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SOUTH TURKEY
FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS
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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

With some 60 active implementing partners, the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster (FSLC) South Turkey Hub coordinates support for IDPs and the most vulnerable people in northwest Syria. These operations are made possible through the Syria-Turkey cross-border programme under UN Resolution 2533, enabling NGOs to reach 3.3 million people in need.

STORY 5

ABU MUSTAFA

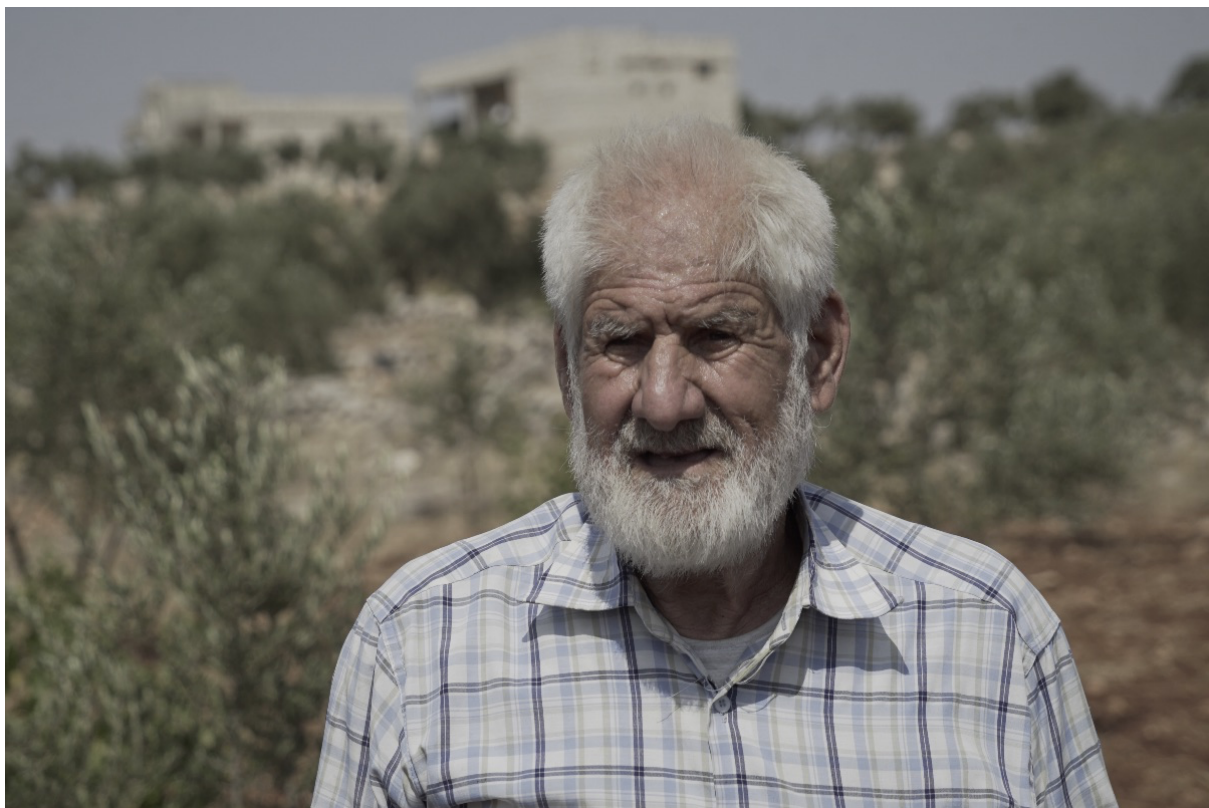
Of about 100 million trees in Syria as of 2020, more than half are olive trees that produce approximately 1 million tons of olives per year. Agricultural livelihoods projects provide support to the olive value chain, which is a significant source of income for many communities in northwest Syria.

This is the story of Abu Mustafa, who has been displaced and returned multiple times to the land he inherited from his father to cultivate olive trees.

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Like many agricultural landowners in northwest Syria, Abu Mustafa and his family have been displaced multiple times due to the ongoing conflict. Returning home when the situation became safer, they found their olive groves and house damaged by shelling, and no longer had the income to pay for its repair. With limited job opportunities and two of daughters and his wife suffering from chronic illness, the family is entirely dependent on food security assistance to survive.

Abu Mustafa's two daughters, Alia, 39, and Rawaa, 29, have epilepsy and are in need of expensive medicine that is unavailable in northern Syria. Bringing medicine in from neighbouring countries is a great concern and can involve waiting lengthy periods for it to arrive.



A month before this picture was taken, Abu Mustafa went underwent surgery but kept working the land with his son to provide for the remaining family of five. He says, “My other children all migrated with their families, looking for a country to live in peace

and safety”.



"I inherited this land from my father, and I have worked on it since my childhood. We plow it, take care of it, and harvest olives from it." says Abu Mustafa, pictured here working his land under an olive tree.

The olive industry in northwest Syria is hampered by low quality and productivity with high production costs. One olive tree in Syria produces an average of 14 kg of fruit per year, while the global average is 30 kg. The average production cost is about 65% of the product's value, which negatively impacts cultivation and essential services.

As such, when taking care of the land became too expensive for Abu Mustafa, FSL Cluster partner Islamic Relief Worldwide provided agricultural tools to support its cultivation, strengthening the family's livelihood and helping them earn an income.



Abu Mustafa is supported through an agriculture-based livelihoods support programme for vulnerable families, implemented by FSL Cluster partner [Islamic Relief Worldwide](#), within the cross-border agreement in northwest Syria.

“I hope more organizations strengthen their efforts for livelihoods projects in northwest Syria, as we are in dire need of these.”

The FSL Cluster prioritizes supporting the olive value chain with partners' projects on harvesting, pruning, and oil extraction processes to enhance livelihoods. Olive-growing land in northwest Syria makes up about 46% of the cultivated area in the country and contributes to around 44% of Syria's total production.

Despite the sharp drop in production over the past ten years of war, the annual olive oil production rate in 2020 suggests that with continued support, there's hope for recovery.



“I hope to God that the war in Syria will end, and we can live the rest of our lives in peace and security.”

Click [here](#) to read our latest monthly report, "Insights on Northwest Syria" and learn more about the FSL Cluster South Turkey hub activities and our partners' work.



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