

Note on the Settlement of Arabs from  
the Proposed Jewish State in Trans-Jordan.

Introduction and Summary.

The area here considered is that contained within the present boundaries of Trans-Jordan.

There are three means of achieving that increase in the yield of the land by which alone can place be made for agricultural settlers. These are by :-

A. Increasing the area under irrigation.

B. Developing dry-farmed areas where suitable land is at present unoccupied or used for sparse grazing only.

C. Improving dry-farming methods in areas already cultivated.

These are explained in this note, and the following is

a summary of the possibilities immediately in view for "mass" settlement of Arabs from the Jewish State under direct Government control:-

A. By canalisation of streams in the Jordan valley .....	1000 families
By minor lift-irrigation in the Jordan valley.	800 "
B. By development in the Shireh area.....	900 "
C. (Impractical).....	-
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TOTAL	2700 families

In addition to the above there would no doubt be settlement by individual enterprise, which would include settlers to meet demands for labour on intensification of cultivation in the canalised area of 150,000 dunams; settlers to develop springs and wells; and the uncultivated population needed by this expansion in the number of agriculturalists. For these it is not possible at present to give an estimate.

A. Increasing the area under irrigation.

of the users in their present state of education can probably only be safeguarded if it is accepted that when canalisation works are undertaken by Government they shall be entitled to an amount of water equivalent to that which they at present enjoy. Irrigated land for settlers can only be obtained, then, by bringing under control new supplies of water. The possible sources of such supplies are :-

(1) Lake Tiberias, the Jordan, and the Yamuk upstream of the Power Station.

Although the possibility of expropriating the electricity Concession is to be omitted from this preliminary survey it is worth recalling Art. 9 of the Concession which allows the Air in Council to "regulate, for the purpose of irrigation, the use of the waters of the Jordan and the Yamuk" subject (article 11a of Schedule) to the requirements of the Company. These requirements have not, as far as is known, been stated. Any such excess as is likely to be available could be taken from the Yamuk and used for irrigation in Trans-Jordan.

(2) By canalisation of the streams in the east of the Jordan Valley.

There are a dozen or so of these streams, between the Wadi el Arab in the north, and the south of the Dead Sea. The flow of the majority of them has been estimated by Mr. G.S. Blake (and recorded in his draft Report on the Geology and Hydrology of Trans-Jordan) and three of them were measured in June this year. Making some allowance for annual variations and taking as working a basis the discharge in late summer, a flow of not more than four cubic metres per second should be used for calculating irrigable areas. If it be assumed that of this amount one-third could be acquired, after canalisation (which would create savings in losses in transmission and in gross wastage which at present take place); and that one cubic metre will protect 37,500 downs of land extensively cultivated on the two-year

This land would have to be expropriated and legislation would be needed to acquire powers to control the water.

If 50 dorems of land per family be allowed, then 1000 families could be settled.

The immediate result of such a scheme would be, then, that a total of 150,000 dorems would come under complete Government water control on a basis of extensive cultivation, 50,000 being allotted to settlers. It need not be assumed, however, that the original extensive method, though their adoption as a basis for settlement is probably desirable, would persist. This large area under unified water control and with registered title in land and water rights, would prove a powerful attraction to capital and would become the most valuable land in Trans-Jordan. More intensive methods would probably follow, and the expansion in labour and in the ancillary population which the scheme would create might be supplied partly from the Arabs in the Jewish State.

(111) By minor lift-irrigation from the Jordan.

There are in Trans-Jordan some 26,000 dorems of "gor" land, i.e. the low-lying alluvial benches of recent formation on the immediate banks of the river. This land is cultivable by lift in small disconnected plots, but would largely need clearing of heavy bush, and rigorous anti-malarial measures would be necessary. The cost of developing would preclude any but intensive cultivation, under which it might support, say, 800 families at 30 dorems per family.

(117) By tapping sub-surface water supplies.

This would comprise improvements to springs, drilling of wells, and, possibly, the construction of subsurface dams in the streams mentioned under (11) above. But the present state of knowledge of the geology and hydrology of the country, though indicating possibilities in this direction, is insufficient for any estimate to be made.



of this method of expanding irrigation. Results of investigation in Palestine, and the general nature of Trans-Jordan are not encouraging.

B. Developing Dry-Farms in Unoccupied Areas.

The only region which is at the moment worth consideration is the Shirah, in the neighbourhood of Ma'an. It is estimated that there are some 440,000 dunams which are at present grazed by the Howaitah. The region was pronounced by Mr. J.D. Shepherd who visited it in the spring of 1934, as being "most suitable stock country" (Para 7 of his report dated 19th. March, 1934, to T. J. Economic Committee). Valuations of cultivated land in the villages in the district are poor, averaging some 25 kg. of wheat per dunam, owing probably to the low rainfall which appears to average between 100 and 150 millimetres per annum. It seems that this region should be classed, in the words of the 1936 Report to the League of Nations (p. 277) as one "where crops succeed in years of exceptional rainfall." If the Howaitah were persuaded to occupy <sup>and</sup> could subside on half the area, and if 20% be deducted from the remainder as being uncultivable, some 176,000 dunams would be available for settlement. It would be unsafe at this stage to allow less than 200 dunams per family, so that say 900 families could be accommodated. I hope that the area is capable of sustaining agriculturalists would need to be provided before Government could assume liability for settlement in this area.

C. Improving Dry-Farming Methods.

No hope can be entertained at present for any planned settlement depending on an increase in the productivity of existing dry-farmed areas. On the contrary, the danger of the creation of a landless class through sales to immigrants from

consider, and we hold this view also as regards the "lot viable" of the cultivator, be discovered by experience, by a system of 'trial and error' in the different parts of the country". These views could no doubt be applied with equal force to Trans-Jordan in respect of the 'lot viable'. Whatever the "lot viable" in the dry-farmed regions may be, it is certain that existing family holdings (which are indicated on P.327 of the League of Nations Report for 1936) exceed the "lot viable", if at all, by a negligible margin.

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**Source:**

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Ministry of Finance

Department of Lands and Survey

Records of the Diwan

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