



ZAYTOUN
FROM PALESTINE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Doha Asous'ih an olive tree. Photography by Alaa Badarneh

FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

2023 was a year dominated by the launch of a relentless Israeli attack on Gaza, whose consequences quickly rippled out to the West Bank. We needed to call on all our resources as the landscapes within which we operate shifted suddenly and dramatically. Unpredictability is inherent to the context in which we work, but the last quarter of the year brought an unprecedented level of risk to life and livelihood for the Palestinians who create the products we sell.

Against this devastating backdrop, we experienced a surge in sales motivated by our customers' desire to not only show solidarity with the Palestinian people but to send them tangible support. Turnover was at a record high by the end of the year at £2.1 million; representing a 15.5% increase over 2022 figures. This dramatic rise in sales applied across all our products and customer segments.

Alongside the financial picture, we experienced a sharp increase in social media following and reach as we shared stories and calls for solidarity from Palestinian communities everywhere as they struggled under a brutal assault on lives, livelihoods and liberty.

Our mission is as relevant today as it was when we conceived Zaytoun in the wake of the economic and social restrictions of the second intifada.



Photo: Alaa Badarneh

Haj Rafeeq Hussein looking out across the valley from his farm in Ti'inik

2023 IN PALESTINE

The year 2023 marked 75 years since the Nakba, the mass displacement of 700,000 Palestinians from land that was to become Israel. That displacement has been an ongoing fact as settlements grow in the West Bank along with an infrastructure that excludes Palestinians from their own lands.

October brought news of the horrific Israeli military assault on Gaza, which turned into an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. We watched in disbelief as entire communities were destroyed and displaced. Meanwhile, the West Bank was placed under a military lockdown, while armed settler attacks grew in frequency and violence, resulting in multiple deaths. This deadly rise in aggression came at a time when Medjoul date and olive producers were attempting to bring home their harvests. These harvests provide livelihoods and food security for thousands of families.

On our blog and social media posts and through our newsletter, we shared the voices of Palestinian journalists and their calls for justice, dignity, freedom and an immediate ending to the siege on Gaza. We also suggested ways to support Palestinian communities under attack.

Although unbelievably shocking in their extent and intensity, these violent outbursts are part of a pattern of steadily growing brutality that is characteristic of the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian lands and lives.

Despite all the challenges, our suppliers managed to not only produce but export their harvests, so we were able to offer continuity in product availability and meet rising demand.

2023 IN UK

We were deeply saddened to see our longtime friend and partner, Traidcraft PLC, go into administration early in the year. A pioneer of the Fairtrade movement in the UK, Traidcraft sold our product range via their website and through innumerable regional Fairtrade buying groups. In recent years we also benefitted from using their warehousing and delivery services. We remain deeply grateful to the staff at Traidcraft, past and present, for their support over the years. They worked hard to ensure that our transition from their premises went as smoothly as possible.

Happily, we soon confirmed arrangements with another long-term partner of Zaytoun, Oxfam, to provide warehousing and fulfilment services. While we may have lost one founding member of the Fairtrade movement, it means a lot to us that we are now working closely with another.

We remain committed to working with like-minded organisations, and together proving that business can be done in ways which nourish people and protect the planet on which we all rely.

We are always looking to grow our product range and diversify our income. In September we launched a new addition to our almond range; smoked almonds. Early indicators of sales were good and we look forward to seeing this product on more shop shelves next year.



In response to the changing situation in Palestine, we prioritised sharing voices from affected communities there. Our communications focused on our role in offering a way for people in the

UK and Ireland to show solidarity and support incomes for those in the West Bank.

We ensured we kept our audiences updated on news from our suppliers via our blogs, newsletters and social media. As the Israeli attack on Gaza continued, we wrote articles for the Scottish Left Review and The New Arab sharing our experiences and position regarding the safeguarding of farmers' lives and livelihoods.



RESILIENCE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

In such difficult times, we value our longstanding relationships more than ever. We draw on nearly two decades of business with our Palestinian suppliers and the support of the fantastic communities here in the UK that buy our products. This long-term network comes into its own whenever we are faced with challenges. We know we are always part of a bigger picture, whether in providing a tangible way for people to support Palestinian communities or creating market opportunities for Palestinian producers under occupation.

In remaining resilient to rapidly changing circumstances we are always inspired by the farmers, producers and processors from whom we buy. They show us, time and again, how to find possibility in the most limiting of situations and how to face seeming calamity with dignity and even good humour.

Manal Ramadan White
Managing Director

IMPACT REPORT

FAIRTRADE PREMIUMS

In 2023, the farmers in our Fairtrade supply chains received a total of £12,202 in Fairtrade premiums. These are paid in addition to the price of the products we buy and go directly to the co-operatives of each village. Co-operative members decide collectively how that money is spent. In 2023, investments were made in agricultural tools and equipment, as well as in village school facilities.



INCOME TO PALESTINE

Every purchase of our products means more income for Palestinian farming families. High unemployment rates, compounded by restrictions on travel that can mean a short journey to work takes hours, make it all the more important that farming offers sustainable livelihoods for rural communities.



£1,401,381

Value of Zaytoun purchases
to producers in 2023

TREES FOR LIFE

Despite the escalating challenges in the West Bank, we are pleased to report that in January this year over 36,500 olive and almond saplings were distributed to farmers as a result of sponsorship by Zaytoun customers.

The Trees for Life programme is run by the Palestine Fair Trade Association, and provides seedlings and saplings to farmers in over 40 West Bank villages. These offer future livelihood opportunities as well as hope for those whose trees have been bulldozed or burnt, or are now inaccessible due to increasing land grabs for illegal Israeli settlements.



Trees for Life



50.240

Total trees planted
in the 2023 season

36.540

Trees sponsored by
Zaytoun customers

FARMING IN PALESTINE 2023

The bombardment and invasion of Gaza starting in October overshadowed earlier events. According to OCHA¹ as of November 2023 nearly 2,000 West Bank Palestinians were displaced amid settler violence since 2022; 43% of these since 7 October 2023.

While the world's attention was focused on the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, a crisis was also brewing in the West Bank. We started to hear of a sharp rise in settler violence, enabled in part by the Israeli Security Minister's arming of the 500,000 settlers in the West Bank, and a harsh crackdown on travel. 2023 surpassed 2022 as the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since UN records began in 2005². Meanwhile, over 3,000 Palestinians were arrested since the start of the war on Gaza³. These horrific developments come at a time of year when Medjoul date and olive producers had planned to reap their harvests, the foundation of livelihoods and food security for thousands of Palestinian families.

We spoke to a farmer who told us that over 200 of her olive trees were burnt by settlers, and she had to leave five of her olive fields unharvested because Israeli settlers were throwing rocks and threatening to kill them. Although the Israeli army were present, she told us that the soldiers stood by as the settlers attacked.



An illegal settlement in the West Bank

Throughout 2023, new settlements in the West Bank were announced by the Israeli government. A rising tide of violence threatened farming communities.

This was a report from a colleague in the West Bank:

“We always know to expect an increase in violence and harassment from settlers and the army at this time of year – just when the crucial harvest of olives is due to take place. But this year, that violence is increasing and it is not specific to the olive groves.

We heard directly about attacks around Nablus, and we know many farmers and workers were prevented from going to their farms. There are more roadblocks and checkpoints springing up everywhere. We heard three people in Kasera village were killed by settlers, and we heard of Marda village being attacked, and then there were air strikes on Jenin. We hear of arrests happening every night and shops being burned down.

You can feel the escalation of violence and tension everywhere. Most recently and disturbingly we have heard that there has been a massive distribution of weapons to settlers across the West Bank – perhaps 20,000 settlers have been armed.

This means the value of the olives to us is correspondingly increasing – the more we are prevented from working and getting an income – the more we depend on the land. It is a time to encourage agriculture more than ever simply so people can be self-sufficient.

For many young people, this is the first time they are experiencing violence and destruction on this scale. They too are therefore learning the importance of the land.”

“

“In time of war, you go back to your land - and your land will be there waiting for you”

”

By the end of 2023 we were very relieved to have not heard that any of the farmers supplying us had been victim to the worst of the occupation violence. Their steadfastness was strong - and harvests, though impacted by destruction and obstruction, were gathered regardless while exports made their way to the UK and Ireland.

¹https://www.ochaopt.org/content/other-mass-displacement-while-eyes-are-gaza-settlers-advance-west-bank-herders?goal=0_b864f5e0f9-097727b920-111760217

²<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/2023-the-deadliest-year-for-palestinians-in-west-bank-un-report/>

³<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/un-human-rights-office-opt-dramatic-rise-detention-palestinians-across-occupied-west-bank>

HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

In March 2023, we welcomed farmer, cook and community leader Doha Asous to the UK during Fairtrade Fortnight. Doha visited five cities, sharing her experience of farming in the shadow of illegal settlements and the value of international solidarity and community connection.

She also joined our liaison and advocacy officer Taysir Arbasi and Palestine Fair Trade Association manager Mohammed Ruzzi to give a presentation at the Oxford Real Farming Conference.

Doha spoke of her passion for biodiversity, and for the indigenous food and farming heritage of Palestine.



ZAYTOUN ON NATIONAL TV

“

“These almonds and Medjoul dates are amazing... please thank the farmers in Palestine because the stuff that I've tasted here has changed my view on what a date should be. It really has and I've been cooking a long time.”

”

These were the words of chef James Martin, as our MD Manal Ramadan White and co-founder Heather Masoud appeared on ITV's Saturday morning show to talk about how Zaytoun products are created. It was an uplifting conversation, and a proud moment for us and the producers in Palestine who deliver award-winning products under the most challenging of conditions.

Meanwhile, James cooked up a delicious tagine with our olive oil, maftoul, almonds and Medjoul dates.



PALESTINE VISIT

In June, our Managing Director Manal Ramadan White travelled to Palestine to meet up with our partners and suppliers across the country, accompanied by our Board Chair Susan Ralphs, for whom this was a first visit.

They met the women of the Al Ibdia co-operative, who skillfully hand-roll maftoul. This co-operative, part of the Palestine Fair Trade Association, is run by and for the women. The tour of our suppliers also took in the state-of-the-art factories of Canaan Palestine, where the PFTA's products are processed and prepared for export, and those of our date suppliers in the Jordan Valley.

All the suppliers and producers whom Manal and Susan met emphasised the importance of the export market to their livelihoods. Susan came home inspired by the levels of investment in the latest technology and processes she witnessed.



Canaan director Nasser Abufarha with Susan Ralphs

“

“Palestinians are absolutely passionate about their country, and have an unwavering faith that investing now will bear fruit in the future.”

”

COOK FOR PALESTINE

All over the world chefs and cookery writers urged people to #CookForPalestine – an initiative it was obvious we could get behind. We started to collaborate with UK chefs such as Fadi Kattan and Joudie Kalla, who hosted supper clubs to raise money for Palestine, promoting Zaytoun products and the vital importance of buying from Palestinian producers. These in turn have inspired people to organise fundraising feasts in their own homes and communities.



SUMMARY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2023

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

	2023	2022
Turnover	2,102,268	1,819,577
Cost of sales	(1,521,781)	(1,335,098)
Gross Profit	580,487	484,479
Other income	603	3,806
Administrative expenses	(393,742)	(394,347)
Operating Profit	187,348	93,938
Interest received and paid	(20,552)	(6,325)
Profit before tax	166,796	87,613
Tax paid	(39,323)	(17,717)
Profit for the year	127,473	69,896

BALANCE SHEET

	2023	2022
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	1,181	3,859
Intangible assets	0	1,480
Total fixed assets	1,181	5,339
Current assets		
Stock	458,609	337,101
Debtors	431,650	407,752
Cash bank and in hand	388,306	346,631
Total current assets	1,278,565	1,091,484
Creditors falling due within one year	(502,320)	(361,427)
Net current assets	776,245	730,057
Total assets less current liabilities	777,426	735,396
Creditors falling after more than one year	(71,447)	(156,890)
NET ASSETS	705,979	578,506
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Called up share capital	9	9
Profit and loss account	705,970	578,497
Shareholders' funds	705,979	578,506

Zaytoun is a Community Interest Company, a social enterprise founded to support Palestinian farmers through fair trade. 100% of our profits are reinvested into furthering this mission.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Atif Choudhury
Cathi Pawson
Heather Masoud
Manal Ramadan White
Peter Jones
Rebecca Rowland
Susan Ralphs
Taysir Arbasi

ZAYTOUN TEAM MEMBERS

Bridget Cowan / Charlotte Borger
Communications Manager

Heather Masoud
Co-founder and Operations Director

Donal Guerin
Finance Manager

Manal Ramadan White
Managing Director

Omar Qasim
Management Accountant

Wesam Tahboub
Customer Relations and Office Manager

BANK

Triodos Bank
Deanery Road
Bristol
BS1 5AS

Rooted in Time
& Tradition



Zaytoun
1 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE
0207 832 1351
www.zaytoun.uk
contact@zaytoun.uk

 @ZaytounUK

 @Zaytoun_CIC

 @Zaytoun_CIC

Registered in England and Wales as a Community Interest Company no. 5078436
Designed by PMI Creative