Title
A Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)-backed project to grow green fodder for livestock is helping relieve grazing pressure on Jordan's Wadi Mujib Biosphere Reserve.

The reserve, created and managed by Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN, BirdLife in Jordan), is home to a population of threatened Nubian Ibex *Capra nubiana*, and a key link in the Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway, the second most important corridor for migratory soaring birds in the world.

The project is part of CEPF's five year, $10 million investment in the Mediterranean Basin biodiversity hotspot. CEPF works by building partnerships with national and local organisations involved in the conservation of species, sites and corridors, through a system of large and small grants. BirdLife International provides the Regional Implementation Team for the Mediterranean Basin, which among other activities is responsible for allocating small grants, and offering support to small grant recipients.

The Green Fodder Pilot Project was developed at Faqou village, at the edge of Wadi Mujib, where the community struggles to find sufficient water for its household and agricultural needs. Jordan-based NGO the United Society for Developing Water Resources and Environment (USDWE) worked with the sheep-farmers of Faqou's Agricultural Cooperative Association to install a hydroponic green fodder unit. This uses a fraction of the water required for open-irrigation fodder cultivation, and provides a year-round supply of fodder of a much higher nutritional quality than the villager's sheep would find by grazing in the biosphere reserve.

RSCN, which helped plan and implement the unit and is providing ongoing technical support, sees the project as an important contribution to controlling grazing, and using the reserve's natural resources sustainably.

Six months after the project began, ownership of the green fodder unit has been transferred to the Faqou community. Among other benefits, the community will have access to green fodder year-round at a quarter of the price of dry fodder. Higher levels of protein and minerals are expected to result in better quality meat and milk, and healthier livestock with higher birth rates through an increase in twinning. The project has also raised villagers' awareness of Wadi Mujib and its unique nature, and the impacts of the different choices they can make when feeding their livestock.

The project is designed to be replicated within Wadi Mujib, and elsewhere in Jordan and the wider Middle East. As news of the success at Faqou has spread, NGOs and associations representing other communities have approached USDWE for advice and help with green fodder projects.