

# innovATE

Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education

## Jordan Fact Sheet

### Background

The population of Jordan is 6.2 million, with 80% of the population living in urban areas, primarily located in the capital Amman and surrounding cities. The population of Jordan is young with the median age estimated at 20 years. Jordan has low overall employment rates for the region estimated at 64.8% of men and 14.9% of women. Agriculture accounts for less than 4% of the GDP in Jordan, although the combined contribution of agriculture and agribusiness is estimated at 30% of GDP (IFAD, 2011). Of the total agricultural workforce, 30% are rural poor. The rising cost of food, representing 48-58% of expenditures of poor and of rural families combined with increasing water scarcity are contributing to a growing concern for food security in the region.

### Present Status

Education in Jordan consists of pre-basic education, basic education, secondary education, and tertiary education. Pre-basic education is a two year optional cycle for students aged four-five years old. Basic education is free and compulsory from ages six through 15, and includes the first grade through the tenth grade. After the completion of the tenth grade students are placed into an academic secondary or applied vocational track. Students in vocational tracks have the option to specialize in agriculture. At the conclusion of secondary school, students sit for the General Certificate of Secondary Education Exam, known as the Tawjihi, which determines entry into higher education. At the higher education level participation in agricultural programs has steadily declined since 2004. Female students have a higher share of participation in tertiary education and had the highest numbers of agricultural graduates in 2011 at 73% of agricultural graduates. This is despite gender norms that stream girls away from agricultural fields and is largely attributable to participation in nutrition and dietetics which fall under the agricultural umbrella.

#### **Public Universities with Agricultural Programs**

- The University of Jordan
- Jordan University of Science and Technology
- Mutah University
- Al-Balqa' Applied University

#### **Private Universities with Agriculture Programs**

- Jerash Private University



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## Challenges and Issues

There are significant gaps in the relevance and quality of education in Jordan where there are mismatches between the supply of students from the secondary and tertiary systems versus the demands of the labor market. Employers state issues with graduates including low technical skills, lack of appropriate skills, poor work attitudes and social skills, and a high need for re-training to integrate into the workplace. These issues are evidenced in unemployment rates as high as 64% in vocational graduates and 29% in higher education graduates.

Unemployed youth are a significant issue in Jordan, where the youth unemployment rate is three times that of the adult rate. A 2013 World Development Report places the unemployment rate of youths at 22% of men and 45% of women, with first-time job seekers making up 53.4% of the unemployment rate (WB, 2013). Underemployment is also an issue where employees often take jobs for which they are overqualified. This is particularly true for female workers where there are significant disparities between the level of educational attainment and job placement. The economic participation of women is estimated at 14.7% compared to 63.5% of men. Unemployment of women by level of education is revealing where 55% of unemployed women have graduated from tertiary education with a bachelor's degree, a rate that is three times that of men with the same level of education. Women are more likely to take jobs for less than minimum wage, are more often found in entry-level administrative jobs and in education, and must achieve a higher level of education for the same jobs as men.



## Next Steps and Recommendations

- Improve curricula, pedagogy, and skills delivery in agricultural vocational and secondary education to meet the needs and demands of employers.
- Improve the reputation, perception, and profile of careers in agriculture through community outreach, and engagement with families, educational institutions, and employers.
- Increase opportunities for female students in agricultural education through leadership courses, competitive grants, scholarships, and mentoring programs.
- Provide women with safe spaces to participate in community-level agricultural training such as through peer-to-peer training, leadership and entrepreneur training.
- Provide practical experience for agricultural students and graduates including extension training, internships, and certification programs.
- Develop and support new agricultural value-chains and markets to increase job opportunities and economic growth.



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