

Ibrahim and another merchant, Isa, have concluded a post-auction agreement that the former will buy all the sesame and karkadee whereas the latter will buy all the gum. These two merchants own a truck in partnership. Isa has decided to give all his customers 18.60/kantar for their gum, so that there will be no hard feelings and farmers will continue to come to el-Karra market to sell their produce.

We made a straw poll to ascertain farmers preferences for the shiishna system or the mizaan system. The overwhelming majority were opposed to the mizaan system and wanted to return to the shiishna method. The views of one farmer summarized the sentiments of most:

(1) Using the mid for measuring the volume of the crop is a simple procedure. The farmer observes everything and knows exactly how much the merchant is taking. Not so using the scales. These may not be working properly or they may have been tampered with to make them weigh light. The farmer can't tell if he is being cheated.

(2) To perform the auction and weighing in a timely manner requires that a schedule be instituted but this is not convenient for farmers. They usually don't know the precise time of day and they may have to travel a considerable distance to reach the market so that adherence to a schedule is difficult. In the shiishna method of marketing crops, the farmer may sell to the crop buyer at any time during the day.

(3) In the mizaan system the farmer is inconvenienced in order to assess taxes. This may be necessary in el-Obeid but it is unnecessary here. The shiishna system, on the other hand, insulates farmers against taxation, which becomes an issue between the merchant and the market clerk only.

According to several reports that we received, on the Tuesday following our visit, the shiishna system was reinstated at el-Karra crop market.