinians and 6 Israelis) participated; they met with their partners and received guidance on the procedures to be followed after the receipt of their grants. NEF accountant, Aya Nabulsi, and Wael Burhan, the NEF HR manager, clarified the contents of the agreement and explained each partner's duties and responsibilities. During the informational meeting, they also explained the funds distribution and cost-share processes.

At the meeting's conclusion, the participants received copies of the contracts for review. If no further clarifications were necessary, they participants signed the contracts. In sum, 11 contracts (with 31 beneficiaries) were signed; the grants distribution process will begin in July. (Please see section 5 for more information).

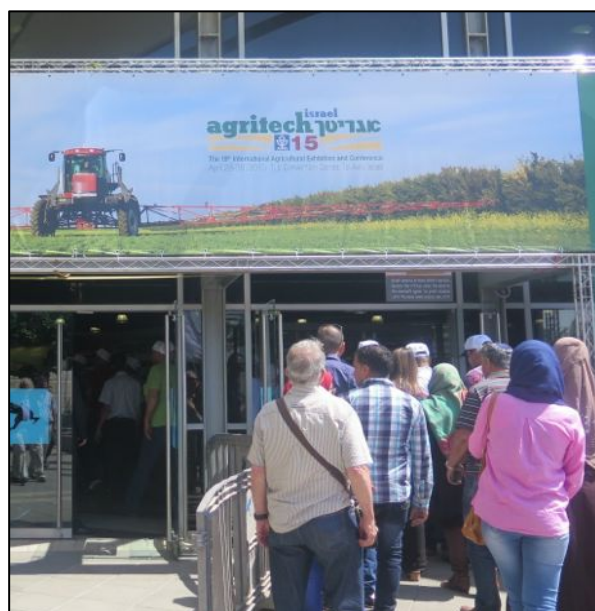
Activity 2.2: Support enterprises in developing and expanding networks of at least 1,200 stakeholders.

Planting the Future project participants from the 3 cohorts (vegetables, herbs and small ruminants) whose plans were selected to receive support, have begun expanding their networks. As part of this expansion, they are bringing in price offers and machine specifications from several professionals, producers, suppliers and other stakeholders from both the West Bank and Israel.

C. Cross Cutting Areas

International Agricultural Technology Exhibition. The project team selected participants from the 4 cohorts (medical herbs, vegetables and fruits, small ruminants, and palm) from the West Bank to attend the 19th International Agricultural Technology Exhibition (AgriTech), which was held at the Israel Trade Fairs and Convention Center in Tel Aviv on April 29, 2015. This exhibition is one of the most important exhibitions in the field of agricultural technologies. Participants were able to gain knowledge and insights into new technologies being used in planting, irrigating and harvesting.

Communications Visit and Training. From June 3-16, a study group from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communication visited NEF offices. Their objective was to tell the stories of people who have participated and succeeded in USAID funded projects. The group represented the best of Syracuse University's magazine, newspaper,



Planting the Future project participants from all four cohorts enter the AgriTech Exhibition in Tel Aviv.

and online journalism students, as well as the highest-ranking students from the multimedia, photography, and design departments. Accompanying them were the distinguished professors Ken Harper and Steve Davis, each of whom has years of experience and impressive resumes in their respective fields.

The purpose of the visit was twofold. For the students, it was an opportunity to get experience working outside of the United States and to learn how to adroitly work with a controversial subject such as writing new stories about Palestinian and Israeli Farmers without becoming embroiled in the related political issues. For NEF and USAID, it was an opportunity to have in-depth stories told about the impact of their regional projects and the people who benefit from those initiatives as well as to highlight the kinds of places where USAID's work is most needed and is most effective. For a period of just under two weeks, the student journalists were introduced to participants in the Planting the Future and Olive Oil Without Borders projects, and were able to encounter the people of the region while exploring various areas of the West Bank. The students were also given tours of the countryside and nearby tourist sites so that they could gain a broader understanding of the area, especially Jerusalem. Some students were also given the opportunity to explore in greater detail other areas of USAID and NEF's work, namely in the Youth Agribusiness Partnership Project. Finally, the students were familiarized with the Olive Oil Without Borders project partners in Israel via an excursion to Israeli farmland near Nazareth. Overall, it was an excellent opportunity to observe the dynamics of Israelis and Palestinians working together towards increased economic development. The day before their departure, Ken Harper and Steve Davis gave a lecture at the NEF Office on story telling, effective communication, and best photography practices for social media. They shared success stories, videos and photographs demonstrating the differences between amateur and professional photography. Since the completion of their trip, the students have been writing stories and editing photographs pertaining to their experiences on the study tour. They are also creating a video, which, together with the other media materials they are generating, will be included on a special website later in the year. In the meantime, the individual stories will be provided to NEF and USAID.



Members of the palm cohort take a group photo during their study tour.

D. Communication

The project team is in the process of preparing success stories regarding joint business development.

E. Synergies

The Project Committee is working to develop synergies and relationships with other projects in the region, as well as funding agencies, to provide additional support for community projects. This is an on-going activity, with the goal of expanding project activities and contributing to the sustainability of the project's impact in the targeted communities.

IV. PROGRESS AGAINST WORKPLAN

The Planting the Future Project has made progress as projected against its first year implementation plan. A chart describing progress against the work plan is included in [Appendix 1](#).

V. CHALLENGES, REMEDIAL ACTIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

After the follow-up debriefing session held for the palm sector, some participants complained of difficulties in communicating with participants from the other side due to the language barrier. Subsequently, the NEF team organized a second joint debriefing session on June 16 in order to facilitate more robust communication and mutual understanding between Israeli and Palestinian participants, as well as to address questions raised by the participants regarding the business plan templates. However, Israeli participants did not attend because of their security concerns. This caused a delay in business plans submission and in the selection processes.

Project leaders whose projects were selected for grants attended the second informational meeting held at the NEF office. The meeting was intended to inform them of the steps they needed to follow moving forward. However, at this point, participants began to demonstrate reluctance, saying that the required procedures were too complicated for such a small amount of money. Subsequently, the project team decided to give more than one grant to one project. As a result, 9 contracts with 15 grants were signed; those 9 contracts represent 23 projects for 25 beneficiaries.

The grants distribution process has been delayed until next quarter because projects funded in the West Bank are tax exempt. Accordingly, this requires permission from the Ministry of Finance for exemption from value added tax. The process of applying and receiving such permission will take at least 3 weeks.

VI. PROJECT INDICATORS & IMPACT

Chart: Summary of Project Indicators, Targets and Impact

#	Indicator	Current Quarter	Year 2 Target	Year 2 Actual	Project Target	PROJECT (ACTUAL)
1	Percentage increase in number of participants who believe that economic cooperation can promote cross-border collaboration and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.	-	50%	-	60%	-
2	Number of US funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale	3	15	13	49	27
3	Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.	-	180 P: 90 I: 90	109 P=45 I=64	320	138
4	Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.	-	36	32	64	40
5	Number of cross-border agribusiness plans created.	5	60	50	60	50
6	Number of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources.	-	30	-	30	-
7	Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources.	-	25%	-	25%	-
8	Number of Israeli and Palestinian beneficiaries participating in activities that seek to promote access to increased economic resources	-	600 P: 300 I: 300	-	1200	-
9	Number of private enterprises, trade/business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices.	-	4	-	12	-
10	Percentage increase in number of participants who indicate that they have an increased positive perception about "the other."	-	40%	-	45%	-

Project Goal: Build lasting relationships of trust and collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians – particularly youth – through joint cross-border agricultural enterprises that create jobs and generate income, promote technical upgrading and increase access to markets.

1. Percentage increase in number of participants who believe that economic cooperation can promote cross-border collaboration and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL
Percentage increase in number of participants who believe that economic cooperation can promote cross-border collaboration and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.	50%	-	-

This indicator is reported on an annual basis.

2. Number of USG-funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL
Number of USG-funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale.	15	27	3

This number includes two (2) joint debriefing sessions for the Palm cohort, one (1) informational meeting was held in NEF Office with 11 selected proposals leaders.

3. Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL
Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.	180	138	-

There are no unique participants at this quarter.

4. Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL
Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.	36	40	-

No unique women participants at this quarter.

IR 1: Cross-border economic cooperation is strengthened between Palestinian and Israeli youth.

5. Number of cross-border agribusiness plans created.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Number of cross-border agribusiness plans created	60	50	5

5 business proposals from the palm sector submitted.

6. Number of micro, small, and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Number of micro, small, and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources.	30	-	-

Distribution of grants will begin in the project's next quarter.

7. Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources.	25%	-	-

Distribution of grants will begin in the project's next quarter.

IR 2: Stakeholders in networks have increased links to markets and improve productivity.

8. Number of Israeli and Palestinian beneficiaries participating in activities that seek to promote access to increased economic resources.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Number of Israeli and Palestinian beneficiaries participating in activities that seek to promote access to increased economic resources.	600	-	-

This number will be updated in the annual report, following launch of first joint businesses.

9. Number of private enterprises, trade/ business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices.

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Number of private enterprises, trade/ business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices.	4	-	-

This number will be updated in the annual report, following launch of first joint businesses.

IR 3: Cross-border economic cooperation builds relationships of trust, mutual understanding, and collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians.

10. Percentage of participants who indicate that they have an increased positive perception about “the other.”

	Year 2	Project	Current Quarter
INDICATOR	TARGET	ACTUAL (TOTAL)	ACTUAL (TOTAL)
Number of Israeli and Palestinian beneficiaries participating in activities that seek to promote access to increased economic resources.	40%	-	-

VII. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

A. Objective 2: Strengthen cross-border economic cooperation in agribusiness to promote peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Activity 2.1: Support the creation of cross-border agribusiness enterprises – joint ventures or linked businesses – among youth through small grants and technical assistance.

Palm sector business plans will be submitted in July. The selection committee will meet at the beginning of August to review, evaluate and select date palm business plans for start-up grants.

The selected participants from the 3 cohorts (vegetables, herbs and small ruminants) will receive start-up grants at the end of July and launch their projects at the beginning of August. The project team will provide ongoing support during implementation. Selected entrepreneurs will contribute 25% of start-up cost in cash and kind (for example, equipment, premises, and/or supplies).

Activity 2.2: Support enterprises in developing and expanding networks of at least 1,200 stakeholders.

The selected participants will focus on bringing together networks of stakeholders and assist them to improve productivity and link to markets—involving at least 1200 individuals by the end of the project. The target for each business will be to bring at least 20 stakeholders (10 from Israel and 10 from the West Bank) into their networks. Both direct and indirect stakeholders will become members of the cross-border network of producers, suppliers, professionals, academics, students, and others.

B. Objective 3: Leverage business relationships and networks to promote reconciliation through communications and cross-border stakeholder.

Activity 3.2: Provide follow-on training and support for select youth entrepreneurs and members of producer networks (‘indirect beneficiaries’).

NEF is working with its partners to organize a roundtable for the vegetables sector will be held for Palestinian and Israeli selectees along with their stakeholders on September 3 at the Peres Center in Israel. The other three will be held during the next quarter. The roundtables and targeted workshops bring together members of producer networks across borders to discuss shared challenges and to confer on options for dealing with these issues collectively. These events will also work to develop the technical and business skills of the workshop participants while continuing to foster dialogue and build relationships among stakeholder networks across borders.

In summary, these events will:

- Create opportunities for direct interaction among as many of the producer network members as possible.
- Through the youth entrepreneur leaders and community leaders, they will reinforce awareness of cross-border collaboration among network members.
- Build skills among network members for managing their relationships productively and constructively.

VII. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PLANTING THE FUTURE: YOUTH AGRIBUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS - YEAR 2 WORK PLAN

Objective 1: Build knowledge of the agribusiness sector, business management skills, and business relationships between Palestinian and Israeli youth.

Principal Activities	Specific activity with Description	Number of Beneficiaries	Sub-Activities	Tasks	Deliverables	Responsibility	Output Indicators	Outcomes	Impact Expected	Location	Timing	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Status of Achievement
Activity 1.2: Provide training to 120 Israeli and Palestinian youth entrepreneurs in agribusiness and entrepreneurship	Selected participants in the Sheep, Vegetables, and Herbs sectors participate in second week of training; participants in the Palm cohort participate in the first and second week of 2-week training on agribusiness, entrepreneurship, and conflict management.	120 participants (60 Israeli and 60 Palestinian)	Host second week of training session for the Sheep, Vegetables, and Herbs cohorts and the first and second week of the training session for the Palm cohort.	Organize and host 5 sessions of workshops	Workshop reports	NEF with support from PCARD, Peres Center, GIMI, expert consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training manual developed 120 individuals trained (first session) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants have increased knowledge of agribusiness, entrepreneurship, and conflict management Participants collaborate in training activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased collaboration between Israeli and Palestinian youth in agribusiness promotes peace-building. Increased collaboration between Israeli and Palestinian youth promotes industry growth/improved livelihoods. 	-	October, 2014 – Jan 2015												Completed	
			Intersession Debriefing	8 small group debriefing sessions	Workshop reports	NEF with support from PCARD, Peres Center, GIMI, expert consultants				Oct.-Nov. 2014 Nov. 2014 – Feb. 2015														
Activity 1.3: Assist 120 training participants to develop 60 business plans for cross-border agricultural enterprises	Coaching and support in development of business plans	120 participants (60 Israeli and 60 Palestinian)	Provide coaching and support to finalize plans	Coaching for participants.	60 business plans finalized	NEF, Peres Center, PCARD, GIMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 finalized business plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants collaborate in development of business plans 			Oct. 2014 – Sep. 2015													Ongoing

Objective 2: Strengthen cross-border economic cooperation in agribusiness to promote peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Principal Activities	Specific activity with Description	Number of Beneficiaries	Sub-Activities	Tasks	Deliverables	Responsibility	Output Indicators	Outcomes	Impact Expected	Location	Timing	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Status of Achievement
Activity 2.1: Support the creation of cross-border agribusiness enterprises – joint ventures or linked businesses – among youth	Panel of Palestinian and Israeli agribusiness experts guide participants; joint ventures supported financially and technically.	120 trainees (60 Palestinian and 60 Israeli)	Panel of Palestinian and Israeli agribusiness experts and industry leaders advise aspiring entrepreneurs	Panel members mobilized for participation	List of panel members List of enterprises selected for support and evaluation forms	NEF, with PCARD, Peres Center, GIMI, expert consultants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 cross-border agribusiness enterprises supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 cross-border agribusiness enterprises promote cooperation and improved livelihoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians through cross-border economic cooperation. 	NEF Headquarters (Nablus), GIMI, various sites	Oct. 2014 – Sep. 2015													Ongoing

