

'Anin Cooperative

The 'Anin cooperative is in the Jenin district of the PFTA. The cooperative has 50 farm families and benefits a total of 457 family members. The cooperative formed in 2006, and has 2906 dunums under cultivation, of which 2671 dunums are certified organic. There are 33,940 olive trees on their farms. The 'Anin cooperative received FLO fair trade certification in February 2009. All PFTA cooperatives are fair trade certified by IMO.

'Anin village is located on the Green Line, and most farmers lost land and trees to the occupation, and more recently to the Wall, which was built inside Palestine and not on the border. Their land was confiscated outright, or is inaccessible to them behind the Wall.

Mahmoud Issa story

The Issa family (photo attached, Mahmoud, Filistina and daughter Eman at four) is one of the 'Anin cooperative farm families. In 2004, Mahmoud worked as a day laborer. With the price of olive oil at bottom, and the economy crippled under occupation, he wanted to give up farming his family's land. Many people in his village could not afford to keep their lands and risked losing their groves to Israeli settlement expansion. But when Canaan Fair Trade offered him to buy his oil for double the price he could not believe it. "Suddenly I felt that my family's trees could be saved. Before I felt that my trees did not exist anymore. That they were worthless." Fair trade changed his life. Now he and his extended family are farming olives full time in the traditional manner of hand picking each olive before sending it to the press.

Mahmoud's entire extended family - there are 7 brothers and 4 sisters - benefits from their land and labors. His brother, Arafat, told me with pride that his oldest daughter, now in high school, was going to be a doctor. She wants to attend medical school, she told me. Arafat's wife is a member of one of the PFTA's woman's cooperatives, making couscous. Arafat's family is expanding their home by two stories as their lives improve. Another brother is on the Olive Oil Council of Palestine, one of three PFTA members out of 11. This brother's oldest daughter Haya earned a Canaan college scholarship award in 2008.

With his natural leadership skills Mahmoud was elected to the PFTA Board and leader of the 'Anin cooperative. He was a member of the Canaan scholarship committee in 2008 that awarded 10 full four-year university scholarships to farmers children. Mahmoud was able to dedicate his time to his land because Canaan started marketing his olive oil to international markets including the U.S. under organic and fair trade principles.

