Taysir Arbasi, Zaytoun’s Advocacy and Liaison Officer in Palestine

Taysir is Zaytoun’s Advocacy and Liaison Officer in Palestine, and a non-executive director on our board. In addition to his work with Zaytoun he has been working with an international NGO on advocacy and development projects in Palestine for over 15 years.

An advocate of the power of fair trade in supporting community resilience, he grew up in the Salfeet district which is an area highly dependent on olive cultivation and one which has seen much of its rich agricultural resources confiscated through the construction of the illegal settlements.

Zaytoun is a Community Interest Company, a social enterprise that was founded to support Palestinian producers through fair trade. 100% of the profits are reinvested into furthering this mission. Since its beginnings in 2004 Zaytoun has worked closely with the Fairtrade Foundation, and in 2009 we launched the world’s first Fairtrade olive oil. This was also the first Fairtrade certified product from Palestine. The Zaytoun range has grown to include za’atar, Fairtrade almonds and the Great Taste Award winning maftoul, freekeh and Medjoul dates. The exceptional quality of these products, despite the obstacles presented by the illegal occupation, is testament to the resilience of Palestinian people and their rich culinary heritage.

“Olive farming is about heritage, it’s not just about money. We inherit this land from our parents and we give it to our children.”

Belal Eid, Jorat Amra Cooperative
THE STORY OF ZAYTOUN

In the wake of the second intifada, Palestinian farmers suffered economic hardship and isolation from the world community. We saw a role for fair trade in a conflict zone as a way not only to introduce a high quality sustainably produced olive oil to the UK market, secure sustainable livelihoods for Palestinian farmers but also to allow those farming communities a voice in the wider world: to speak of their rich history and heritage and their lives as farmers, families, landowners and traders.

In 2004 many farmers were forced to sell their olive oil to traders at a price that was below cost of production. Fairtrade has played a role in farmers now being paid a fair price for their organically grown produce and the additional Fairtrade premium paid to the cooperative allows for further development and training.

Women are also well-supported by Fairtrade olive oil and almond sales. Because of the restrictions of the occupation, unemployment is high and women have increasingly found themselves bringing in useful household income from participating in farming and food production. Since its inception, Zaytoun has imported and distributed over 1,000 tonnes of Palestinian products to a mixture of retail and wholesale customers, in addition to a strong core of regional fair trade and Palestine solidarity groups. Zaytoun olive oil is used for anointments by cathedrals across the UK including St Pauls in London, and many faith groups sell the oil at local stalls as an act of solidarity with Palestine. Zaytoun is available from Traidcraft, Planet Organic, Whole Foods Market, Oxfam shops and independent retailers across the UK and Ireland. For a full list of retailers and wholesalers please visit www.zaytoun.org

Visit Palestine

Every year, Zaytoun organises trips to Palestine for its supporters and customers. These trips are timed to coincide with the annual olive harvest in October.

www.zaytoun.org/visit_palestine.html

TREES FOR LIFE

Zaytoun supports an olive tree planting project which is run by the Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA). The PFTA farmer co-op produce the olive oil, maf fou, almonds and freekeh which Zaytoun sells.

Farmers interested in participating in the project apply through Palestine Fair Trade Association coordinators. Allocations are based on the following, a farmer must:

- Own land suitable for the number of trees applied for
- Demonstrate capacity to care for and nurture trees
- Be ready to prepare land for a collective tree planting day
- All trees must be planted on the day they are delivered.

Priority is given to farmers who:

- Have lost trees to Israeli destruction
- Farm small areas
- Are women landowners interested in farming
- Young starter farmers who have inherited or acquired land.

£20 pays for 5 olive tree saplings (3 years old) to be planted in Palestine. Find out how to take part by clicking on our website:

www.zaytoun.org/plant_a_tree.html