



SUCCESS STORY

Olive Oil Industry in Iraq Begins to Ripen



Photo: USAID Inma Agribusiness Program

Al-Zaytoon Olive Association members in Ninawa install new olive processing equipment provided by USAID-Inma.

USAID-Inma Agribusiness Program continues to assess the association's harvest, post-harvest and processing practices to improve those processes. The program helps the Olive Oil Association improve olive production within their existing olive groves and provide information on best practices for new plantings.

The olive industry in Iraq is beginning to grow and prosper, and much of the credit for the growth belongs to the USAID-*Inma* Agribusiness Program.

In 2009, in accordance with Congressional mandate to work with religious minorities in Iraq, USAID-*Inma* specifically targeted funding to help an olive producer in Ninawa province called the Al-Zaytoon Olive Association. The funding, which totaled \$700,000, helped fund new equipment, technical assistance and other development needs.

Olive groves are concentrated in northern Iraq in the Bashiqa area of Ninawa province. Olive trees have been growing in the area for more than five hundred years. More than sixty percent of the trees are owned or maintained by members of the Al-Zaytoon Association. The association has more than 200 members and contacted USAID-*Inma* two years ago to help establish a thriving olive oil industry for the country.

Assistance from USAID-*Inma* included three modern oil presses, stainless steel oil storage tanks, modern bottling equipment, two irrigation wells for 21,000 olive trees, food processing training and technical assistance. The presses are capable of pressing 4.5 tons of olives per day. The renovated facility created additional seven long term jobs.

As a result of the success with the Al-Zaytoon association, the olive oil demonstration project has been replicated in Kurdistan, Salah al Din and the Tallafar district of Ninawa province by Provincial Reconstruction Teams. USAID-*Inma* and Al-Zaytoon staff members work closely with each of these new mills to provide staff training and technical assistance.

USAID-*Inma* staff members will continue providing technical assistance to the Al-Zaytoon Association to help improve the quality of olive oil to access high value retail markets.