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Making the Desert Bloom: Israel's Contributions to Agriculture and the Life Sciences

Israel is well known throughout the world for literally “making the desert bloom.” Given that Israel is 60 percent desert, its farmers and agricultural scientists have long focused on expanding crop yields and quality, and making agriculture more efficient overall. Israeli companies have also taken advantage of their nation’s educated and innovative workforce to develop revolutionary medical treatments that are now in use throughout the world. In the 60 years since its founding, Israel has truly become an engine of life, and a source of hope for a more healthy and abundant future for citizens around the globe.

- Drip irrigation has become popular with fruit and vegetable growers in dry weather areas, from southern California to the Middle East. The world’s first surface drip irrigation system was developed at Kibbutz Hatzerim near Beersheba in the 1960s.
- Israeli scientists have developed genetically modified, disease-resistant bananas, peppers, and other crops that are expanding the world’s food supply and helping to keep prices down at grocery stores across the globe.
- Israel is a world leader in the manufacture of generic drugs. Israel’s flagship drug maker, Teva Pharmaceuticals, also develops and markets original medicines. These include *Copaxone*, for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, and *Azilect*, for Parkinson's disease.
- Endoscopy is never a pleasant experience. Fortunately, Given Imaging of Yokneam, Israel, has developed a minimally invasive diagnostic procedure—known as capsule endoscopy—that uses an ingestible video capsule to help evaluate gastrointestinal ailments. This “camera in a pill” is marketed under the appropriate name of *PillCam*.
- Some of Israel’s medical advances border on the fantastic. One such product is *Gelrin*, an injectable, biosynthetic gel used to stimulate bone repair, which was developed by Regentis Biomaterials of Haifa.
- Since the 1970s, Israel has partnered with the U.S. in several joint scientific initiatives, including the Binational Agricultural Research and Development fund (BARD), focused on enhancing agricultural productivity, and the Binational Science Foundation (BSF), which supports work in medicine and the life sciences, among other fields.

- Since their inception, these organizations have supported thousands of cooperative U.S.-Israeli research projects, committing the two allies to the pursuit of life and the medical and agricultural technologies that sustain it.

Additional Resources:

[Drip Irrigation](#)

[Copaxone](#)

[PillCam](#)

[Gelrin](#)

[Binational Agricultural Research and Development fund](#)

[Binational Science Foundation](#)