

Nourishing Tomorrow – The Future of Israeli-Jordanian Relations

In Person Dialogue, November 4-6, 2025 Larnaca – Cyprus

Part 1: Professional Dialogue on Food Security in the Israel–Jordan–Palestinian Triangle

The dialogue was convened as a follow-up to a joint policy paper developed by Mitvim Institute and the Arava Institute. The dialogue brought together experts on food security and water systems, representatives from the private sector and international development organizations, as well as practitioners from the fields of diplomacy and public policy.

The joint policy paper between the Arava Institute and Mitvim: *[Jordanian–Israeli Food Security – A Road Map of Potential Collaboration](#)* maps the national food security strategies of Israel and Jordan, which reviewed past experience with cross-border cooperation projects within the water–energy–food nexus, and identified key stakeholders and potential partners for future food security initiatives along the shared border. These included local authorities, development banks, private-sector actors, and neighboring states. The paper concluded by proposing joint pilot projects in border areas that could strengthen food security in geographically peripheral regions, contribute to national food security on both sides, and support the rehabilitation of diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan.

The professional dialogue included an open discussion, a simulation exercise modeling a shared crisis scenario involving pest outbreaks and water scarcity, and working groups focused on selected project ideas. While the policy paper addressed food security primarily in the Israeli–Jordanian context, the dialogue was based on the understanding that food security cannot be meaningfully discussed without considering the triangular relationship between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. This is particularly true for issues related to agriculture, pastoralism, water access, and food supply systems - domains that are deeply interconnected at the regional level, and especially along the Jordan Valley and the Arava.

Key Insights from the dialogue

Livestock and Pastoralism as a Core Component of Regional Food Security

There is a need to frame livestock and pastoralism as a core pillar of regional food security. In Jordan, food security is not limited to crop production; livestock plays a significant role and is often more climatically suited to the region's arid and semi-arid conditions. Livestock is also a crucial component of local and regional supply chains, particularly in relation to Gulf markets. Similarly, in the Palestinian context, herding and small-scale livestock production constitute a vital source of both livelihood and food, especially within the West Bank. In Israel it is also a critical component in the Bedouin communities in the Negev. Participants emphasized the importance of adopting a broad perspective on pastoralism; examining how it is shaped by

climate change, resource allocation, mobility patterns, and questions of sovereignty—while also exploring its role within the wider regional food system.

Livestock production thus represents both an opportunity and a challenge for regional food security cooperation. It is an area that has received growing global attention, including efforts to develop practices that sustain pastoral livelihoods, such as integrating fodder cultivation adapted to grazing needs within designated rangelands.

Market Failures and Food Insecurity Amid Surpluses

Another major theme pointed to structural market failures that contribute to food insecurity. In Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel alike, large segments of the population experience food insecurity, even as substantial quantities of food are wasted and discarded along supply chains.

The discussion highlighted the tension between poverty and limited access to food on the one hand, and significant market failures on the other, where agricultural surplus is destroyed. Participants raised macro-level questions regarding market management, including How agricultural production can be subject to quotas, planning, monitoring, and regulation in order to prevent food loss, enable dynamic pricing, and address food insecurity. A key question was whether such mechanisms could be discussed—or even developed—within an Israeli–Jordanian–Palestinian framework.

Implications of Restricting Food Access to Gaza during the war

Any discussion of food security in the Israeli–Jordanian–Palestinian context must acknowledge both past and current realities of Gaza. Participants emphasized that the use of food deprivation as a wartime practice by Israel in Gaza during the war fundamentally complicates the possibility of cooperation with Israel on food security-related initiatives.

This reality may necessitate the development of distinct cooperation frameworks focused specifically on Gaza, including emergency food security planning and post-war recovery strategies. From a longer-term perspective, the dialogue raised the question of how to reduce structural dependencies within regional food systems, so that no single actor maintains full control over food supply chains. Enhancing resilience requires designing systems in which food security is not contingent on unilateral control.

Structural Challenges Facing the Palestinian Authority

The dialogue highlighted the unique yet severe challenges confronting Palestinian food security. Limited access to Area C - despite it being the primary agricultural zone due to political constraints constitutes, a major structural barrier. Settler violence during the olive harvest, alongside the displacement of herding communities from grazing lands and water sources, illustrates the extent to which sustaining agricultural livelihoods has become nearly impossible. Many Palestinian communities have effectively been confined to isolated enclaves, unable to access land or mobility required for agricultural production.

Participants noted that numerous EU-supported programs have previously sought to develop agricultural and infrastructural capacity in Area C, and that systematically mapping these initiatives could provide valuable insights for future efforts.

In addition, there is a significant knowledge gap within the Palestinian Authority regarding post-harvest handling, storage, and preservation. While a functioning internal vegetable market

exists, substantial expertise needs to be transferred and further developed in areas such as post-harvest treatment and storage technologies.

Further support is also required for Palestinian farmers in areas including pesticide regulation (given that many substances currently sold are banned elsewhere), biological control, pest management, and the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

Strengthening the Neighbor as a Foundation for Cooperation

Overarching insight brings to question the political economy of cooperation itself. Participants emphasized that meaningful cooperation is extremely difficult when one party is significantly poorer or structurally weaker. For cooperation to be viable, at least one side must have a strategic interest in supporting the development of the other and narrowing structural asymmetries.

Strengthening a neighbor's food security, productive capacity, and institutional resilience should therefore be understood not as charity, but as essential infrastructure for sustainable cooperation. Without a minimum level of parity in development and capacity, cross-border food security initiatives are unlikely to succeed or endure.

Key insights from the Simulation

The simulation was a forward-looking crisis exercise set in 2027, designed to test regional food and water security cooperation under extreme conditions. Participants confronted a combined scenario of severe drought, a transboundary pest outbreak affecting gourd crops, and reduced water availability due to contamination and the shutdown of major desalination facilities. These shocks led to market shortages, rising prices, farmer indebtedness, and intensified competition over imports. Representatives from Palestine, Israel, Jordan, and international organizations were asked to respond to an interconnected food–water–market crisis that reflects real regional vulnerabilities and cross-border dependencies.

Short-Term Insights: Immediate Crisis Response

The simulation highlighted the urgent need for a coordinated regional mechanism involving Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority, supported by international actors, to manage food supply during acute crises. Immediate measures should focus on coordinating imports, transportation, and storage of food, including the establishment of a shared or regionally coordinated warehouse for dry food reserves. Rapid logistical solutions, combined with emergency imports from alternative markets, were seen as essential to stabilizing availability and prices. Participants emphasized the importance of creating an emergency task force to monitor pests, share real-time data, and implement rapid containment measures to prevent cross-border spread.

Long-Term Insights: Structural and Strategic Transformation

Over the long term, the simulation pointed to the necessity of a gradual transition toward regional coordination; Investing in long-term regional infrastructure, such as green corridors, transport links, and trade facilitation mechanisms. This includes creating regional policy dealing with diversifying crops, improving soil health, increasing water efficiency in response to growing scarcity and more. Participants emphasized the value of establishing regional research and

development centers and shared data platforms to monitor soil, water, pests, and agricultural production, thereby enabling evidence-based policymaking. Participants also highlighted the importance of investing in farmer training and trust-building across borders, through regular regional meetings, knowledge exchange, and coordinated production planning. Mapping regional supply chains and identifying structural market failures, such as overproduction, shortages, and inefficiencies, were seen as essential foundations for informed policy intervention.

Part 2: Summary of diplomatic dialogue

The diplomatic day was structured around three interrelated axes. First, it examined bilateral tensions between Israel and Jordan in the aftermath of the Gaza war and the growing gap in perceptions between the two leaderships and societies. Second, it situated the relationship within the broader context of regional realignment, including Iran's regional posture, developments in Syria, and emerging connectivity initiatives. Third, it explored forward-looking pathways for restoring strategic trust, including expectations from a potential post-Netanyahu Israeli government and the revival of trilateral mechanisms involving Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Taken together, the discussions revealed a set of strategic insights regarding the fragility, resilience, and future potential of the Israeli–Jordanian relationship.

Key Insights from the dialogue:

Jordanians Believe Israel Underestimates the Strategic Centrality of Jordan's Stability

A prevailing Jordanian perception is that Israeli decision-makers do not fully recognize how deeply the Palestinian issue, Jerusalem, and regional developments affect Jordan's internal stability. For Jordan, these are not abstract diplomatic matters but core national security concerns. Many Jordanians believe that while Israel continues to benefit from the 1994 peace treaty, it has shown insufficient willingness to absorb political costs when required by the spirit of that agreement.

At the same time, Jordan distinguishes sharply between the Israeli government – particularly under Benjamin Netanyahu – and the Israeli public. Despite accumulated distrust at the political level, Jordan continues to regard Israel as a vital strategic partner and has consistently preserved the peace treaty as a foundational pillar of regional stability.

The Palestinian Issue Remains the Core Determinant of Jordan's Strategic Calculus

For Jordan, developments in Gaza and the West Bank are inseparable from domestic stability. The absence of a credible political horizon is widely perceived in Amman as a direct threat to long-term regional order. The Gaza war significantly intensified this perception, deepening public skepticism toward Israeli intentions.

Historic anxieties also persist; concerns regarding Israeli intentions on the Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa compound and fears surrounding narratives suggesting that “Jordan is Palestine.” Even when exaggerated, such narratives resonate strongly within Jordanian society, particularly under an Israeli government perceived as ideologically extreme. These concerns reinforce the belief that progress on the Palestinian issue is indispensable for restoring bilateral trust.

Security Coordination Remains Strong Beneath a Cold Political Surface

Despite visible diplomatic strain and negative public sentiment, security coordination between Israel and Jordan remains robust and strategically essential. Jordan continues to function as a buffer against jihadist networks, Iranian-sponsored actors, and cross-border smuggling operations. This cooperation is largely invisible to the public but constitutes the backbone of the relationship.

Importantly, Jordan's commitment to peace is not rooted in fear of Israel but in strategic calculation. Nevertheless, frustration persists in Amman regarding what is perceived as Israel's preference for military responses over diplomatic engagement and a lack of reciprocity in political arenas.

Regional Realignment Reinforces Jordan's Central Role as a Stabilizing Actor

Rapid regional shifts are reshaping the strategic environment in which Israeli–Jordanian relations operate. Iran's attempts to extend its “ring of fire” strategy into Jordan – through networks operating in Iraq and Syria and via drug- and weapons-smuggling routes – were actively countered by Jordanian security forces. Jordan's interception of a major Iranian attack earlier in the year was framed as an act of defending its own sovereignty rather than defending Israel.

At the same time, Iran's relative setbacks have coincided with Turkey's growing regional influence. Any realistic post-war regional framework will need to account for Ankara's consolidated role in Syria and beyond. These shifts underscore Jordan's continued importance as a stabilizing actor capable of balancing competing regional pressures.

Instability in Syria and Refugee Pressures Continue to Strain Jordan

Developments in Syria remain a central concern for Jordan. Ongoing instability, smuggling networks, and the continued presence of large refugee populations place significant pressure on Jordanian infrastructure and security forces. Jordan's strategic interest lies in stabilizing Syria, facilitating refugee repatriation, and reopening economic channels.

Jordanian concerns also extend to Israeli military activity in Syria, particularly regarding potential implications for water sources that supply Jordan. Israeli operations, even when tactically justified from Israel's perspective, can fuel Jordanian public doubts regarding Israel's long-term regional intentions.

Connectivity and Climate Cooperation Offer Politically Viable Entry Points

Amid political tensions, infrastructure and climate initiatives represent relatively less sensitive domains for advancing cooperation. The India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC) presents a significant opportunity for Jordan, including the prospect of railway connectivity linking the Saudi border to the King Hussein Bridge and onward to Haifa. Integrating the Palestinian Authority into such initiatives – particularly near Jenin – could enhance both political legitimacy and economic viability.

Climate cooperation was identified as another promising track. Cross-border environmental projects, supported by European actors, allow for practical collaboration without immediately confronting the most politically contentious issues. Regional models such as shared electricity

grids and multilateral energy forums demonstrate how infrastructure integration can gradually strengthen political relationships.

Jordan's expanding role in humanitarian assistance to Gaza and its ability to influence developments in Syria and Lebanon further illustrate its potential to contribute to broader regional normalization efforts.

A Post-Netanyahu Government Would Face High Regional Expectations

A hypothetical transition to a moderate Israeli government would generate immediate regional expectations. Across the Arab world, there is a widespread belief that new Israeli leadership would need to restore credibility by acknowledging the centrality of the Palestinian issue and rejecting narratives that sidestep it.

Early symbolic and diplomatic gestures – such as visits to Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE – would be interpreted as signals of strategic reorientation. Public commitments to negotiated solutions, clear rejection of annexationist policies, and steps such as formally removing the E1 plan from the agenda could serve as initial confidence-building measures.

At the same time, Israeli domestic constraints remain significant. Security concerns dominate Israeli public discourse, and collective trauma has created emotional distance from Palestinian suffering. Any Israeli government seeking diplomatic re-engagement would need to address this internal psychological and political landscape.

Trilateral Mechanisms Provide the Most Practical Path Forward

Despite profound political disagreements, practical trilateral cooperation remains feasible in specific domains. A coordinated security framework to combat weapons smuggling from Iran through Jordan into the West Bank would serve shared interests. Reviving mechanisms for coordinating activities at the Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa compound could reduce flashpoints. In the energy sector, addressing electricity shortages in the West Bank through trilateral initiatives could enhance Palestinian resilience while serving Israeli and Jordanian stability interests.

Projects such as Blue-Green Prosperity demonstrate that mutually beneficial frameworks are possible and can be expanded to include a formal Palestinian role. More broadly, incremental, technical cooperation in infrastructure, energy, and humanitarian coordination may offer the most realistic pathway for rebuilding trust.

Concluding Insight

The dialogue underscored a central paradox: Israeli–Jordanian relations are simultaneously strained at the political and societal levels and deeply interdependent at the strategic level. The peace treaty endures not because tensions are absent, but because both sides recognize the structural necessity of cooperation.

Future progress will depend on narrowing perception gaps, addressing the Palestinian issue in a credible manner, and advancing practical trilateral mechanisms that anchor political trust in shared material interests.