

Beit Mirsim Village Profile



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Background

This booklet is part of a series of booklets, which contain compiled information about each city, town, and village in Hebron Governorate. These booklets come as a result of a comprehensive study of all localities in Hebron Governorate, which aims at depicting the overall living conditions in the governorate and presenting developmental plans to assist in developing the livelihood of the population in the area. It was accomplished through the 'Village Profiles and Azahar Needs Assessment'; a project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and the Azahar Program.

The 'Village Profiles and Azahar Needs Assessment' was designed to study, investigate, analyze and document the socio-economic conditions and the needed programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current unsecure political, economic and social conditions in Hebron Governorate with particular focus on the Azahar program objectives and activities concerning water, environment, and agriculture.

The project's objectives are to survey, analyze and document the available natural, human, socioeconomic and environmental resources, and the existing limitations and needs assessment for the development of the rural and marginalized areas in Hebron Governorate. In addition, the project aims at preparing strategic developmental programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current political, social, and economic instability with the focus on the agricultural sector.

All locality profiles in Arabic and English are available online at <http://proxy.arij.org/vprofile/>

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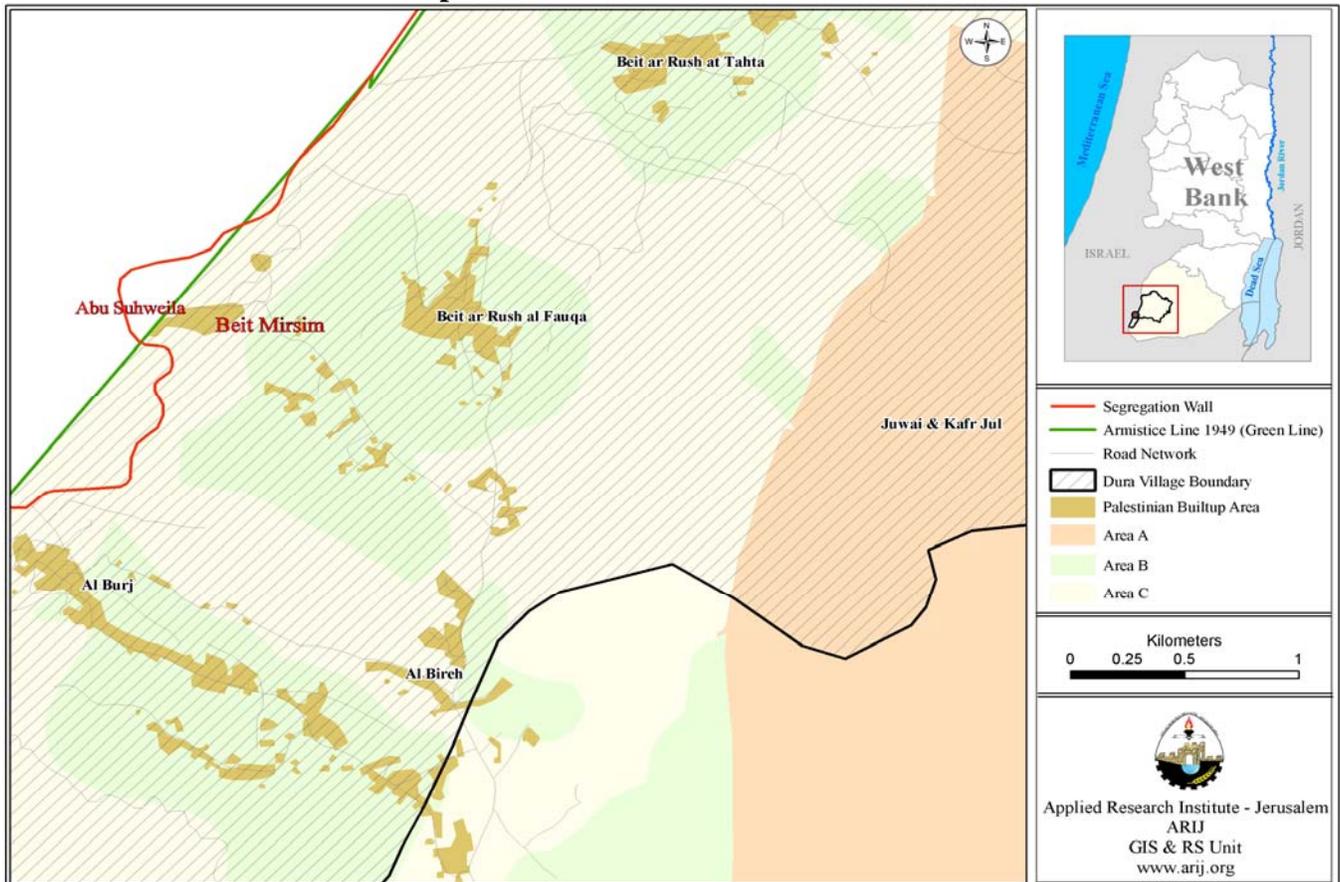
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Beit Mirsim Village Profile

Location and Physical Characteristics

Beit Mirsim is a village in the Dura area which is located 30 kilometers southwest of the city of Hebron in the southern part of West Bank. It is bordered by Beit ar Rush al Fauqa to the east and north, and Al Burj and the Segregation Wall to the west, and the south (See Map 1).

Map 1: Beit Mirsim location and borders



The total area of Beit Mirsim village is approximately 1,500 dunums. 46 dunums are classified as a built up area, 1010 dunums are agricultural lands, 30 dunums are forests, 30 dunums are open space area (with little or no vegetation), and 220 dunums had been confiscated by the Israeli Forces.

Beit Mirsim village is located south west of Dura city with an elevation of 503 m above Sea level. The mean annual rainfall in the village is 436 mm; the average annual temperature is 16°C, and the average annual humidity is 61 % (ARIJ GIS).

The village is considered a solely a rural area. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government (MOLG); Beit Mirsim village consist of Beit Mirsim and also Abu Suhweila. Beit Mirsim village is governed by a village council. This council was established in 1997 and consists of six members. The services provided by the council are mainly infrastructure services such as: building and repairing schools, paving and maintaining roads, and managing the village’s electrical network from “Al Qutriya Company”. The village council also provides social help to the residents.

Since 1992, the Ministry of Local Government provides the village with master plan for 500 dunums of area.

History

The name Beit Mirsim derives from the Canaanite word “Qarya Safar” and “Beir sefer” which means an educational city. The village has also had another two names in past, these were: Beit Sena, (which means Palm Branch), and ‘Dbeer’. The history of the village dates back to ancient Arab tribes who migrated from the Arabian Peninsula and settled in the land of Palestine, most of the families settled in the village during the Islamic and Ottoman period, and this can be proved by the ‘Place of Handal’ (a building similar to a mosque). Similarly some of the inhabitants of the village are also descendents of people expelled from Israel in 1949 (predominately from Mrat and Al Za’aq villages).

Photos of Beit Mirsim



Photo of old olive press was in the village



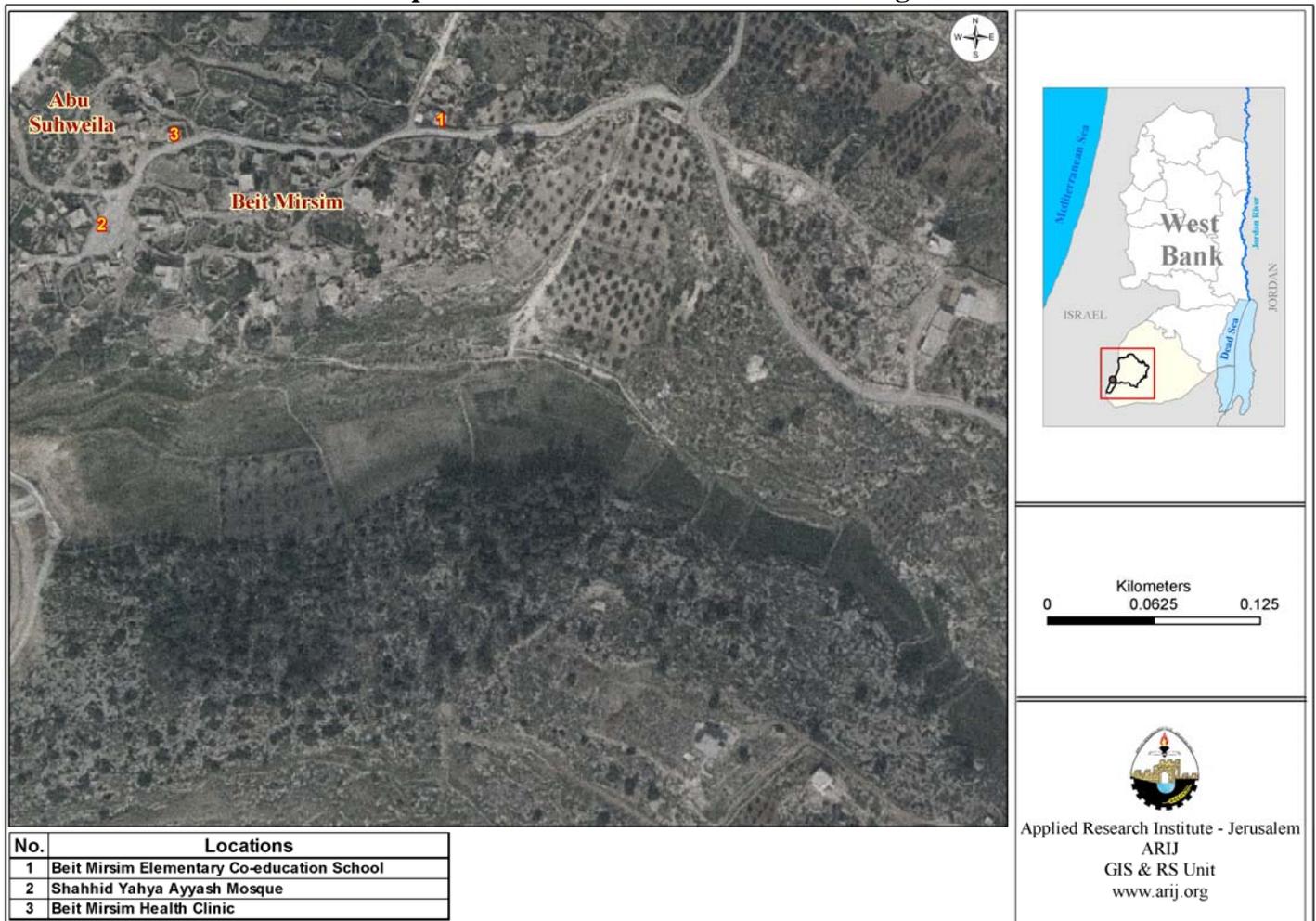
Archaeological site : The Handal shrine

Religious and Archaeological Sites

In terms of religious site, there is one mosque serving the village “Al Shahed Yihya ‘Ayash Mosque“. The village was famous for ‘Place of Handal Prophet’; this however has been destroyed by the Israeli Occupation since the construction of the Segregation Wall. In addition

there is the Beit Mirsim Hill which Canaanite Caves and Palaces, and ancient stone wells. In Abu Suhweila village, there are also ruins from the look Roman period.

Map 2: Main location in Beit Mirsim village



Demography and Population

According to the 2007 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Census, the total population of Beit Mirsim in 2007 was approximately 318 people, of whom 278 were living in Beit Mirsim and 40 were in Abu Suhweila. Out of the 278, 160 were males and 158 were females. There were 58 households residing in 77 housing units in the villages.

Village	Male	Female	Total
Beit Mirsim	139	139	278
Abu Suhweila	21	19	40
Total	160	158	318

Source: PCBS, May 1999. Population, Housing and Establishment Census-1997, Final Results

Age Group and Gender

The 2007 Census reveals the demographic of population in Beit Mirsim village by age and sex. The results indicated that the 0_14 age groups make up the majority of the population in the village with 48.4% of the total. Residents aged between 15-64 years of age account for 46.5% of the total population and the 65 years and over age group total 5.1% of the village's population. The sex ratio in the village was 101.3 males for every 100 females. In terms of percentage, the males constitute 50.3% of the population and females constitute 49.7%.

Families

The population of Beit Mirsim is comprised of three main families, which are: Amro, Abu 'Arqoub, 'Emran.

Migration

The data collected from Beit Mirsim village council indicated that there were about 60 emigrants from the village due to the political and economic situation, and due the extreme distance from amenities and general services.

Education

According to PCBS 2007 Census, 11.2% of the residents (10 years and above) were illiterate (34.8% were males and 65.2% were females). Of the literate population; 14.6% of the residents could read and write, 32% completed elementary education, 31.6% completed preparatory education, and 6.8% completed their secondary education. There is only three persons that has an associate diploma and five have a bachelor degree.

Sex	Illiterate	Can read & write	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary	Associate Diploma	Bachelor	Higher Diploma	Master	PhD	Total
M	8	12	34	30	6	3	3	-	-	-	96
F	15	18	32	35	8	-	2	-	-	-	110
T	23	30	66	65	14	3	5	-	-	-	206

Source: PCBS, March 2009. Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, Final Results

According to the field survey there is one school in Beit Mirsim which is called the "Beit Mirsim Co-education School", which is the oldest school in the Dura area (established 1952). The school is supervised by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The data also indicates that the school during the scholastic year of 2006/2007, the school had about 64 students, 5 classes and 7 teachers. The village however does not have any kindergarten.

The students in Beit Mirsim village are forced to travel approximately 3 km to reach Beit ar Rush al Fuaqa village to complete their preparatory education. They also have to travel between 8 and 20 km to reach Al Majd and Dura to complete their secondary education. The educational sector

in the village is suffering from a severe lack of classes, teachers, stable power supply and regular public finances.

Health Status

Beit Mirsim village does not have any kind of health service; it has no clinics, no ambulance, and no pharmacies. There is only one simple governmental ‘Mother and Child Care Center’ in the village, that provide services one day a week. The village official’s cite that the village need is in severe need of a health center, particularly because the residents find difficult to reach the health centers in the neighboring villages, as they forced to travel 20 km or 30 km to access Dura or Hebron hospitals and health centers.

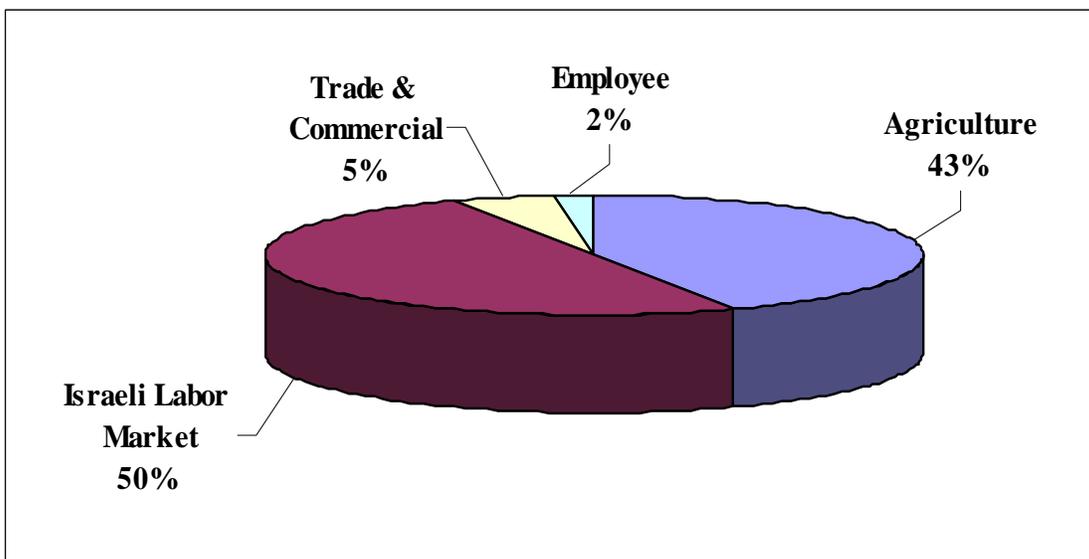
Economic Activities

According to village officials, the economic base of the village is concentrated predominantly in the Israeli labor Market. Approximately, 50% of the population (of working age) is working inside Israel. In addition to this, about 43% of the residents work in the agricultural market. The village also depends on general local trade. 5% of the village’s labor force depends on this sector, including olive presses, three shops and groceries.

According to village officials’ estimates, the economic base of the village consists of the following sectors:

- The Israeli Labor Market (50%)
- Agricultural Sector (43%)
- Trade and Commercial Sector (5%)
- Government or Other Employees (2%)

Figure 1: Percentage of economic activities in Beit Mirsim village



The social groups most affected in the village by the Israeli restrictions during the Second Intifada were:

1. Families maintaining 6 individuals and more,
2. Previous worker in Israeli labor market,
3. Housekeeping and children,
4. Small-holder farmers,
5. Small-holder traders.

Labor Force

The 2007 Census reveals the labor force status in Beit Mirsim; the data shows that about 66.5% of the populations of Beit Mirsim were within the working age (10 years and above). Out of 206 people within the age range, 23.3% were economically active in the labor market and 76.7% were not economically active – outside the labor force. Of the economically active, 75% are employed, of whom 95.8% were males and 4.2% were females. 48.1% of the non-economically active persons are students, while 38.6% were housekeeping. Table 3 shows the labor force status in Beit Mirsim village.

Sex	Economically Active				Not Economically Active						Total
	Employed	Currently Unemployed	Unemployed (Never worked)	Total	Students	House keeping	Unable to work	Not working & Not looking for Work	Others	Total	
M	35	10	1	46	35	-	14	-	1	50	96
F	1	0	1	2	41	61	6	-	-	108	110
T	36	10	2	48	76	61	20	-	1	158	206

Source: PCBS, March 2009. Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, Final Results

Agricultural Sector

Beit Mirsim lies on a total area of 1,500 dunums. 1,010 dunums are considered arable land; however, only 748.5 dunums are currently cultivated. There are about 0.5 dunums of greenhouses cultivating cucumbers.

Total Area	Arable Land		Built up Area	Forests Area	Open Spaces and Rangelands
	Cultivated Area	Uncultivated Area			
1,500	748.5	752	46	30	30

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agricultural (MoA), 2006

Map 3: Land use/land cover and segregation wall in Beit Mirsim village

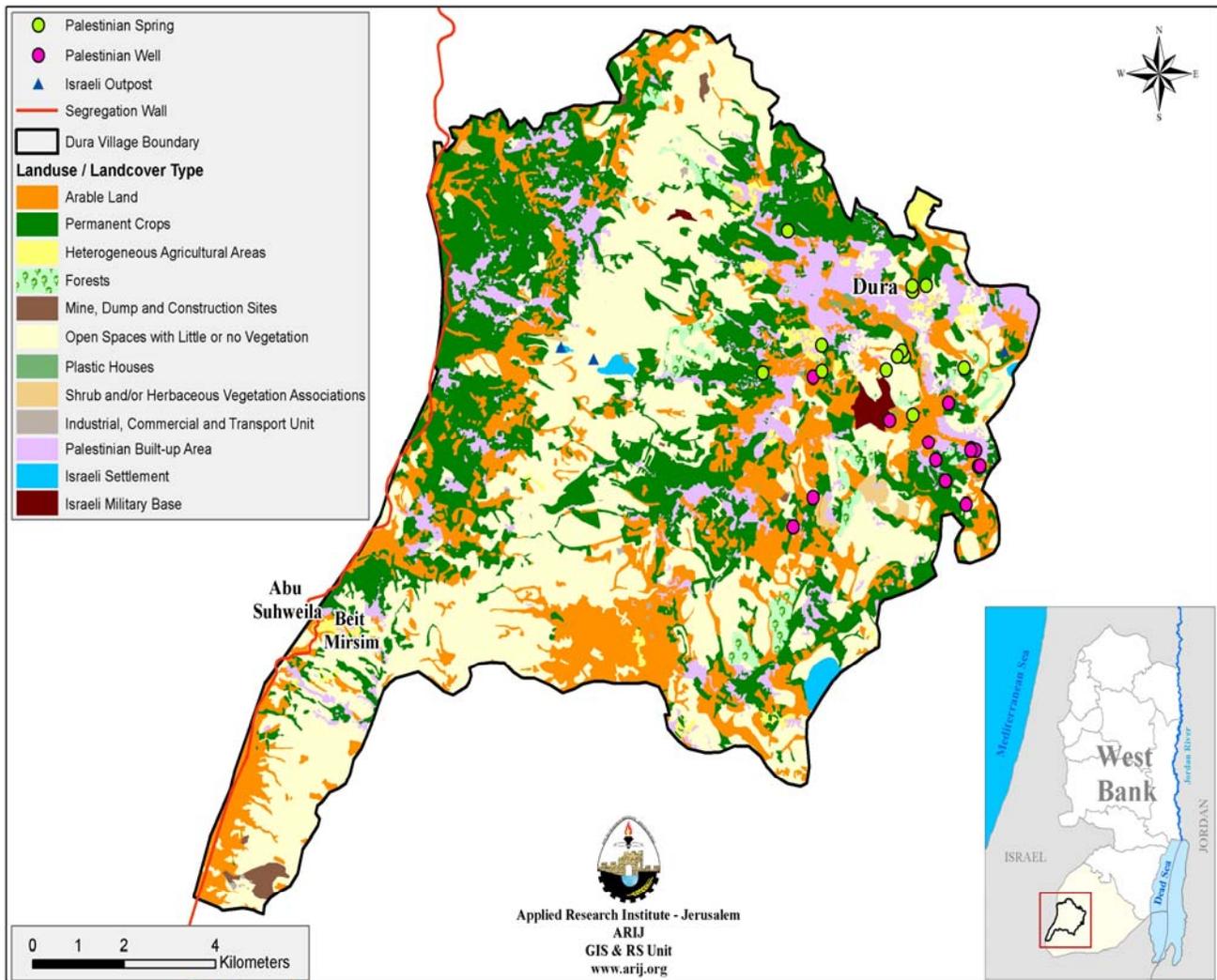


Table 5 shows the different types of rain-fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in the village of Beit Mirsim. The rain-fed fruity vegetables are the most cultivated with an area of about 10.5 dunums. The most common vegetables cultivated within this area are squash, snake cucumber and pumpkin.

Table 5: Total area of rain fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in Beit Mirsim Village (dunum)

Fruity Vegetables		Green Legumes		Other Vegetables		Total	
Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.
10.5	0	1	0	0	1.5	11.5	1.5

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

There are 2 types of aromatic medical plants in Beit Mirsim which spread over a total area of about 2 dunums. These plants are thyme and sage.

In Beit Mirsim, there is a total area of 290 dunums olive tree plantations. Other trees planted in the area are mostly almond trees, fig trees, and grape vines.

Olives		Nuts		Other Fruit		Total	
Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr
290	0	87	0	27	0	414	0

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

Table 7 shows the total field crops cultivated in Beit Mirsim. Cereals, in particular, wheat, barley and corn, are the most cultivated crops with an area of about 229 dunums.

Cereals		Bulbs		Dry Legumes		Forage Crops		Total	
Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr
229	0	3	0	32	0	55	0	319	0

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

In terms of livestock, the residents are rearing livestock, where they benefit from their meat and dairy production. The main livestock rearing in the village are sheep (321). There are 12 cows, 28 goats and 22 donkeys. There are also four poultry farms totaling 13,300 birds (see table 8).

Cows*	Sheep	Goats	Donkeys	Broilers
12	321	28	22	13,300

*Including cows, bull calves, heifer calves and bulls

The main source of water for irrigation in the village is the harvesting wells. The total length of the agricultural roads in the village reaches 6,000 meters, which it is unpaved and only suitable for tractors, other agricultural machines. The agriculture sector in the village has suffered greatly from Israeli activities, and the lack of capital and water. The Israeli Forces have cut and destroyed about 300 olive trees, 60 grape trees, 200 almond trees and 140 forest trees. They have also destroyed about 220 dunums of the agricultural lands in the village.

Institutions and Services

The main institute in the village is the village council, which was established in 1997. There is also the Beit Mirsim Women Committee that was established in 2003.

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Telecommunication Services: Beit Mirsim village is connected to a telecommunication network. Approximately 50% of the housing units in the village have a telephone line.

Water Services: Beit Mirsim village is not connected to any water network. So the village depends on mainly on wells and water tanks. The water services in Beit Mirsim are suffering from many problems including:

- The lack of water network.
- The shortage of water especially in summer.
- The pollution of water especially pollution in rainwater collection wells.
- The high prices of water (which cost 20 New Israeli Shekel per meter cubic), making it unobtainable for many families.

Electricity Networks: Beit Mirsim village is not connected to electricity network. The village uses private generation to supply electricity to the residents. And according to officials the village is disconnected because of the cost of connection. Therefore, the electricity services in Beit Mirsim are suffering from many problems which are: 1) The inability to pay the fee to the Israeli company, 2) The inability to get license because the village is located in Area C, 3) Lack of assistance from the Palestinian Authority

Sewage Disposal Facilities: Beit Mirsim village is not connected to sewage network. All houses must therefore dispose of their wastewater in cesspits.

Solid Waste Collection Services: There are no solid waste services in the village, and each family must dispose its own garbage in their dumping sites. About 57 tons of solid waste is generated in Beit Mirsim village (ARIJ database, 2006).

Transportation Facilities: The village is in severe need for a stable transport service. Currently, the residents must walk about two kilometers to reach the main street, or request a private taxi which is costly. There are two kilometers of main road which are paved and in good condition, and five kilometers of internal roads which are unpaved. There is also six kilometers of agricultural road which are unpaved.

Impact of the Israeli Occupation

Though there are no settlements in the surrounding area of the village the village is still subject to flying checkpoints. There is also a bypass road within the village. The Israeli Forces have destroyed two houses in the village during the Second Intifada and confiscated 220 dunums of land. As a result of these activities in the village and surrounding it, there has been a great amount of pollution in water supply. The people have also experienced difficulties in accessing health centers or hospitals. Sometimes, farmers find it difficult to pick their fruit trees as the Israeli Forces have cut and destroyed the olive and almonds trees, and closed the agricultural roads in the village. Approximately eight families in the village have had their agricultural

product damaged. The educational sector also suffers from the Israeli activities where about 15 students find it difficult to reach their schools. Students from the neighboring villages must walk about two kilometers to reach the school in the village. 11 harvesting wells have also been destroyed by the Israeli Forces.

The Segregation Wall surrounds the village from three sides, the north, west and south. The construction of the Wall in the village began in 2004, a 3 km m portion (of the wire type) has been constructed on 80 dunums of confiscated village land and another 140 dunums will isolate behind the Wall. Also a further 2 km of Wall has been planned to be constructed on the village lands. About 400 olive, almonds and forest trees were destroyed while constructing the Wall. Five houses and five establishments were also demolished to construct the wall.

Development Plans and Projects

Since 2004 the council has implemented two projects, these projects include:

No.	Project name	Type	Funded by
1	Established fence for the Beit Mirsim Co-education School	Educational	Netherland and Norway
2	Established plastic houses	Infrastructure	OXFAM

Locality Development Priorities and Needs

According to Beit Mirsim village council, the village suffers from a shortage of many infrastructural and service needs. Table 10 shows development priorities of the village.

No.	Sector	Strongly Needed	Needed	Moderately Needed	Not Needed	Notes
Infrastructural Needs						
1	Opening and Pavement of Roads			*		13 km ^
2	Construction of New Water Networks	*				3 km
3	Rehabilitation of Old Water Networks				*	
4	Construction of Water Reservoirs			*		500 m ³
5	Extending the Water Network to cover New Built up Areas				*	
6	Construction of Sewage Disposal Network				*	
Health Needs						
1	Building of New Clinics or Health Care Centre	*				
2	Rehabilitation of Old Clinics or Health Care Centres				*	
3	Purchasing of Medical Equipments and Tools	*				
Educational Needs						
1	Building of New Schools		*			Elementary
2	Rehabilitation of Old Schools			*		Elementary
3	Purchasing of New Equipments for Schools			*		
Agriculture Needs						
1	Rehabilitation of Agricultural lands	*				400 dunums
2	Building Cisterns			*		30 cisterns
3	Construction of Barracks for Livestock			*		25 barracks
4	Veterinary Services			*		
5	Seeds and Hay for Animals			*		
6	Rehabilitation of Greenhouses				*	
7	Field Crops Seeds			*		
8	Plants and Agricultural Supplies			*		

^ 2 km main roads, 5 km internal roads, and 6 km agricultural roads

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- Ministry of Agriculture. *Agricultural Status Database in Hebron Governorate*. 2006.
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