



Developing agritourism experiences in As-Salt

Engaging communities for self-reliance

With USAID BEST support
from 2017 to 2018

Located 50km north of Amman lie the three rural villages of Um Al 'Amad, 'Allan and Jil'ad, outside the town of As-Salt. The communities of these villages rely on farming and the scenic landscapes attract locals during high seasons. However, it is a little-known destination for international tourists. As such, there was great potential to increase visitation to the area and create new sources of income for the communities who live there.

The farming communities of As-Salt rely primarily on their agricultural lands as a source of income, producing wheat, local fruits and vegetables, olives and olive oil, dairy products, herbs, and more.

The area is quite popular with Jordanians, and an estimated 20,000 people flocked to the scenic natural areas each month during peak tourist seasons. However, it is a little-known destination for international tourists.

Supporting Al Marj to develop agritourism in Jordan

Al Marj for Training and Development Company is a nonprofit company that was established in 2015 to train local guides and farming communities to open their farms to domestic and inbound tourism. In 2017 they sought USAID BEST grant and technical support to develop agritourism in the villages of As-Salt as a pilot initiative that would expand to other areas if successful. The initiative entailed working with local communities and authorities to introduce accommodation, food and beverage services, tours and farm experiences.

Why is BEST supporting agritourism?

Agritourism addresses several challenges faced by the participating rural communities, including unemployment, low income sources and sales outlets for local produce and handicrafts. It also adds a unique new cultural and culinary experience to Jordan's offerings, where visitors can meet locals, learn about their life and traditions, and taste homemade dishes and meals they will not find in restaurants.

What developments took place in the villages near As-Salt?

USAID BEST worked with Al Marj to:

- Create awareness of the concept of agritourism within the villages of As-Salt
- Build tourism capacity of farmers and cooperative members
- Connect farms to three private sector service providers
- Develop agritourism products and experiences were developed at 12 farms in three villages
- Brand and market BookAgri



With USAID BEST support, the BookAgri initiative achieved the following:

- 8 farms and homes, three bed and breakfasts and a community garden have been renovated and equipped to host visitors for agritourism activities
- Full-day and half-day tour programs were developed that connect activities in the village
- BookAgri products are available at four shops and ten bazaars and markets

By July 2018, 136 people were involved in part-time or full-time work related to agritourism in As-Salt. These include:

- 90 women produce food items under the brand that are sold in bazaars, farmers markets and shops
- 36 people operate the 12 agritourism experiences in As-Salt
- 10 people are directly employed or involved with Al-Marj, including 6 local guides



Um Nidal shows visitors to her family's farm how to milk a goat. The income of Um Nidal's family sheep farm went from a monthly average of JD600 to JD1,300 after implementing

These farming families and their wider connections are all now benefitting from agritourism and there is potential for the circle to widen even further as visitor numbers increase. BookAgri participants have reported revenue increases between 25% and 50% since taking part in the BookAgri initiative.

Going forward: Implementing the BookAgri model around Jordan

Al Marj has reported to USAID BEST that revenues have grown to the point of self-sustainability. They are now working to expand their agritourism model to other parts of Jordan their business, including Jarash and Ajloun.