

Renovation of Women's Couscous Cooperative in Jericho 2016

In this newsletter, we will shed light on the development and renovation of Women' Couscous Cooperative in Jericho. Also we will interview women and get their feedback about the renovation!



Towards Sustainable Social Economy

Women's Couscous Cooperative has been operating since 2008 when it was first developed by Al Reef and in partnership with PARC by providing the cooperative with location, quality assurance, equipment, input materials, marketing and promotion. The cooperative has since then been an important economic and social development tool for women in Jericho; a city that has an unemployment rate of 22.7% among women which is almost double the number of unemployment among men there which is 12.3% (PCBS, 2015). In the cooperative you see strong, empowered and capable women.

Not only has their work improved their economic conditions but also it has boosted their self-esteem, confidence and personality. The relationship between Al Reef and the members of the cooperative is based on partnership, transparency and mutual respect.

Contribution to Social Inclusion!

When Al Reef first supported the cooperative, it faced a challenge to combine the women who come from different social background; women who are originally from Jericho and women who were displaced and live in refugee camps nearby Jericho city. The cooperative has provided all these women from different social backgrounds with a sustainable and fair income, better working conditions, continuous support to enable them to develop their skills, reinforce the cooperation spirit, and expand their knowledge to the needs of the external market while preserving the traditional Palestinian kitchen where couscous is considered an integral part of the Palestinian history and culture. These women have become a great example of social inclusion success.



Members of the Women's Couscous Cooperative during their lunch break at the cooperative.

Women's Couscous Cooperative has around 30 women members where the majority of them come from nearby refugee camps mostly from Ein El - Sultan and Aqbat Jabr camps. Renovation of the cooperative was necessary to improve and facilitate the working conditions of the members and contribute to increased capacity and productivity and decreased costs. It will also enable the cooperative to produce more couscous and increase the income of all women in the cooperative.

Did you know:

Jericho is the most suitable place to produce couscous as couscous production needs high temperature to dry couscous, and with Jericho being the lowest city in the world (258 meters below sea level), it has the best weather for couscous production!



Couscous during the sun drying process!

A huge renovation at Women's Couscous Cooperative in Jericho



This renovation project is funded by Chico Mendes and Millan municipality, in partnership with PARC (Agricultural Development Association), and Al Reef for Investment and Agricultural Marketing. The idea is also to develop and achieve an organic chain for couscous within the project of Pal Pass: "Fair Food Security in Palestine". Furthermore, the renovation aims to increase the export potential of the cooperative and to attain HACCP certification and optimization of the couscous supply chains.

Renovation's Details



BEFORE



AFTER

The renovation includes the ceiling which is now, made of a double layer of metal sheets with 5 cm isolation layers. This will prevent the sun heat from entering the work place and reduce the temperature degree where the processing of couscous takes place.



INSIDE THE NEW WHEAT ROOM



THE DOOR TO THE NEW WHEAT ROOM

A new warehouse storage room was especially built for the reservation and protection of the stored wheat.

Renovation's Details



A new separate room was especially designed for sterilization. Before the renovation this room was within the inside area where women used to process the couscous. Now it's separate and this minimizes the heat and high temperature inside the building and women can work in much better working conditions.



Full painting of the cooperative walls in addition to the external walls.



Maintenance and rehabilitation of the air conditioning system inside the couscous processing hall.

Renovation's Details



ONE OF THE COOPERATIVE'S
GREEN HOUSES

Adding a concrete ground framework to support the drying green house.

Transforming spaces and lives!



"I would really like to thank everyone that has helped this cooperative and its progress", Zahra Abu Sharar- a member and a resident of Ein El Sultan refugee camp.



"The couscous cooperative is the foundation of our lives, it's like a second home for us and we work as one family here. This development enhances our persistence and dedication to work to have a sustainable project", Yusra Abu Saleem- Ein El Sultan Refugee Camp.

A Beautiful Talent

Shadia farawnah, a hardworking and high skilled productive member of the Women's Couscous Cooperative that has been rolling couscous for 8 years now, and has a great experience in almonds, thyme and dates production as well. Shadia started working to support her family financially to help her husband and a family of five children. Her husband's income was not enough. Through her work at the cooperative, she has been able to send her eldest son to continue studying at the university to become a lawyer. "This was my first job, I have never had a job before, but when I got the opportunity I decided to work to give my family a decent life" Said shadia. She considers couscous rolling a sophisticated skill that one has to learn and develop to excel in the job. "Rolling couscous is beautiful! I love it, it's like an art work for me! It gives me the feeling that I have a distinct talent that I can depend on to achieve success in my life and accomplish my dreams while I contribute to protect the Palestinian food culture. Not everyone can roll couscous, believe me" said Shadia.



Shadia will be participating in late September in the "Terra Madre" event which is organized in Italy by Slow Food to promote the Palestinian couscous as part of the Palestinian food culture.

Hear what Shadia said about the renovation!

When we were told about the renovation, we didn't expect it to be that huge! I was amazed when I saw walls being brought down and new spaces being added! We are so satisfied with this renovation; especially the addition of the new isolation ceiling that will prevent the sun heat from entering. It will be easier for us to process the couscous with less heat. It looks cleaner and whiter and much more relaxing and comfortable to process couscous inside!



Throwback to when the palestinian couscous won the first class prize in couscous competetion in San Vito Lo Capo- Italy.



The biggest importer of Palestinian couscous is C.T.M Altromercato in Italy.



Our Palestinian couscous in different packages as exported to our partners Trade Aid Importers, Oxfam Fair Trade, and SERRV International!



Our new packaging design for Couscous!

**Stay updated with us on our website:
alreeffairtrade.ps**

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