



State Comptroller
of Israel

The Agricultural Sector in the Swords of Iron War

▪ September 2025 ▪



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Abstract

Background

In the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023 (October 7 attack) and in the ensuing the Swords of Iron War, approximately 1,500 people were murdered or abducted. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 52 foreign agricultural workers, and 13 foreign agricultural students were murdered, and among the .abductees were also farmers

The war caused extensive harm to Israel's agricultural sector. The damage was concentrated in the agricultural holdings of communities in the Hevel Tekuma region in the south (Tekuma region) and in the frontline communities in the north, which together account for approximately a quarter of Israel's agricultural holdings. Under these circumstances, the significant impact on agricultural output was reflected in the loss of produce, a decline in the production volumes of certain agricultural products, and an increase in the overall import of agricultural produce. In addition, the rise in fruit and vegetable prices intensified, with prices during several .months of the war reaching record levels relative to the past five years

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry) acts to ensure the existence and promotion of agriculture in Israel. The Ministry is responsible for implementing government policy to encourage agriculture (both in plant and animal sectors), and for ensuring the supply of high-quality and reasonably priced food to the population in both routine times and emergencies, as part of safeguarding food security. Emergency preparedness in the agricultural sector is designed to ensure the ability to address several key challenges: securing the continuous supply of fresh agricultural produce to the population; preventing long-term damage to the means of production of agricultural holdings; mitigating the economic harm to farms; and ensuring the functional continuity of governmental and public entities that regulate the sector's activity.

Key Figures

**25**

Number of dairy farms damaged on October 7

**NIS 670 million (13%)**

Value of the loss of domestic agricultural produce in the first six months of the war, and its share of total domestic agricultural produce during this period

**7.8%**

The gap between the average increase in the fruit and vegetable price indices and the increase in the Consumer Price Index during the first ten months of the war

**163,000 tons per month on average (7%)**

Decline in the volume of domestic agricultural produce marketed in Israel during the first six months of the war

**25%**

Decline in the volume of domestic fruit and vegetable production in Israel during the first six months of the war

**5.1%**

Increase in the share of imported fresh vegetables in total supply to the domestic market in 2023 compared with 2021¹


¹ The year 2022 was a Sabbatical year (Shmita), during which there were more imports in comparison to regular years.



21,000 (58%)

Decline in the number of foreign and Palestinian workers in the sector during the first two months of the war

Audit Actions

 From January to November 2024, the State Comptroller examined various aspects of the Ministry of Agriculture's preparedness for war, its activity following the October 7 attack, and its conduct during the first months of the Swords of Iron War. These included advance emergency preparedness, the response to labor shortages in agriculture, the deployment of mobile shelters on farms, and the operation of the national emergency headquarters. The audit was conducted within the Ministry of Agriculture. Supplementary examinations were carried out in the Foreign Workers Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority, the Plant Production and Marketing Board, the Egg and Poultry Board, the Israel Dairy Board, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), and the Home Front Command. As part of the audit, the State Comptroller held an online roundtable discussion with farmers from various agricultural sectors and regions across the country.

Key Findings

Approximately 1,500 people were murdered or abducted in the October 7 terrorist attack and in the war that followed, including 56 farmers, 52 foreign agricultural workers, and 13 students. In the attack, 25 dairy farms were damaged. The value of the loss of domestic agricultural produce in the first six months of the war totaled NIS 670 million (13% of all produce). During the same period, the average monthly decline in the volume of domestic agricultural produce amounted to 163,000 tons (7% of all produce), and the decline in the volume of domestic fruit and vegetable production reached 25%.





The Impact of the War on Fruit and Vegetable Prices


- From October 2023 to August 2024, the increase in fruit and vegetable price indices compared with the same months in the previous year (10.8% on average) was considerably higher than the increase in the Consumer Price Index (3% on average) and in the food price index excluding fruits and vegetables (3.7%). During the period from October 2023 to January 2025, the sharpest rise in the past five years (2020–2025) in the prices of fresh fruits and vegetables was recorded. The continued rise in fruit and vegetable prices in the third quarter of 2024, at the highest rates observed in the past five years, may indicate difficulties faced by the government in addressing the impact of the war on fruit and vegetable prices, even nearly a year after the war began.

Deficiencies in Emergency Preparedness in the Agricultural Sector

- Failure to Update the Sectoral Reference Scenario** – Every five years, the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) prepares an "integrative reference scenario" that analyzes threats and their impact on the civilian sphere. The emergency units in government ministries are required to prepare a sectoral reference scenario – covering the domains under the ministry's responsibility – based on the integrative scenario and to obtain NEMA's approval for it. The Ministry of Agriculture has not updated its sectoral reference scenario since 2010, even though NEMA's integrative scenario has since been updated twice, in 2016 and in 2022. Consequently, when the Swords of Iron War broke out, the scenario was old and outdated. This implies that the Ministry was not properly prepared to respond to the renewed threats and risks that had emerged over the years, and that the reference scenario did not reflect the changes in the agricultural sector or the growth in the volume of production and consumption of agricultural produce. It should be noted that in 2023, the Ministry began formulating an updated sectoral scenario, but this work was suspended with the outbreak of the war and had not been completed as of the audit's conclusion. It should also be noted that after the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War, NEMA updated the part of the integrative reference scenario relating to the war twice: once in late 2023 and again in April 2025.
- Failure to Update the Ministry's Emergency Response Plan** – In light of the sectoral reference scenario, the Ministry of Agriculture was required to prepare and approve an emergency response plan. The Ministry had not updated its response plan since 2015 and, therefore, at the outbreak of the war, operated based on an outdated plan that relied, for example, on obsolete production supply targets. For instance, the weekly egg supply target was based on an annual consumption of 1.768 billion eggs, whereas 2023 data indicate a consumption level of 2.74 billion eggs per year – reflecting a 55% increase in consumption. This occurred even though NEMA's aggregated national reference scenario changed twice between 2015 and the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War (and twice more since the war began), and despite NEMA's comments to the Ministry in audits it conducted in 2017 and 2021.

 **The Command and Control (C2) System Used by the Ministry of Agriculture** – Computerized command and control (C2) systems constitute a fundamental component for ensuring effective management, control, and organizational operation during emergencies. In practice, the Ministry of Agriculture did not use its internal C2 system – established in 2017 and developed and maintained at a cost of approximately NIS 205,000, including approximately NIS 38,000 in 2023 – either during routine times or in emergencies. The system was outdated, inconvenient to operate, and not suited to the Ministry's working environment in routine times nor to managing events in emergencies. Instead, the Ministry relied on Excel spreadsheets. In 2015, the IDF Home Front Command developed an advanced computerized national command and control system (known as Shu'al) for use by all emergency agencies in managing emergency situations, which could have met the Ministry's needs in such circumstances. However, the Ministry of Agriculture decided not to implement the system prior to the war. As a result, at the outbreak of the war, the Ministry did not have an active C2 system and lacked an effective tool for managing and controlling emergency events. It should be noted that only more than a year and a half after the outbreak of the war – in June 2025 – was the Shu'al system implemented at the Ministry of Agriculture.

 **Mapping of Agricultural Land** – Mapping agricultural land enables decision-making on matters such as the allocation of agricultural areas to communities, water allocation for agriculture, future agricultural planning, infrastructure, and construction. In emergencies, such mapping is required in order to analyze the implications and determine the necessary response to bridge shortages in cases where agricultural growing areas are damaged. However, the mapping of agricultural areas available at the Ministry of Agriculture is based on outdated and incomplete data. Consequently, upon the outbreak of the war, the Ministry did not have at its disposal a database that could have enabled it to plan its actions based on up-to-date information regarding agricultural land in Israel, the agricultural produce derived from it, and the damage caused during the war. Moreover, prior to the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War, the Ministry of Agriculture had not prepared a plan for the allocation of alternative land for the cultivation of plant-based agricultural produce during emergencies. This was despite the fact that the Tekuma region and the northern confrontation-line communities are home to approximately 33.8% of all vegetable crops, 31.8% of all field crops, and 31.4% of all orchards, while approximately 67% of eggs are produced in the northern confrontation-line communities. Only after the outbreak of the war – when it became clear to the Ministry that agricultural produce could not be cultivated for as long as the fighting continued – did it act to identify alternative areas for growing crops in that region.

 **Lack of Water Reservoirs in Dairy Farms** – The Ministry of Agriculture did not act to find a solution to the deficiency known since at least 2017, whereby only a few dairy farms (out of approximately 800 active dairy farms in Israel) have water reservoirs intended to supply drinking water for livestock for up to 72 hours in emergencies. Such reservoirs are essential for ensuring the continuity of milk and meat production and for preventing animal suffering.

Gaps in the Fortification of Agricultural Farms and the Deployment of Mobile Shelters by the Ministry of Agriculture

🔴 Lack of Clarity Regarding the Rules on Fortification Requirements and Exemptions for Agricultural Buildings – Due to the absence of specific legislation governing the reinforcement of agricultural buildings, in 2018 the Home Front Command established reinforcement requirements and conditions for an exemption therefrom. However, these were not made public until July 2023, creating uncertainty on the matter. A lack of at least 1,000 mobile shelters, combined with other factors, led to disruptions in the functional continuity of the agricultural sector during the war².

🔴 Establishing Conditions and Criteria for Exemption from the Construction of Shelters for Agricultural Buildings, Without Legal Authority – In the policy document published by the Home Front Command, conditions and criteria were set for granting an exemption from the requirement to construct a shelter in agricultural buildings. This was done without the legal authority vested in the Minister of Defense under the Civil Defense Law, 1951, which requires the consent of the Minister of Interior.

🔴 Funding, Procurement, and Placement of Mobile Shelters (Migoniyot) on Agricultural Farms Before and During the War

Lack of Criteria for Approving Support for the Placement of Mobile Shelters on Agricultural Farms Before the War – In the years preceding the war, the Ministry placed approximately 600 mobile shelters on agricultural farms, primarily in the Tekuma region. This was done without establishing criteria for the distribution of shelters or publishing support guidelines to serve as the basis for decision-making regarding the provision of support and the prioritization of applications.

● **Failure to Adequately Map Reinforced Structures and Failure to Prioritize Support for the Reinforcement of Agricultural Farms Before and During the War** – The audit found that although the Ministry of Agriculture had decided to support the placement of mobile shelters on agricultural farms, it did not possess complete, accurate, and up-to-date information regarding the reinforcement status of these farms, including the lack of standard protection. Nevertheless, after the outbreak of the war and up to April 2024, the Ministry's Support Committee, which had determined that reinforcement deficiencies were a prerequisite for eligibility for a protective shelter, approved 303 out of 496 applications (61%) for shelters. Each shelter cost tens of thousands of shekels. The applications were approved even though, at the time of decision-making, it was not possible to calculate the actual reinforcement deficiencies at the farm.

²

Mobile shelters are necessary for use by agricultural workers in the field during missile and drone attacks.

- **Failure to Assess the Need for Mobile Shelters in the Galilee–Golan District Prior to the War** – In the years preceding the war, the Ministry of Agriculture did not examine the need to finance the placement of mobile shelters (miguniyot in Hebrew) in agricultural farms in the Galilee–Golan District and did not install any such shelters there, even though farmers in the district had raised the need for them several times prior to the war. During the war, the absence of mobile shelters for agricultural workers in the Galilee–Golan District impaired functional continuity in the agricultural sector and could have resulted in casualties, particularly along the northern confrontation line. It should be noted that during the war, the Ministry of Agriculture placed 571 mobile shelters – approximately 60% of all shelters placed by the Ministry during the war – in the Galilee–Golan District, which may indicate that there were substantial protection deficiencies in the district.
- **Placement of 497 Mobile Shelters (from November 2023 to April 2024) Without Publishing Procedures for Requesting Assistance** – Following the outbreak of the war and until April 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture approved support for agricultural farms for the purchase and placement of 497 mobile shelters, at a total cost of NIS 28.2 million. This support was approved even though the Ministry had not published a procedure clarifying to the agricultural sector the eligibility requirements and criteria for approving applications. This was despite the fact that the Ministry had sufficient time to act in alignment with the General Accounting Instructions (Takam) and publish such a procedure. Consequently, approximately 12% (192) of the applications submitted prior to the procedure's publication were rejected for failing to meet eligibility terms that had not been made public.
- **Placement of Mobile Shelters Without Approval by the Home Front Command or the Relevant Local Authority** – Before installing the shelters in the farms, the Ministry of Agriculture did not approach the Home Front Command, the relevant municipal engineer, or the head of the local authority to obtain the necessary placement approvals as required by law, nor did it verify that farmers had obtained the required approvals prior to installing the shelters provided to them.

Human Resources in the Agricultural Sector During the War


- 👎 **Failure of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Population and Immigration Authority to Prepare in Advance for an Exceptional Shortage of Labor in the Agricultural Sector During Wartime** – On the eve of the war, the agricultural sector employed more than 36,000 Israeli farmers, 22,611 legal foreign workers, 7,648 illegal foreign workers, and approximately 11,000 Palestinian workers. The Ministry of Agriculture did not make prior preparations for the possibility that, during hostilities, there would be an exceptional shortage of thousands of workers in the sector, due to the departure of foreign workers, the prohibition on Palestinian workers entering Israel, a decrease in the number of Israeli workers as a result of widespread reserve call-ups, or the evacuation of farms. This was despite the fact that in recent years the

relevant reference scenarios, the lessons learned from Operation Protective Edge, and the findings of emergency drills conducted by the Ministry had all indicated the need for such preparedness.

Furthermore, prior to the outbreak of the war, the Foreign Workers Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority had not prepared a plan that included concrete reference to the agricultural sector, including preparations for addressing labor shortages arising from the absence of foreign and Palestinian workers. In practice, more than 21,000 foreign and Palestinian workers left the sector during the first two months of the war.


 **Reliance on a Single Bilateral³ Agreement with Thailand for the Employment of Foreign Workers in Agriculture Prior to the War** – The need to conclude bilateral agreements with additional countries, beyond Thailand, for the recruitment of foreign workers to the agricultural sector had already been raised nearly a decade before this audit. In its July 2023 decision, the government even assigned the Minister of Foreign Affairs to lead negotiations toward the signing of another bilateral agreement. Although, in the years preceding the war, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Population and Immigration Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture worked to promote bilateral agreements with several countries – Nepal, Vietnam, and Cambodia – for the recruitment of agricultural workers, their efforts did not bear fruit. The agricultural sector's reliance on the recruitment of more than 30,000 foreign workers from a single country, Thailand, made it difficult for the State to cope with the severe labor shortage created in the sector with the outbreak of the war.


As of June 30, 2024, the number of legal foreign workers employed in agriculture stood at 29,873, i.e., an increase of 7,262 compared with their number on the eve of the war. However, given the shortage of approximately 9,500 to 15,000 Palestinian workers, it was estimated at that time that the agricultural sector still faced a shortfall of approximately 2,200 to 7,400 workers.

 **Infeasibility of the Bilateral Agreements Signed During the War** – The bilateral agreements signed during the war for employing foreign workers in agriculture from countries other than Thailand did not meet the urgent need to recruit foreign workers for the agricultural sector, due to their practical infeasibility⁴. Two of the three agreements signed (with Ecuador and Malawi) did not result in the recruitment of any workers, while under the third agreement (with Sri Lanka) the recruitment rate from among the pool of Sri Lankan workers registered to work in Israel was only 14% (1,600 out of 11,000). This was due, among other reasons, to the fact that the Foreign Workers Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture had not conducted a prior professional consultation process with farmers and their representatives (such as the agricultural production boards) regarding the feasibility of employing Sri Lankan workers in agriculture and the farmers' willingness to hire them.

³ An agreement concluded between the recruiting country and the worker's country of origin.

⁴ For further details on this matter, see the State Comptroller's report "Employment of Non-Israeli Workers Before and During the War" (forthcoming publication).

 **Enforcement Actions Against Foreign Workers Residing Illegally in Israel** – Since 2018, there has been a significant decline in the enforcement activity carried out by the Enforcement and Foreigners Administration, alongside a marked increase in the number of illegal foreign workers in general, and in agriculture in particular. Between 2014 and 2021, their number rose sharply from 531 to 2,755 (an increase of approximately 419%). At the same time, in the years 2020–2023 there was a significant downward trend in the level of enforcement activity conducted by the Enforcement and Foreigners Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority against employers, compared with 2018. The number of cases opened against employers fell from 1,217 in 2018 to 181 in 2023 (a decline of approximately 86%); the number of fines imposed on employers who employed workers unlawfully decreased from 424 in 2018 to 102 in 2023 (approximately 76%); the number of indictments filed dropped from 175 in 2018 to 44 in 2023 (approximately 75%); and the number of court rulings issued fell from 135 to 36 (approximately 73%). In addition, from 2018 to 2022 there was a gradual decline – from 7,957 in 2018 to 2,657 in 2022 (approximately 67%) – in the deportation of illegal residents from Israel by the Population and Immigration Authority. This situation has had adverse effects on legally employed foreign workers, on agricultural employers, and on the economy as a whole, including concern over the spillover of illegal residents into other sectors, the deterioration of employment conditions for foreign workers, and an increase in the number of asylum requests submitted in Israel.

 **Actions by the Ministry of Agriculture to Coordinate Volunteer Activity in Agriculture During the War** – During the war, various bodies – including the Ministry of Agriculture, local authorities, civil society organizations, production boards, growers' associations, and private initiatives of large agricultural farms – engaged in extensive volunteer activity in the agricultural sector. Examples include approximately 270,000 volunteers whose activities were supported by the Ministry of Agriculture; a rotating pool of 500 IDF soldiers who assisted farmers in the southern and central regions on a daily basis; volunteers supported by the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee; and volunteers recruited by civil society. However, this extensive activity took place without the designation of a central body – either within the Ministry of Agriculture's headquarters or another government headquarters – in charge of coordinating the operation of the tens of thousands of agricultural volunteers and directing them according to the needs of the Ministry and farmers in the various sectors, in a manner that would prevent duplication and allow for a comprehensive response to the system's needs. Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture did not supervise the volunteer activities conducted on its behalf during the war, nor compile data on the volunteers it referred to assist farmers.
















Operation of a National Emergency Headquarters at the Ministry of Agriculture During the War

– At the outbreak of the war, the Ministry of Agriculture activated a National Emergency Headquarters. The headquarters, managed by senior officials from the Ministry, and including participants from the production boards, the IDF Home Front Command, NEMA, and others, enabled consolidation of a real-time operational picture from the onset of hostilities. It facilitated ongoing monitoring of developments in the sector, joint

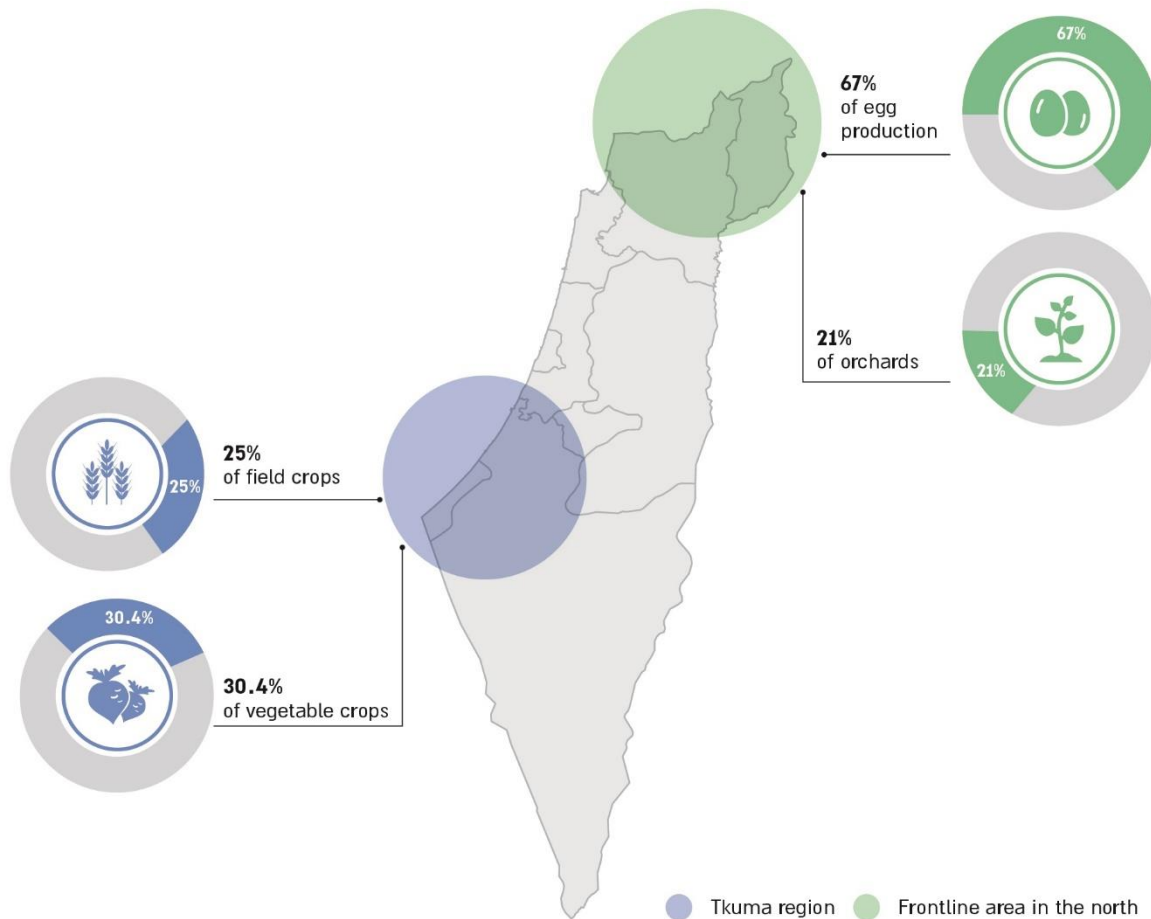
decision-making, the issuance of directives to maintain functional continuity, and the identification and elevation of issues requiring attention in response to the challenges that arose during the war.

Key Recommendations

-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture examine the rise in fruit and vegetable prices from the outbreak of the war onward and define principles and guidelines to best ensure the required supply, considering the constraints and deficiencies arising from the emergency situation. Such an examination would help ensure that, in the future, decisions are made in a manner that prevents fruit and vegetable prices from increasing excessively – placing an undue burden on Israeli consumers – relative to the general price index.
-  The Ministry of Agriculture should promptly update its sectoral reference scenario in accordance with NEMA's updated 2025 national reference scenario. NEMA should ensure that whenever it updates the national reference scenario, the Ministry of Agriculture correspondingly updates its own ministerial reference scenario.
-  The Ministry of Agriculture should promptly update its emergency response plan in alignment with the updated reference scenario it prepares. NEMA should monitor the handling of the deficiencies identified in its inspections and ensure that the Ministry rectifies those deficiencies accordingly, including by acting to reduce the deficiencies in its response plan.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture conduct an up-to-date mapping of agricultural lands and their uses, and update it periodically, in order to improve its ability to provide an effective response to potential damage to agricultural lands and crops during emergencies.
-  Given the importance of dairy farms as an essential component for ensuring the supply of basic food products to the public (some of which cannot be imported), the Ministry of Agriculture should act to find a solution to the lack of water storage facilities (water tanks) in dairy farms and sheepfolds. It should be noted that these water tanks are made of plastic and are highly vulnerable to shrapnel. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture examine whether protective measures against shrapnel damage are required.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture prepare, in advance, a plan defining alternative agricultural areas as a possible response to damage to agricultural lands during emergencies. The plan should include mapping of agricultural lands in Israel where various crops can be grown according to the season, prevailing climate, and soil type, and serve as input for decision-making regarding the relocation of agricultural crops from areas likely to be affected during hostilities.

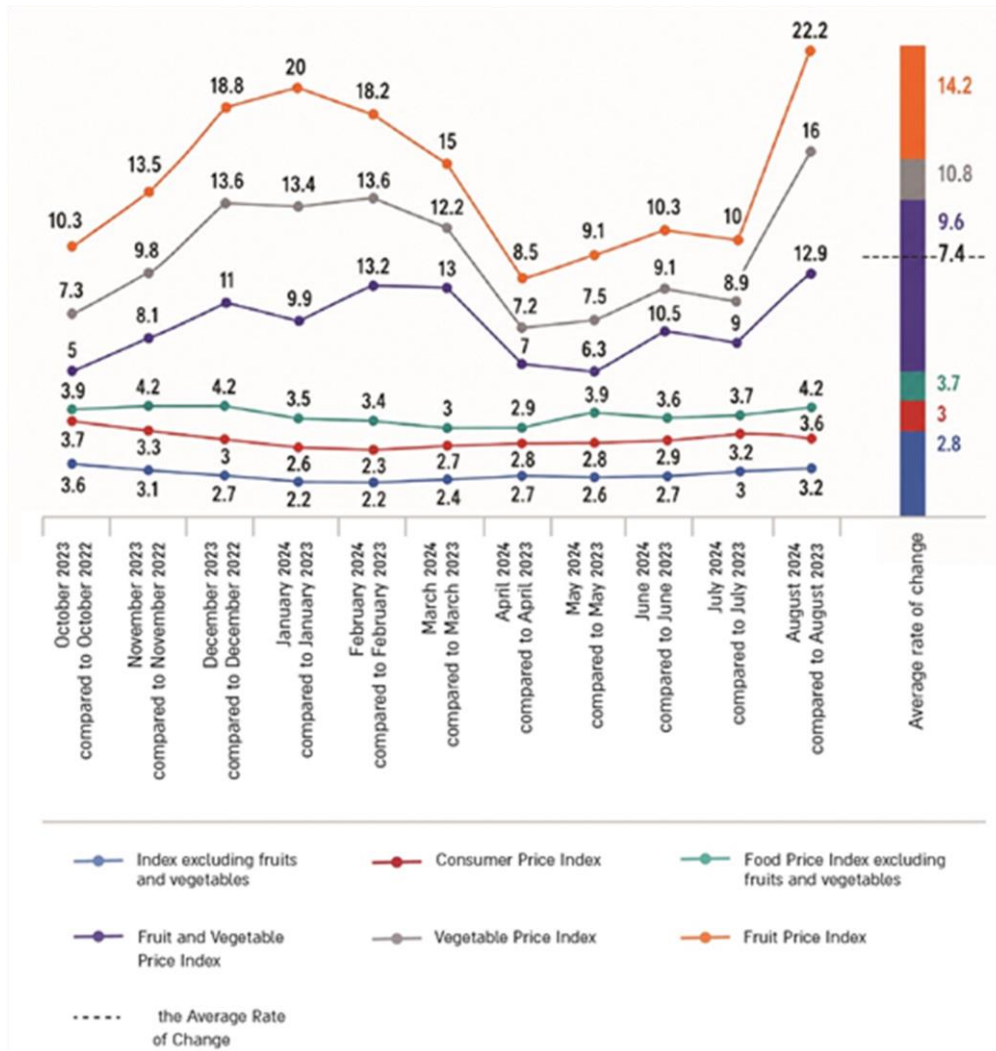
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture map the deficiencies in protective measures in agricultural farms and, in cooperation with the relevant local authorities and planning bodies, and in consultation with the Home Front Command, develop a plan to promote compliance by farm owners with the Civil Defense Law's protection requirements.
-  The databases managed by the Ministry of Agriculture must include relevant and up-to-date data on every agricultural farm, including, inter alia, information on the number of workers and on existing protective solutions. Such updated databases would enable the Ministry to make informed and evidence-based decisions during both routine times and emergencies, particularly when physical access to farms is difficult. It is recommended that the Ministry act promptly to establish these databases and create mechanisms for the periodic updating of farm data.
-  The Ministry of Agriculture must ensure that, in the future, prior to the placement of a mobile shelter, the farmer receiving the support provides approval from the relevant local authority and from the Home Front Command for the placement of the shelter, as required under planning and building laws.
-  It is recommended that the Enforcement and Foreigners Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority and the Administration for Regulation and Enforcement of Labor Laws in the Ministry of Labor take action to strengthen enforcement regarding illegal foreign workers in the agricultural sector, including implementing the 2025 inspection and enforcement plan they presented to the Directors-General Committee on Foreign Workers in the Prime Minister's Office.
-  It is recommended that, as part of its emergency preparedness, the Ministry of Agriculture address the need to cope with exceptional labor shortages in the sector, and formulate detailed preparedness plans to provide an adequate response to such shortages. This is intended to mitigate the impact on the sector and its functional continuity during emergencies, which may lead to shortages of essential agricultural produce and even to price increases, as occurred during the Swords of Iron War.
-  The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Population and Immigration Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture shall continue advancing the necessary steps toward signing additional bilateral agreements with suitable countries, in accordance with the government decision of July 2023. It is recommended that, prior to promoting any bilateral agreement for the employment of foreign workers in agriculture, and in order to enhance its likelihood of implementation, the Foreign Workers Administration of the Population and Immigration Authority ensure that consultations are held with farmers' representative bodies to map needs and assess the compatibility of foreign workers with the requirements of Israeli farmers, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture designate an official in charge of coordinating volunteer activities in agriculture during both routine times and emergencies, including for facilitating cooperation among all relevant entities in the field. It is further recommended that the Ministry establish clear criteria to ensure efficient and equitable prioritization in assigning volunteers to agricultural farms.

Clusters of Agricultural Production in the Confrontation-Line Areas



Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

Rate of Change in Selected Consumer Price Index Components from October 2023 to August 2024 and the Corresponding Period of the Previous Year



Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

Summary

The Ministry of Agriculture's proper preparedness for war and its optimal functioning in wartime are essential in view of the Ministry's roles and powers. These are required both to preserve and develop agriculture and to ensure the functional continuity of the agricultural sector, as well as to guarantee food security and the regular supply of fresh produce to the public during emergencies and in their aftermath. Since many farms in Israel are located along the country's northern border and in the Tekuma region, the agricultural sector was among the first to be affected during the Swords of Iron War.

The State Comptroller commends the operation of the Ministry of Agriculture's war room, established to help address the challenges that arose during the war, including its efforts to distribute mobile shelters to help maintain the sector's functional continuity.

At the same time, this report reveals significant deficiencies in the Ministry's preparedness for war, including the absence of an up-to-date emergency reference scenario and response plan; the failure to use the Ministry's command-and-control (C2) system during routine and emergency times; and insufficient preparedness by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Population and Immigration Authority for a severe shortage of manpower in the sector. These deficiencies necessarily affected the Ministry's functioning during the war and its ability to provide a comprehensive response to hundreds of farms in two regions – the South and the North.

The Ministry of Agriculture shall complete the preparation of an updated emergency reference scenario and response plan reflecting current threats and developments in the agricultural sector, ensure their integration into the Ministry's operations, periodically review the composition of the agricultural labor market, and implement appropriate and effective solutions to address manpower shortages in the sector during emergencies.

The National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) shall ensure that whenever it updates the aggregated national reference scenario, the Ministry correspondingly updates its sectoral reference scenario; monitor the handling of deficiencies identified in its audits; and ensure that such deficiencies are rectified in accordance with timelines it defines. Moreover, it is recommended that NEMA conduct staff work on the recruitment of volunteers for various sectors during emergencies and recommend the body to be responsible for coordinating volunteer activity in such circumstances.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Workers Administration, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the production boards, and farmers' representatives, shall act to implement the existing bilateral agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers in the agricultural sector. The Directors-General Committee in the Prime Minister's Office shall continue efforts to remove implementation barriers vis-à-vis the relevant entities and exercise close oversight over the advancement of this matter, in order to ensure an adequate and immediate response to the sector's manpower shortage, including the employment of foreign workers as a substitute for Palestinian workers.

The Ministry of Agriculture shall examine the rise in fruit and vegetable prices following the outbreak of the war and define principles and guidelines that will best ensure the required supply, taking into account the constraints and failures arising from the emergency situation, in order to minimize price increases for consumers.

The continued functioning of the agricultural sector during emergencies is essential to ensuring a steady supply of basic needs – milk, meat, eggs, fruits, and vegetables – for the public. Accordingly, vigorous action must be taken to rectify the deficiencies identified in this report.