

109

THE "GHOUTA" OF DAMASCUS

BY

AZIZ AMIN DALATI

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

1938-1939

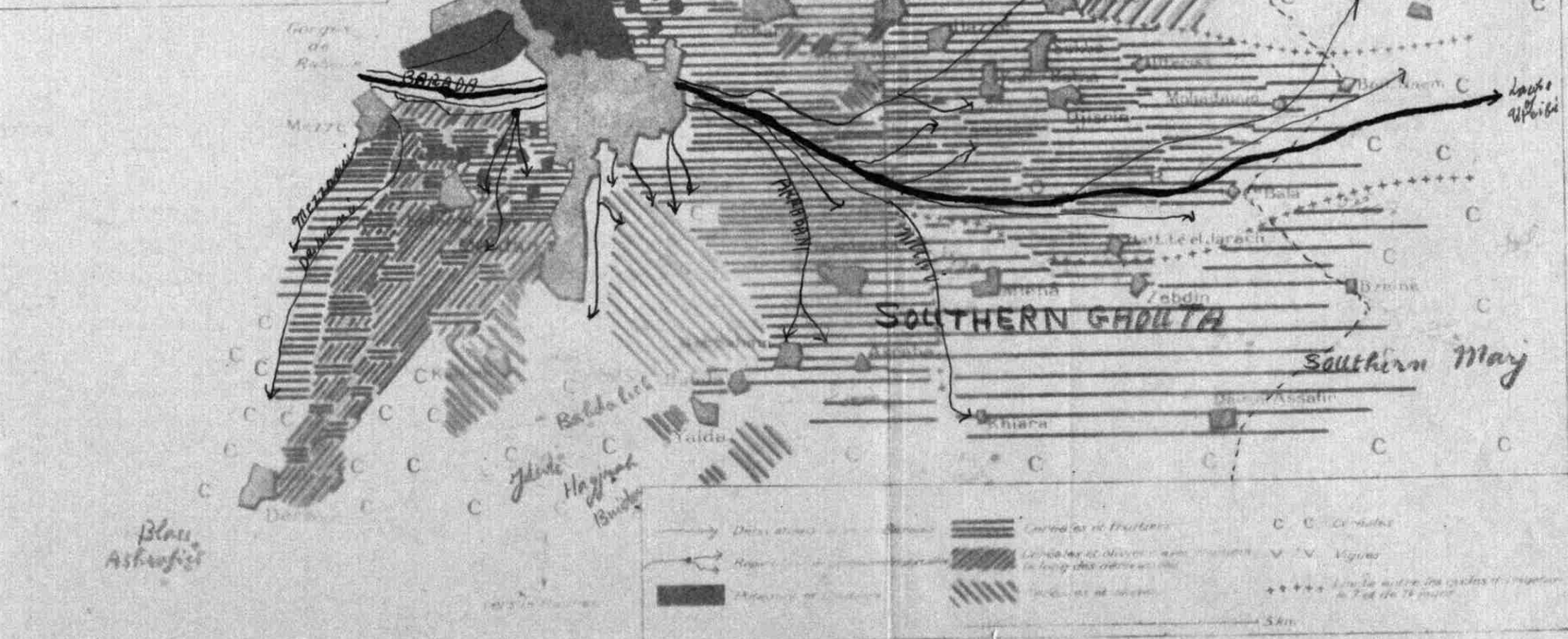
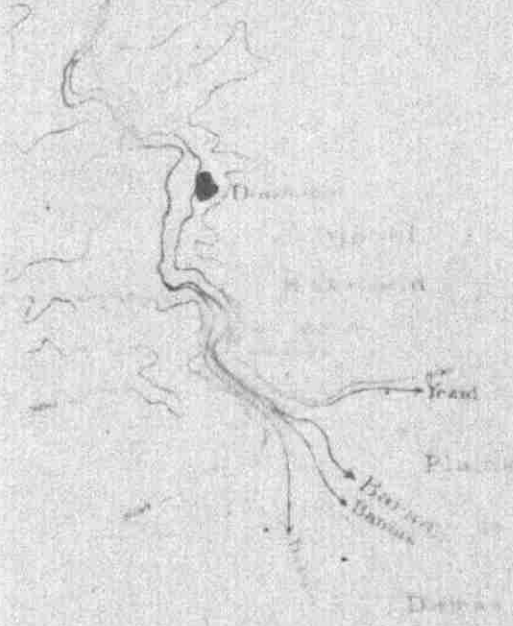
An essay presented to the Department of
Commerce in candidacy for the
Bachelor of Business
Administration.

June 10, 1939

Advisor - Mr. G. Hakim

Origine des premières
barrages du Barada
en amont de Bab

Hama



Blau
Ashraf

Dams and barrages	Limits of the Ghouta	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Circled C
Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Vignettes	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance
Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance	Limits of the Ghouta in the long distance

5km

THE "GHOUTA" OF DAMASCUS

T
109

(10)

THE "GHOUTA" OF DAMASCUS

BY

AZIZ AMIN DALATI

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

1938-1939

An essay presented to the Department of
Commerce in candidacy for the
Bachelor of Business
Administration.

June 10, 1939

Advisor - Mr. G. Hakim

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"THE GHOUTA"

	<u>Page</u>
FRONTISPIECE - <u>MAP I</u>	
CHAPTER I - <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	
CHAPTER II - <u>GENERAL CONSIDERATION</u>	1
A. <u>Divisions</u>	1
1. <u>Western "Ghouts"</u>	1
a. Area	1
b. Climatic Conditions	1
c. Population	2
2. <u>Southern "Ghouts"</u>	3
a. Area	3
b. Climatic Conditions	3
c. Population	3
3. <u>Northern "Ghouts"</u>	5
a. Area	5
b. Climatic Conditions	5
c. Population	6
CHAPTER III - <u>LAND TENURE</u>	8
A. <u>Types of Ownership in the Ghouts in General</u>	9
1. <u>Individualistic Ownership</u>	9
2. <u>Ownership by landlords</u>	9
a. Contract based on a share	9
b. Contract based on a fixed rent	10
B. <u>Ownership of Land in Different divisions of the Ghouts</u>	10
1. Western Ghouts	10
2. Southern Ghouts	10
3. Northern Ghouts	10

	<u>Page</u>
C. <u>Sizes of Land Holdings</u>	10
1. <u>Minimum and Maximum sizes owned by the farmer</u>	10
2. <u>Minimum and Maximum sizes owned by the landlords</u>	10
D. <u>Economic Significance of the Different Types of Ownership</u>	10
1. <u>Ownership by the Tenant</u>	11
2. <u>Ownership by the landlord</u>	11
CHAPTER IV - <u>SOIL AND FERTILITY</u>	12
A. <u>Composition of the Soil</u>	12
1. <u>Black Soil</u>	12
2. Reddish Soil	12
3. Black and Red Type of Soil	12
4. Sandy Soil	13
B. <u>Degree of Fertility in:</u>	13
1. The Western "Ghouts"	13
2. The Southern "Ghouts"	13
3. The Northern "Ghouts"	14
C. <u>Factors Reducing Fertility</u>	14
1. Negligence	14
2. Ignorance	15
3. Lack of Crop Rotation	15
4. Old Methods of Cultivation	15
D. <u>Remedies to Improve Utilization</u>	16
1. Greater Care	16
2. Education	16
3. Crop Rotation	16
4. Application of New Methods of Cultivation	17

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER V - <u>CULTIVABLE LAND</u>	18
A. <u>Extent of Cultivable Land</u>	18
B. <u>Extent of Land at Present Cultivated</u>	18
C. <u>Types of Land Cultivated</u>	19
1. Abundant Water and Orchard Type	19
2. Moderate Water and Ground Crops with Borders of trees	20
3. Diminished Water and Vineyards	20
D. <u>Reasons for Lack of Full Utilization and Ways of Possible Improvements</u>	20
CHAPTER VI - <u>METHODS OF WORK</u>	22
A. <u>Methods of Work in Cultivation</u>	22
1. Tools - Old and New	22
2. Plantation	23
3. Threshing	24
B. <u>Methods of Work in Irrigation</u>	25
1. Sources of Water	25
a. Barada and its Branches	26
i. Barada	26
ii. The Branches	27
b. The Underground Water	28
i. The Qanâts	28
ii. The Wells	28
2. Technique of Distribution	29
a. Water Rights	29
b. Administration of Water Rights	30
c. Disputes	31

	<u>Page</u>
C. <u>Drainage</u>	31
D. <u>Transport</u>	32
1. The Roads	32
2. Means of Transportation	33
CHAPTER VII - <u>PRODUCTION AND MARKETING IN THE</u> <u>"GHOUTA"</u>	34
I. <u>The Products of the "Ghoutas"</u>	34
II. <u>Relative Value of Crops</u>	41
A. The Western "Ghouta"	42
1. Types and Qualities of pro- ducts raised in it	42
2. Quantity and value of the Products	43
B. The Northern "Ghouta"	44
1. Types and Qualities of pro- ducts raised in it	44
2. Quantity and value of the products	45
C. The Southern "Ghouta"	46
1. Types and Qualities of pro- ducts raised in it	46
2. Quantity and value of the products	47
III. <u>Markets and Marketing Methods</u>	49
CHAPTER VIII - <u>LABOR IN THE "GHOUTA"</u>	51
A. <u>Labor Supply</u>	51
1. Laborers Working under a contract	52
2. Provisional Laborers	54
B. <u>Wages and Hours of Work of Labor</u>	54
C. <u>Conditions of the Laborers</u>	55

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER IX - <u>MEANS AND WAYS OF IMPROVING</u>	
<u>AGRICULTURE IN THE "GHOUTA"</u>	56
A. <u>Immediate and Necessary Steps</u> <u>to be undertaken solely by</u> <u>the Government</u>	57
1. Security and order in the villages and on fields	57
2. Good hygeinic and sanitary conditions	58
3. Construction of connecting roads	59
4. Spread of Education	59
B. <u>Steps of Secondary Importance to</u> <u>be undertaken by the Government</u> <u>and the help of the people</u>	59
1. The establishment of experi- mental stations & nurseries	60
2. Application of new projects of irrigation and registration of rights to water	60
3. Organization of Chambers of Agriculture	60
4. Prohibition of cutting trees	61
5. Protective Agricultural tariffs	61
6. Taxation of agricultural pro- duce	61
7. Prohibition of Goat raising	62
8. Fight against the pests	62
9. Establishment of agricultural banks	63
10. Abolishing of taxation of oil for machinery	63
11. Presence of market places	63

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER X - <u>A TYPICAL VILLAGE IN THE "GHOUTA"</u>	
<u>"MULAYHAH"</u>	65
1. Location and climatic conditions	65
2. Inhabitants and their health	65
3. Social and Economic life in the village	66
CHAPTER XI - <u>CONCLUSION</u>	69
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	71

T A B L E S

CHAPTER II

	<u>Page</u>
Table I	2
Table II	4
Table III	6

CHAPTER VII

Table I	35
Table II	40
Table III	43
Table IV	45
Table V	47
Table VI	48

A P P E N D I C E S

	<u>Page</u>
Appendix I	72
Appendix II	73
Appendix III	74
Appendix IV	75

CHAPTER I

Introduction

A wide agricultural plain, with an area of 57000¹ feddans and well watered by the Barada River, hosts the western, North-eastern and southern outskirts of the old city of Damascus, composed of 53² villages, supplies 45697³ people with necessities of life and several other tens of thousands of outsiders with earning income as businesses are possibly dependent on the farmers. This plain is well-known as the "Ghouta" of Damascus.

It has been the aim of this 'thesis' to make as thorough a study as possible of this large area so as to show the importance of the "Ghouta" from the economic point of view. The work includes in its pages practically all of the most important and relevant topics - a general consideration, land tenure, soil and fertility, cultivable land, methods of work, main products, labor supply, wages and means and ways of improvement, all supplemented by a typical village to give a vivid description of the life in the "Ghouta" and a conclusion covering the whole thesis.

Certainly a work that has such an aim and scope can hardly be free from errors. There is every possibility that there are some mistakes in the figures as they are mere estimates. But this has not prevented the writer from undertaking the work.

-
1. See Chapter II on the area p. 1
 2. See Chapter II on table I, II & III, p. 2, 4, 6
 3. Ibid.

With regards to the method used and sources resorted to, it will be observed that the deduction method has been used and the sources were partly books but largely a long and troublesome field work and numerous formal and personal interviews. The fact that sources are of such nature makes it evident that many great difficulties stood on the way. Yet, with all these the thesis has been completed. To what extent it has been a success the reader will tell.

CHAPTER II

General Considerations:

A general and brief consideration of the "Ghouta" involves a study of its divisions as to their areas, climatic conditions and populations.

A. Divisions

The "Ghouta" is divided by its inhabitants into three main divisions, each division comprising several villages. The divisions are as follows:

1. Western "Ghouta"

This section is the smallest division as it includes a relatively small area with only seven villages namely: 1. Doummar 2. Hamé 3. Ashrafiet-el-Wadi 4. Bassimy 5. Jdiedé 6. Kudsayya 7. Jimraya.

a. Area

The area of the Western "Ghouta" the section that is to the west of Damascus, is only 1400 feddans¹ Khttat, *b kb, 's* each feddan being equal to 6.217² dunums. As the whole "Ghouta" comprises an area of 57000³, then this section is only 2.5% of the grand total.

The main characteristic of the region is that, it is composed of valleys surrounded by mountains and hills.

b. Climatic Conditions

The climate of this section of the "Ghouta" in general is colder as compared with the city of Damascus,

1, 2, & 3. Department of Agriculture, a formal interview with Omary Bey el-Tarmanini, the general inspector, on January 11, 1939.

but it is still subtropical. This is due mainly, to the abundant supply of water from the Barada river. In a very cold winter one can say that the temperature falls below zero degrees^C, in December 1931, it fell even to -6°C^4 . During the summer the temperature rises over 40°C^5 , in August, 1920 it rose to 45°C^6 . Of course one could imagine that such a great range puts a severe strain on the many orchards trees, not only in this division but in all others as the climates of the different divisions are practically the same.

c. Population

The population of this region is 4301⁷ inhabitants, of which 2147 are male and 2154 are female. The population as per village being as follows:

Table I

Population as per Village in the Western "Ghouta", 1938⁸

No.	Name of the Village	Total	Male	Female
1	Doummar	1138	548	590
2	Hamé	737	370	367
3	Ashrafiet-el-Wadi	403	219	184
4	Bassimy	445	220	225
5	Jdiedé	512	249	263
6	Kudsayya	745	391	354
7	Jimraya	321	150	171
	Totals	4301	2147	2154

4. J. Allen Tower, The Oasis of Damascus, 1935, p. 16

5. Ibid 6. Ibid.

7. Department of the Census, 1938.

8. Department of the Census, 1938.

2. Southern "Ghouta"

This division of the "Ghouta" is the largest as to its area and population. There are 30⁹ villages in which 29986¹⁰ people lead an agricultural life. The villages are: 1. Darayya 2. Suhnaya 3. El-Ashrafiéh 4. Blass 5. Kafer Soussé 6. Mazzé 7. Yalda 8. Babbila 9. Beit Sahem 10. Zubdin 11. Sahyya 12. Hosh-el-Dweir 13. Shabaa 14. Al-Kadam 15. Sbeiné 16. Hosh-el-Rihamieh 17. Hajjrah 18. Buayda 19. Hosh-Kuyel 20. Hosh-el-Shair 21. Hosh-el-Sultan 22. Khiaret-Nofal 23. Deir-Bahdal 24. Anraba 25. Kabre-el-sitt. 26. Mleiha 27. Blatt 28. Jasamana 29. Hattitit-el-Jarosh 30. Bahdabéh.

a. Area

The area of the Southern "Ghouta" the section that is to the south-east of Damascus, is about 30,000 feddans or 186510 dunums.¹¹

One can see readily its importance as it comprises about 52.6% of the total area of the whole "Ghouta". The main characteristic of this section is that, it is composed, mainly, of plains which are very thickly covered with various kinds of trees.

b. Climatic Conditions

The climate of this section is relatively hotter than that of the Western "Ghouta", being completely temperate. The average annual rainfall is about the same as that of the Western division, being approximately 8.73 inches.¹² During the rainy season this falls in short, heavy squalls, over a period of time.

9 & 10. Department of the Census, 1938.

11..... Department of Agriculture, 1939.

12..... J. Allen Tower, "The Oasis of Damascus, 1935, p. 16.

c. Population

The population of the Southern "Ghouta" is about 29986¹³ people, of which 15150 are male and 14836 are female. The populations of the villages are as follows:

Table II
Population as per Village in the Southern "Ghouta",
1938^{14, 15}

No.	Name of the Village	Total	Male	Female
1	Darayya	6039	3545	3394
2	Suhnaya	1145	573	572
3	El-Ashrafieh	549	282	267
4	Blass	91	43	48
5	Kafer-Soussé	5491	2784	2707
6	Mazé	4958	2599	2359
7	Yalda	1234	557	677
8	Babbila	1001	515	486
9	Beit-Sahem	745	343	402
10	Zubdin	183	98	85
11	Sahyya	152	78	74
12	Hosh-el-Dweir	114	46	68
13	Shabaa	116	40	76
14	Al-Kadam	2311	1124	1187
15	Sbeiné	171	83	88
16	Hosh-el-Rihanieh	67	32	35
17	Hajjurah	271	132	139
18	Buayda	386	192	194
19	Hosh-Kuyel	-	-	-
20	Hosh-el-Shair	-	-	-
21	Hosh-el-Sultan	-	-	-
22	Khiaret-Nofal	-	-	-
23	Deir-Bahdal	-	-	-
24	Akraba	510	255	255
25	Kabre-el-Sitt	361	182	179
26	Mleha	670	368	302
27	Blatt	468	224	244
28	Yaramana	1748	848	900
29	Hattitit-el-Jarash	85	45	40
30	Bahdalieh	120	62	58
	Totals	29986	15150	14836

3. Northern "Ghouta"

This division of the "Ghouta" that falls to the North-west of the city of Damascus, is next to the Southern "Ghouta" in importance, as its area and population are nearly as much as those of the Southern "Ghouta", though there are only 16¹⁶ villages, namely: 1. Barzé 2. Kabun 3. Jobar 4. Urbin 5. Ain Terma 6. Hassé 7. Kafer-Batna 8. Jissrin 9. Efftriss 10. Mouhammadieh 11. Sakba 12. Hammora 13. Beit Sawa 14. Mdureh 15. Zamalka 16. Beit Naim.

a. Area

The total area of Northern "Ghouta" is 25600 feddans or 159155 dunums¹⁷. The total area is then 44.9% of the whole "Ghouta". The peculiarity of this region is that it is composed of large treeless fields.

b. Climatic Conditions:

With regards to climate this region is more temperate or milder than the other two sections particularly the western "Ghouta". The temperature rises higher in summer and falls less in winter than it is the case in the other two divisions. As to rainfall it is the same. In addition, this part is known for its lasting beautiful weather, especially during spring.

13. Department of Statistics, 1938

14. Department of the Census, 1938.

15. The populations of the villages number 22 and 23 are workers in villages number 26 and 27 the populations of the villages 19, 20 & 21 are always moving from village to village and they are included in the populations of the villages.

16. Department of the Census, 1938.

17. Department of Agriculture, 1938.

c. Population

There are about 26246 inhabitants¹⁸, of which 12387 are male and 13859 are female. They are concentrated largely in big and fertile villages. The populations of the sixteen villages are as follows:

Table III

Population as per Village in the Northern "Ghouta" 1938¹⁹

No.	Name of the Village	Total	Male	Female
1	Barzé	3678	1242	2436
2	Kabun	2410	1301	1109
3	Jobar	5910	2572	3338
4	Urbin	4951	2478	2473
5	Ain Terma	411	213	198
6	Hazzé	945	510	433
7	Kafer-Batna	1302	695	607
8	Jissrin	795	401	392
9	Effttriss	90	50	40
10	Mouhemadieh	169	78	91
11	Sakba	2158	1143	1015
12	Hammara	1265	614	649
13	Beit Sawa	579	292	287
14	Mdeireh	282	148	134
15	Zamalha	1035	518	517
16	Beit Naim	272	132	140
Totals		26246	12387	13859

18. Department of Statistics, 1938

19. Department of Census, 1938.

Land Tenure

Since agriculture is the main sector of the Syrian economy, there have been definite kinds of ownership of land in the "Ghouta". But before I go deep into a discussion of types of ownership I would like to mention something about the registration of landed property rights. Since long three outstanding types of registration have been passed to us from generation to generation until our own days. The three types of registration to ownership are:

1. Right to ownership by registration at the land register office. This system of claim is the most important in the case of large areas. But in the cases of smaller areas another type of right to land is important.

2. Right to land by receipts or transfer rights. Though this method is not widely used in general, yet it is the best of most widely used claim. The farmer is very conservative and follows this method strictly. Sometimes, he is not content with mere transfer rights but desires to have, in addition, a formal registration at the nottary public. *سجل* The reasons why the farmer prefers such a system are:

a. The farmer will not undergo some of the expenses that he does in the system number one.

b. It is by this system that the minor can sell and buy lands.

-
1. The material of this chapter is got largely from the following reliable sources:
- a. Mr. Amin Dalati
 - b. Mr. Omar-el-Tarmaniny, the general inspector of the Agricultural department in Syria
 - c. Department of Land Registration.

c. Also because, other nationalities can neither sell nor purchase land in any other way.

3. Right to ownership by mere payment of rent to the Wakfs. *وكت* This is a good method of having a claim over land, but unless the farmer asking for it is a relative of the one who made the contribution and pays regularly he can not get any such claim or right of possession.

A. Types of Ownership in the "Ghouta" in General

The land, in general, is owned in two ways:

1. Individualistic Ownership

This type is the most prevalent in the "Ghouta" because two thirds of the total area is owned by independent farmers.² But a great peculiarity of this is that the average land that is in the hands of an average farmer is far smaller than the land that is cultivated by another type of ownership, ownership by landlords.

2. Ownership by landlords

Such ownership is dominant in one third of the area. Usually, there is a contract verbal or written between the land lord and the tenant farmer on the following different bases:

a. Contract based on a Share

This arrangement enables the farmer to get a certain percentage which is usually 50% of the total product - as is the case in the "Metayer System". The percentage varies with the kind of the products the farmer raises, which may be fruits, vegetables, grains etc....

2. Mr. Amin Dalati & Mr. Said Hamzé - thru a letter
February 8, 1939.

b. Contract based on a fixed rent

In this case the landlord requires of the peasant a fixed rent payable annually.

B. Ownership of land in the different divisions of the "Ghouta"

The type of ownership varies in accordance with the different divisions of the "Ghouta". In the Southern "Ghouta" الغزوة الغربية the land is largely owned by the landlords, whereas in the northern and western divisions independent ownership is dominant.

C. Sizes of Land Holdings³

As was already mentioned, the average size of land owned by an individual farmer is far smaller than that of a landlord, the minimum size falling to 1/10 of a dunum and the maximum rising up to 120 dunums only. Whereas the minimum size owned by landlord is not less than 30 dunums and in the maximum goes as high up as 1200 dunums. These sizes are as per village because certain landlords own much larger areas but in several different villages.

D. Economic Significance of Different Types of Ownership

The two major types of ownership have their advantages and disadvantages from an economic point of view, as a result they have a great deal of significance to the economy of the "Ghouta".

3. Mr. Amin Dalati & Mr. Saïd Hamzé - thru a letter February 8, 1939.

1. Ownership by the tenant

When the peasant owns his land he is in his element, very efficient and productive. He tries to make the utmost out of his land so long as he is the one to reap the returns himself. Though this type has a disadvantage, as the farmer must supply himself with the necessities of life, yet the lands under this system have produced the greatest amount per feddan. One can generalize that this system has contributed a great deal to the prosperity of the "Ghouta".

2. Ownership by the landlord

Usually the opposite results have been secured in this system. Production has been less and the tenant has abstained from doing anything to better his land and even his own conditions. This inefficiency applies largely in the cases when it is the "Mitayer System", the farmer sharing about 50% of the total product. Though it has one advantage, a poor farmer who has no capital can work, the several other disadvantages have worked against the system, thus making the farmer working under such circumstances, inefficient and poor. The second kind of contract based on different percentages on different products has similar results.

But when the farmer pays only a fixed rent, he works hard and produces more because what he gets as extra is his own. Though it is not good as the individualistic ownership because the latter encourages initiative to a greater extent. But this does not mean that the former type is not any better than all the rest.

CHAPTER IV¹

Soil & Fertility

The soil of the "Ghouta" is not analysed, so all the statements concerning its composition are mere estimations. The reasons for this are that neither the government nor the peasants take the initiative and make a thorough scientific analysis. So is the case with fertility. It is hoped that in the near future a scientific analysis will be made.

A. Composition of the Soil

The following are the different types of soil found in different regions of the "Ghouta"².

1. Black Soil

This type of soil is scattered in the "Ghouta" and makes up the greatest portion of the total area. It is usually very deep and suitable for raising grains, potatoes, corn and hemp. Fruit trees also grow in abundance on the same soil.

2. Reddish Soil

It is a thin layer of soil mixed with pebbles, suitable for cucumber, peas, and some legumes.

3. Black & red type of soil

This type is a mixture of the reddish and black soil in proportions varying in different regions. Usually, a greater portion of it is black. On such a soil grains and fruit trees are raised in great quantities and numbers.

1. The material of this chapter is got from an interview with Mr. Salah Khurbutli - March 10, 1939.
2. Ibid.

4. Sandy Soil

The banks of Barada river and of all its tributaries have this kind of soil - well suited for all kinds of lumber trees such as poplar trees, willow, ash trees, etc., and for all sorts of legumes.

B. Degree of Fertility

Soil fertility in the "Ghouta" varies in accordance with divisions, although the different types of soil are scattered in the whole area. In general, the fertility is above the average, though very little chemical fertilizers are used. Production increases if a good combination of the different factors of production is made.³

1. The Western Ghouta"

This region is the least fertile one among the three. About half of it is of mountain slopes. As to the farmer, he makes no attempts to increase its fertility and to utilize the soil. The government seems to have nothing to do neither for the land nor for the farmer. But there are to private offices in the city of Damascus working to better the conditions by selling various kinds of fertilizers brought from Europe.

2. The "Southern Ghouta"

Relative to the first, this region is fertile and only 25% of it is below the average fertility.⁴ Again, no attention is paid to ameliorate the prevailing conditions, except that manure is used by the farmer in the cultivation of certain crops such as cucumbers and other sorts of legumes.

3. An interview with Mr. S. Hamzé - March 10, 1939.

4. An interview with Mr. Amin Dalati - March 10, 1939.

3. The "Northern Ghouta"

The fertility in this section is far above the average in general and only 10% is below the average.⁵ There is no great need to use any artificial fertilizers or means of increasing the fertility. The farmer, however, uses some manure in cases when he wants to cultivate the land twice in one year. Because of this high degree of fertility the farmer in this area is more prosperous in relation to the farmers of other sections.

C. Factors Reducing Fertility

There are numerous reasons why the fertility of the soil is not effectively utilized, but only four of them are striking:

1. Negligence

The average farmer, particularly when he owns his land pays a great deal of attention to plantations but none to the weeds that grow with the plants. It is a known fact that the weeds like any other plants need nutrition. When it grows with the other plants that the farmer cultivates, it takes a large part of the food that should go to the other plants, thus, making the soil less fertile and the land less productive. This fact, the farmer knows very well. He does not remove the weeds either because of his negligence which is the most important reason, or because such a job will free him to incur certain expenses by hiring extra labor, something

5. Ibid.

that the farmer abstains from doing no matter how valuable the consequences be.

2. Ignorance of the farmer

Because of lack of soil analysis and the prevailing ignorance of the farming population, practically, very few, (because of long experience) know what crops are best suited for a certain piece of land. The farmer usually plants a certain crop that should be planted somewhere else on a different kind of soil. When he realizes that he should plant the right crop, it is too late because the soil is no more suitable for it.

3. Lack of Crop rotation

It is a general rule that a piece of land that is not made fertile artificially should be left for a certain period of time without being cultivated, or if that is not possible, different types of plants must be cultivated on it so that its natural fertility would be kept up. The farmer uses no artificial fertilizers, moreover, he neither leaves the land uncultivated for some time nor changes the kind of crops at intervals. The soil is planted repeatedly with crops until its fertility is reduced to the minimum. The farmer does this because he wants to increase his produce so that he might be able to live with his family.

4. Old Methods of Cultivation

The old plough that is used does not go deep into the ground and thus turns only the upper part of the

soil. This means that only the upper part is nourishing the plant and exhausting its fertility whereas the lower part is not utilized at all. Of course, under such conditions, the upper part of the soil only loses its fertility soon and becomes sterile.

D. Remedies to Improve Utilization

If improvement in the utilization of the soil of the "Chouta" is to be applied, certain requirements are demanded of the farmers:

1. Greater Care

The farmer must pay attention not to his plantations alone but to the weed that grow besides the plant as well. He must take them out. And it is essential that all the farmers do it simultaneously so that the fields will be cleared all at once and the consequence of this will be a mutual benefit for all the farmers.

2. Education

The farmer is too ignorant to know what is suited best for his land. In order to enable him to know it, he must be taught by the government experts from time to time. Otherwise, the whole area will be wasted.

3. Crop rotation

It is very important to leave the land fallow for sometime, if he does not use any fertilizers at all. The farmer must learn the value of crop rotation.

4. Application of new methods of cultivation

The old plough must be replaced by a modern one that can go deep into the soil, and this will be possible by the extension of credit to the farmer to enable him to buy such implements.

CHAPTER V

Cultivable land

An analysis of the cultivable land in the "Ghouta" proper, lends itself to such a classification, extent of cultivable land, land that is at present cultivated, the types of land that is cultivated and the reasons for lack of full utilization and ways of possible improvements.

A. Extent of Cultivable Land

About all of the "Ghouta" can be cultivated with the exception of an insignificant area of land which for some reason is not profitable for crops and is left uncultivated. Most of such land is hilly, swampy, and exists in the western "Ghouta".

B. Extent of Land at Present Cultivated

As to the extent, at present cultivated, only $2/3$ or 38000 feddans¹ of the whole area is utilized regularly. The cultivation of the remaining $1/3$ or 19000 feddans², depends upon the supply of water available. In the year when the water is abundant this portion is also fully utilized and in it summer crops are planted. So, in such fortunate years, the whole cultivable "Ghouta" is used. Yet such a year of abundant water is rare and usually only half of the $1/3$ is utilized. But, recently, new wells have been dug. From them, by the help of pumps, the necessary water can be obtained and a relatively greater portion of this section is used.

1 & 2. Mr. A. Dalati, April 10, 1939.

C. Types of Land Cultivated³

The cultivated land may be classified as of three types according to the amount of water available and the use to which it is put. Two of the types are characterized by the presence of trees to an extent rarely seen elsewhere. The most important and the type most characteristic of the entire "Ghouta" is the orchard with intertillage of ground crops. The second type because of moderate water supply is partially planted with trees and the remainder with ground crops. The third type is the vineyard area with a diminished water supply.

1. Type I : Abundant Water and Orchards

The olive - apricot type of orchard produces the most profitable crops of the "Ghouta" and is found in the best water part. This begins where the Barada river enters the plain, being much more in the northern and southern sections. Plentiful water is indispensable for the trees must receive their minimum supply of water, otherwise, the hopes and labors of years may be lost. Other kinds of trees are associated with the olive and apricot. These are temperate fruits such as the apple, pear, peach, and nuts.

The ground crops cultivated in summer under the trees are mostly vegetables. Wheat and barley are winter-grown here, being sown by hand in October and harvested in June.

3. Field work - April 12, 1939 and A. Tomer, The Oasis of Damascus, 1935, p. 32-33.

2. Type II : Moderate Water and Ground Crop with
Borders of Trees

The available water supply diminishes progressively nearer to the extreme east of the "Ghouta", partly in the northern "Ghouta" but mostly in the southern "Ghouta". And in the latter region the second type of land cultivation predominates. Here the trees are chiefly timber although there are nuts and apricots. In general, however, in the second type, the trees are more widely spread, being planted along the canals and ditches while the ground crops are chiefly of the same character as those planted in type one.

3. Type III : Diminished Water and Vineyards

The third type of cultivated land is devoted to grapes. This is undoubtedly due to the drought - for the vine does not need much water, as well as to the very extensive use of grapes. In general, in the "Ghouta" rarer and more profitable crops are preferred to the vine, though it is cultivated on the less watered sections of the plain. This type of cultivation is usually found near Jobar, in the northern section and Daraya in the southern section.

D. Reasons for lack of full Utilization and Ways of
Possible Improvements

In reality the land is fully utilized, but when sometimes water is not abundant, some parts are left uncultivated. This can be overcome easily by application of

a scientific project of irrigation that not only will make possible the cultivation of the whole area, but also will enable the farmer to cultivate it intensively. However, one should remember that the application of a scientific project of irrigation for intensive cultivation, must go hand in hand several other improvements - to be mentioned later.⁴

4. Refer to chapter IX.

CHAPTER VI

Methods of Work

The "Ghouta" is a farm of contrasts. The oldest and the most modern methods of cultivation, irrigation and transportation are used. The land lords lead in the usage of new machinery, whereas the independent farmer still sticks to the old type of implements. So as to facilitate to the reader a detailed discussion of different kinds of methods and tools it will be better to divide the chapter into three different sections:

A. Methods of Work in Cultivation¹

The methods of cultivation divide themselves into three topics, the tools old fashioned and new, planting of grains, trees and legumes, and threshing.

1. The tools old fashioned and the new

The old fashioned tools are very numerous. They vary in accordance with the wealth of the farmer. The simplest one is the land tool *المزل* used by farmers who own not more than a very small piece of land called Maskabé and which is about 4 sq. meters. On such piece of land, the farmer devotes all his time to turn up the soil or dig it with this tool. At present, these are decreasing because of the fact that such farmers who use these tools are disappearing, because of the fact that they are selling their small areas and moving to the cities where they can work for wages.

1. The information for method of work in cultivation is got from three sources: a. field work; 8-15 April, 1939.
b. Mr. A. Dalati, April 10, 1939.
c. Mr. Khurbutli, April 10, 1939.

Another group of farmers who form a great majority use the old steel plough *سدة الحراة القديمة* led by a pair of oxen. The reasons why they are the majority are that, they are either poor or their lands are so planted with trees that modern machines can not work. The second case is true of the land lords and the first of the independent farmers who can not afford to buy a modern one. But there are certain land lords who are not satisfied with the old plough, because it does not go deep into the soil and overturn it. To meet this deficiency, they have started using the foreign plough *سدة الحراة الأوربية* again led by a pair of oxen and which is bigger and can dig deeper. Besides these instruments there are many other simple ones used for various purposes such as to level the ground and to open canals by means of an instrument called marr.

With regards to new tools, there are the modern European tractors run by oil. These are not too many as there are only a few rich land lords who can afford to use them on their large holdings that are suitable for wheat cultivation. The number of tractors do not exceed eight and they are largely used in the northern and some parts of the southern "Ghouta".²

2. Planting

The methods of planting are very old. There has been no change during the last fifteen years. Practical-

2. An interview with Mr. Omar Bey-el-Tarmanini - March 10, 1939.

ly all the work of planting is done by hand. The farmers men and women sow the seeds with their own hands. When the plants grow again they take care of them with their own hands also, take the weeds away and put some manure around the plants.

As to the planting of trees, it is again the hands that do the whole job. The ground is dug with shovels and the young trees are put into the holes. The arrangements of the trees are many but the most common one is, planting nut trees only on the boundaries of the fields and apricot trees or other fruit trees in across form in the center. The other less important arrangements are: planting vines regularly over the whole area, planting olive trees over the field. The first important arrangement is dominant in the southern and western "Ghouta" while the other two in the northern section.

It must be noted that the various kinds of grains, vegetables and trees have special periods of planting. The grains are usually planted from November to the end of January. The vegetables are planted from the middle of February to the end of June. Finally, the trees are planted from December to the end of February. In very few cases, trees, vegetables, and grains are planted at other times.

3. Threshing

The tools used in threshing are, in general, still primitive. As to the simplest ones there are the knife for reaping and a board with nails to crush the grains *لوحة الراس* and a fork to separate the grain from the

straw. Practically, all the independent farmers and the majority of land lords use these tools. Only a few of the farmers and land lords use native made machines run by hands to separate the grains from the straw. In addition to these there are the modern threshing machines run by oil, though very few in number. The trouble with such European machines is that they break some of the grains while separating them from the straw.

B. Methods of Work in Irrigation

The irrigation of such a large zone as the "Ghouta" has been no easy matter as the development was very slow. Beyond any doubt the landlords' interest against the peasants' interest and the dispute between the members of each class have caused conflicts and thus retarded possible solutions and application of a proper project of irrigation. Today, the whole system runs without a scientific project but is based on the traditional ways.

1. Sources of water

As is commonly the case in arid and semi-arid lands water supply is of more importance than fertility of the soil. The sources of the water supply of the "Ghouta" are two: the mountain streams and the underground seepage.³

The higher parts of the Anti-Lebanon ranges are responsible for the river that has contributed a great

3. A. Tomer, The Oasis of Damascus, 1935, p. 17.

deal to the exceptional development of the "Ghouta". During the winter months from November to March inclusive, these mountains collect precipitation in the form of snow which yields water gradually to the plain in spring and summer thru streams and springs.

a. Barada and its branches

There is one important river, Barada, with sixteen branches that originate from it. These water the whole basin of the "Ghouta". The main river discharges a great deal of its water as it passes thru the western "Ghouta", the city of Damascus and the southern "Ghouta" until it reaches the lake of "El-Uteiba" بحيرة العتيبة . The branches may be directly connected with Barada or with another branch and pass in all the different sections which are irrigated thru them.

1. Barada⁴

The Barada river starts from a small lake near the foot of the plain of Zebdani الزبداني and on its western side.⁵ The entire lake bottom is a series of many thousands of little bubbling springs. The river flows across the plain to its south-eastern corner where the bed of the stream becomes a wild mountain ravine whose scenery at many places is very striking. In the last third of its course the stream receives from "Ayn-al-Fijah" a tributary which is almost as large as the

⁵: Refer to the map of Ghouta, Map I.
⁴: *ibid.*, p. 18-19.

Barada itself. Barada river springs out from the ravine upon a plain to the west of Damascus at an altitude of 2950 feet. It flows thru the city and 24 miles eastward to end in the marshy lake of "Al-Utaybah", 380 feet lower in altitude. A wide belt of verdure follows the course of the river from the city of Damascus to the lake itself.

2. The branches

The sixteen branches are distributed in all the sections and can be divided, on the basis of their course, into two divisions:⁶

a. Those that pass in a northern direction and are namely, 1. Yazid, 2. Tora, 3. Dayani, 4. El-Zaboun, 5. Mulk 6. Beit-Naim, 7. Harastani.

b. Those that pass in a southern direction and are namely, 1. Mezsaoni, 2. El-Derani, 3. Kanawat, 4. Banias, 5. Akrabani, 6. Mlehi, 7. Belani, 8. Sheydani, 9. Zebdini.

One might not be satisfied from this classification, a clearer one will be based on their distribution in the three different sections:

1. Northern "Ghouta"

The branches that irrigate this section are three:

1. Yazid, 2. Tora, 3. Harastani.

2. Southern "Ghouta"

Those that water this section are nine: 1. Akrabani, 2. Mlehi 3. Dajani 4. Zebdini, 5. Belani, 6. Zabouni 7. Mulk 8. Shedani, 9. Beit-Naim.

6. Refer to the map p. 1.

3. Western "Ghouta"

The branches irrigating this section are four in number namely, 1. Mezzaoni, 2. Derani, 3. Kanawat
4. Baniyas.

b. The underground water

Besides the water from Barada, there is also the underground water of which much use is made after it reaches the "Ghouta". In parts of the "Ghouta" the water table averages 16ft.⁷ below the surface. The peasants have dug deep into the ground and made channels called qanât. These qanâts are subterranean tunnels dug between the chalky layers of the soil and following the geological slope of the layers. From the surface of the ground above each qanât at every few rods, shafts are dug down to the floor of the channel, so that they will supply dim light and fresh air to the men working below. The floor of the qanât has just enough slope to bring the water finally to the surface, where it flows forth sometimes a river in size, its water beautifully clear and cold.

As to the wells, they are pumped by motors from depth of the ground and utilized in irrigating the farms. They are usually utilized fully in summer as the water of the rivers get scarce. Up to the present time there have been dug between 35 and 40⁸ wells and they are on the increase.

7. A. Tomer. The Oasis of Damascus, 1935, p. 24.

8. An interview with Mr. A. Dalati, April 10, 1939.

2. Technique of Distribution

Throughout the "Ghouts" the water is led by simple gravity flow alone, the canals being kept as high up on the slopes as possible. In general, no retaining dams are used, nor elevating machinery. The water is diverted into the lesser irrigation canals by means of boards or by a few spadefuls of earth. In some places there are pavements of huge stones, laid across the bed of the stream at the point of junction of the main and the branch canals.⁹

a. Water rights

Every village receives every day a given fraction of the total volume of a canal for a given period of time, after which it receives no water at all until its turn comes once more. A particular plot of land receives only an allotted share of water during a certain fixed portion of its village's time allowance for the use of the water of that canal. Time period and fraction volume are the sole bases for the calculation of water rights thruout the system.¹⁰ Neighboring farms whose time allowances do not coincide often borrow water informally from one another to help in their respective dry intervals in the cultivation of certain crops.

9. A. Tomer, *The Oasis of Damascus*, 1935, p. 20 & 21.
10. Ibid., p. 21

b. Administration of the water rights¹¹

The use of the water is regarded as belonging neither to the public nor to the government; it is purely individual property, normally associated with land ownership, but not always so. When any plot of land is used for building purposes, its water right then becomes an article of commerce, and so can be inherited, bought, rented, or auctioned off, independently of its former connection with particular land ownership. A family's wealth is frequently calculated by the number of hours of water that it owns.

There is no one agency charged with supervising the distribution of the water; neither is there any exact and wide-spread similarity of water rights and customs. A stranger might find the whole system confusing. Even the terminology in regard to time and quantity of water and land mensuration varies from one locality to another. This variation in terms and methods has been purposely retained by the villagers in order to preserve communal solidarity in the practices of each separate village. The peasant is an extreme individualist and he prefers to be controlled by local traditions rather than by government regulation.

The primitive existing organization is based on the village and on the canal. Each village appoints an agent known as the Shaoui to watch the distribution

11. Ibid., p. 22

of the water. He insures the proper opening and closing of the barriers and stops dishonest diversions of the water. These agents keep the village records, which are partly written and partly oral. His integrity is severely tried during a dry year when influence is brought to bear and bribes are offered, while all the water users watch him jealously.

c. Disputes¹²

Such a system of primitive water rights, usages, and methods lends itself at times to troubles between villages and even between villages and large proprietors. Violent disputes are not infrequent during the summer, especially in dry years. These quarrels are usually settled by the individuals or groups concerned. Even such settlements are sometimes accompanied by loss of blood or even of life. The government finds it difficult to intervene in such situations since no law court is familiar with the traditional rights of the matter.¹³

C. Drainage

When the Barada river and its tributaries overflow in winter, they leave some small dotted areas or swamps all over the three sections of the "Ghouts". They are largely in the western part where the Barada river is abundant in water. Such pools though not very

12. Ibid., p. 23

13. From the Agricultural Department, An interview with Mr. Omar bey el-Tarmanini, April 10, 1939.

important, are not drained because of the fact of the difficulty involved in doing such a job. Most of the time, they remain stagnant until, by chance, either the summer heat is too strong or the Barada river does not over-flow, The following year, and the swamp dries up.

These swamps have an advantage as well as a disadvantage. They are excellent places for planting certain trees that flourish in abundant water such as willow trees *شجر الطور* hemp *القنب*. On the other hand, they, usually, are sources of certain diseases such as malaria.

D. Transportation¹⁴

Transportation facilities and roads are in a very bad state. It is because of this situation that there has been no progress. If any improvement is to be expected the means of transportation must be modernized and the old roads reconstructed as well as new ones opened.

1. The roads

The absence of roads is a striking fact in the "Ghouta". Except for the two main asphalted roads of the northern and southern "Ghouta" that were built recently one can say that there are no proper roads. That is why the means of transportation are still primitive. Some roads are so narrow that a carriage can not pass thru. Certain other roads are absolutely useless particularly in winter when they get muddy because of constant rain and overflow of the rivers.

14. The material of this section is got from a field work made by the writer on April 10, 1959.

Not only the roads are bad but also the bridges are worse. Most of them are made of wood which do not last for a longer period than two years. The main trouble is with the construction of such bridges as they are quickly worn out. The government does not take the initiative to reconstruct them, so such a job is left to the people. But unfortunately most of the time a conflict arises whereby the work is left undone, perhaps never to be resumed.

2. Means of transportation

The different means of transportation range from donkeys and mules up to modern trucks and cars which are very few in number. In the different parts of the "Ghouta" there are horse-drawn carriages and mule-drawn carriages ^{ر.ك} and these render a great service to the farmers. The horse-drawn carriages are used for his travel from the village to the city whereas the mule-drawn carriages are used to transport his seeds and all his various products to the city. Donkeys and mules are very numerous and sometimes they are the best means as the roads are too narrow and rugged, particularly between two neighboring villages. Camels were used for more frequently in the past than they are today because of the fact that their cost is relatively high and there is need for a greater speed.

CHAPTER VII

Production and Marketing in the "Ghouts"

Before I start to analyse this chapter carefully, I would like to call the attention of the reader to the fact that this is the most important section of my thesis because it gives the real economic value of the "Ghouts" in general from two points of view namely, firstly the present production and the markets that consume the various products, and secondly the prospects of future production.

The "Ghouts" as have been stated, is a large fertile area of land where there is a great variety of crops of all types and qualities raised. Also each type of crop has its own care and marketing method, thus causing less specialization and greater confusion. It is true that an improvement has been made recently in the methods of marketing the various products, yet we can still say that they are not modernized.

I. The Products of the "Ghouts"

In dealing with this topic, we have to approach it from two points of view: a general one and a specific one. In general, we can say that all kinds of agricultural produce can be raised in this region with the exception of those produce that grow on the coastal plains. But if we want to take the specific point, we have to divide the main products that are raised into eleven categories. These are, clearly shown on the following table in quantities as well as in values:¹

1. Refer to table I p. 35.

Table I

An Estimate of the Total Products of the three Sections of the
Ghouta²

(An Average of ten Years)

1929-1938

Name of Produce	Quantity in Tons	Value in L. L. S.
Apricots	7,517	270,612
Nuts	1,330	212,800
Olives	1,477	147,700
Grapes	2,728	109,120
Various fruits	738	44,280
Grains	2,786	111,440
Vegetables	1,482	41,496
Hemp	625	137,500
Seeds	282	33,840
Cucumber Seed	40	44,000
Wood	705	56,400
Totals	19,710	1,929,188

An analysis of each item mentioned in the previous table will be as follows:

1. Apricots - As has been estimated for the "Ghouta" in general, they amount in value to L.L.S. 270,612 and in quantity to 7,517 tons.

2. Estimated by two agriculturists, Messrs A. Dalati and S. Hamzé, May 5, 1939.

There are several kinds of apricots raised in the "Ghouta" but the most important ones are the following: El-Baladi *المشمه البلدي* which is used mostly to make sweets and partly is eaten fresh; el-Klabi *المشمه الكلابي* which is usually smaller in size and is used for making apricot paste *قرديه*; El-Hamoui *المشمه الحموي* which has the best taste because of the fact that it is sweeter than the others and that is why it is used for eating as fruit; El-Ajami *المشمه العجمي* which is the biggest in size and it is used for eating when fresh. The minor kinds are El-Wazari *المشمه الوزري* and El-lozi *المشمه اللوزي* etc..

2. Nuts - They amount to L.L.S. 212,800 and 1330 tons. There is only one kind of nut but it differs in size. The bigger size is usually preferred.

3. Olives - Olives amount to L.L.S. 147,700 and 1,477 tons. There are many varieties of olives and they vary in size and kind. The most important kinds are: El-Jlitt *الجلط* El-Muffash *المفشه* Assowad *الأسود* Akhdar *الأخضر* etc.. A very great portion of the total product is used for oil but the main portion is used for consumption as olives.

4. Grapes - This product amounts to L.L.S. 109,120 and 2,728 tons. It can be stated that there are more than twenty kinds of grapes raised in Ghouta. The most important ones are as follows: El-Hilwani *العنب الحلواني* El-Baladi *العنب البلدي* El-Ahmar *عنب الأحمر* El-Aswad *عنب الأسود*

El-Zeiny ^{عنب الزين} etc... Usually the greater portion of this product is used for food and the other portion is used for wine

5. Various fruits - Totaled up to L.L.S. 44,200 and 738 tons. Under this item one have to mention only the most important and these are: Apples ^{التفاح} Pears ^{الفاص} phims ^{خوخ} figs ^{سبه} peaches ^{درايه} cherries ^{كرز} mulbery fruit ^{تون} Peach Almonds ^{اللوز والقطايب} etc..

Some of the produce of the various fruits is used for making conserved fruits and the remaining portion is consumed fresh.

6. Grains - These amount to L.L.S. 111,440 and 2,786 tons. The various kinds of grains are: wheat, barely, maize, sorghum, etc...

A sufficient amount of this produce is kept by the farmers for the coming year and the extra is sold in different markets of the city. The kinds of wheat that are raised are: El-Biadi ^{القمح البياض} El-Hawrani ^{القمح الحوراني}

7. Vegetables - They amount to L.L.S. 41,496 and 1,482 tons. The outstanding varieties are: tomatoes ^{بندوره} ladies finger ^{باميا} peas ^{بازاليا} marrow ^{كوسا} egg plant ^{بازنجان} cucumber ^{ميار} Artichoke ^{ارضي ثولي} carrot ^{جزر} cabbage ^{ملفوف} Beetroot ^{شوند} etc...

It can be stated that 70% of the total produce of this item is consumed as fresh food. The remaining 30% is conserved.

8. Hemp - This amounts to L.L.S. 137,500 and 625 tons. This produce is very important because it serves for three purposes. Firstly the threads of the hemp are used to make sacks of all sorts and ropes of all kinds. A second purpose is that its wood is used for fire. Finally its seeds is used for making a low grade of oil.

9. Various Seeds - They amount to L.L.S. 33,840 and 282 tons. Under this heading there are many kinds of seeds but the important ones are: Vetch كرسنة
Marrowfort حلبة lentils عدس chickpeas صويا
horsebeans uniseed يا نوره sesame سم etc...

Approximately half of this produce is kept by the farmers for their own use and the remaining half is sold in different markets of the city of Damascus.

10. Cucumber seed - This amount to L.L.S. 44,000 and 40 tons. It is stated as a separate item because of its importance from the financial point of view - that is a ton of it is sold for L.L.S. 1,100. There are only two kinds of it; namely: El-Baida البيرة البيضاء and El-Safra البيرة الصفراء. The greater part of that produce is sold in the market and the remaining part is kept to be planted for the second season.

11. Wood - This is equivalent to L.L.S. 56,400 and 705 tons. The kinds of wood that are raised are: the poplar tree شجر الطور of which there are two varieties:

the Roumy الرومي and the Farssi الفارسي. It is used for making ceilings, doors, windows etc.... Then comes the willow trees الصفار which is used to make out of it clogs; and lastly the ash tree شجر الدرار which is used mainly for making ploughing instruments

In addition to these eleven important items, there are other minor items that are produced in the "Ghouta" such as tobacco, water melons etc..

So, according to the eleven items, the total production of the "Ghouta" is estimated to be L.L.S. 1,029,188 and 19,710 tons. But this is on the average and indicates a normal annual production. Sometimes, during the lean year the production falls 25% less than the given totals.³ Whereas, in good years it may rise 25% above the average.⁴

Such increases or decreases in the total production are largely dependent on whether the river water was sufficient or not, the amount of rainfall or whether or not there was an attack of pests and insects on the plantations etc... Sometimes, a formidable frost appears and destroys a great portion of the fruits.

Not only climatic conditions lead to the increase or decrease in the total production of the "Ghouta", but a tremendous gradual drop in the prices of these products has taken place since ten years.

3. & 4. Estimated by Mr. A. Dalati, May 5, 1939.

For example, a ton of apricots used to be sold ten years ago for not less than L.L.S. 100 whereas now it is sold for L.L.S. 36. This disregarding the depreciation of the currency which if considered makes the decline in prices many times more. The reason for this drop in prices is not only due to the greater supply but there are other factors such as tariff barriers, world depression. Here is a table of ten years average prices of the products that are raised in the "Ghouta"⁵.

Table II


An Estimate of Average Prices of the Products that are Raised in Ghouta⁶
1929-1938

Products	Prices per ton in L.L.S.
Apricots	36
Nuts	160
Olives	100
Grapes	40
Various fruits	60
Grains	40
Vegetables	28
Hemp	220
Seeds (various)	120
Cucumber	1,100
Wood	80

5. Refer to table II p. 40

6. Estimated by two Ag'ists, Messrs A. Dalati & S. Hamzé
Nov 5 1930.

II. Relative Value of Crops

Apricots bring in the largest income than any other single crop of the orchard type.⁷ The villages that give the greatest amount are: Zubdin, Hattitit-el-Jaramana and Mleika.⁸ The apricot fruit is sold in four forms. When handpicked and selected for making the Damascus candied fruit, it brings high prices. The fruit sold for eating fresh by the public brings good prices according to quality. Dried apricots, sold by weight, bring a better price even than fresh fruits. The fourth form is apricot paste  which is made of the pulp of the fruit after it has been crushed in a mortar. This product brings a good price in Syria and much of it is sold in Egypt through export middlemen.

Nuts come next in importance in quantity whereas in value it has a higher price than apricots⁹. The villages that give the greatest yields are: Mleiha, Urbin Kafer-Batna, Jaramana.¹⁰

Olives come next to nuts as a source of income.¹¹ The olive is a staple article of diet all thru the winter months. The oil is in great demand both for soap-making and to a large extent for cooking. El-Kadam, Urbin, Kafer-Soussi are the most important villages that supply the product.¹²

-
7. See appendix I p. 72
 8. See appendix II, III, & IV. 72, 73, 74
 9. see appendix I p. 72
 10. See appendix II, III, & IV. p. 72, 73, 74
 11. See appendix I p.
 12. See appendix II, III, & IV. p. 72, 73, 74

The extensive rope-making industry of Damascus creates a demand for hemp which is one of the most profitable crops of the "Ghouta". The centers that supply large quantities are: Kafer-Batna, Effttriss, Sakba.¹³

The grape crop is also important economically not only as a fresh fruit but for making raisins, dibs, wine. Darayya is the greatest center for supplying this produce and also it gives the greatest varieties¹⁴.

Wheat is financially the most important of the grain crops. Vegetables are important because of the fact that the supply meets the demand of the Damascene natives and the surplus is sold in the outside markets. The center of vegetables that gives also the greatest varieties is Kafer-Soussi.¹⁵

A. The Western "Ghouta"

A discussion of the products of the western "Ghouta" will best be carried on by dividing it into: types and qualities of products raised and quality and value of such products.

1. Types and qualities of products raised

The western "Ghouta" being a typical section of the whole area yields practically the same types and qualities of products raised in the Ghouta as a whole. But certainly there are some differences in the importance of the product in this section. It is true that at least nine of the eleven of the already mentioned

13. see appendix II, III, & IV. p. 72, 73, 74

14. see appendix IV, p. 74

15. see appendix IV, p. 74

products of the "Ghouta" grow in this section, but the major ones are only six and are namely in the order of their importance, 1. grains, 2. nuts, 3. wood, 4. olives, 5. apricots, 6. various fruits¹⁶.

The most important kinds of apricots that grow here are two-the baladi and klabi. As to nuts they are smaller in size. Olives are of average quality. The important grains are wheat and barley, wood-poplar tree and willow, and various fruits are figs, pomegranate,

2. Quantity and Value of the Products

It is essential to note that the total production of the western "Ghouta" as it is down on the following table is equal to L.L.S. 38,788 and 632 tons and these quantities in comparison to the whole production are 3.2% in value and 3.3% in tons.¹⁷ This proves that this section is sufficiently productive in comparison to its area which is only 2.5% of the whole area.

Table III

An Estimate of the Products of the Western "Ghouta"¹⁸
Average of the ten Years
1929-1938

Name of Produce	Quantity in tons	Value in L. L. S.
Apricots	102	3,672
Nuts	59	9,440
Olives	44	4,400
Grapes	22	880
Various fruits	37	2,220
Grains	260	10,400
Vegetables	22	616
Hemp	2	440
Various Seeds	-	-
Cucumber Seed	-	-
Wood	84	6,720
Totals	632	38,788

16. Refer to table III on p 43

17. Refer to table III for production and chapter II for areas

The productivity of this section is about L.L.S. 27.71 per feddan¹⁹, though this figure should be much larger if the areas that are uncultivated such as marshy lands, roads, and river beds are excluded. The reason for the western "Ghouta's" relatively high productivity is that agriculture is carried on more intensively with more modern machines and greater quantities of fertilizers.

B. The Northern "Ghouta"

Because of the fact that the northern "Ghouta" is much larger than the western and a slightly smaller than the southern "Ghouta", there are many varieties of kinds and qualities of products. Each quality and type are produced in much greater quantities and higher in prices due to better qualities.

1. Types and qualities of products raised

It is again equally true that there are eleven different kinds of products produced in this section, but eight of them are really important namely, apricots, nuts, olives, various fruits, grains, vegetables, hemp and cucumber seed.

The different types of apricots that grow in this section are the Baladi, Klabi, and Hamoui. As to nuts the larger ones are produced in great quantity. Olives of all kinds grow in equal quantities. Various fruits of all kinds grow in this region, and grains such as wheat, barley and corn are also important. Hemp and

18. Estimated by two agriculturists: Messrs A. Dalati and S. Hamzé - May 5, 1939.

19. Ibid.

cucumber seed grow here with a high degree of quality.

2. Quantity and Value of the Products

Practically all the eleven kinds are produced in large quantities, the eight already mentioned being the largest crops.²⁰

Table IV

An Estimate of the Products of the Northern "Ghouta"²¹
Average of ten Years
1929-1938

<u>Name of Produce</u>	<u>Quantity in tons</u>	<u>Value in L. L. S.</u>
Apricots	3,300	118,800
Nuts	640	102,400
Olives	670	67,000
Grapes	310	12,400
Various fruits	417	25,020
Grains	825	33,000
Vegetables	730	20,440
Hemp	402	88,440
Various seeds	105	12,600
Cucumber seed	25	27,500
Wood	<u>141</u>	<u>11,280</u>
Totals	7,565	518,880

The present productivity of the northern "Ghouta" is about L.L.S. 20.3 per feddan, on the basis of a total production of L.L.S. 518,880 and an area of 25,600 feddans.²² The productivity per feddan could be much larger if the areas

²⁰. Refer to table IV p. 45

²¹. Estimated by two agriculturists, Messrs. A. Dalati & S. Hamzé - May 5, 1939.

²². Refer to chapter II on areas p.

that are uncultivated such as marshy lands, roads and river beds are excluded - the same situation as in the western "Ghouta". Also, an additional reason which lowers the productivity is the fact that the whole section is extensively cultivated.

The percentage of the production of the northern "Ghouta" as compared with the general production is about 42.9% in value and 38.4% in tons. One can conclude that this section is far more important than the western "Ghouta". Also this latter section is at an advantage with regards to production in values as compared with production in tons, as the products produced are largely the ones whose prices are high.²³

C. The Southern "Ghouta"

The largest and the one that yields the largest quantity of produce of the three sections is the southern "Ghouta". Certainly there are also more different kinds and qualities of each produce.

1. Types and qualities of products raised

The most important kinds of products raised are nine in number though the eleven kinds are raised in large quantities, namely, apricots, nuts, olives, grapes, grains, vegetables, hemp, various fruits and wood.

With regards to the qualities the southern Ghouta is famous for its greater varieties of each kind. For example, all possible types of apricots grow in this section and the same thing is true of other products.

23. Refer to table II p. 40

2. Quantity and Value of the Produce

From the point of view of production the southern "Ghouta" out runs all the other two sections - The total production is L.L.S. 651,520 and 11,513 tons.²⁴

Table V

An Estimate of the Products of the Southern "Ghouta"²⁵

Average of ten Years

1929-1938

Names of Produce	Quantity in Tons	Value in L. L. S.
Apricots	4,115	148,140
Nuts	631	100,960
Olives	763	76,300
Grapes	2,396	95,840
Various fruits	284	17,040
Grains	1,701	68,040
Vegetables	730	20,440
Hemp	221	48,620
Various seed	177	21,240
Cucumber seed	15	16,500
Wood	480	38,400
Totals	11,513	651,520

The percentage of production is 53.9% in value and 58.4% in tonnage of the total production. The production per feddan is L.L.S. 21.7 less than it is in the other sections because in such a calculation certain

24. Refer to table V p. 47

25. Estimated by two agriculturists, messrs. A. Dalati and S. Hamzé - May 5, 1939.

uncultivated areas are also included. Anyhow, the yield per feddan is less than it should be because of the fact that cultivation is carried on on an extensive scale.

To give a clearer picture about the economic situation of both the southern and the northern Ghouta, here is the following table that clarifies the point and that gives the importance of each.²⁶

Table VI

An Estimate of the Products raised in the Northern and Southern "Ghouta"
 Combined²⁷
 Average of ten Years
1929-1938

	Northern Ghouta		Southern Ghouta	
	Quantity in tons	Value in L. L. S.	Quantity in tons	Value in L. L. S.
Apricots	3,300	118,800	4,115	148,140
Nuts	640	102,400	631	100,960
Olives	670	67,000	763	76,300
Grapes	310	12,400	2,391	95,840
Various fruits	417	25,020	284	17,040
Grains	825	33,000	1,701	68,040
Vegetables	730	20,440	730	20,440
Hemp	402	88,440	221	48,620
Various seed	105	12,600	177	21,240
Cucumber seed	25	27,500	15	16,500
Wood	141	11,280	480	38,400
Totals	7,565	518,880	11,513	651,520

26. Refer to the above table

27. Estimated by two agriculturists, Messrs. A. Dalati And S. Hamsé - May 5, 1939.

Markets and Marketing Methods

The agricultural products of the "Ghouta" are not all consumed within its boundaries. The surplus not only supplies the surrounding areas but much of it, especially the fruits, is exported to Egypt, Palestine, and to a lesser extent to some of the European countries. Probably 50% of the apricot crop is exported to the above mentioned countries. An accurate statement of the extent and importance of this export trade from the "Ghouta" cannot be made since there are no available figures at the present time.

As to marketing methods, they vary somewhat according to the crop but the following are the most important.

1. Quite frequently if fruits and nuts are sold on the tree, middlemen buy, pick and deliver the crop to merchants, who may buy the crop outright from the middlemen or may sell it on an agreed commission basis. This process, usually, is called farming *~V*. Usually, this method is used under the landlord type of ownership.

2. In many cases, under the individualistic type of ownership, the peasants themselves pick and sell their products directly to the merchants. This is especially true of vegetables.

3. A third method is that the landlords who are able to finance the business hire the necessary laborers who do the task and the landlords sell the produce directly to wholesalers.

4. The fourth method is used with regards to grains: the commission merchants send out their agents to buy from the peasants directly.

In closing this chapter I would like to call the attention of the reader that in all these various methods of marketing, primitive packing and transporting is still in existence.

Labor in the "Ghouta"

The discussion of such a topic presents several difficulties. The most important is the lack of statistics, as any figure that is given is nothing but an estimate. Also, there are so many different types of laborers that it is a hard job for the writer to enable the reader to get a clear concept of labor in this fertile district. Even if labor is properly explained, there are so many divisions of it that the difficulty in general is really a problem. Yet, under all these circumstances I will attempt to explain it as clearly as possible.

A. Labor Supply

Labor supply in the "Ghouta" is an inclusive term. By this we generally mean all the population of the "Ghouta" that can be productively employed. Certainly, the population that is gainfully employed is the total population minus the people who are unable to work such as the children, the old people and physically unfit and women whose husbands would not like them to work. So the total supply after such reductions can be estimated to be 35,000², including those who work in their own independent farms and who sometimes if they are free might go and work on the landlord's farms as hired laborers. But it must be noted that the term which I am going to use in this chapter will denote only the paid labor which will usually amount to about 15,000 laborers. With this limitation, labor supply can be discussed under the following classification:

-
1. The material of this chapter is supplied from Mr. A. Dalati and Mr. S. Hamzé
 2. Mr. A. Dalati and Mr. S. Hamzé, thru a letter, April, 25, 1939
 3. Ibid.

1. Laborers working under a contract

Workers under contract, laborers who work for the landlords under fixed compensation, are the least efficient of all. As compared with the independent farmers, they are far less efficient because the independent ones usually work to produce more and more so as to satisfy their necessary needs and what they get extra, it is their own, whereas laborers working under contract have no incentive to work since they are going to get a fixed salary. Though these laborers have better instruments, yet the increase is not comparable with that of the (fella), in constant fear lest the landlord might send them out at the end of the period. Again such laborers as compared with the provisional laborers are also, more efficient because the latter do not have the feeling of doing a complete and efficient work so long as they are here today and might be somewhere else the next day.

With regards to the period of the contract the laborer is tied to the landlord for at least a year, beginning and ending in September. The contract is absolute and oral. Except in the extreme cases the landlord has to keep the laborer until the expiration of the contract even though he is dissatisfied. The exceptional cases in which the contract is annulled and the laborer is sent out are the cases of theft, dishonor and disputes.

With regards to the task these laborers perform, the following are outstanding:

a. The task of general supervision

This is usually done by an experienced person who is called the steward *المزلي*. He runs from place to place and sees to it that all the work is done properly. He is, also, the head as all the other workers are responsible to him. His responsibility is only towards the landlord who informs him at every occasion and of every task.

b. The task of supervising the cultivation

This is done by a man called foreman *الوقان* whose job is to make sure that all the lands are cultivated properly and he is responsible directly to the steward but all who work under him are responsible to him.

c. The task of irrigating the land

Those laborers who undertake the job of irrigating the lands of the landlord are called *المراشيد*. Usually there are more than ten in each farm *حازن* and can be divided into two categories: Those who work during the day time and those who work during the night, depending on the time the water is given to the landlord to irrigate his fields. It is true that, their job is mostly during summer.

d. The task of cultivating and harvesting

Those who do such work are called servants and number at least twelve depending upon the size of the landlord's field. They are the lowest in rank and usually they are young persons.

In addition to these mentioned above, there are the less important employees who help in the transportation or who guard the fields called *الاجري*

2. Provisional Laborers

These laborers are the constantly moving ones. As their work is over in a particular job or village, they move to another job or another village. There is no contract in their case and they are usually paid less than those working under contract. So the efficiency of this group is lower than the one mentioned above.

Concerning the nature of work they do, it is usually an easy job such as clearing the field from the weeds or threshing the wheat or picking the fruits and vegetables etc.. This explains the reason why most of such laborers are women. The task they perform comes usually and mostly during the summer. That is why the demand is greater than the supply during that period tending to raise their wages.

B. Wages and hours of work

All paid laborers whether they are working under a contract or are provisional ones receive as wages from 30 to 60⁴ p.s., the highest being received by the supervisors, then by the contracted manual workers and finally the lowest by the provisional ones who do less important work.

I would like to call the reader's attention to the fact that the wages to the contracted group are not only the money wages for they receive also wages in kind. For example a supervisor gets 60 p.s. plus free lodging with 70⁵ midds of wheat per year. But such additional wages

4. Mr. A. Dalati & Mr. S. Hamzé thru a letter - April 25, 1939.
5. Ibid.

in goods and services, as I said, are only true in the case of the contracted laborers. Provisional ones may get only 30 p.s. and are supposed to get nothing more in addition.

Concerning the hours of work, all the workers whether they work under a contract or temporarily, have fixed working period of 8 hours a day. The contracted ones usually work from 5:00 a.m. till 9:00 a.m. and from 10:00 till 2:00 p.m. The interval being reserved for rest and meal. But such a schedule is applicable in summer. In winter, the work starts at 7:00 a.m. till 12:00 noon and from 1:00 p.m. till 4:00 p.m. As to the provisional workers, they come to work at 8:00 a.m. and work till 12:00 noon. After an interval of one hour they again start until 5:00 p.m., whether it is in summer or in winter.⁶ The hours of work are different in the two groups because the provisional laborers cannot work early and they have to come from very far places whereas the contract laborers live very near to the land of the landlords.

C. Conditions of the Laborers

A typical "Ghouta" laborer is an uneducated and poor man working under unhealthy and miserable circumstances. He usually has many children and as he himself alone can not afford a comfortable living, all his crowded family are obliged to live in a small room which is absolutely not sanitary. Because of his poverty his standard of living is very low and unfortunately his conditions are very bad. The only thing that enables him to live is that he works in a healthy spot and undergoes a hard physical exercise, otherwise he could not have endured.

6. Mr. A. Dalati & Mr. S. Hamzé thru a letter April 25. 1939.

Means and Ways of Improving Agriculture in the "Ghouta"¹

Before enumerating the necessary means of improving agriculture in the "Ghouta" the reader must have a general knowledge of the conditions existing. Any visitor after some time of stay notices that the general economic conditions of this large agricultural region have deteriorated. The farmers are far less prosperous and happy than they were in the past. Particularly in the western division and a part of the southern region the poverty stricken farm houses attract attention. The reasons that led to this situation are many and fundamental. Since 1924-26 the revolutionary period that resulted in destroying most of the houses of the peasants and landlords and two years of getting nothing from the land, these causes have had severe effects. The immediate cause for the deterioration was the destruction of some of the villages by the French military authorities. From such devastation, till now, the "Ghouta" has not yet recovered. The burned houses still stand at village ends. In addition to such an intended destruction, there came the natural destructive factor, scarcity of rainfall. Since 1927, the rainfall has been far below the average, thus leaving the quantity of production at the mercy of the inefficient irrigation system. In spite of the decrease in production the prices have not risen due to the major fact that the total effective demand has fallen. Egypt, Turkey and Iraq have closed their

1. Al-Ayyam November 21, 1939 (Al-Ayyam reporter interview with Mr. Asim Dalati).

markets by high tariffs, as a result the few factories of Damascus have not been able to absorb even this decreased total production. The prices have fallen greatly due to the world depression and that situation led to the detriment of the farmer. Under such conditions one should naturally expect the government help. But what the government has done, has been to keep on the same heavy taxes on the gross produce, thus making the conditions far worse than before. Over all these difficulties there has been another factor working against betterment. Eversince the revolution, there has not been a complete security over the area. Now and then quarrels and theft take place as the force to keep order is inadequate. So, destruction as a result of the revolution of 1924-26, scarcity of rainfall, fall in prices, closing of the outside markets and the lack of security have caused the existing conditions in the "Ghouta". Then, the question is how to remedy the existing factors?

A. Immediate and Necessary steps to be undertaken by the Government

There are four important steps that should be undertaken by the government if any improvement in the conditions of the "Ghouta" is expected.

1. Security and order in the Villages and on the fields - It is very easy to realize the importance of security and order to the "Ghouta" when we state that, that vast section gives so many opportunities to theft and conflicts. Whenever there has been order and

security the work has gone on smoothly and orderly, as a result the total production has been increased. So, it is vitally important that the government establish greater security and order both in the villages and on fields.

2. Good hygeinic and Sanitary conditions

Unless the farmer and his family are sound and healthy they cannot work. But, unfortunately in the "Ghouts" good hygeinic and sanitary conditions have been lacking for many years and they have been intensified recently. Also, there are no health centers situated near each other so as to better the health of the farmer. For a small disease the poor farmer has to go miles away to get medical advice. If his case needs immediate care and expenditures, he usually dies before reaching the place or before having the medicine. Therefore, there is a great need for closely constructed health centers equipped with modern instruments, supplied by and up to date medicine and run by expert doctors.

In addition to health centers, the government must see to it, thru inspectors, that all the villages are in perfect sanitary conditions and that there are no more sources of disease such as infected pools and swamps, gardens containing animal waste products and so on. Only three years ago the government thought of a start for betterment by distributing quinine trees to be planted in the swamps so as to combat the malaria malady. But this is a very small job as compared with what should be done by the government.

3. Construction of Connecting roads

With the already stated difficulties in the "Ghouta" there is the problem of connecting roads, new and old, that must be constructed and improved if any progress from the point of view of communication and transportation is to be made. This is a very serious problem nowadays. Not only, there are no linking roads between the villages and the big centers but equally more exist between the neighboring villages. Though the farmers of the "Ghouta" pay all the taxes which amount to a great portion of the government reserve, they receive no such necessary help. In the Lebanon, in spite of the fact that it is mountainous and difficult to construct roads, there is not a single village that is not connected with the centers and with other neighboring small villages.

4. Establishment of primary schools

The fourth point which is the spread of education is as fundamental as the previous three mentioned above. Unless education is widely spread by establishing primary schools run by teachers of good character, there is no possibility of improvement, because ignorance has directed the villagers to theft, controversy and conflicts.

The fulfillment of the four primary conditions will undoubtedly raise the standard of living of the farmer and the conditions of agriculture in the "Ghouta" in general.

B. Steps of secondary importance to be undertaken by the government with the help of the people.

The fact that these points come under steps of secondary importance does not mean that they should not

be undertaken fully. They are equally indispensable.

1. The establishment of experimental stations and nurseries

It must be kept in mind that all the primary reasons must be supplemented by these secondary steps. The government must establish agricultural stations and nurseries to distribute the various kinds of trees agricultural implements and all sorts of seeds. Also, they ought to teach the farmer how to utilize chemical fertilizers as well as proper planting. Breeding of animals, scientific methods of pruning and the preparation of all sorts of dairy products, the farmers should learn from the experts of these stations.

2. Application of new projects of irrigation and registration of rights to water

As it was discussed in chapter five the irrigation system in the "Ghouta" is very old and leads always to disputes between the villagers of different villages as well as between the villagers in the same village. So there must be a special department established to take care of the application of the project which includes opening canals and wells and registration of rights of water so as to prevent conflicts which hinder cooperation among the farmers.

3. Organization of Chambers of Agriculture

In order to promote agriculture there is a great need for such chambers whose members must be elected by the people. They must meet at definite times and devise

ways and means of improving methods of agriculture and finding markets abroad. The members who are to be elected from all districts must be helped financially by the people as well as by the government. With regards to the work of such organizations these must be given certain privileges to act the way they choose. It is very probable that such chambers if run properly will be of great value as they will always try to apply the modern methods that they learn from other agricultural centers of Europe.

4. Prohibition of cutting trees

In order to increase the trees in the forests, the government must prohibit cutting trees which bear fruits such as olive and nut trees as well as those non bearing trees like polar *جوز الطور* willow *جوز الصفار* etc.... Such an action will decrease gradually the already abnormally grown imports of wood.

5. Protective agricultural tariffs

Syria must have an agricultural tariff on the imports of produce that are of the kinds raised in the "Ghouta". Though this will mean higher prices, in the short run, but later in the long run, when the farmer has increased his production due to the application of modern methods of production and intensive cultivation, thus a decrease in his costs that will ultimately result in greater demand.

Lower prices will benefit the consumer and increase consumption. If the internal markets cannot absorb the increase, the external markets must be sought for.

6. Taxation of Agricultural produce

The present system of taxation must be improved

because it is unjust. The rate, instead of being on the gross produce must be on the net produce so that the farmer will not be taxed on the expenses. There is also another defect namely, that there are certain prices of land which pay more than others though the returns of the latter are greater. Also, the rate must be decreased, otherwise, even if it is on the net produce, it is beyond the capacity of the average farmer to pay.

7. Prohibition of Goat raising

Unless there are special places selected for goats, the government must prevent goat raising, because they are the enemies of the trees as they usually feed upon them.² This problem had been taken up by the government in the past, but the results were not fruitful. Until today nothing has been done and the problem is still waiting for solution.

8. Fight against the pests

In the region of the "Ghouta", there are two important pests that come during the summer and attack the apricot trees and grains. They are namely insect of apricot ^{الزهر} *حيت* and sunah respectively. Besides these there are many other insects such as locusts ^{الجرار} black seal ^{حشرة} etc... These various insects destroy a great portion of the total plantations yearly. The government with the help of the people must attempt at killing them.

2. lack individualistic farm has a number of goats which are taken by a son of the peasant to be fed in the fields of the land lords. So long as the land on which the goats graze, the farmer pays no attention. The goats damage the trunks of the trees, thus kill it.

9. Establishment of agricultural banks

There is only one state agricultural bank whose main office is in the city of Damascus, branches being in different other cities of Syria. Of course, this is not enough, there must be some more agricultural banks to extend more credit. As to the present state bank, there are many defects which hinder it from working properly. High rates of interest, the question of collateral and favoritism, combined together, prevent it from achieving its main purposes namely, helping the poor farmers. Under such condition, there is a great opportunity for well educated people to start banking business. It is also hoped that cooperation will start so as to enable the poor farmer who has nothing to offer as collateral to have credit.

10. Abolishing of taxation of oil for machinery

In order to encourage the use of machinery on the farm, the government must abolish taxation of oil, because of the fact that its price is already high in proportion to the capacity of the farmer to pay. When the oil is cheap, the purchase of machinery will be increased and the production will increase proportionately.

11. Presence of market places

Under our present condition, the peasant has to carry his product to the city of Damascus to sell them in a market which is very bad from the point of view of its location, administration and sanitation. What I would

like to state in this connection is that the government ought to have first of all a big modern market in the city of Damascus and branches to it in the villages. The poor farmer will carry his product to the village market and in turn the whole sales will carry it to the central market.

In conclusion to this chapter one should say that in order to accomplish the above primary and secondary steps, the government and the people must cooperate, otherwise there is very little prospect for betterment in the "Ghouta".

CHAPTER X

A typical Village in the "Ghouta" Mulayhah¹

In order to give a clearer picture of the various aspects of the villages and the life in the "Ghouta", I have chosen "Mulayhah" as the very typical one from which an accurate conception can be obtained. The weather conditions, the inhabitants and their health, and economic and social life of this village are typical of the whole region.

1. Location and Climatic Conditions

Mulayhah is located in the southern "Ghouta" to the East of the city of Damascus and is far from it by only about six kilometers. The connection with the city is made by a main asphalted road.

The winter in Mulayhah is rather severe. Sometime the temperature falls to the freezing point, whereas during the summer there is an unbearable heat and moisture. The two other seasons, the spring and the autumn, are quite pleasant particularly the spring as it makes possible a thorough recreation in green fields and is free of mosquitoes and full of bright sunshine and roses. After all a new life starts in this season - nature is in its best form and people rejoice in it very much.

2. Inhabitants and their health

The people in Mulayhah are all moslems and this is the case in most of the villages. Two big families comprise a great percentage of the total population and it is practically the same in most of the villages of the

1. Personal observation.

"Ghouta". The percentage of the two big families that exist in Mulayhah is about 40% of the total population of the village which is about 670 people. Certainly, by the families that form the majority I mean to say that the peasant families and not the landlords. But one should mention that there has been a general intermarriage that has brought about a closer relationship between the different families, thus increasing their cooperation, and mutual understanding. Whenever one is damaged, all the rest of the villagers come to his aid at any time and at all costs. It must be remembered that Arab hospitality is the main characteristic of every inhabitant of Mulayhah, so is it in all the rest of the villages.

With regards to sanitary conditions, Mulayhah, is not healthy though there has been tremendous improvement recently. Here and there, there are swamps which help the malaria disease to develop and attack, particularly the children who have less immunity. In summer, in addition to mosquitoes, there is the dust that penetrates to every corner and helps the spread of several other diseases. A short time ago, the government took up the matter with a greater vigor and has been fighting against several diseases since then. Baldness still prevails everywhere especially among the children. It is correct to think that if the inhabitants were not originally physically strong, they would have been in a worse situation to-day.

3. Social and Economic life in the village

A foreigner entering the "Ghouta" at once is attracted by customs and costumes that are quite different

from the ones that are found in the cities, everything here is old-fashioned. Old Arab manners, character, and clothing, such as the Shirwal سُورَال Hitan حِيتَان Abaya أَبَايَا Bgal and Kafieh كَفَايِيه etc.. are outstanding.

In order to discuss the social life more carefully and thoroughly, I shall take up the growth of a child. Till the age of four, the newly born baby is taken care of by his mother. After this age he is sent to a small school where he learns reading the Koran till the age of eight. At the age of eight he is taken back by his father to work on the farm until the age of fifteen after which the boy looks for an independent work out side, and when established gets married.

With regards to the course of marriage, the family involved put up a declaration in the district officer's office announcing the wedding. After sometime, the ceremony lasts three nights during which all the inhabitants of the village are present. Arabic music is played and various kinds of dancing such as the Dabké دَبْكِيه take place. The usual term which is given to such a ceremony is called in Arabic--Mssareh مَسْرِيه .

The marriage will end and the new life will start. The couple start living together and working with each other on the farm in case it is a poor family. Thus the same life cycle is repeated.

As to the home in which they live it is composed usually of one room. The furniture of the room comprises

the necessary things which are very very simple. Their children will live with them and so on until the boy reaches maturity. With this situation in mind, it is to be noted that there are many others among the individualistic farmers who live a better life and who can afford to have a somewhat comfortable home.

The economic life in Mulayhah is evidence of the sufficiency of the individual farmer and even of the whole village. Usually, in the case of the independent farmer a small portion is sold outside the village whereas in the case of the landlords, most of the crop is marketed outside.

The standard of living in "Mulayhah" is very low as the farmer can only afford buying the necessities as he can produce goods to enable him to buy just so much. What he buys is what he can not produce. The most difficult thing for the farmer is the payment of taxes that amount to $1/5^2$ of the total gross produce. In bad years, he feels it very badly.

In addition to the independent farmers, there are those who move from village to village and work as hired laborers. These wait for a time at which they can buy a small piece of land to live on.

2. An interview with Mr. A. Dalati, May 9, 1939.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

The status of agriculture in the "Ghouta" and its prospects may be summarized thus:

The "Ghouta" is a center of agriculture where practically all the inhabitants derive their livelihood from agriculture as it is the only occupation. Because it has specialized in this phase of life, it has acquired a great deal of importance not only because its inhabitants live on it but because the city of Damascus and several internal and external markets depend upon it as well. The production of apricot and various other fruits and vegetables serves as the basis on which several large native factories of Damascus and Beirut depend. The national conserved fruit factory *شركة التوت والكمثرى* and Cortas factory *مصنع قريظا* are examples. In addition to these, several markets in Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan etc., depend for their imports on these products from all Syria.

It is an important region, not only to the people in the country and to foreign markets, but also to the government which undoubtedly gets a large revenue from the Ghouta.

It must be noted that the status of agriculture in the "Ghouta" is still rather backward. There is a great lack of security, of good hygienic conditions, of roads and of education. The various governments in the past as well as those of the present have done practically nothing to

better the prevailing conditions and every thing has been left as it is. That is why a whole chapter of this thesis has been reserved to bring the attention of the reader to the reasons for the backwardness of the "Ghoute" and the possible ways of remedying and improving the situation.

Well, my aim has been to show the bad points, the good points and to suggest the means and ways of improvements. Whether these improvements will take place in the coming years is difficult to tell. Most probably the time element is the most important in this case!

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Books

1. J. Allen Tomer, "The Oasis of Damascus"
American Press, Beirut - 1935
2. Richard Thommin "Geographie Humaine de la
Syrie Centrale"
Librairie Ernest Leroux, Paris - 1936
3. Tresse, Rene "L'Irrigation dans le Ghouta
de Damas"
Paris, Geuthner (Reprint), 1929
4. Mohamad Kurd-All "Khitat el-Sham",
Taraky Press, Damascus, 1927

II. Field-Work - "Interviews with"

1. Amin Dalati
2. Bashir Dalati
3. Omar Termanini
4. Said Hamzé
5. Hani Jellad

III. Periodicals

1. El-Eyyam - November 2, 1938
El-Eyyam Press, Damascus
2. Arab Economic Journal, Published weekly by
the Arab Publications Co. Ltd.,
Jerusalem - Palestine.

Appendix I
 Tables: I, II, III, IV, V
 An Estimate of the Total Products of the Three Ghoutas¹
 An Average of ten years, 1929, 1938

Produce	Western "Ghouta"		Northern "Ghouta"		Southern "Ghouta"		Grand Total		Value per ton in L.L.S.
	Quantity of each in tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantities in tons	Value in L.L.S.	
102	3672	3500	118800	4115	148140	7517	270612	36	
59	9440	640	102400	651	100960	1350	212300	160	
44	4400	670	67000	765	76500	1477	147700	100	
22	880	310	12400	2396	95840	2728	109120	40	
units 37	2220	417	25020	284	17040	738	44280	60	
260	10400	825	35000	1701	68040	2786	111440	40	
22	616	730	20440	730	20440	1482	41496	28	
2	440	402	88440	221	48620	625	137500	220	
beds -	--	105	12600	177	21240	282	33840	120	
seed -	--	25	27500	15	16500	40	44000	1100	
84	6720	141	11280	480	38400	705	56400	80	
632	38788	7565	518880	11513	651520	19710	1209188		

¹ Prepared by two agriculturists, Messrs. A. Dalati, and S. Hamze, May 5, 1939.

APPENDIX II

An Estimate of the total Products
of the Western "Ghouta" (1)
An average of ten years
1929 - 1938

Name of Village	APRICOTS		NUTS		OLIVES		GRAPES		VARIOUS FRUITS		GRAINS		VEGETABLES		HEMP		VARIOUS		CUCUMBER SEED		WOOD	
	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.
DOUMMAR	25	900	10	1600	5	500	3	120	3	180	45	1800	5	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	2000
H HAME	35	1260	15	2400	15	1500	5	200	8	480	55	2200	8	224	2	440	-	-	-	-	25	2000
KUDSAYYA	9	324	10	1600	4	400	3	120	3	180	55	2200	3	84	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	400
BASSIMY	5	180	5	800	3	300	2	80	4	240	30	1200	2	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	400
ASHRAFIEH	7	252	5	800	2	200	2	80	4	240	35	1400	2	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	720
JBEIDEH	15	540	8	1280	5	500	4	160	10	600	25	1000	2	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	960
JUMRAYAH	6	216	6	960	10	1000	3	120	5	300	15	600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	240
Totals	102	3672	59	9440	44	4400	22	880	37	2220	260	10400	22	616	2	440	-	-	-	-	84	6720

(1) Estimated by two agriculturists, Messrs A. DALATI & S. Hamzé, May 5/1939

APPENDIX III

An Estimate of total Production of the Northern "Ghouta" (1)
An average of ten years
1929 - 1938

Name of village	APRICOTS		NUTS		OLIVES		GRAPES		VARIOUS FRUITS		GRAINS		VEGETABLES		HEMP		VARIOUS		CUCUMBER SEED		WOOD	
	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.	Quantity of each in Tons	Value of each in L.L.S.
1 BARZE	25	900	10	1600	25	2500	15	600	5	300	50	2000	15	420	-	-	5	600	-	-	-	-
2 KABUN	75	2700	20	3200	40	4000	-	-	15	900	40	1600	70	1960	3	660	5	600	-	-	-	-
3 JOBAR	500	1800	50	8000	40	4000	5	200	35	2100	50	2000	90	2520	25	5500	10	1200	-	-	50	4000
4 URBIN	400	14400	75	12000	125	12300	25	1000	75	4500	80	3200	125	3500	10	2200	10	1200	3	3300	10	800
5 AIN TERMA	200	7200	50	8000	40	4000	25	1000	50	3000	40	1600	50	1400	25	5500	5	600	-	-	20	1600
6 HAZZE	150	5400	30	4800	50	5000	50	2000	40	2400	40	1600	25	700	5	1100	5	600	-	-	-	-
7 KAPER-BATHA	200	7200	70	11200	5	500	10	400	15	900	40	1600	40	1120	50	11000	5	600	3	3300	10	800
8 JISRIN	150	5400	45	7200	25	2500	5	200	10	600	40	1600	30	840	40	8800	5	600	3	3300	10	800
9 EFFRIS	250	9000	35	5600	85	8500	75	3000	20	1200	75	3000	50	1400	50	11000	10	1200	3	3300	5	240
10 MOUHADIEN	400	14400	50	8000	-	-	5	200	7	420	70	2800	35	980	40	8800	5	600	3	3300	15	1200
11 SAZHA	200	7200	40	6400	20	2000	5	200	15	900	40	1600	25	700	50	11000	5	600	2	2200	5	400
12 HAMMORA	200	7200	50	8000	25	2500	5	200	40	2400	60	2400	60	1400	40	8800	10	1200	3	3300	10	800
13 BEIT-SAWA	100	3600	30	4800	40	4000	70	2800	20	1200	75	3000	35	980	30	6600	10	1200	3	3300	5	400
14 MDTIREH	100	3600	20	3200	100	10000	5	200	25	1500	25	1000	40	1120	4	880	5	600	-	-	-	-
15 ZAMALKA	200	7200	40	6400	45	4500	10	400	40	2400	50	2000	35	980	10	2200	5	600	-	-	-	-
16 BEIT-NAIM	150	5400	25	4000	5	500	-	-	5	300	50	2000	13	420	20	4400	5	600	2	2200	3	240
Totals	3300	118800	640	102400	670	67000	310	12400	417	25020	825	33000	730	20440	402	88440	105	12600	25	27500	141	11280

(1) Estimated by two agriculturistes, Messrs A.DALATI & S.HAMZE, May 5/1939

APPENDIX IV

An Estimate of total Production of the Southern "Ghouta" (1)

An average of ten years

1929 - 1938

Name of village	APPRICOTS		NUTS		OLIVES		GRAPES		VARIOUS FRUITS		GRAINS		VEGETABLES		HEMP		VARIOUS		CUCUMBER SEED		WOOD	
	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each	Quantity of each	Value of each
	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.	in Tons	in L.L.S.
1 DARAYYA	150	5400	30	4800	25	2500	300	80000	40	2400	100	4000	100	2800	-	-	5	600	-	-	5	400
2 SUHNAYA	10	360	5	800	60	6000	15	600	3	180	70	2800	10	280	-	-	12	1440	-	-	-	-
3 EL-ASHRAFIEH	5	180	5	800	40	4000	5	200	5	300	70	2800	10	280	-	-	35	4200	-	-	-	-
4 BLAN	5	180	5	800	5	500	100	8000	5	300	35	1400	5	140	-	-	5	600	-	-	-	-
5 KAFRE SOUSSE	150	5400	40	6400	120	12000	7	280	60	3600	70	2800	250	7000	-	-	10	1200	-	-	25	2000
6 MAZZE	75	2700	30	4800	25	2500	15	600	40	2400	35	2800	20	560	-	-	5	600	-	-	5	400
7 YALDA	80	2880	25	4000	35	3500	5	200	5	300	50	2000	25	700	4	880	-	-	-	-	5	400
8 BABILLA	80	2680	25	4000	30	3000	5	200	7	420	50	2000	25	700	5	1100	-	-	-	-	2	180
9 BRIT-SAHAM	85	3060	30	4800	20	2000	5	200	5	300	45	1800	10	280	15	3300	4	480	-	-	3	240
10 ZUBDIN	1100	39600	100	16000	-	-	35	1400	10	600	60	2400	25	700	35	7700	-	-	3	3300	100	8000
11 SAHAYA	5	180	1	160	-	-	-	-	1	60	30	1200	5	140	-	-	3	360	-	-	-	-
12 HOSH-EL-DEJIR	25	900	1	160	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	800	5	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13 SHABAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80	3200	3	84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14 AL-MADAM	35	1260	15	2400	150	15000	-	-	-	-	40	1600	45	1260	-	-	7	840	-	-	-	-
15 SHEINE	10	360	9	1440	18	1800	10	400	15	900	40	1600	45	1260	-	-	8	960	-	-	-	-
16 HOSH-EL-RIHANIEH	15	540	5	1280	40	4000	6	240	6	360	55	2200	8	224	-	-	15	1800	-	-	-	-
17 HAJJIRAH	30	1080	5	800	5	500	5	200	5	300	3	120	8	224	-	-	5	600	-	-	-	-
18 BUAYDA	15	540	3	480	15	1500	-	-	1	60	45	1800	5	140	-	-	5	600	-	-	-	-
19 HOSH-KUBL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	1400	5	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20 HOSH-EL-SHAIR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	1000	2	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
21 HOSH-EL-SULTAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	1600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
22 KHIARET-NOFAL	50	1800	5	800	25	2500	-	-	-	-	30	1200	-	-	10	2200	-	-	-	-	30	2400
23 DEIR-BAHDAL	75	2700	7	1120	-	-	30	1200	-	-	65	2600	10	280	15	3300	-	-	-	-	-	-
24 AKRABA	150	5400	25	4000	15	1500	-	-	8	480	10	400	15	420	15	3300	5	600	2	2200	-	-
25 KABRE-EL-SITT	60	2160	15	2400	30	3000	5	200	5	300	70	2800	10	280	7	1540	8	960	-	-	-	-
26 MLEIHA	500	18000	90	14400	-	-	10	400	8	480	70	2800	10	280	50	11000	-	-	3	3300	100	8000
27 BLATT	100	3600	40	6400	-	-	25	1000	10	600	8	320	-	-	20	4400	-	-	2	2200	40	3200
28 JARAMANA	600	21600	60	9600	5	500	4	160	5	300	40	1600	15	420	25	5500	10	1200	3	3300	15	1200
29 HATTITET-EL	700	25200	50	8000	-	-	4	160	20	1200	75	3000	80	2240	20	4400	-	-	2	2200	150	12000
30 BAHDALIEH	5	180	2	320	100	10000	5	200	5	300	120	4800	14	392	-	-	35	4200	-	-	-	-
T O T A L	4115	148140	631	100960	763	76300	396	95840	284	17040	1701	68040	730	20440	221	48620	177	21240	15	16500	480	38400

(1) Estimated by two agriculturistes, Messrs A. DALATI & S. HANZE, May 5/1939