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A Descriptive Analysis of Home-Based Agro-Processing Projects in Rural Jordan

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Abstract:

In Jordan, there are many home-based agricultural processed products that are favoured by a lot in the Jordanian community. Unfortunately, this sector is weakly studied as an influence too the national economy as well as a strategy for rural development, where one of the core concepts of this development is improving the social and economic well-being of people living in rural areas. This study proposes an analysis and description of home-based businesses in the Jordanian countryside, focusing on various factors that shape their characteristics and influence their operation. These factors include gender dynamics, demographic indicators, socio-economic characteristics, marketing channels used and regulatory status and its impact, it will also focus on the main challenges and obstacles these producers are facing. Through a comprehensive survey and interviews conducted with producers and informants we found examine these factors thoroughly and attempt to bring a connection between them. Identifying these characteristics is essential to better understand and direct future interventions to help elevate this sector and bring the full potential of people living in rural areas.

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Introduction and Objectives:

In numerous rural regions worldwide, homes are shifting from mere places of residence and comfort to vibrant hubs of economic activity. Families and individuals are leveraging their time and space to create value-added products from local resources or those available within their rural environments. With agriculture serving as a primary income source for many households, the burgeoning connectivity among people and the imperative to cultivate supplementary revenue streams have spurred the rise of agro-processing as a pragmatic solution and a promising strategy for rural development (FAO U. O., 2007).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO) defines agro-processing as the conversion of raw agricultural produce into intermediate or final products using simple processing techniques (FAO F. a., 1997). This concept has been extended with home-based agro-processing where this process is conducted within the domestic settings such as the household itself, as opposed to industrial and commercial environments.

Home-based agroprocessing has a profound and far-reaching impact on individuals and families across both rural and urban settings. This concept plays a multifaceted role, empowering farmers and home producers to augment the value of their agricultural produce and broaden their income prospects. By adding value through processing, they can command high prices for their goods, thus bolstering their economic resilience.

In rural areas particularly, home-based agro-processing offers a means to diversify income streams, a crucial strategy in regions where agriculture alone may not suffice to sustain livelihoods year-round. By engaging in agro-processing activities, families reduce their dependence on seasonal agricultural cycles, where these products have long shelf life, which also minimize waste and enhance food security within households and communities.

Certainly, home-based enterprises have a crucial role to play in employment generation, especially in rural areas where formal job opportunities are very limited. Family members including youth and women can participate in these activities contributing to the household income and their economic and social development at the community level. Added to that, engaging in agro-processing at home promotes sustainable development by adding value to the local resources, fostering entrepreneurship, and strengthening local food systems and security.

Despite the potential benefits of these businesses, they still face many challenges that refrain them from bringing their highest capacity, these challenges include inadequate infrastructure, limited technical knowledge, insufficient market linkages, cultural norms and much more that will be explained in later chapters. However, various initiatives and organizations collaborate closely with local communities to assist them in overcoming these obstacles and furnish the requisite resources to address these issues effectively.

This paper aims to conduct an analysis and description of various aspects of home-based agro-processing businesses in select governorates of Jordan, and in Waqqas locality in the Northern Jordan Valley. The study will be conducted through a combination of surveys and interviews with producers and key informants, focusing on demographic factors such as gender, age, location, and household size.

Furthermore, the research will investigate the sourcing of materials, the marketing channels utilized by producers, and the extent of their market reach. Additionally, it will explore the employment and profit generation of these ventures in relation to their regulatory status and the support they receive from relevant authorities.

Moreover, the study will examine the main challenges producers encounter and explore the motivations behind their decision to engage in home-based processing. Through this analysis, the paper aims to offer valuable insights into the dynamics of the home-based processing sector in Jordan, shedding light on its opportunities and constraints.

Literature Review:

Jordanian countryside, and the Jordanian rural population:

Jordan is an Arab country located in the Middle East, Western Asia, Northeastern Africa. Bordering four countries; Saudi Arabia to the south, Iraq to the east, Syria to the north and Palestine to the west, make the country settled in an area of conflict almost from all directions. Jordan is a developing country with limited natural resources and striving for its economic and social survival. The population in Jordan is predominantly urban and young; 11.3 million (2022) with a population growth rate of 1.23% from the previous year (DOS, Population and Housing, 2022), two thirds of which are concentrated in the capital Amman, Irbid and Zarqaa' the Second and third most populated governates respectively, mostly comprised of males and females under 25 years old (Wikipedia, 2024). Jordanians make up to 70% of the total population, other nationalities make up the remaining 30% with the majority from Syria with 13.3%; this is due to the recent events which took place in Syria in 2011 where 1.3 million Syrians have fled their homes to Jordan, Palestinians and Egyptians comprise 6.7% each. Most of the population however is comprised of Muslims with 97.2%, and only less than 3% Christians (Britannica, 2024).

Jordan's rural areas are defined by extensive dry terrains, interrupted by productive valleys and river basins supporting farming. Rural areas are generally described as areas situated away from cities, characterized by lower population densities and a dependence on agriculture as the main source of income (FAO, 2022). The department of Statistics has a more generic definition where rural areas are described as those areas with a population of not more than 5000 people (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015). The rural areas in Jordan offer a variety of natural landscapes,

such as steep mountains, gentle hills, and vast desert plains, forming a beautiful setting for country living.

Traditional farming methods closely linked to the cultural heritage of rural communities form the basis of the rural economy in Jordan. Olive cultivation is widely practiced, with olive oil production being a significant income generator for many rural households. Furthermore, fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, and cereal crops enrich the agricultural profile and develop a thriving agro-processing activity in rural regions. Raising sheep, goats, and cattle for dairy, meat, and wool production is essential for rural communities as it provides for both local consumption and engaging in economic activities. (FAO, 2022)

The rural community in Jordan comprises various demographics. Families frequently reside in close-knit neighborhoods, where strong social connections and family ties are deeply rooted. In rural households, traditional gender roles are common: men typically work in agriculture while women take care of domestic tasks. Nevertheless, economic factors and evolving societal standards have resulted in a rise in women's involvement in revenue-generating endeavors, such as at-home enterprises like food preparation and handicrafts.

A considerable proportion of Jordan's total population is made up of rural inhabitants, with a notable presence in the country's demographic composition. Data shows that around 9% of the population of Jordan lives in rural areas, underscoring the importance of rural dynamics within the country (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015). The significant number of people living in rural areas highlights the need to comprehend and tackle the specific difficulties and advantages encountered by rural communities engaged in processing activities at home.

Home-based food processing is emerging as a significant practice within the rural landscape, showcasing a dynamic interplay between traditional agricultural methods and the potential for expanding economic opportunities. While agriculture remains a cornerstone of livelihoods for many rural inhabitants, the processing of agricultural produce adds substantial value to this activity, transcending the boundaries of mere agricultural production (ESCWA, 2020).

Access to essential services and infrastructure in rural regions can greatly differ, as certain areas encounter obstacles like restricted availability of water, electricity, healthcare, schooling, and transportation. Yet, continuous development initiatives and programs aim to tackle these challenges and enhance the living conditions for people living in these regions. NGOs, government agencies, and community-based organizations are vital in offering assistance and resources to rural communities, where they promote economic growth and improve social well-being (Al Zyoud, 2019).

Rural economy in Jordan: Home-based food processing businesses

The rural economy of Jordan is greatly influenced by home-based food processing enterprises, which support livelihoods, food security, and cultural heritage. Usually, these businesses entail people or households producing food items in their homes for local communities' sale or

consumption (Zaid Saidat, 2022). Jordan has a wide variety of traditional cuisines and recipes from its rich culinary past. These customs are frequently tapped into by small-scale food processing enterprises, which create goods including pickles, pastries, preserved fruits, and speciality cuisines. The authenticity and distinctiveness of these goods are enhanced by family recipes and traditions that have been passed down through the years (Lina Hundaileh, 2019). However, the country faces economic challenges including high unemployment rate, especially among women and youth where a lot of people found an alternative inexpensive entrepreneurship opportunity in home-based businesses that enabled them to launch small and microenterprises with little capital. A lot of Jordanians use home-based food processing as a way to support their families, particularly those who live in remote regions or have limited access to official jobs (REACH, 2020).

Home-based food processing enterprises frequently function in close-knit communities where reputation and trust are vital. Personal connections and word-of-mouth advertising are key factors in these businesses' success. Women in particular frequently produce food at home, utilizing their innate ability to cook and their cultural responsibilities as caretakers (Reach, 2018). Because of things like customer preferences for traditional flavors, worries about the safety and quality of food, and support for small-scale producers, Jordan has a developing market for locally made and artisanal food items. Home-based food processors can attract customers looking for distinctive and real food experiences by focusing on specialized marketplaces like specialty stores, local or national bazaars and media. (Salime Mehtap, 2018)

The lack of comprehensive data regarding the size and scope of home-based food processing businesses in Jordan is primarily attributed to the prevalent informality characterizing this sector. As a result, estimations and assumptions about this sector are often drawn from reports and research conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, which shed light on the challenges and opportunities facing home-based food processors. Despite the valuable insights provided by these studies, the informality of the sector presents constraints in accurately measuring its size and impact (ESCWA, 2020). Many home-based food processors operate with no formal registration or licensing, opting instead to engage in informal market transactions to avoid the costs and bureaucratic hurdles associated with formalization (Sobh, 2019).

Purpose and Scope:

This literature review seeks to thoroughly investigate different factors related to home-based food processing enterprises in rural regions of Jordan. The research aims to determine the scale and profit these businesses generate, the variables impacting their establishment, and their overall objectives. Furthermore, it will examine the variety of products made through food processing at home and evaluate their impact on local communities. Moreover, the analysis will assess how home-based food processing businesses impact rural communities socio-

economically, with a specific emphasis on their contribution to reducing poverty, creating jobs, and ensuring household food security. It will focus on the important role of women in these businesses, analyzing their empowerment, economic agency, and impact on household incomes and well-being.

Geographically, the study will analyze how home-based food processing businesses are spread out in Jordan, classifying them according to the products made and their rural locations.

Difficulties encountered by the industry, such as restrictions on regulations, limitations on market entry, and constraints on infrastructure, will be recognized and examined.

In addition, the evaluation will analyze current government policies and regulations that oversee home-based food processing companies in Jordan, and suggest ways to encourage their formal recognition. These tactics are designed to improve the sustainability, market competitiveness, and overall impact of home-based food processing businesses on rural development in Jordan.

By conducting a thorough analysis, the literature review aims to offer valuable perspectives from policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners. This will enhance comprehension of the rural Jordanian home-based food processing industry and guide future interventions and policy crafting.

The rural features of Jordanian governates:

In Jordan, rural areas are defined as regions outside of urban centers with fewer than 5,000 residents, characterized by low population density, agricultural activities, and traditional lifestyles (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015). Understanding the demographic characteristics and agricultural dynamics of these rural regions is essential for comprehensively examining the phenomenon of home-based food processing businesses.

The distribution of rural population in Jordan is significant, with approximately 9% of the country's population residing in rural areas. This population is spread across various governorates, each with its distinct agricultural activities and economic dynamics. Key governorates with significant rural populations include Irbid, Mafraq, Balqa, and Karak. (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015)

The villages and towns surrounding the city of Irbid in the northern region of Jordan make up the rural areas in Irbid Governorate. In these villages, olive cultivation is one of the most important agricultural activity, with both olive oil and table olives being notable home-based activity. (Ali El Hanandeh, 2016) Additionally, dairy farming is prevalent, leading to the production of various dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, and labneh. The fertile land in Irbid Governorate allows for significant vegetable farming, particularly in the villages near the central area and the Northern Jordan Valley (Jose Luis Figueroa, 2018). Growing a diverse range of crops at home contributes to supporting different food processing. Additionally, the highest concentration of

rural villages can be found in the northwest corner and Jordan Valley (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015). This can be attributed to the good weather, fertile soil, and being situated close to urban areas, which provide improved services and opportunities for residents of rural areas (Jose Luis Figueroa, 2018). Hence, businesses run from home and the production of pickled goods and jams play a crucial role in these rural regions.

Situated in the expansive Badia region to the northeast, Mafraq Governorate stands as Jordan's largest in terms of size and holds the distinction of harboring the country's most substantial rural population (DOS, Department of Statistics, 2015). Renowned for its extensive livestock holdings, it boasts the largest number of livestock in Jordan, a factor contributing significantly to the flourishing dairy sector, as highlighted (Alhammd, 2020). Amidst its vast agricultural expanse, cereal cultivation, particularly wheat, emerges as a linchpin supporting the processing activities of local bakeries, pastry shops, and other cereal-based enterprises, while the cultivation of vegetables further augments processing, notably in the production of pickled goods (Al-Oun, 2012). Notably, Mafraq is characterized by a sizable population of Syrian refugees who sought refuge following the onset of the regional conflict in 2011. Their profound impact on the agricultural sector, particularly in farming, livestock raising, and processing, is evident, with their expertise in rural livelihoods contributing significantly to the local economy, providing employment opportunities and reducing dependency on NGO aid (Mercy Corps, 2017).

In Balqa Governorate in central-western Jordan, rural areas consist of villages and agricultural settlements. The region excels in growing fruits and vegetables, which are essential for making homemade pickles, jams, and preserves. The variety of crops grown in this region supports a thriving homemade food processing sector, where residents rely on traditional techniques to store fresh produce throughout the year (Hmoud Olaimat, 2008). Olive farming is widely practiced in Balqa Governorate, especially in regions with appropriate weather and fertile land. This has resulted in the creation of various products made from olives, such as table olives, olive oil, and spreads made from olives. The abundant olive history in the area brings cultural importance to these items, which are frequently essential to the local food customs (Ali El Hanandeh, 2016). Moreover, Balqa Governorate covers the southern section of the Jordan Valley, where farming is highly concentrated because of the rich soil and availability of water. This region plays a major part in Jordan's agricultural economy by helping produce various crops such as fruits, vegetables, and grains. The plentiful agricultural resources in Balqa Governorate also help boost the development of a variety of high-quality products within the home-based food processing industry.

Karak Governorate, located in the southern part of Jordan, is home to a rural population mainly living in villages and rural communities. Olive farming is a defining feature of the area's farming scenery. In addition, livestock raising, specifically sheep and goats, is widespread in Karak Governorate. This livestock plays a vital role in providing dairy products such as cheese and yogurt, which are essential elements of the local food. The dried goat milk product called "Jameed" made in Karak is highly reputable throughout the country (Alu'datt, 2016). Jameed

core of the traditional Jordanian dish "Mansaf," which is highly valued for its cultural importance and is a favorite among many Jordanians. Furthermore, the agricultural customs of Karak Governorate are closely connected to its cultural heritage, influencing the food culture and promoting a feeling of communal pride. The creation of olive oil, dairy products, and Jameed supports both livelihoods and the conservation of Jordanian heritage. (Muheisen, 2022)

In summary, it is important to fully grasp the unique geographical characteristics and the diversity of home-based businesses in various regions of Jordan to pinpoint key areas for growth in this industry. By examining how the geographical location impacts the types of home-based businesses in various areas, policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners can identify distinct opportunities and obstacles in different regions. By gaining a detailed understanding of how geographical factors and home-based businesses interact, stakeholders in rural areas can fully realize the potential of entrepreneurship and leverage the diverse landscapes of Jordan for sustainable development that includes everyone. By implementing specific strategies, making careful investments, and forming strong partnerships, Jordan has the ability to develop favorable conditions that support success and the growth of home-based entrepreneurs, ultimately benefiting rural economies that are dynamic and able to bounce back from challenges.

Business Registration and Informality:

Informality within the home-based food processing industry relates to the widespread presence of unregistered or informal enterprises involved in food processing activities carried out in households or small-scale establishments. This lack of formality is evident in many areas of the industry, such as registering businesses, following regulations, entering formal markets, and obeying labor laws (Sobh, 2019). According to a report for USAID, it is estimated that there are more than 12000 home-based businesses that operate within the informal sector. Here, we will address various aspects of the informal food processing sector including the causes of informality and its implications as well as formulated strategies aiming to tackle this issue (Amawi, 2017).

Food processing is one of the sectors in Jordan that the government permits to be practiced from home by Jordanians. However, this allowance comes with specific conditions and requirements that owners must comply with to ensure the safety and legality of their operations. These conditions include obtaining health certifications, adhering to noise restrictions (prohibiting the use of machinery in production), and limiting land use to 15% of the indoor area (MIT, 2020).

The Jordanian government has stressed the need to formalize home-based food processing businesses by focusing on their registration. In order to encourage business owners to register their businesses, the government has introduced initiatives like lowering registration fees and providing exemptions from advertisement fees (GAM, 2021). Although these initiatives have prompted certain individuals to oversee their businesses, research and reports have emphasized

the necessity for greater incentives and tax breaks, especially in the early phases of starting a business. (World Bank, 2017)

Navigating the registration process for home-based businesses in Jordan involves interactions with various governmental bodies and entities, including the Companies Control Department, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Social Security Corporation, Income and Sales Tax Department, Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and municipalities. Obtaining vocational and health licenses is also crucial. However, the complexity and inconvenience of this process have been cited as barriers to formalization (Sobh, 2019).

To address these challenges and attract more home-based businesses, NGOs and community development organizations have proposed recommendations and amendments to the legislative system. These proposals aim to streamline the registration process, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and provide more accessible incentives for entrepreneurs (Amawi, 2017).

With regards to informality, a survey conducted for USAID encompassing samples from across Jordan, findings revealed a prevailing preference among individuals engaged in informal home-based businesses to remain in the informal sector. This preference stems from a perceived imbalance between the inadequate services and insufficient benefits they anticipate receiving from formalizing their businesses, in contrast with the associated costs of formalization. The survey identified key deterrents to formalization, notably including tax burdens, lengthy registration procedures, and high licensing fees, which collectively dissuade entrepreneurs from transitioning to formal status (Sobh, 2019).

Beyond the aforementioned factors, a separate survey conducted by Blumont shed light on additional barriers hindering the registration of home-based businesses. Among these obstacles are a lack of understanding regarding registration procedures, unclear directives from authorities, and apprehensions regarding the potential loss of aid from the National Aid Fund for economically disadvantaged Jordanians. Furthermore, concerns about forfeiting assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for non-Jordanian beneficiaries contribute to the reluctance to formalize (Blumont, 2020).

These observations emphasize the diverse characteristics of informality within the home-based business industry in Jordan. The results point out broader issues that go beyond just economic factors, including regulatory challenges, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socio-economic uncertainties. Dealing with these obstacles to formalization requires a comprehensive strategy incorporating policy changes, training efforts, and specific assistance programs designed for home-based entrepreneurs' needs. Jordan can tap into the potential of its informal sector, stimulate inclusive growth, and drive sustainable economic development by reducing obstacles to formalization and improving conditions for business registration (Attar, 2015).

Moreover, it's notable that owners often cite a lack of trust in Jordanian government institutions as a significant factor influencing their decision to remain informal. This distrust further

exacerbates their reluctance to engage with formalization processes, as they perceive government regulations and enforcement mechanisms as unreliable or burdensome (Sobh, 2019).

Characteristics of Home-based Food Processing:

In rural households across Jordan, a diverse array of products is being produced, influenced by factors such as natural resources, traditional skills, and seasonal variations (Salime Mehtap, 2018). While dairy products are prevalent throughout the kingdom, pickled goods, jams, and dried items are concentrated in the northwestern regions, including Ajloun, Jerash, and Irbid, as well as parts of Balqa Governorate. Many rural Jordanian households engage in homemade production for both personal consumption and additional income generation (UNPD, 2010). These products often find their way to urban centers or local communities through informal marketing channels like word of mouth, particularly targeting consumers who may not have access to similar quality products (Blumont, 2020).

Traditional marketing channels such as word of mouth remain prevalent, with products often sold at competitive prices compared to local markets (ESCWA, 2020). However, concerns persist regarding hygiene standards, particularly with dairy products like white cheese and yogurt (Alhammd, 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have also become significant marketing channels for rural producers, allowing them to reach broader audiences and command varying prices based on branding and presentation (ARDD, 2021).

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to support the development and enhancement of rural businesses, aiming to improve their sustainability, efficiency, and legitimacy. Governmental organizations like IRADA, a branch of the Ministry of Planning, offer capacity-building programs and marketing trainings for entrepreneurs (Attar, 2015). Additionally, entities like the Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO) and various NGOs, including USAID, UNHCR, Save The Children, and Care, provide financial assistance and training opportunities to support rural businesses (Lina Hundaileh, 2019).

Furthermore, partnerships between rural producers and emerging businesses have led to innovative collaborations, where the latter provides packaging, marketing, and distribution support, particularly targeting urban centers (USAID LENS, n.d.). Proximity to tourist destinations also presents opportunities for rural producers to showcase their products in local shops, often commanding higher prices due to the tourist market's willingness to pay premium rates for authentic, locally sourced goods (Author). Overall, these initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the economic potential of rural household businesses and the importance of supporting their growth and development to foster inclusive economic growth and sustainable livelihoods across Jordan's rural communities.

Socio-economic characters of home-based food processing:

A comprehensive study estimates that there are approximately 5000 food-processing businesses operating in Jordan, collectively contributing approximately \$70 million to the national economy (ESCWA, 2020). Concurrently, another estimation conducted by USAID suggests a higher figure, estimating the number of home-based businesses (HBBs) at around 12000. It is important to note that USAID's estimation encompasses a broader spectrum of HBBs, including food processing, handicrafts, services, and other entrepreneurial endeavors, which could potentially include a subset of approximately 5000 HBBs specializing in food processing (Amawi, 2017). This disparity in figures underscores the diverse landscape of home-based businesses and their significant contribution to Jordan's economic landscape.

The economic influence of these businesses operated from home goes well beyond just financial measurements, playing a crucial part in the growth of the local economy and the welfare of rural areas. Significantly, these establishments act as crucial providers of jobs, especially for females residing in rural regions, where unemployment rates tend to be elevated. Home-based businesses are essential in reducing poverty and empowering individuals economically by offering chances for creating income, leading to financial stability and better quality of life (Quynh Lê, 2015).

Interviews with rural women involved in these enterprises demonstrate the positive change in household welfare. For a lot of people, the money earned from these tasks acts as a crucial support, allowing them to cover important costs like their children's schooling. One woman explained how her in-home business helped pay for her son's college tuition, showing the concrete advantages of being an entrepreneur (Cook, 2020).

Additionally, the assistance offered by government and non-government groups via capacity-building workshops has increased the influence of home-based businesses on rural communities (Attar, 2015). These workshops provide participants with valuable skills and knowledge while also nurturing a feeling of empowerment and agency in women entrepreneurs. These workshops help create a strong social network among women by getting them more involved in capacity-building programs, which can help break stereotypes and cultural barriers that may hinder women from engaging in income-generating activities beyond the home (Cook, 2020).

The knowledge and skills inherited from ancestors are vital for the success of home-based businesses, allowing women to use their expertise to make quality products while managing household duties effectively. This double duty of providing care and making money highlights the diverse ways in which they contribute to household finances, questioning conventional gender roles and advocating for gender equality.

Women as rural human-resources in Jordan:

The high unemployment rate in Jordan, particularly prevalent among women in rural areas, serves as a significant catalyst for women to embark on entrepreneurial endeavors.

Empowerment, a term often associated with women's entrepreneurship, encompasses multifaceted dimensions, ranging from self-reliance to challenging traditional gender norms and accessing resources for independent decision-making (Bonnie Keller, 1991) (Cook, 2020).

However, the conceptualization of empowerment varies, with some perspectives grounded in feminist ideologies or liberalism, while others critique such approaches for imposing Western and classist assumptions, potentially creating divisions within communities (Abu-Lughod, 2009) (Sonbol, 2003).

Cook (2020) proposes a framework beyond traditional gender norms, focusing instead on the practices of women entrepreneurs and their impact on social reproduction. Social reproduction, as defined by Winders and Smith, encompasses the daily activities necessary for maintaining and producing life at individual and societal scales (Smith, 2018). In rural contexts, food production for both consumption and sale constitutes a form of social reproduction, with women leveraging their skills to provide for their families and invest in their children's education (Cook, 2020).

Development programs play a crucial role in supporting women entrepreneurs, offering financial assistance, training, and networking opportunities. These programs address key challenges faced by women, including marketing, technological unfamiliarity, and business legitimization (Cook, 2020). Moreover, the rise of women's groups in the Middle East, linked to the expansion of NGOs in Jordan, highlights the growing acknowledgement of women's involvement in the economy and their empowerment (Karen Rignall, 2017) (Jane Harrigan, 2006)

Although these efforts have been successful in tackling current business obstacles, there is still a requirement for comprehensive strategies that include wider socio-economic empowerment. In addition to funding and training, women entrepreneurs need opportunities to actively participate in both local and national economies, such as access to markets and chances for community involvement. In addition, it is crucial to address the digital gap and improve the technological skills of rural women in order to fully utilize the opportunities provided by e-commerce and digital marketing tools.

Furthermore, efforts directed at promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange among female entrepreneurs can promote group empowerment and enhance social connections. By embracing their traditional identities and cultural heritage, women can establish themselves as leaders in their communities by confronting the systemic obstacles to gender equality. By giving more power and influence to women in making decisions, development programs can help promote economic growth that is both inclusive and sustainable in rural areas of Jordan.

Main Challenges and Obstacles of home-based businesses:

Jordanian home-based businesses face various obstacles that hinder their progress and expansion, even though some established ventures have been successful. The lack of successful marketing and branding strategies was recognized as a key hurdle in interviews and surveys. Many HBBs rely solely on word-of-mouth promotion or maintain rudimentary social media pages, limiting their reach and market penetration. However, efforts by various organizations and entities to provide training and support aim to address this deficiency and empower entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses through enhanced marketing and branding practices (Cook, 2020) (Hmoud Olaimat, 2008).

Another major challenge faced by HBBs is the insufficient infrastructure development, particularly in rural regions where a large number of these enterprises are located. Their lack of access to necessary services and insufficient transportation infrastructure hinders their capacity to access urban markets and grow their customer base. (Abeer Dababneh, 2007). Moreover, entrenched gender roles present formidable challenges for both male and female entrepreneurs. In communities where traditional gender norms prevail, men may face societal stigma for engaging in home-based income-generating activities, while women may encounter resistance to their participation in economic activities outside the home (Salime Mehtap, 2018). However, shifting societal dynamics and economic pressures have gradually eroded these barriers, facilitating increased participation of women in income-generating endeavors.

Furthermore, the widespread casual nature of HBBs presents a major obstacle to their growth. A lack of trust in government institutions, high perceived costs of formalization, and complex bureaucratic procedures lead many entrepreneurs to choose to stay in the informal sector (Sobh, 2019). This hesitation in creating formal processes prevents businesses from obtaining necessary resources like funding and being able to take part in formal markets and bazaars. Meeting this challenge involves working together to simplify registration procedures, decrease bureaucratic hurdles, and establish trust between business owners and government agencies. (Amawi, 2017).

In addition to these challenges, HBBs may encounter issues when it comes to obtaining financial support, adhering to regulations, and adjusting to market changes. A lack of finance access limits business expansion and innovation, and regulatory complexities may discourage entrepreneurs from formalizing their operations (Attar, 2015). Moreover, fluctuating market conditions and competition from larger enterprises can pose challenges for small-scale businesses striving to maintain their competitive edge (Lina Hundaileh, 2019).

Overall, although home-based businesses in Jordan encounter major challenges in their growth and progress, there is also substantial opportunity for positive change through specified interventions and support systems. By overcoming these obstacles and creating a supportive atmosphere for startups, Jordan has the opportunity to tap into the complete economic capabilities of its domestic industry and encourage comprehensive and enduring progress for all societal groups.

Conclusion:

The literature review discussed here offers a detailed examination of home-based food processing businesses in rural Jordan, highlighting their importance, features, socioeconomic effects, and related difficulties. By examining various aspects, several important themes are revealed that emphasize the crucial role of these businesses in rural communities, economic growth, and cultural conservation.

Above all, the review emphasizes the inherent connection between home food processing and rural economies in Jordan. Such businesses play a crucial role in generating income and providing jobs, especially for disadvantaged groups like women and young people, ultimately helping to reduce poverty and promote economic independence.

Furthermore, the review highlights the wide range of products and geographical differences found in Jordan's domestic food processing industry. From the olive groves in Irbid to the dairy farms in Mafraq, every area has its own special culinary legacy and farming practices, influencing the variety of goods made and the methods of promotion used. Though faced with infrastructural limitations and regulatory constraints, rural entrepreneurs display perseverance and creativity by utilizing traditional knowledge and community networks to maintain their businesses.

Nevertheless, the assessment also highlights the challenging barriers that are impeding the expansion and legalization of home-based food processing businesses. Entrepreneurs face a variety of obstacles, including poor marketing techniques and societal norms based on gender, that hinder their ability to reach markets, secure funding, and meet regulatory requirements. The presence of informality makes these challenges even worse, causing businesses to lack important resources and chances for expansion.

Various stakeholders, such as governmental and non-governmental organizations, have started interventions to assist rural entrepreneurs in facing these challenges. Efforts to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of home-based businesses in rural areas include capacity-building programs, financial aid, and policy reforms to promote inclusive and resilient rural economies.

To sum up, the literature review highlights how socio-economic, cultural, and institutional influences interact to shape the home-based food processing industry in rural Jordan. Although progress has been made in acknowledging the impact of these businesses on local growth, more work is needed to tackle the root issues and unleash their complete capacity. By using a comprehensive strategy that combines policy changes, specific actions, and involving the community, Jordan can utilize the various rural areas to promote fair development, lasting growth, and protecting cultural heritage.

Research Materials and Methodology:

In this part, we present the design and methods of our study, which aims to thoroughly explore the socio-economic factors of home-based food processing businesses in rural Jordan. At the core of our method are the research inquiries created to inspect how the establishment of these businesses is affected by challenges and factors. Furthermore, theories are formulated to investigate regional differences in products, gender diversity, and the impact of regulatory policies on business practices. Our research approach includes employing a variety of methods like surveys, in-depth interviews, and thorough literature reviews to gather a diverse set of information. The data have been collected over two months between (February 2024 – April 2024). Our aim is to collect feedback from a variety of Business owners and informants across various regions of Jordan through various communication channels like social media, in-person meetings, and online searches, eventually, the size of the sample was 50 responses in total gathered through contacting the people who run home-based processing at home and key informants. The carefully planned survey questionnaire explores different elements of home-based food processing businesses, such as job creation, marketing tactics, and following regulations, in order to answer research questions and meet objectives. Moreover, an extensive analysis of current literature enhances our analytical framework, offering essential context and aiding in the understanding of empirical results. In the end, our research results will be shared, aiding in a better grasp of the industry's workings and guiding policy actions based on evidence to help its development and longevity.

Research Questions:

Research Question 1:

"What are the socio-economic impacts of home-based food processing businesses on rural communities in Jordan?"

This inquiry will be addressed using the findings from the survey and the interviews with participants.

This research explores the different effects of food processing businesses operated from homes on rural regions in Jordan, aiming to comprehend the intricate relationship among socio-economic factors at play. The study's goal is to uncover the concrete and abstract benefits that these businesses offer to rural livelihoods through a detailed examination of their involvement in local economies. Investigating job creation is essential, as these enterprises provide significant revenue for rural households, helping diminish poverty and sustain economic strength. Moreover, the research will assess the impact of home-based food processing enterprises on enhancing household food security, particularly in regions with restricted availability of healthy food options. Added to that, the study will center on empowering women in these enterprises by

showcasing their role in decision-making, financial gain, and community enhancement. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how home-based food processing businesses impact the social and economic landscape of rural areas in Jordan through a thorough analysis, emphasizing their role in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Research Question 2:

"What are the main challenges and obstacles faced by home-based food processing businesses in Jordan, and how do they impact their growth and sustainability?"

We will address this question by analyzing the interviews with our participants to compile a comprehensive response based on both their input and existing literature outlining similar challenges.

The study also seeks to investigate various obstacles faced by home-based food processing businesses in Jordan, with the goal of understanding the wide range of challenges that hinder their progress and growth. The research aims to identify the underlying reasons for the challenges faced by these enterprises by examining the social, economic, regulatory, and infrastructural obstacles they encounter. Primary research areas focus on the difficulties faced by home-based food processors in marketing, as they commonly struggle to reach markets and distribution channels, impeding their potential for customer base expansion. Moreover, the research will investigate challenges concerning infrastructure, like restricted utility and transportation availability, that pose significant logistical obstacles for these businesses. Furthermore, the study will explore how conventional gender stereotypes and societal expectations intertwine with business operations, shedding light on the gender-related complexities of these issues. The study aims to gather data for policy measures and assistance to overcome obstacles and improve the development and long-term success of home-based food processing enterprises in Jordan through comprehensive examination.

Research Question 3:

"What are the factors influencing the initiation and success of home-based food processing businesses in different regions of Jordan?"

Our survey and interviews with respondents will also address this question.

This study aims to explore the complex factors influencing the start and prosperity of home-based food processing businesses in various areas of Jordan. The study seeks to reveal the fundamental factors driving entrepreneurial activities in this sector through a comparative analysis of different geographical, cultural, and market settings. Important areas to investigate include where a place is located, because the presence of resources, ease of reaching markets, and closeness to cities can greatly impact the success of a business. Furthermore, the study will examine how cultural heritage and traditional knowledge influence the product offerings and market positioning of home-based food processing businesses through local culinary traditions and recipes. Moreover, the research will assess how social networks and support systems like

cooperatives and business associations contribute to promoting entrepreneurship and achieving success in business. By delving deeply, the study aims to offer valuable perspectives on the varied socio-economic environments of home-based food processing businesses in Jordan, facilitating targeted interventions and strategies to aid in their advancement and progress.

Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The type of home-based processed products varies based on geographic location.

The products and practices of home-based food processing businesses in Jordan are significantly influenced by their geographic location. From the green hills in the north to the dry landscapes in the south, each area has its own special cooking customs, farming materials, and customer tastes. Therefore, it is logical to speculate that home-based businesses in various regions will produce a variety of processed goods. Local abundance of agricultural resources, climate, and cultural heritage are expected to impact the choice of raw materials and the creation of unique recipes and flavors. Through testing this theory, our goal is to reveal the geographical aspects of home-based food production in Jordan, clarifying the role of regional variations in enhancing the complexity and diversity of the industry.

Hypothesis 2: Women encompass the larger proportion of owners in these food processing projects.

Women in Jordan are crucial to the success of home-based food processing businesses, using their cooking abilities, business mindset, and traditional expertise to fuel creativity and economic growth. Many recognize that women frequently make up a large portion of entrepreneurs in the informal economy, such as home-based businesses, because of different social, cultural, and economic influences. Thus, we theorize that women make up a greater percentage of proprietors in these food processing initiatives in comparison to men. This theory emphasizes the important part that women play in promoting economic stability and growth in communities, stressing the importance of recognizing and backing their efforts in this field.

Hypothesis 3: The informal nature of many home-based food processing businesses in Jordan poses challenges to their growth and development.

Many home-based food processing businesses in Jordan present both advantages and challenges due to their informal nature, providing entrepreneurs with flexibility and autonomy while hindering their growth and development. Informality is frequently described as having restricted entry to formal markets, financial services, and regulatory supervision, which can impede the growth and long-term viability of businesses. Thus, we posit that the lack of formality in these

businesses presents obstacles to their expansion and progress. Our goal is to explore how informality affects the access of these businesses to the market as well as their professionalism through observing the support they receive from initiatives and the profit they generate.

By conducting thorough empirical research on these theories, we aim to enhance our comprehension of the socio-economic factors involved in home-based food processing in Jordan. This will then help us develop policy interventions and support systems based on evidence to promote the growth and sustainability of these businesses.

Introduction to the study location:

This study examines the Waqqas locality and its neighboring areas, located in the Moath bin Jabal municipality in the Northern Jordan Valley (MOI, n.d.). While not having a clear structure, these areas are strategically located along the primary road running through the Jordan Valley, indicating a linear pattern of settlement. The land in the Jordan Valley is effectively split into two separate zones by the highway: the built-up area, which includes mostly residential and administrative buildings on the east side, and the agricultural land on the west side.

Located in the center of the northern Jordan Valley, Waqqas is the residence of about 6000 people, with a fairly equal split between genders - 53% male and 47% female. The typical number of people in a household in the Jordan Valley is 5, with most households owning their homes, a common trait among Waqqas residents (DOS, Population and Housing, 2022).

In Waqqas, as in many rural or disadvantaged areas in Jordan, the unemployment rate is significantly high, standing at 30% for individuals aged 15 and older. Although many Jordan Valley residents rely on services and government jobs for income, a significant number are involved in agriculture, capitalizing on the area's status as Jordan's main food producer. Moreover, job prospects for young males with limited access to higher education are also found in the military, cash-for-work programs, and informal transportation industry, impacting the local employment situation (Tarawneh, 2014).

Due to the urgent demand for jobs, especially in rural regions like Waqqas, numerous people strive to establish their own sources of income. Amid concerns about unemployment, home-based food processing is becoming a notable economic opportunity in the area, providing a way for people to start their own businesses and make money.

In Waqqas, the availability of basic services like clean water and electricity is prevalent, in line with the country's standard guidelines. Jordan has impressive literacy rates, thanks to mandatory primary education that has a high enrollment rate of 99%, with many students moving on to secondary education (MOE, 2020). Moreover, over half of Jordanians have health insurance and the Ministry of Health covers a large portion of medical costs, indicating the country's healthcare system offers broad coverage (MOH, n.d.).

In conclusion, Waqqas and its neighboring areas showcase the socio-economic environment of rural Jordan, which is defined by a mix of farming, employment obstacles, and availability of crucial services. In this context, the rise of home-based food processing as a significant economic activity highlights the need for thorough research to grasp its impact on local livelihoods, given the limited research on the subject in the area.

Our study will cover not only the Waqqas area and its vicinity, but also rural regions in different parts of Jordan, such as Mafrqa, Ajloun, Jerash, Balqaa', Karak, Amman, and other areas of the country. Having a wider geographical range allows us to create a more thorough explanation of food processing initiatives, specifically those running on internet-based platforms. Our goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the home-based food processing sector by investigating various locations to cover regional differences, industry developments, and new ideas.

The study method includes a thorough survey focused on people involved in making food at home, mainly in rural areas around the Waqqas region. The research is carried out using three main channels to guarantee a varied and inclusive sample.

The initial step involves distributing the survey on social media platforms, specifically in Facebook groups with a large number of followers from the specified area. This strategy targets people running home-based food processing businesses who are engaged on social media, allowing for wide-reaching and inclusive participation from a diverse group of participants.

Secondly, the survey is hand-delivered in the Waqqas area with the help of local informants who are knowledgeable about the community and its businesses. This approach allows for direct interaction with entrepreneurs to conduct detailed interviews that complement survey answers and provide a better understanding of the operational complexities and struggles encountered by individuals who process food at home.

Furthermore, a thorough online search is performed to find and reach out to people running home-based food processing ventures on social media platforms like Facebook, Google, and Instagram. This strategy focuses on online sales and marketing entrepreneurs in various rural and urban areas of the country, making sure to include representation from this specific market segment.

The survey questionnaire is carefully crafted to thoroughly cover the research questions and objectives of the study. It examines different areas of the socio-economic effects of home-based food processing businesses, such as their impact on employment, income, household relationships, and community growth. Furthermore, the study examines the primary difficulties and barriers faced by entrepreneurs in various areas of their businesses, including acquiring raw materials, packaging, communication, transportation, marketing channels, infrastructure limitations, and formalization procedures.

Additionally, the survey examines the reasons for starting home-based food processing businesses and recognizes the factors that impact their formation. It also analyzes where these

businesses get their funding from and evaluates how much support they receive from both government and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the significance of traditional knowledge in shaping the industry is explored through the investigation of its role in recipe formulation and product development.

The questionnaire gathers information on respondents to understand the demographics of home-based food processing businesses, such as gender distribution, location, and household size. It also looks at the kinds of products made by these companies to determine the level of product diversity in the industry. Furthermore, the survey assesses how common formality and informality are in business practices, pointing out the pros and cons of both methods.

Concurrently, an extensive examination of current literature on the home-based food processing industry in Jordan and other areas enhances the analytical framework of the research. Utilizing information from past research and academic articles allows for a deeper understanding of findings in relation to the wider socio-economic setting, pinpointing important industry trends, patterns, and obstacles. This compilation of current information acts as a starting point for further investigation, directing the understanding and examination of the practical information gathered from the survey.

In addition, it is important to mention that the most common approach used in prior research to examine or explain the home-based food processing industry, whether it is formal or informal, has been through surveys and questionnaires. This method enables researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative information directly from industry stakeholders. Expanding on the existing methodology, our study will use insights from past research to enhance our analysis and make more thorough conclusions.

The results of the research will be examined and showcased, offering significant perspectives on the domestic food processing industry in Jordan. An investigation will be carried out to pinpoint regional differences and patterns within the industry by comparing businesses in Waqqas with those in other areas of the country. In the end, the research seeks to enhance knowledge of the socio-economic aspects of home-based food processing businesses and provide insight for policy actions to promote their development and long-term viability.

Discussion:

In this chapter, we will delve into the findings of our survey, which aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the home-based processing sector. Through this endeavor, we sought to address our research questions and illuminate the hypotheses posited. Our methodology involved conducting a thorough online search for producers, particularly focusing on renowned governorates where home-based food processing is prevalent. This practice is widespread nationwide, serving various purposes such as household consumption, alternative income generation, or direct sales. In the following sections, we will examine these governorates in detail.

Firstly, let's delve into the gender dynamics observed in our sample. From our survey, it's evident that the majority of producers are women. According to Figure 1 below, 66% of the interviewees were women, while 33% were men. This distribution could be attributed to various factors related to gender-based disparities in employment, education, and cultural norms. These differences have been previously discussed in the literature review. For example, it's culturally more acceptable, and even desirable, for women to engage in income-generating activities from home.

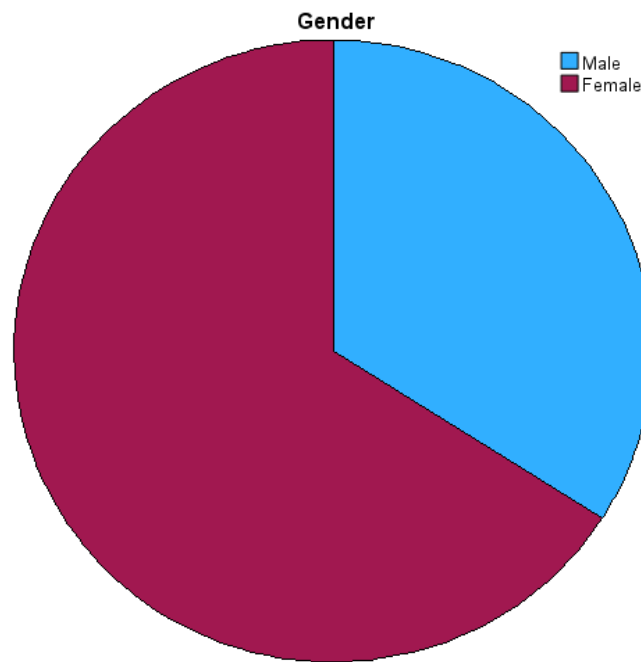


Figure 1: Gender of producers
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Secondly, let's examine the age distribution within our sample. The data reveals that the majority of producers fall within the middle age range of 40 to 50 years old. This trend can be attributed to the wealth of traditional knowledge and skills possessed by this demographic. When asked about the origin of their recipes, most respondents cited family recipes passed down from mothers, grandmothers, or other relatives. This heritage adds significant value to their products, as they are crafted with traditional Jordanian techniques, evoking a sense of authenticity and cultural pride. Additionally, some younger women mentioned that they have been able to develop products by following recipes found online. Figure 2 illustrates the age breakdown of the respondents interviewed online.

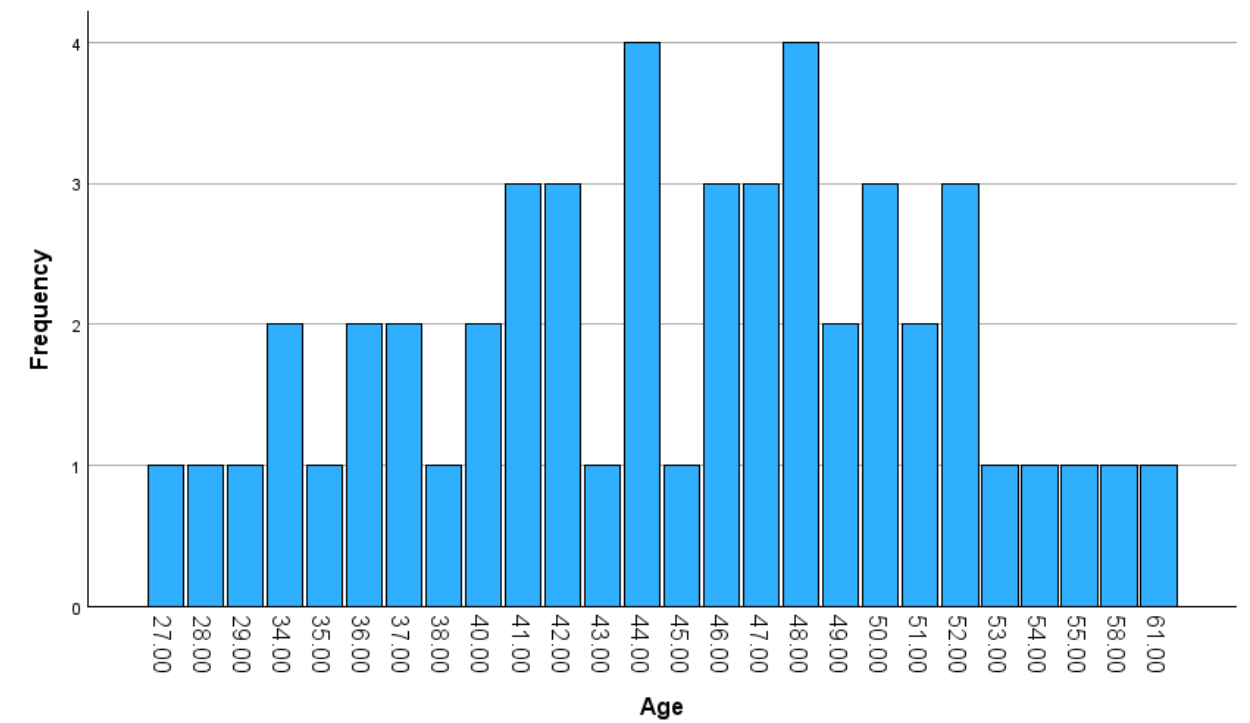


Figure 2: Age breakdown of producers
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Our sample of online producers encompasses respondents from various governorates across Jordan, with a focus on representing the three geographic regions of the country: the mountain ranges in the middle and northwestern Jordan, and the Jordanian Badia. We aimed to cover producers from Irbid, Ajloun, Jerash, Amman, Balqa, Mafraq, and Karak. Interviews were also conducted with informants and direct producers from Waqqas and its surrounding localities, as well as the western part of the Balqa governorate, which includes areas from the Jordan Rift Valley. This approach ensured a diverse representation of producers from different regions, allowing for a comprehensive analysis.

However, we observed no particular pattern in the type of products varied across different geographical locations, which contradicts our initial hypothesis regarding product variation

based on geographic diversity. One notable exception is Karak, where Jameed (dried goat milk) holds significant cultural and culinary importance. "Jameed Karaki" from Karak enjoys a renowned reputation among Jordanians, symbolizing high quality and traditionality.

Additionally, the production of dried fruits and jams from Amygdalae trees, such as peach, cherry, almond, and apricot, is notable in the governorates of Jerash and Ajloun within our sample. While producers in these regions either own the raw materials or source them from local farmers, it's important to note that such production is not exclusive to these areas. Producers from other governorates also engage in similar activities, though the distinction lies in the direct access to raw materials in Jerash and Ajloun, where these fruit trees are more prevalent, compared to sourcing from local markets in other regions.

Furthermore, dairy products and pickled items constitute the predominant forms of home-based processing practiced by Jordanians, with their prevalence extending throughout the country. These two categories encompass a diverse array of products, each reflecting unique local flavors and traditions.

In the case of dairy production, most producers within our sample have direct ownership of the necessary resources. They maintain a herd of cows or goats and undertake the processing of dairy products themselves. This approach is favored due to its higher profitability compared to selling raw milk to larger processors. Some producers even operate specialized shops dedicated solely to dairy products, showcasing the significance of this sector within the local economy.

Figure 3 illustrates the sourcing of raw materials for the respondents in our sample, highlighting that a majority of producers directly own the resources required for their processing activities.

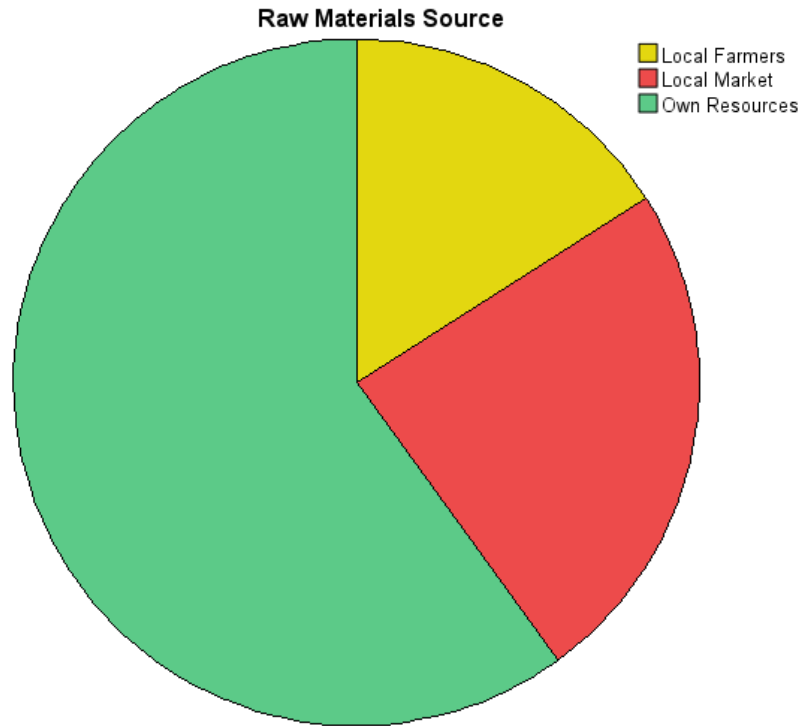


Figure 3: Main sources of the raw materials
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

There are various avenues through which these producers market their products. Since our sample was collected through an online search for producers, it's notable that most of them have some form of online presence. While some maintain dedicated pages or profiles on platforms like Instagram to market their products, others utilize their personal accounts by posting on pages or groups with a large number of followers.

Insights gained from interviews with producers reveal that many of them receive assistance from family members, such as daughters, sons, or even nieces and nephews, in managing their online presence. This assistance is crucial as many producers admit to having limited knowledge about social media and lack the necessary literacy to effectively navigate online platforms. While using personal profiles for marketing purposes may not be considered a professional approach, some producers have found success through this method, attributing it to increased visibility and sales.

In contrast, producers who maintain separate pages dedicated to selling their products often receive assistance from younger relatives in creating promotions and managing paid advertising. Some producers, however, take on the responsibility of running their own pages in addition to producing the goods.

Another notable case that has significantly contributed to the growth of these home-based businesses is the creation of brands encompassing a wide range of products from various producers. These brands offer packaging and marketing services, along with access to urban

centers. Some have even succeeded in getting their products onto the shelves of supermarkets and large stores, highlighting the vital role played by such initiatives and the services they provide in elevating the production standards of local producers.

These brands enable producers to focus on creating top-quality traditional products, which are highly favored among many Jordanians, especially when accompanied by certification. This professionalization of production not only enhances the marketability of the products but also instills confidence among consumers regarding their quality and authenticity.

For many dairy producers, their primary sales channels include direct selling to local markets within their locality and even extending to urban centers. This preference for local markets is driven by the superior taste and competitive pricing of their final products, such as yogurt or labneh, compared to packaged dairy items available in large supermarkets. As a result, there is a steadily growing demand for their products.

Conversations with local shop owners confirm this trend, as they report that yogurt, in particular, is often sold out by the end of the day due to the loyalty of regular customers. This high demand is characteristic not only of home-based dairy production but also extends to certain pickles producers, indicating a broader consumer preference for locally sourced and traditionally made food items.

It's worth noting the significant role played by word of mouth in the marketing strategies of home-processors. Many rely heavily on their community relationships and reputation for producing high-quality goods, which effectively draws in customers, particularly from urban areas. Through close-knit connections within their communities, some producers even offer delivery services, leveraging their regular visits to rural areas or interactions with relatives.

This reliance on word of mouth underscores the strength of social capital among these individuals. For some, their entire marketing strategy revolves around informal recommendations and referrals. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in the case of olive oil producers, given the high value of their product. Recommendations from trusted sources, attesting to the quality and authenticity of a particular producer's olive oil, carry considerable weight in influencing consumer decisions.

Home-based food processing has witnessed a significant surge in recent years, marked by increased competition in the market and a growing emphasis on meeting consumer demands for quality products. An important development in this regard is the emergence of platforms like Labeeb, dedicated to showcasing homemade goods. Through Labeeb, consumers can access a diverse array of home products crafted by Jordanian producers. Moreover, producers themselves have the opportunity to establish their online shops on this platform, facilitating the sale of their various offerings. This innovative approach not only expands market reach but also streamlines the purchasing process for both producers and consumers alike.

Table 1 illustrates the marketing channels utilized by our sample of respondents. It is notable that half of them rely on online channels and word of mouth, while a considerable number also engage in wholesale distribution. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that a majority of these producers specialize in dairy products.

Marketing Channels	Frequency
Online	9
Online and Word of Mouth	25
Online and Wholesale	2
Word of mouth alone	4
Wholesale	5
Wholesale and word of mouth	4
All Channels	1
Total	50

Table 1: Main marketing channels used by producers.

Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Food processing at home serves as a crucial means for rural communities to supplement their income. However, many individuals find that their businesses are insufficient to cover household expenses. The average household size in Jordan mirrors that of our sample, with an average of 5 members, though some households accommodate 7 or 8 members.

For some, home-based food processing represents their primary source of income, while for others, it serves as supplementary or extra income. We will delve deeper into this aspect in subsequent sections to understand the motivations behind starting these businesses and to gain insights into the significance of the income derived from these endeavors.

In cases where food processing constitutes the primary income source for the household, families often work collectively to manage the business. For instance, in Jarash and Ajloun governates, two businesses generate between 1000-5000 JD per month. These establishments not only maintain physical shops for sales but also maintain well-established Facebook pages. Situated near tourist attractions, they emphasize the cultural identity inherent in their products. They offer a diverse range of items for sale and rely on family members for support. Women typically handle the processing aspect, while men focus on marketing and managing the shop, including coordinating orders and deliveries.

In the majority of cases observed, income from food processing fluctuates between 100-250 JD and 250-500 JD. In such instances, these projects serve as an alternative or additional source of income, either for household consumption or for sale. The chart below illustrates the income generated by 50 respondents.

From Figure 4, it is evident that the majority of producers earn between 100-250 JD and 250-500 JD. Despite the relatively modest earnings, these businesses have a significant impact on the

lives of the owners. As previously established, the majority of those involved in these ventures are women. In Jordanian society, there is a prevailing expectation that men are responsible for covering all expenses and needs, while women are not required to contribute financially to the family.

However, the profits generated from these home-based businesses make a considerable contribution to the lives of these women and their families. For example, one woman mentioned that her earnings enabled her to enroll her child in extracurricular courses and activities that were beyond their usual school curriculum. She emphasized that relying solely on her husband's salary would not have allowed them to afford such opportunities. Another woman expressed that her earnings brought her a sense of contentment and accomplishment, particularly because they were no longer struggling to cover the monthly rent for their house, which had previously been a source of significant stress for her and her husband.

While a few women mentioned encountering dissatisfaction from their husbands or family members regarding their involvement in these businesses, many others expressed overwhelming support from their partners and families. They noted that their involvement in home-based food processing had clear positive impacts on their lives and brought about a sense of ease.

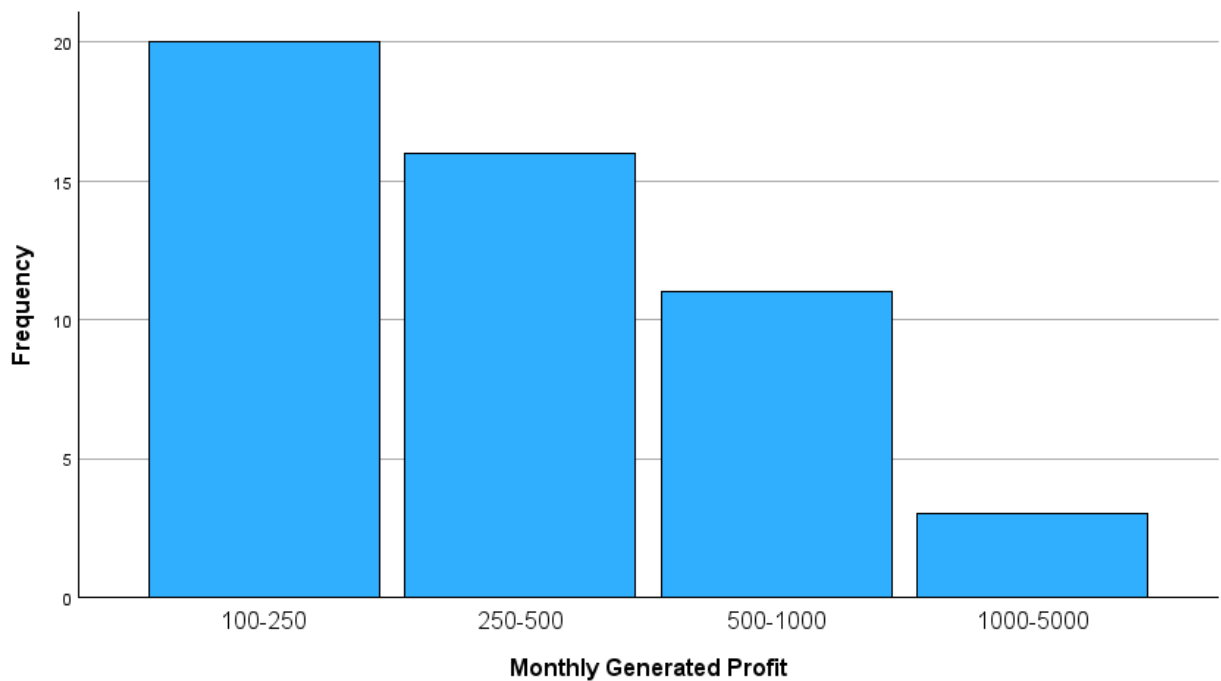


Figure 4: Breakdown of monthly generated profit
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Out of the 50 respondents, only 19 reported having employees, typically no more than 2 or 3 individuals. These employees are predominantly from the same community as the owners and assist with various tasks such as product processing, social media management, sales, or a

combination of these roles. On the other hand, the remaining 31 respondents operate their businesses independently without any additional employees besides themselves as individual owners.

However, if we extrapolate these findings to the estimated number of home-based processing businesses in Jordan, which according to USAID is around 12,000, it suggests that such ventures have the potential to generate employment for at least over 12,000 individuals. Figure 5 illustrates the number of employees reported by the respondents.

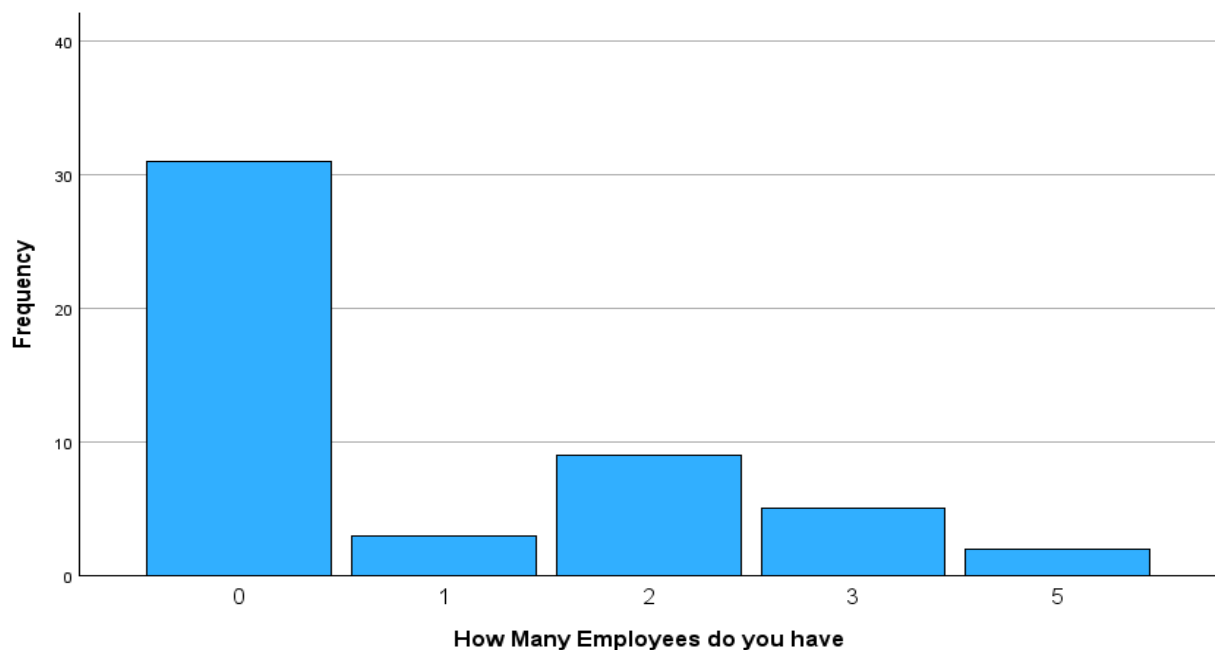


Figure 5: Number of employees
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

In addition to individual home-based operators, there are initiatives, such as the one mentioned earlier, that collaborate with home producers by offering marketing and packaging services. These initiatives share success stories of producers who have partnered with them, inspiring many others, particularly women from various regions, to embark on similar paths of self-employment through joining these programs.

One prominent program, known as "Ayadi Albalad" has brought together over 300 rural women working from home. Upon interviewing some of these women, they expressed immense satisfaction with their involvement in the program. One woman mentioned that prior to joining, she lacked experience in marketing and lacked connections to facilitate packaging for her

products. At times, her products would go to waste due to challenges in selling during certain seasons. However, after becoming part of Ayadi Albalad, not only did she successfully sell her products, but her productivity also saw a significant boost, resulting in a substantial increase in her income from food processing skills.

One of the defining features of home-based food processing is the pervasive informality within this sector. Many producers exhibit skepticism toward business registration, either deeming it unnecessary or unprofitable, while others are deterred by the perceived complexity of the registration process. In this section, we will delve into the dynamics of business registration, analyzing its nuances and implications. Additionally, we will explore the constraints surrounding registration, its impact, and implications, drawing comparisons between registered and unregistered businesses to evaluate our hypotheses regarding the challenges posed by lack of registration.

From our survey sample, a prevailing trend of informal business operation emerged, as depicted in Figure 6, with 31 businesses operating without formal registration compared to 19 registered ones. Through interviews and discussions with producers, we uncovered several reasons contributing to this informality. One prominent factor is a widespread lack of trust in government initiatives. Many respondents expressed skepticism, with one woman characterizing the government as "blood-sucking," alleging excessive fees and bureaucracy hindering Jordanians' efforts to improve their lives. Another common sentiment was that formalizing their businesses was unnecessary due to the clandestine nature of their operations. These producers often rely on community networks and word-of-mouth marketing, or they promote their products through personal online profiles. Given that demand typically matches their production capacity, they see no compelling reason to undergo formal registration.

Certainly, many producers express concerns about the protracted procedures and financial burdens associated with formal registration, as well as the certifications required. These certifications include registration with social security, enrollment with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and obtaining health certification from the Jordan Food and Drug Administration. Some producers harbor preconceptions that these procedures are time-consuming and costly. They perceive registration as a threat to their projects, fearing that formalizing their businesses will subject them to stringent rules and regulations. This apprehension is compounded by a general mistrust of government regulations and a belief that registration will lead to increased oversight and compliance obligations.

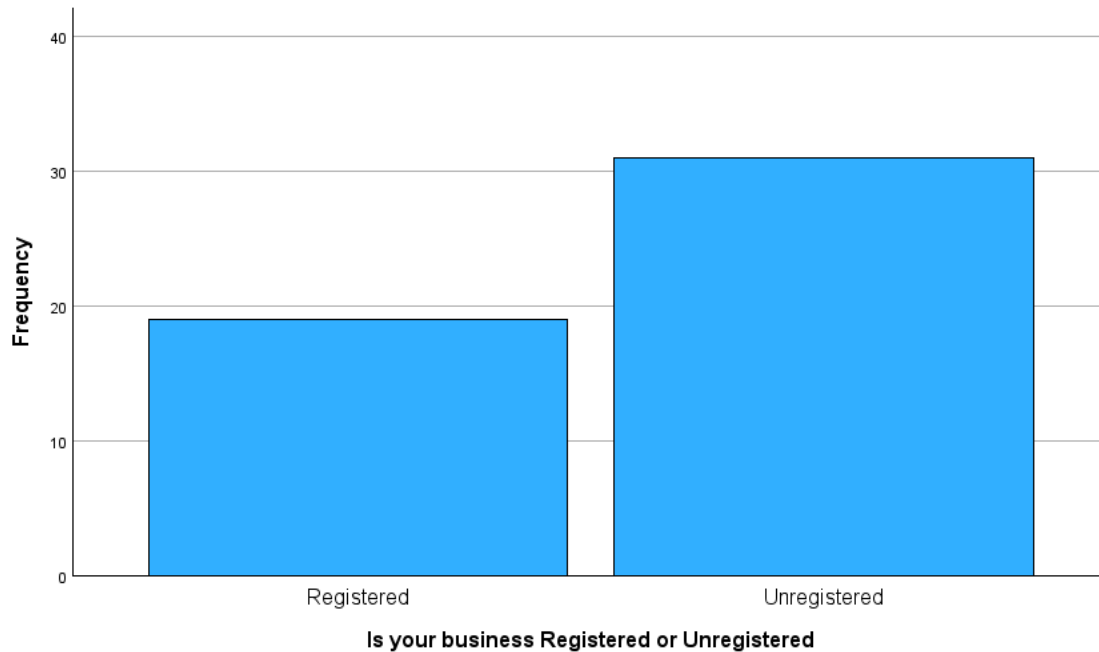


Figure 6: Registration status of businesses
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Despite the prevailing informality in home-based businesses, half of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of the registration process. However, they expressed a willingness to formalize their businesses, or they were already in the process, as shown in Figure 7. When asked about their motivation for wanting to register their businesses, many respondents cited seeking the benefits of registration from their neighbors or community members who had similar projects and had already registered their businesses. Additionally, some respondents mentioned being encouraged to register by NGOs and initiatives.

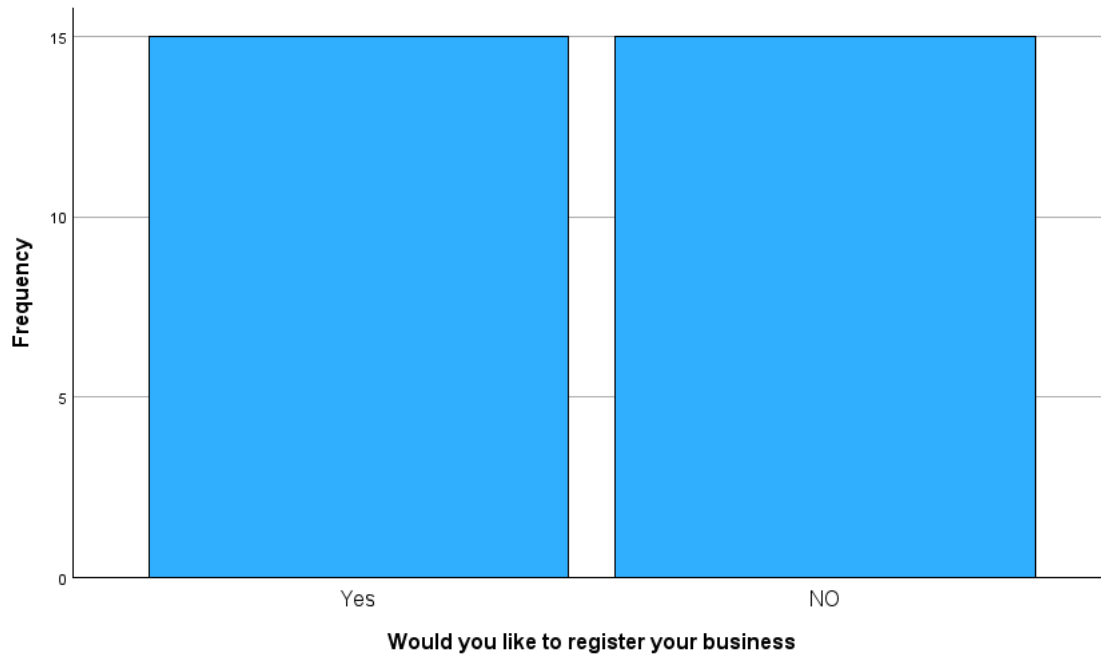


Figure 7: Registration willingness of producers
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

For initiatives like Ayadi Albalad, as mentioned earlier, they have strict criteria before starting to work with any producer, requiring them to be formalized and have acquired the necessary certifications. They offer assistance to producers and facilitate the registration process for them. It's worth noting that there are some home wine producers, although very few in number due to the fact that 97% of the population is Muslim and the production of alcohol at home is not permitted by the government. These producers are primarily from the Christian minority in the country, and only three were found in Ajloun, Karak, and Balqa, where Christian communities are present.

When we inquire about the registration process from the registered producers, their experiences vary. Some describe it as easy and convenient, particularly those who completed the process after 2018. In that year, the government introduced a new type of registration specifically for home-based businesses, aiming to streamline the process. This new registration is free of charge for the first two years and exempts businesses from social security obligations. Many of these producers also received assistance from NGOs or other initiatives, further simplifying the process for them.

However, some individuals still describe the procedure as lengthy and complex. They often need to visit multiple government facilities to complete the registration process, adding to the time and effort required. Fortunately, the registration fees are relatively low, typically amounting to only 10 JD for businesses with a capital of less than 20,000 JD – a threshold that all the producers we interviewed fell under.

For seasonal producers like olive oil small-scale producers, registration doesn't significantly impact their business operations. These producers primarily rely on word of mouth marketing, which generates substantial demand in the region. They emphasize that customers often purchase their products based on recommendations from previous buyers, highlighting the importance of reputation and quality. Olive oil production typically spans a two-month period, and the product boasts a long shelf life while maintaining its value. As such, these producers find that formal registration isn't essential for their business model.

Therefore, it is evident that there exists an ambiguous perception among home-based producers regarding registration, as many are unaware of the incentives offered by the government and the recent regulatory changes aimed at simplifying the registration process. It is imperative to prioritize spreading awareness about registration and encouraging its uptake among producers. In the subsequent sections, we will delve into the variations in profitability between registered and unregistered producers and elucidate the relationship between these projects and the support they receive based on their registration status.

In this section, we will scrutinize our hypothesis regarding the challenges posed by the informal nature of many home-based food processing businesses in Jordan to their growth and development. We will conduct our analysis based on two primary factors:

Profitability Comparison: We will compare the profitability of registered businesses with their unregistered counterparts to discern any notable differences in financial performance.

Support Patterns: We will examine if there is a discernible pattern in the support received by these businesses based on their registration status, and what types of support are commonly provided.

By evaluating these factors, we aim to gain insights into the extent to which the informal nature of home-based food processing businesses hampers their growth potential and the types of interventions needed to address these challenges effectively. Let's proceed with our analysis.

In general, there exists a noticeable disparity in the income generated by formal and informal home-based food processing businesses. This variance in income generation can be attributed to several factors, including the level of support received by these businesses, which we will delve into later, and the markets they have access to based on their formality status.

Formal businesses often have the advantage of accessing broader markets through various channels facilitated by initiatives that provide packaging and marketing services. These initiatives benefit from extensive outreach, supported by national bodies, international actors like NGOs, and even exposure on national television. Leveraging these connections, formal producers can expand their reach to both local and international markets. Consequently, their products gain visibility and credibility, often commanding higher prices due to the perceived authenticity of being handmade by rural Jordanian artisans.

Furthermore, formal producers may enjoy opportunities to participate in national bazaars and events, providing them with additional avenues for sales and exposure. Some have even progressed to establish physical stores, augmenting their sales through walk-in customers in addition to their regular distribution channels via word of mouth and online platforms. This multifaceted approach to marketing and sales amplifies their income potential compared to their informal counterparts.

Concerning informal businesses, while some may receive support from NGOs encouraging registration, their market reach remains confined primarily to word of mouth and online platforms. Although a few may have well-established online pages that yield above-average returns, they encounter more constraints compared to formal enterprises, which enjoy broader market opportunities. As a result, formal businesses tend to generate higher income levels. Figure-8 illustrates the disparity in income generation between registered and non-registered businesses within our sample of respondents.

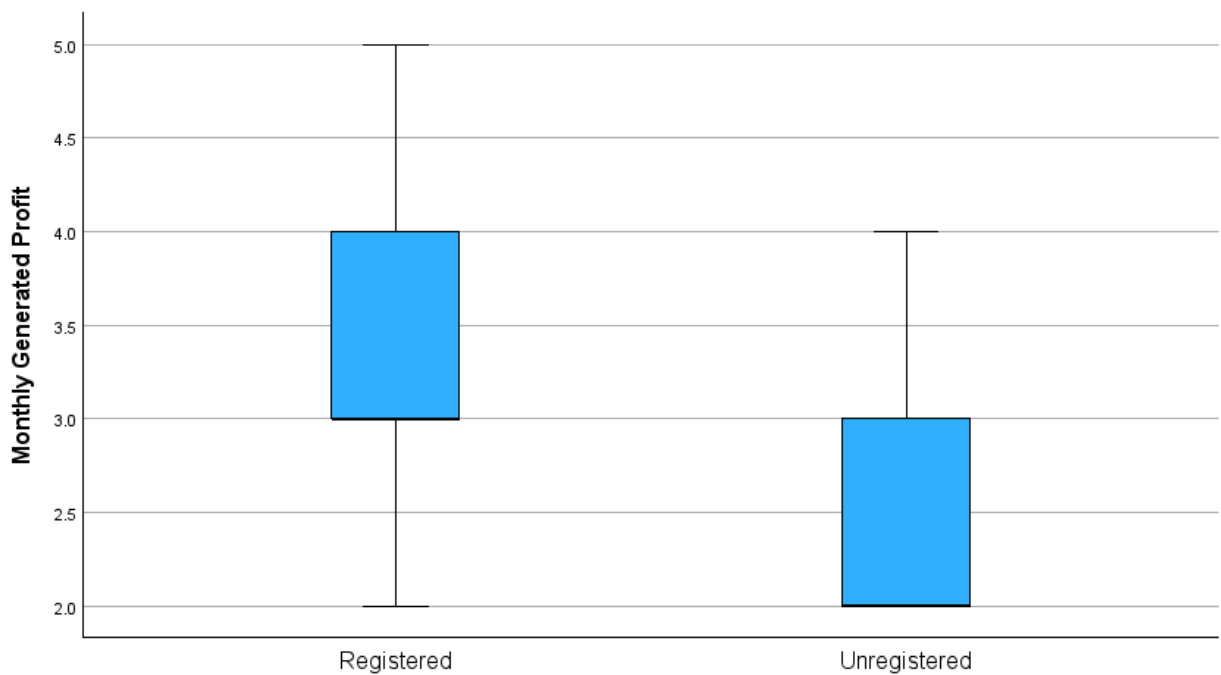


Figure 8: Generated income in relation with registration status
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Figure 9 illustrates the profit generated by both registered and non-registered businesses. Informal businesses predominantly yield profits ranging from 100 to 500 JD, with only a few reporting earnings between 500 and 1000 JD. In contrast, formal enterprises exhibit more diverse income levels. From our sample, two businesses located in Jerash generate over 1000 JD per month. Interestingly, these businesses share common characteristics, boasting physical stores to

showcase their products and catering to a broad customer base, including tourists attracted to nearby tourist attractions. Conversely, only a minority of informal businesses report profits below 500 JD.

Therefore, we can conclude that informal businesses encounter challenges in increasing their income, aligning with our initial assumption. To gain a clearer understanding of these challenges, we will create a relationship map between formality and the support received. As discussed earlier, formalizing home-based businesses expands their market reach beyond traditional channels such as word-of-mouth and online platforms. It's crucial to emphasize that while registration entails initial expenses and obligations, these investments are not wasted; rather, they yield long-term benefits by unlocking greater opportunities and ultimately leading to increased profitability.

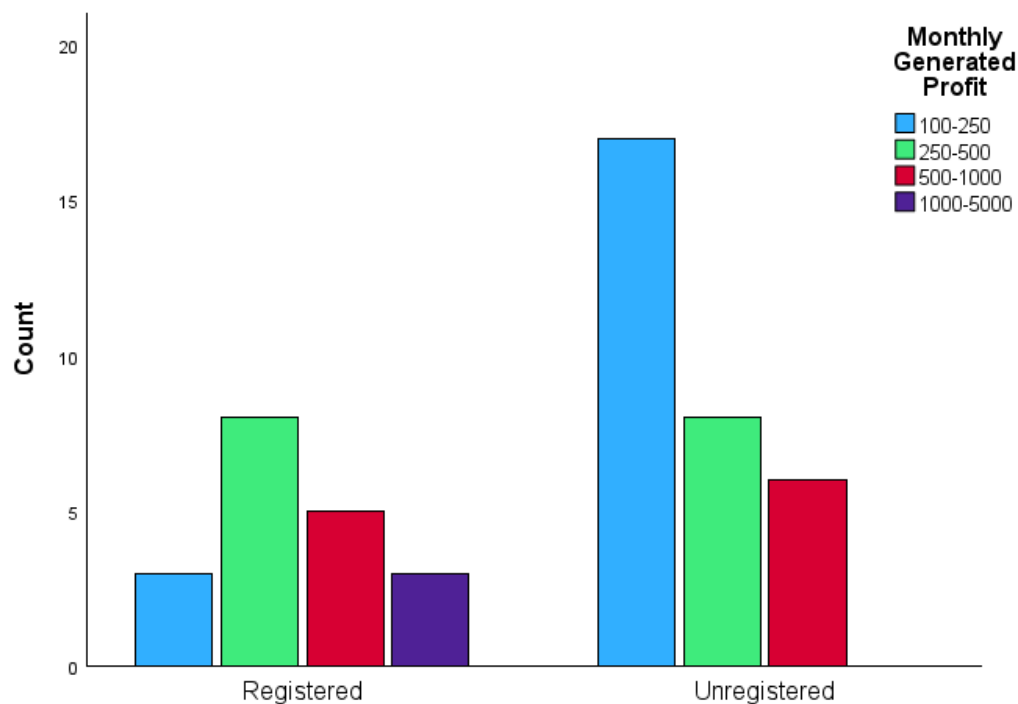


Figure 9: Profit breakdown in relation with registration status
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

Numerous national and international initiatives collaborate with home-based business owners, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. These initiatives offer multifaceted support, including capacity building programs, marketing and business development trainings, financial assistance, and networking opportunities. In our sample, several producers have benefited from

such programs and express satisfaction with the assistance received. Many attest to significant improvements in sales and outreach following their participation in these initiatives, which are designed to foster the development of rural communities and enhance the sustainability of their businesses and livelihoods.

In testing our hypothesis from the perspective of support received by Home-Based Businesses (HBBs) in relation to their regulatory status, a discernible pattern emerges. Most registered businesses have indeed received support, with the exception of a few dairy producers who established physical shops, necessitating their registration. When asked about the types of support they received, responses varied. Some mentioned financial assistance, receiving direct payments from NGOs with the requirement to demonstrate that the funds were allocated to their projects. Others benefited from technical assistance, participating in workshops focusing on market penetration, online marketing strategies, product presentation, and networking events. Some discovered platforms like Labeeb, an online marketplace for home-based producers, or connected with initiatives such as Ayadi Albalad. Additionally, they established connections with companies offering services like packaging customization or delivery. A handful received government assistance, ranging from financial aid to tax exemptions or access to certain machinery. Moreover, they received invitations to participate in national and international trade fairs, providing opportunities for product showcasing and market expansion.

On the flip side, only a small minority of home-based producers receive assistance, primarily from NGOs, and the support they obtain is predominantly technical. They participate in workshops conducted by various initiatives and NGOs. However, all those who receive this support are either in the process of formalizing their businesses or express willingness to do so in the future. Furthermore, some unregistered businesses were encouraged by community members with registered businesses, who shared the positive impact of operating formally. Figure 10 is a relationship map illustrating the connection between the regulatory status of businesses (registered or non-registered) and the receipt of support.

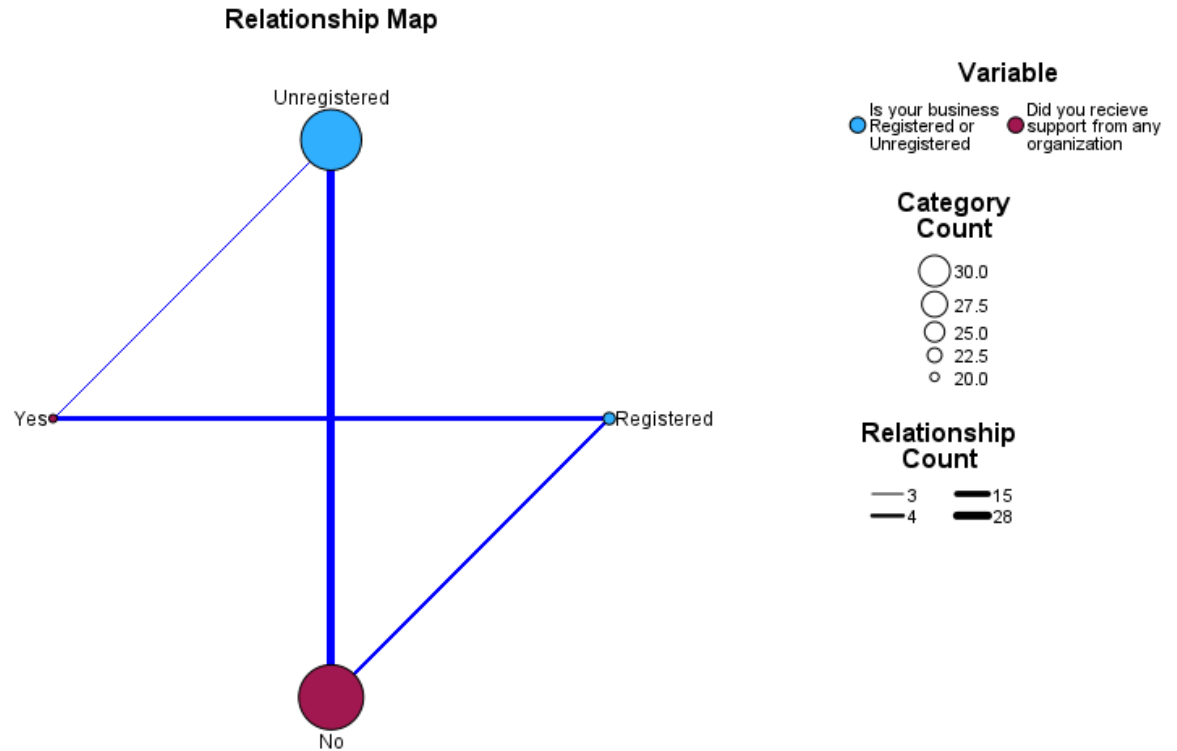


Figure 10: Relationship map between registration status and support received.
Source: Survey (N=50) (Own research, 2024)

In conclusion, business registration represents a critical step for home producers, enabling them to access additional marketing channels and various forms of support from initiatives and organizations. Our analysis suggests that registered businesses generally generate more profit and benefit from support, whereas non-registered businesses face greater challenges in terms of profitability and lack of support, hindering their growth and development. However, some individuals remain unaware of the benefits of registration and may perceive it negatively, despite government efforts to facilitate the process for home-based producers.

Moving forward, there is a need for a nationwide campaign across all platforms to raise awareness about the importance of registration. Such a campaign would not only benefit individual producers but also the entire home-based food producers community. By collecting data and drawing policies informed by this data, we can better support these businesses, harnessing their potential as catalysts for integrated rural development and addressing challenges faced by disadvantaged communities across Jordan.

The case of Waqqas:

As previously discussed, the rural areas of Jordan, including Waqqas and its surrounding localities, face higher rates of unemployment and poverty compared to urban areas. This pervasive issue has prompted the community in Waqqas to explore various income-generating

activities to support household stability, with home-based processing emerging as one such activity. The rural setting of Waqqas provides an ideal environment for such businesses to thrive. However, the exact scale and scope of these businesses remain largely unknown, primarily due to the prevailing informality within this sector in Waqqas. In the following sections, we will delve deeper into this aspect to gain a better understanding of the home-based processing landscape in Waqqas.

There is currently a lack of literature or research on home-based processing in Waqqas and other localities in the Jordan Valley. To address this gap and gather information about the prevailing conditions in these areas, a survey was shared on various Facebook pages dedicated to Waqqas and its surrounding localities. Despite efforts to locate producers for the inquiry, only four were identified: two pickle and olive oil producers, and two dairy producers. Among these producers, one woman specialized in pickles, while the remaining three were men, all residing in Waqqas.

In addition to the survey, two alternative approaches were utilized to gather data. Firstly, key informants were consulted, including a vocational education class at a male secondary school in Waqqas, and a nurse who also engaged in agriculture, with holdings including land for chickpea cultivation, as well as cows and chickens. The nurse also operated a dairy business, processing the milk produced on his farm. Secondly, interviews were conducted with local shop owners who sourced goods from the community. In the subsequent sections, we will explore the findings gathered from these various sources.

In Waqqas, the gender dynamics of home-based processing differ from the broader trends observed previously. Here, men primarily drive the income generation from these businesses, contributing to the overall household income. However, women play a crucial role in the processing aspect, handling the actual production tasks. Men typically oversee logistical aspects of the process. These processing activities are often undertaken by families with a longstanding tradition of engagement in such activities, spanning generations. Many of these families own agricultural holdings, particularly cattle, with a focus on cow ownership.

As anticipated, the majority of the producers referred by our informants in Waqqas are dairy producers, totaling 18 individuals. These are typically small-scale operations conducted at home. Each of these producers owns the raw materials required for processing, maintaining their own cows and sheep. They prioritize selling their processed products over raw milk due to its higher profitability. This income generated contributes to the household finances, with women often responsible for the processing tasks. Additionally, there are a few pickle and jam producers in the area. They source their vegetables and fruits for processing either from the local market or directly from farmers.

When it comes to marketing their dairy products, the dairy producers in Waqqas have two primary methods. Firstly, they sell their products at wholesale prices to local markets and shops. Through our interviews with several shop owners, it was revealed that they exclusively source their dairy goods from local producers due to the limited production capacity at home. Given the

preference of consumers, homemade dairy is highly favored over mass-produced canned dairy products. Additionally, the producers also engage in direct sales from their homes to occasional consumers who visit on a weekly basis, particularly for white cheese.

The goods offered by these producers are priced relatively lower compared to those in regular markets, which contributes to an increase in demand for their products. However, despite this demand, the profit generated from their goods is not sufficient to sustain their livelihoods. In all cases, the producers rely on additional sources of income, including formal employment in government institutions, the services sector, or the military, as well as informal jobs, which are prevalent in the region. On average, the monthly income generated does not exceed 250 JD per month, aside from any income generated by producing for their own household consumption.

There is a noticeable absence of online presence among producers of goods other than dairy, such as pickles or jams. None of them have a social media page or make posts from their personal profiles. Instead, they heavily rely on word-of-mouth marketing, particularly through connections with relatives. This reliance on familial connections underscores the strong ties within the community, indicating robust community networks and trust among members. Consequently, this reflects a strong social capital, which is common in many rural areas operating in similar ways. Goods are typically distributed through short supply chains, with delivery to urban centers facilitated by regular passersby. This traditional mode of operation extends to olive oil producers as well, who primarily rely on word-of-mouth marketing.

Regarding business registration, none of the producers in Waqqas have registered their businesses, nor do they express any interest in doing so. When asked about their reasons for not registering, they cited a lack of understanding of how registration could benefit them, viewing it as an unnecessary and cumbersome process. Additionally, none of them have received any form of support, whether financial or technical. In terms of financing their businesses, dairy producers explained that their livelihood of raising cattle has been a longstanding family tradition. Other producers mentioned that their businesses incur minimal costs, as they primarily utilize readily available ingredients, with jars and bottles being recycled from other household products.

The motivations behind these producers' decision to start processing food varied based on their gender and the type of products they make. For dairy producers, the decision was primarily driven by the profitability of processing their produce, as they found that selling processed dairy products fetched higher prices compared to selling milk alone. On the other hand, women who make pickles and jams cited the ease of production and low startup capital required for processing these products. They typically operate on a demand basis, only making products when there is a specific request from a customer. Many of these women expressed frustration with unemployment and saw processing food as a way to utilize their free time productively and generate income.

These producers encounter various challenges and obstacles in their business operations. One major challenge they face is penetrating urban markets and expanding their reach. Unlike many

rural areas in Jordan that receive attention and support from NGOs, Waqqas does not benefit from such initiatives. Furthermore, even in areas where there are some local or national initiatives, none of them specifically focus on empowering women and disadvantaged communities through income-generating projects. There is a missed opportunity to leverage the knowledge and skills of local people within these communities to foster economic growth and development.

Another challenge these producers face is the lack of access to finance. There is a need for improved access to finance tailored to their needs, including efficient operation and specialized loans. Financial literacy training would also be beneficial. Additionally, networking and building collaborations are crucial for the development of this community. Despite their strong ties within their own circle, they lack connections to communities outside their immediate surroundings, such as NGOs, government agencies, and farmers' associations. Establishing such connections would enable them to engage in capacities that extend beyond their geographical region, facilitating growth and development.

In conclusion, the case of Waqqas presents several distinct differences compared to other regions in Jordan. One notable difference is the lack of online presence among local producers, which could significantly benefit from training in online marketing techniques. Additionally, there is a limited variety of products being made, which could be expanded through training programs focusing on value addition and processing. Given that the Jordan Valley is the food basket of Jordan and boasts a wide range of agricultural production, including citrus fruits, subtropical fruits, vegetables, and vegetation, there is great potential to diversify and enhance home-based processing in this region. With the proper support and focus, producers in Waqqas can significantly improve their processing capabilities beyond dairy, jam, and pickles.

Indeed, regions like Waqqas in the Jordan Valley deserve greater attention from development agencies, particularly in the realm of food processing. Investing in food processing initiatives can significantly enhance economic well-being, social interaction, and community development. Addressing the lack of understanding and literacy regarding business registration is crucial, as formalizing their businesses can provide opportunities to participate in national events and bazaars, thereby expanding their market reach. Given that the current profit margins are insufficient, not exceeding 250JD, facilitating registration processes and providing support for market access can empower local producers to unlock their full potential and contribute more effectively to their communities' economic growth.

Indeed, the lack of women's representation in home-based processing in Waqqas is notable, especially considering the high levels of unemployment among women both in this region and across the country. Encouraging and facilitating women's involvement in such activities could have significant social and economic benefits. Not only would it provide them with opportunities for income generation, but it could also foster feelings of independence and empowerment, ultimately enhancing their overall quality of life. Therefore, initiatives aimed at promoting

gender equality and supporting women's participation in home-based processing should be prioritized in development efforts in the region.

Conclusions and Suggestions:

With our extensive examination of home-based businesses through conducting interviews and surveys and contacting key informants who better know the communities in their region, we have revealed a complex tapestry of challenges, opportunities and dynamics that shape the livelihoods of individuals and communities across the country. We have shed light on the diverse landscape of the home-based processing sector through our analysis and findings that encompassed diverse geographical regions, gender dynamics, age and household demographics, market, income generating patterns, registration dynamics and support mechanisms.

Hypothesis 2: Women encompass a larger proportion of home-based business owners.

Starting with gender dynamics, the dominance of women in home-based processing businesses underscores the significance of this activity as a way of empowerment and bringing economic opportunities and independence, especially within the frame of cultural norms and societal expectations of women in rural areas in specific. This, however, does not only express an economic necessity where many women have managed to generate income and contribute to the household but also reflects the importance of these businesses in preserving traditional culinary heritage and fostering a cohesive community.

The age distribution among producers reveals a predominance of middle-aged individuals, underscoring the crucial role of knowledge transfer in leveraging traditional recipes for authentic and culturally significant products. While some younger producers may utilize online resources to diversify their offerings, traditional recipes remain the cornerstone of this craft, highlighting the enduring value of cultural heritage in home-based processing businesses

Hypothesis 1: The type of home-based processed products varies based on geographic location.

Geographically, the distribution of products among home-based processing businesses shows no significant variation, thanks to rapid information exchange and connectivity within society. Dairy products and pickles enjoy widespread adoption across Jordan, reflecting their general appeal and demand. However, certain regions have gained iconic reputations for specific products, such as Karak for Jameed or Jerash and Ajloun for dried fruits and jams. Additionally, ethnic influences play a role, with wine production being exclusive to Christian communities scattered throughout the country.

Effective marketing strategies and access to markets are crucial factors determining the success of home-based businesses. Leveraging online platforms, word-of-mouth referrals, and collaboration with marketing initiatives are essential for reaching consumers and expanding

market reach. While digital marketing literacy may pose a challenge for some producers, collaborative efforts with younger family members and external initiatives can help bridge this gap. These efforts not only enhance market access but also highlight the importance of engaging young people in rural development initiatives.

The socioeconomic context within communities where home-based producers operate varies widely, influencing the role of these businesses as primary, supplementary, or alternative sources of income for households. Regardless of the income level generated, the impact of home-based processing on household wellbeing is evident. Profits from these businesses contribute significantly to essentials such as education, housing, and overall quality of life for many families.

Hypothesis 3: The informal nature of many home-based food processing businesses in Jordan poses challenges to their growth and development.

The disparity between registered and unregistered businesses highlights a multifaceted landscape concerning market access, support mechanisms, and profit potential. Formalization opens doors to broader markets, institutional support, and growth opportunities. However, informality persists due to perceived bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness, and distrust in government initiatives. Nevertheless, numerous initiatives and organizations collaborate with these communities, offering technical and financial aid to bridge these gaps. Empowering producers to navigate regulatory compliance unlocks their full potential. Success stories of registered businesses operating formally underscore the significance of this step, revealing the correlation between regulatory compliance and business growth.

Additionally, NGOs, national initiatives, governmental bodies, and all development actors serve as catalysts for the growth and professionalization of home-based producers in this sector. Through training, networking opportunities, and marketing support, these organizations empower producers to improve product quality, expand market reach, and add overall value to their offerings.

In the case of Waqqas, a nuanced profile emerges from a community grappling with economic challenges amidst a backdrop of rich agricultural resources and untapped potential in home-based food processing. Despite the hurdles of unemployment and poverty, the resilience of the population shines through their efforts to create livelihoods through entrepreneurial ventures and the untapped potential of food processing.

In Waqqas, gender dynamics take on a different form, with both men and women playing pivotal roles. Men are primarily involved in logistical aspects, while women take part in the actual processing activities. Families engaged in these businesses in Waqqas have a longstanding history in agriculture, particularly in cattle ownership such as cows and sheep, integrating home-based processing into their overall livelihood strategy.

The prevalence of dairy production underscores the importance of utilizing local resources, whether through small-scale operations or sourcing raw materials from the community's own cattle. This strategy of self-reliance not only improves the profitability of processing activities but also nurtures a sense of ownership and sustainability within the community.

The strong consumer preference for homemade dairy products presents a significant advantage and opportunity for producers in Waqqas. However, the lack of market penetration poses a barrier to fully realizing the economic potential of these businesses. Additionally, the absence of online presence exacerbates this challenge, underscoring the need for capacity-building initiatives to provide producers with digital marketing skills and access to broader markets.

Indeed, the entrepreneurial spirit in Waqqas and the wider Jordan Valley holds immense potential, yet barriers like limited access to finance and networking opportunities hinder the growth of home-based enterprises. Introducing financial solutions and fostering collaborations with internal and external economic bodies are critical steps towards unlocking the full economic potential of these businesses.

There exist established methods that can significantly enhance the utilization of the home-based food processing sector, and these approaches should be actively promoted and adopted on a wider scale. One such approach involves the establishment of platforms that closely collaborate with producers, providing them with opportunities to access a broader customer base, as demonstrated by initiatives like Ayadi Al-Balad. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards fostering a cohesive identity for rural spaces, encouraging cooperation among various producers operating within the same region. This collaborative framework not only facilitates knowledge sharing and resource pooling but also promotes the diversification of rural economies.

Encouraging the formal registration of such businesses is paramount to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the sector's dynamics, thereby enabling the development of informed strategies and paving the way for further research initiatives. By fostering an environment conducive to registration and research, policymakers can craft impactful policies that optimize the utilization of resources within the home-based food processing sector, ultimately fostering sustainable development and economic growth.

Conclusion:

After conducting extensive research and analyzing the conditions of home-based food processing businesses through surveys and interviews conducted both online and in-person with business owners and informants, we present our findings as follows:

The home-based food processing sector has a significant impact on various aspects of the community, contributing to economic and social upliftment. These businesses play a crucial role in income generation, employment provision, poverty alleviation, social participation, women's empowerment, capacity building, and education. While many successful approaches and

integrated operations exist, these businesses face several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited market reach, lack of formalization, intense competition with small and medium-sized enterprises dominating the market in Jordan, and adherence to cultural norms.

The primary motivation for individuals to venture into home-based food processing varies. For some, particularly women, it's about creating economic opportunities and enhancing their financial well-being. Others, especially those engaged in dairy production and olive cultivation, have inherited these businesses, which are deeply entrenched in their family's identity and tradition. Additionally, some individuals seek to add value to their social lives and assert a sense of independence through entrepreneurship in this sector.

Regarding our hypotheses, our findings indicate that while there is a general similarity in the products made across the country, there are also region-specific specialties influenced by factors such as ethnicity and cultural traditions. For instance, Jameed production is prominent in Karak, while wine production is associated with Christian communities in certain governorates. However, increasing connectivity through channels like social media and easier access to knowledge and information contribute to a convergence in product offerings across regions.

Furthermore, our research confirms that women constitute a significant proportion of home-based food processing business owners, driven by the desire for economic security and independence amid challenging economic conditions and cultural norms. Women's involvement in these businesses is often rooted in the skills passed down through generations, particularly in rural areas.

Finally, our analysis of business formality reveals distinct advantages for registered businesses compared to their unregistered counterparts. Registered businesses tend to generate higher profits, enjoy access to a wider market due to their formal status, and receive various forms of financial and technical support, thereby facilitating their operations and professionalizing their production processes. In summary, formalization appears to be a key factor in fostering the growth and development of home-based food processing businesses.

Lastly, we conclude that home-based agro-processing is a concept that has a huge significance in Jordan which should not be underestimated, this sector's full potential has yet to be unlocked where it can be a community-saving strategy with what it can offer to solve chronic problems that have exhausted rural communities such as social participation, employment, poverty, education and much more. There should be concentrated efforts to rise up with this sector and unlock its potential and capability through fostering partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector, synergy with larger sectors and the greater economic drivers can leverage and address systemic challenges, promote innovation and place impactful interventions.

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Table 1: Main marketing channels used by producers.

Survey and Interviews Inquiry:

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Education:
4. Household size:
5. Governate:
6. What Kind of products do you make?
7. How do you know the recipe?
8. Raw materials Source?
9. Monthly Generated Profit?
10. Is there another source of income?
11. Where do you sell the products? (Market)
12. Do you have an online page?
13. Which platform do you use?
14. Number of employees
15. Business Status (Registered/Unregisters)
16. How would you describe the registration process? (Easy/medium/Hard)
17. Would you like to register your business?
18. Are you familiar with organizations that provide funding for HBBs?
19. Do you receive support from a governmental initiative?
20. Do you receive support from an NGO?
21. Why did you start food processing at home?
22. What are the main challenges you face in your project?

DECLARATION

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III. Requirements for Students
III.1. Study and Examination Regulations
Appendix 6.13: The MATE Uniform Thesis /
thesis / final thesis / portfolio guidelines
Annex 4.1: Consultancy statement

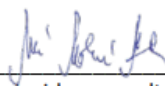
DECLARATION

El-Omari Abdulgayum Abdallah Hussein (name) (student Neptun code: A3OCY0)
as a consultant, I declare that I have reviewed the final thesis/thesis/dissertation/portfolio¹
and that I have informed the student of the requirements, legal and ethical rules for the
correct handling of literary sources.

I recommend / do not recommend² the final thesis / dissertation / portfolio to be defended
in the final examination.

The thesis contains a state or official secret: yes no*³

Date: 2024 year April month 25 day


insider consultant

¹ The other types should be deleted while retaining the corresponding thesis type.

² The appropriate one should be underlined.

³ The appropriate one should be underlined.