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Food for Progress Program with Jordan Update: The Al-Karak Dam Commences to Fill

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation, Agriculture in the Economy, Agriculture in the News,
Climate Change/Global Warming/Food Security,
SP3 - Build Demand in Developing Countries through Trade Capacity Building

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Report Highlights:

The Food for Progress Program with Jordan has funded the construction of the al-Karak Dam in the al-Karak Governorate, 150 kilometers south of Amman. The project has been funded using \$10.4 million of monetized funds (from donated U.S.-origin hard red wheat) and an additional \$4 million from the Government of Jordan. The dam construction was completed in late September 2017. The dam will assist over 25,000 beneficiaries in the Karak Valley in irrigating agricultural lands.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Food for Progress Program with Jordan – The Al-Karak Dam

The Food for Progress Program with Jordan (fiscal year 2012) has funded the construction of the al-Karak Dam in the al-Karak Governorate, 150 kilometers south of Amman. The project has been funded using \$10.4 million of monetized funds (from donated U.S.-origin hard red wheat) and an additional \$4 million from the Government of Jordan. The dam construction was completed in late September 2017.

The Al- Karak Dam Commences to Fill: The dam’s reservoir commenced to fill with snow/rain runoff during the winter season of 2017-18; it is currently at a depth of nine meters and holding back about 150,000 cubic meters of water. Once filled to capacity, the reservoir will hold 2 million cubic meters (MCM) of water; it will have an inflow and outflow of 4 MCM, irrigating over 500 hectares. The dam will assist over 25,000 beneficiaries in the Karak Valley in irrigating agricultural lands.



Photo: Al-Karak Dam, initial fill level high water marks (February 8, 2018).

Impact on Water Supply: The al-Karak Dam will increase the water supply and support the local community by providing water for the irrigation of several types of horticultural crops (e.g., tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower), as well as assist to recharge the underground aquifer.



Photo: Al-Karak Dam. (L-R) FAS OAA Cairo Senior Regional Agricultural Attaché Mariano J. Beillard and FAS OAA Amman Agricultural Specialist Mohamed Khraishy (February 7, 2018).

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation aims to raise national dam rainwater and runoff storage by 25 percent by 2019. Dam construction is raising overall capacity from 327 million cubic meters to 400 million cubic meters. There are 12 major dams in Jordan along with 25 sand dams and 143 large ponds collecting floodwaters in the desert.

Jordan's Water Availability: Jordan is one of the world's driest countries. It has one of the lowest levels of per capita water availability (150 cubic meters per annum). The Syrian crisis has dramatically increased the country's population (which is on track to double by 2047), making meeting water demand even more critical. Shifting precipitation patterns in the region are aggravating the situation where already more than 90 percent of rainfall evaporates or runs off. Groundwater is being utilized by some estimates at twice the rate of recharge; agricultural use accounts for half of the water supply's consumption.

Jordan and Refugees: Jordan counts today with a population of over 10.2 million (Central Intelligence Agency - July 2017 estimate); this estimate has been revised upwards to reflect assumptions about the net migration rate due to the increased flow of Syrian refugees. Prior to 2012, Jordan had a population of 6.2 million. The country has also experienced an influx of Egyptian, Yemeni, and Libyan nationals in recent years. The influx of refugees, as a result of regional instability, has strained Jordanian food security and per capita water availability.

The Syrian conflict has led to the influx of 650,000 UN-registered refugees (over 80 percent live in Jordan's urban areas). Jordan's census puts the numbers of refugees closer to 1.3 million (as of early 2016). Resolution of the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts should lead to the reopening of border crossings and export-import transit routes. It is expected that this will also facilitate the eventual return of refugees to their home countries.

Jordan's economy is among the smallest in the Middle East. It lacks sufficient supplies of water, oil, and natural resources, underlying the Jordanian government's reliance on foreign assistance. Jordan's central location makes it strategically important to the United States, its main ally. The kingdom maintains good relations with western and neighboring countries.