

New hopes for dates farmers in the Jordan Valley

Jericho, June 10th 2019 – *Support to productive, managerial and commercial reorganization of Palestinian and Egyptian dates producers' associations*, a development cooperation project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and implemented by John Paul II Foundation, concluded its activities this morning with a final ceremony in Jericho.

With the participation of the General Consul of Italy in Jerusalem Fabio Sokolowicz, the AICS Jerusalem Director Cristina Natoli, the Governor of Jericho Jihad Abul Asal, the John Paul II Foundation President in Middle East Father Ibrahim Faltas, the President of the Jericho chamber of commerce Tayseer Mahmoud Mohammad Alhameedi and the President of PCFA Cooperative Ghazi Abu Dhaher, a 200 tons capacity brand new refrigerator room has been inaugurated for the dates storage before the introduction to local and international market.

Through the involvement of more than 100 dates producers and the Jericho Chamber of Commerce, the local cooperative Palm Farmer Cooperative Association and a large network of Italian partners, the project implemented vocational training and experience exchanges between Italy and Palestine in order to find solutions to the main issues faced by farmers in the Jordan Valley such as a sustainable utilization of water, the adoption of fertilizers with a low percentage of nitrates, the employment of skilled workers for all the production phases. The project also encouraged the opening of new trade channels due to the active participation to international fairs in Italy, Germany, Bahrein and Abu Dhabi. Lastly, PCFA Cooperative has been provided by a business plan to enlarge and enhance different facilities at PFCA such as new equipment for selection, storage and packaging of the products.

The **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation** is currently funding 15 developments projects implemented by Italian Civil Society Organizations in Palestine for a total amount of 20 million EURO. The projects cover a large spectrum of sectors like rural development, gender mainstreaming, social inclusion, civil society enhancement, sustainable tourism and health care.

The **John Paul II Foundation for dialogue, cooperation and devElopment** has been established in 2007 as a result of the joint effort and work delivered by Fiesole and Montepulciano Churches, within additional churches in Tuscany and Italy, in favor of Middle East countries and other disadvantaged parts of the world. The main sectors of activity in Palestine are local economic development and health-education.

