

**Palestine Fair Trade Association
General Assembly Conference Meeting
May 26th 2011
Jenin**

PFTA's organizational growth is sprouting new leadership and new opportunities for producers to be the main players in making decisions that impact their lives and their work. As such, Palestine Fair Trade Association held a general assembly conference on May 26th 2011 to discuss future plans and elect a new board of directors. The meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce in Jenin city. 39 out of 56 members of the General Assembly attended as well as representatives from the ministry of economic and interior affairs. The meeting started with a briefing of the yearly achievements and financial budget. Members of the general assembly approved a strategic plan and a budget that was detailed in the annual report. This included an environmental plan that members reviewed and voted into effect.

In the last few years Palestine Fair Trade Association has made significant impact in the lives of farmers across the northern West Bank. In over 4 districts PFTA, which holds under its umbrella over 49 farmer cooperatives, has been able with minimum resources to achieve several challenging developmental goals. PFTA certified over 1000 olive oil producers fair trade working with major certifying bodies such as FLO and IMO. In this last year PFTA has achieved the latest organic and fair trade certification Naturland, which is a comprehensive certification well known in Germany and is expanding. Naturland is a private certification scheme that is putting more rigorous standards into practice to contribute more actively to the protection of the environment and the natural resources focusing on organic agriculture as the way to protect and manage fragile ecosystems. On a global scale, over 50,000 Naturland farmers are cultivating an area of over 142,000 hectares and Palestinian farmers are now part of it with the village of Jalqamous in the Jenin district being the first to acquire this certification in Palestine through PFTA.

Another area of success at PFTA has been the expansion of women's work. While PFTA works with 9 women cooperatives, this year many major organizations working with women have come to learn from PFTA because they could see that there is genuine sustainable success on the ground. PFTA in its history and experience is serving as a role model influencing the direction of development in Palestine. This was highlighted when the General Assembly voted in a new and highly active board of directors whose members have been immersed on the ground with fierce commitment to the values and practices of fair trade.

Future Plans:

Future plans and potential developments were the highlights of the conference. Members of the board and the general assembly discussed a wide range of issues from new certifications to reaching out to new markets. Below are some of the highlights discussed:

1. Organic and fairtrade Certification expansion to include new produce such as honey, almonds , and cherries. There is a large demand for almonds with some European Fair Trade companies looking to source around 40 tons of organic and fair trade almonds.
2. Developing a research center for organic agriculture that will work to find solutions to plant diseases such as the fungus attacking the olive leaves locally known as “Ain el Taous”. The research would be conducted with farmers in their field.
3. RUN ACROSS PALESTINE was a proposed project that will be implemented in collaboration with fair trade companies in the United States (Food for Thought and Higher Ground). This marathon would include a run from the village of Yatta in the south all the way to Jenin in the north of the West Bank stopping in several villages along the way and providing saplings and activities in the targeted villages. Each runner would have to raise \$10,000 to run. The marathon is meant to raise awareness as well as bring more communities together using its main revenue for PFTA’s Trees for Life program with the goal to plant 40,000 saplings by 2013.
4. Internships for young leaders who are recipients of the Canaan Fair Trade scholarships were a topic of discussion. In the works a discussion with universities in the U.S. to create more study abroad opportunities for students seeking to earn Masters degrees.
5. Diversifying and developing live stock and exploring developing a wider array of cheeses that would be exported.
6. Creating a major composting location in the Jenin area through collecting organic waste from farmer and fruit markets.
7. Expanding women work to include more products and more cooperatives. PFTA is working with 10 new women cooperatives conducting trainings and food safety workshops in their villages.

New Board of Directors:

The conference was concluded with new board of directors elections, which were monitored and conducted by an elections committee made up of the representatives of the ministries of economy and interior as well as Ahmed Tahayneh and former board member Ali Jawabra. 11 people from the general assembly nominated themselves. After all members voted, the votes were counted publicly. Out of the 11 nominees 9 board members were elected from the villages of Sanour, Deir Ballout, Anin, Anza, Mazar' Noubani, Rameh, Nos Ijbail, Jalama, and Burquin representing the districts of Salfit, Jenin, Ramallah, and Nablus. A significant outcome of this elections is that member of the General Assembly voted in a dynamic new board whose members are very excited to carry the vision of PFTA forward that for the first time two women members were elected to the board contrasting with previous years where only one woman was represented. This is a significant development highlighting PFTA's success in involving more women in the work and in creating new dynamics that allow woman to be more visible and active participants in the decision making process testimony of PFTA's commitment to values of equality, fairness, social participation and responsibility.



**Siham Mustafa casting her vote (upper left)*

**Ahmad Tahayneh recording votes (middle)*

**Widad Farid and Siham Mustafa, the two newly elected women board members (bottom right)*

The new board members are:

1. Siham Mustafa (Deir Ballout, Salfit district)
2. Bashir Habaybeh (Sanour, Jenin district)
3. Rida Khader (Anza, Jenin district)
4. Oudeh Qadi (Mazari' Noubani, Ramallah district)
5. Abed Al Mu'ti (Rameh, Jenin district)
6. Khader Khader (Nos Ijbail, Nablus district)
7. Majed Abufarha (Canaan Fair Trade)
8. Widad Salameh (Burquin, Jenin district)
9. Mahmoud Issa (Anin, Jenin district)

Saturday following the elections the new board met at the Palestine Fair Trade Association offices in Jenin where they elected Mahmoud Issa (Abu Musa'b) from Anin as president of the board, Khader Khader from Nos Ijbail as vice president, Majed Abufarha as secretary, Abed El Mu'ti Hidareyeh as treasurer, and Siham Mustafa for Women Empowerment.

The Palestine Fair Trade Association is very excited to welcome its newly elected members of the board. As many new opportunities and projects are ahead PFTA is proud to be an organization whose membership is the community it serves.

Palestine Fair Trade Association
May 31, 2011