
Kibbutz Kfar Blum — Land Use in a Microcosm

ARTHUR H. DOERR, University of Oklahoma, Norman

The 1,100 acres of Kibbutz Kfar Blum in northern Israel were wrenched from the clutches of hostile nature by the tenacity, blood, sweat, and tears of a group of hardy Jews, largely English and American in origin, during the twentieth century. This prosperous kibbutz was literally clawed out of the muck and swamps of the Huleh Lake district in extreme northern Galilee. The Kibbutz Kfar Blum is located approximately 33°5' N. and 35°33' E. It stands in an area which until the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 was under constant physical harassment from nearby hostile Syrians.

Unlike most areas in Israel, Kibbutz Kfar Blum has suffered from a superabundance of water. The annual rainfall of 35 inches is not inordinately heavy, but poor drainage conditions in the Huleh basin posed major difficulties for early settlers. After much effort and through the use of a series of ingenious holding ponds, however, the swamp has been conquered and Kibbutz Kfar Blum prospers.

Indeed, because of a Mediterranean climatic regime (Csa in the Koeppen scheme), spray irrigation, utilizing water from the Jordan River, has now been extended to all cultivated land in Kfar Blum. And, clever use has been made of a series of holding ponds on the western perimeter of the kibbutz, where carp are raised for the kibbutz and urban markets of Israel, notably Tel Aviv.

Rich muck and alluvial soils, high in organic matter, inherently fertile, heavily fertilized and irrigated in the presence of a bright Mediterranean sun, yield abundant crops of alfalfa, cotton, hay, deciduous fruits, nuts, and gladioli. During July, 1965, approximately one third of the

TO KIRYAT SHMONA

KIBBUTZ KFAR BLUM

LAND USE — JULY, 1965

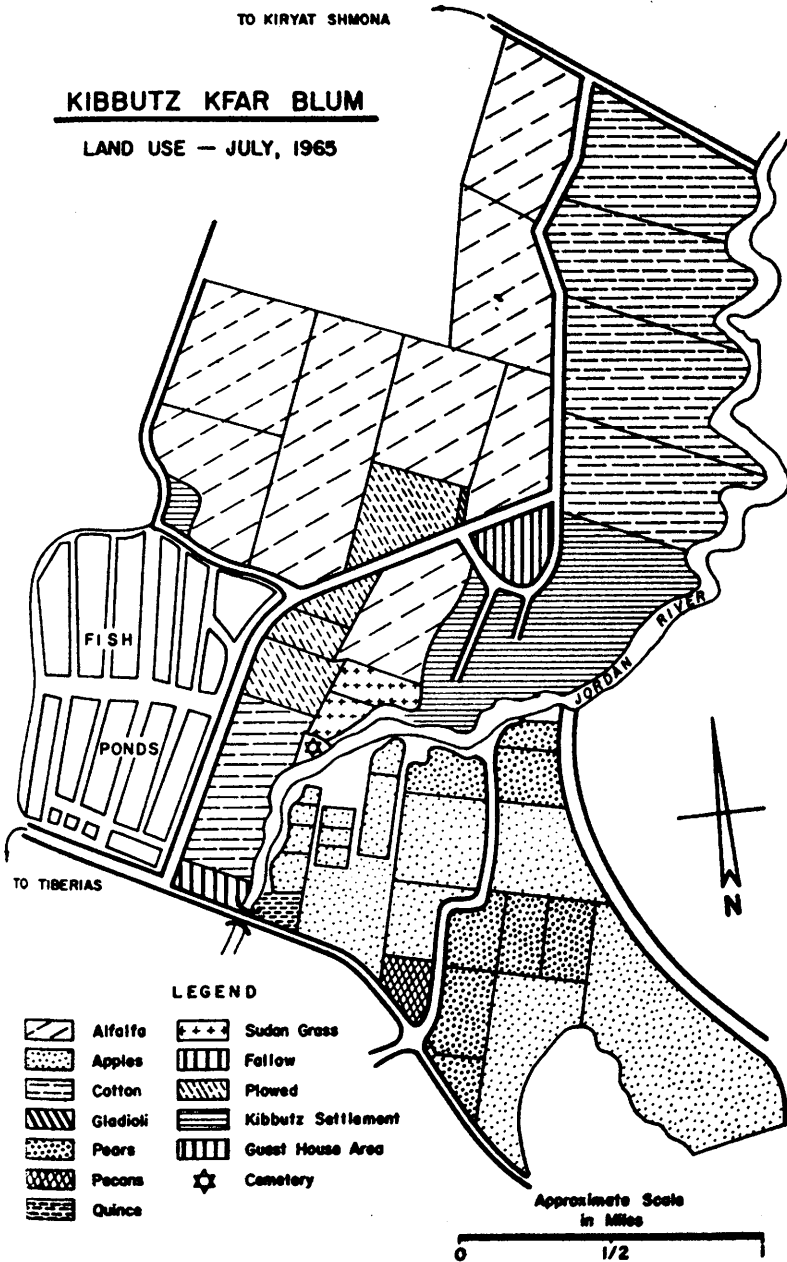


Figure 1. Land Use Map of Kibbutz Kfar Blum. Intensive cultivation is matched with an astute rotation system.

land was in deciduous orchards, principally apples, pears, quince, and pecans. Something less than one-fourth of the area was taken up by fish ponds, and the remainder of the land was about equally divided between forage crops, principally alfalfa, and cotton. Very small acreages were devoted to gladioli or were plowed in preparation for fall-sown grain (Fig. 1).

Except for the orchards and fish ponds, which were essentially fixed, regular rotation of legumes with cotton and other crops tends to maintain soil fertility and tilth at a high level of excellence. Additions of animal manures and mineral fertilizers assure high per acre yields.

Waters drawn from the Jordan so near its source carry few dissolved salts, and salt accumulation in the cultivated area has not become a problem. Adequate drainage and chemical treatment, if necessary, will probably eliminate the specter of saline encroachment for the foreseeable future.

Ready markets exist for all the kibbutz products, i.e., cotton, desiccated alfalfa, gladioli bulbs, carp, and deciduous fruits and nuts. Nevertheless as population and living standards grow within the kibbutz the necessity for seeking other sources of income has become apparent.

To date only a guest house (undergoing its third expansion) has brought in significant sums of outside cash. Kfar Blum is looking for a manufacturing industry, and such an industry it must have if the populace is to thrive. Alteration of crop patterns to a completely horticultural base affords some minimal prospect for economic improvement, but such a palliative affords temporary relief at best.

Ironically enough, the Jews at Kfar Blum need lebensraum! Perhaps Israeli conquests in the summer of 1967 will yield additional space.
