

SEKEM Insight

SEKEM's Journal for Culture, Economy, Society and Ecology in Egypt

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Inspiration is (in most cases) literally everything. If “sparks” do not fly, one alone often cannot achieve much against the resilience of most traditional institutions. But for making sparks fly, people have to meet and they have to engage in close collaboration – in work and life. It needs human beings to meet for inspiration to occur.

That bring such inspiration about in the spirit of sustainable development has been a goal for SEKEM for a long time. This month we report on several such sources of inspirations.

Markus Arbenz, Executive Director of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement, writes about why sustainability is important how SEKEM's “sustainability flower” has inspired IFOAM.

With the redesigned international and European websites and the latest Sustainability Report 2013, SEKEM also present three new sources of abundant inspiration. We report on new developments and show you where you can learn more.

Your Team of Editors

Find SEKEM also on the Internet at:



Sustainability 1

SEKEM's “Flower”
Inspires Others

Website

SEKEM Relaunches
Websites

Sustainability 2

Sustainability Report
2013 Published

SEKEM „Sustainability Flower“ Inspires Other Pioneers

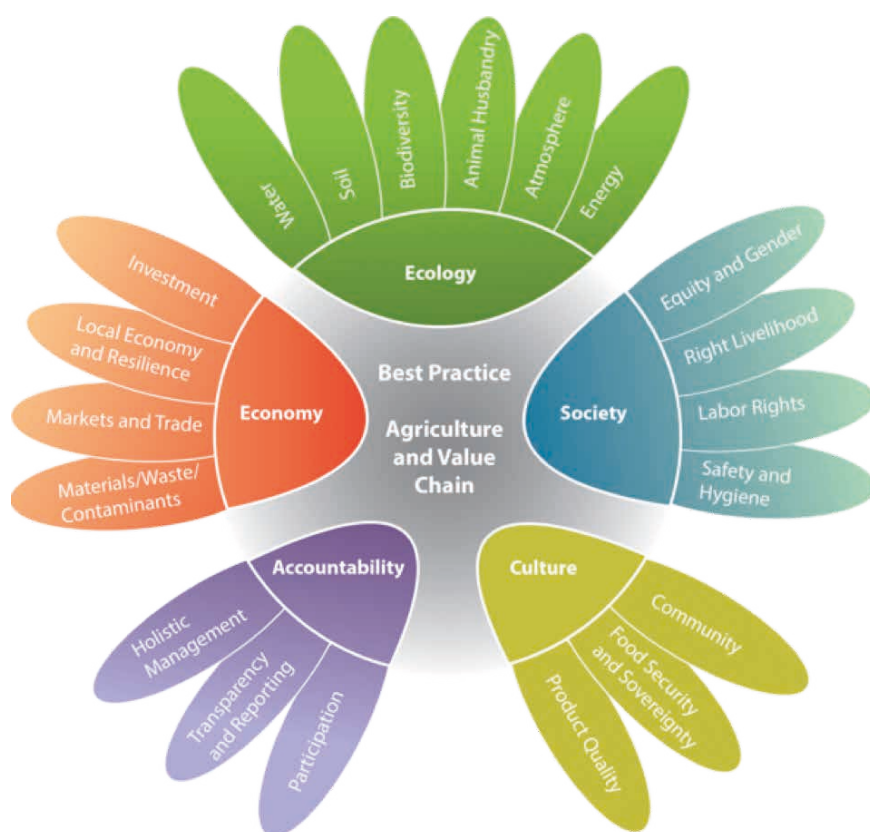
With its “Sustainability Flower”, SEKEM has created itself a practical tool to measure and improve sustainability in its business conduct. It is now also inspiring others to adopt it.



IFOAM General Assembly in Korea: IFOAM is today working with a modified version of SEKEM's "Sustainability Flower".

In 2010 Helmy Abouleish wrote a letter to IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) asking its members to strive to improve the image of organic farming as a primary model to achieving greater sustainability worldwide. At this time, SEKEM was busy with the development of its “sustainability flower” in the framework of its commitment to increasing the global impact of its IAP (International Association for Partnership).

At IFOAM the letter met with open ears and other closely related initiatives and, a year later, in October 2011 the global IFOAM General Assembly in South Korea voted for IFOAM to continue to lead the global sustainability debate without a dissenting vote. The mandate is a commitment to the four principles of organic farming health, ecology, fairness, and care. IFOAM believes that to achieve this goal, new developments are necessary in accordance with



The "Sustainability Flower", as it was adopted by IFOAM in a form modified to fit its own needs.

the principle of continuous development. Reasons for this are not only to be sought in the behaviour of and pressure from some, less benevolent circles of economy, science and media. Improvements in conventional agricultural systems encourage organic farming to do new steps out of inner conviction.

Sustainability is Necessary

Today, the need for sustainability is virtually undisputed. The creation of an environmentally clean, economically sound, socially and culturally acceptable nutritional system is a widely accepted goal. The disagreement is in how sustainability is defined and whether sustainability can be achieved with the industrialization of agriculture or agro-ecological methods.

The Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined sustainability as development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and to choose their own lifestyle." Based on that, in the conventional

way of thinking, sustainability is often equated with high productivity or production of sufficient amounts of food on a global level. Organic farming, however, seeks to achieve "functional integrity". Under this holistic perspective, the human being is seen as a part of nature and thus its entire system. Diversity and different perspectives also form a natural part of this approach. It is not only concerned with the regeneration of productive capabilities and to safeguard our ecological, economic and social capital for future generations. It also takes ethical aspects into account. Thus, while exploitative wages or cruel slaughter methods are not an immediate concern for the conservation of the profitability of production systems or even the health and nutritional safety of future generations, they obviously represent grave ethically issues that affect the functional integrity of the entire food supply system.

Networks for Better Sustainability in Organic Farming

In the year 2012, the Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network (SOAAN) was founded. The Action Network, headed by IFOAM, sets out to identify areas where organic farming is already sustainable, and where more needs to be done. Thus, the aim is to improve the general effect of organic farming on a large scale. Specifically, SOAAN is developing a document that sets out to describe the state of organic farming at a future point in time when it may have reached "100%" sustainability. The document describes all required objectives in all aspects and great detail. They include five dimensions and twenty subject areas. The document will be developed with the participation of a broad base of stakeholders. A number of expert and public consultations will form part of the development process. In the framework of this task, IFOAM is also organising the "Bonn Sustainability Days" as a "think tank".

Among these tools, SEKEM's "Flower of Sustainability" is one of the major tools to help agricultural businesses and initiatives improve on sustainability. It's main characteristic is its extremely broad scope encompassing a wide range of aspects far beyond what businesses usually aim to comply with.

In December 2013, the "Best Practice Guidelines for Organic Agriculture and Value Chains" were also adopted unanimously by the IFOAM General Assembly. The document can now be used for strategy development, research, communication, education, development of standards or comparative analysis of expectations versus reality. This document, too, needs continuous development. IFOAM members such as SEKEM able to request such developments. The first opportunity to do so will be at the upcoming General Assembly in Istanbul with Helmy Abouleish as this event's president.

Markus Arbenz

Markus Arbenz is Executive Director of the organization IFOAM.

SEKEM

YOU CAN VISIT SEKEM YOURSELF:
WWW.SEKEM-REISEN.DE
WWW.AVENTERRA.DE

More information:
<http://bit.ly/1sJFP55> (SOAAN Netzwerk)
<http://bit.ly/1ITbsld> (IFOAM Best Practice Guideline for Agriculture)

SEKEM - A role model for sustainable development.

The SEKEM Initiative was founded to realize the vision of sustainable human development. Its mission is the development of the individual, society and environment through a holistic concept integrating economic, societal life, cultural life and ecology.



Exp

Economy Societal Life Cultural Life Ecology

SEKEM

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Cooperative of SEKEM Employees Our Values Health & Safety at SEKEM Diversity & Equality

A meaningful work and environment for all of us. From the first day.

Relation to our employees

The Cooperative for SEKEM Employees (CSE) was founded in 2000 to promote meaningful work in a healthy, safe and humane environment. The governmental Cooperative Union of Social Affairs oversees its activities. The goal is to achieve social justice and decent human life for everyone in the SEKEM Initiative. The current activities of the CSE are the pharmacy at the main SEKEM premises, the library, the cafeteria that provides healthy and warm meals for the employees every day and the transfer of workers to and from the companies. Currently, the CSE has 230 members based on the distribution of shares. On top of this, SEKEM employees are encouraged to take part in a labor union, which is welcome to promote its activities on company premises anytime.

Read about health & safety



100% Organic. For all!

Would it be possible to feed the world with organic and bio-dynamic food? And could it be possible that this would be cheaper? We believe: Yes! Read more



Heliopolis University
The first university in the Middle East declaring sustainable development as its central and ultimate goal. Explore the Heliopolis University now



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Education is more than learning.

Holistic human development

Education is the foundation of holistic human development and advancement of all. It is a continuous challenge. Learning throughout life enables people to improve their living conditions and contribute to the development of the community and the country.

The SEKEM Development Foundation started the SEKEM School System. SEKEM schools educate students (boys and girls) from kindergarten through the twelfth grade on the basis of Waldorf education. The schools serve Muslim and Christian students alike, encouraging them to live in harmony and have respect for each other's religious practices. In addition to the gender and religion diversity, the student body in the entire SEKEM School System is characterized by socio-economic-cultural diversity.

Visit the SEKEM School

Education for everyone

Students come to SEKEM schools from rural, semi-urban and urban areas; from underprivileged and privileged families; from professional and managerial parents; from children of skilled labourers; from children of farmers and workers; and from native Egyptians to foreigners. They are also diversified with respect to their educational background. Some are those who seek regular public schooling, to desire technical education and vocational training, to have special educational needs, and even to those who dropouts or have had no opportunity for any type of education. Needless to say, that this broad diversity of the



dimensions of life and work at SEKEM – economic life, social life, culture and ecology – as well as the functional categories “contact”, “sustainability”, “press and news” and “background information”. On the main page, this structure will be immediately clear to the user and allows them to directly delve into topical areas relevant to his or her interests. Each section carries its own colour, which is repeated in the titles and links of the area. This helps users to keep track of their progress through the site. “Our aim was to convey the complexity of SEKEM as easily as possible and deliver a web experience in which the user can concentrate on the content”, Thomas Abouleish comments, who is heading the project.

The websites have also been reprogrammed from scratch. The technical team has managed to increase performance by over 70 %, shortening the loading time of each page. “We can now offer a much more pleasant online experience”, says Moataz Ahmed, developer and database manager.

Since the launch of the website in mid May user acceptance has been precisely analyzed. Visitor numbers have augmented and the average length of each stay has increased by almost 50%. “We are very pleased to see that visitors are accepting the new site so well”, Thomas Abouleish adds.

Bijan Kafi

SEKEM Redesigns International and European Websites

After several years of visual constancy, the SEKEM Initiative has decided to redesign its international and European web presences.

Back in September of last year, SEKEM had begun the process of restructuring its international and European websites with a basic analysis. User-friendliness, content preparation, structure, design and navigation were all put under scrutiny and reconsidered in detail. Early drafts for a redesign quickly emerged and have matured into a new concept which is now incorporated into the redesign of the two major Internet presences of the SEKEM Initiative (www.SEKEM.com and www.SEKEM-europe.com).

In particular, communicating the growing complexity of SEKEM itself was at the center of the challenges to be tackled. The question lead to a detailed review of a wide range of

stakeholders and a clear understanding of the need to make it easier to understand those elements of SEKEM that are often difficult to understand from the outside. „Our goal was to minimize clutter in the layout and design so that the contents are in the foreground and the user can easily switch between them”, says Ahmed Mokhtar, Graphic Designer of the SEKEM Companies. Better user friendliness and a warmer, more emotional representation through more pictures and greater colour variety without overly distracting the reader with strong accents were among the other goals.

More User-Friendly, More Emotional

Thus, the new site was divided into eight distinct elements: into the four

! More information:
• <http://www.SEKEM.com>
• <http://www.SEKEM-europe.com>

Strengthening Civil Society in Africa Together

SEKEM hosts first regional conference for Africa and the Middle East for laureates of the „Alternative Nobel Prize“.

A group of award-winning human rights campaigners, environmental activists and academics working in Africa and the Middle East say that a new drive to strengthen civil society is urgently needed to safeguard Africa's future. The group, comprising of recipients of the Right Livelihood Award (RLA, also known as "The Alternative Nobel Prize"), will come to Egypt this coming week from 11 countries in the region to explore the crucial role that African civil society must play in building the best possible future for the continent, particularly in achieving food security and justice, reducing poverty, ending impunity and protecting the environment. SEKEM itself has received the Right Livelihood Award in 2003.

Over a four-day conference at the SEKEM Initiative, from 6-9 June 2014, the RLA Laureates will discuss issues ranging from human rights and justice, environmental destruction and the extractive industries, women's health and safety, community development, as well as ecologically and socially sound agriculture. The conference will provide a forum at which award recipients can share their ideas, voice their concerns and network with key changemakers in Africa. Sessions will involve dialogue with local civil society organisations and strongly emphasise the sharing and promotion of practical solutions.

12 RLA Laureates and Laureate organisations have confirmed their attendance.

Ole von Uexkull, Executive Director of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation, said: "The conference aims to enable Laureates to build fruitful working relationships with each other and to lay the foundation for joint projects. This meeting should be seen as both South-South and North-South expressions of solidarity with civil society organisations and activists in Egypt and the region."

The Programme

The event will take place at the Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Cairo. In the morning, a "Market place" will give Egyptian civil society groups opportunities to present their work followed by exchanges in the form of smaller group discussions between Laureates and invited local civil society groups.

From 11.30-13.00, short press statement will be held followed by individual interviews with the Right Livelihood Award Laureates.

In the afternoon, Two panel debates will be conducted to which the public is also welcome: "Against All Odds – Connecting Civil Society in Africa and the Middle East" and "Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security".

Politicians, embassies, representatives from civil society organisations in Cairo, university students and the interested general public are cordially invited to participate in the event.

Participants

The following participants have so far confirmed their attendance: Dr. Ibrahim and Helmy Abouleish, SEKEM, Egypt; Nnimmo Bassey, Nigeria; Matron Sr. Tenadam Bekele Wolde, repr. Dr. Catherine Hamlin and the Addis Abeba Fistula Hospital, Ethiopia; Jumanda Gakelebone, "First People of the Kalahari", Botswana; Guillaume Harushimana, "Centre Jeunes Kamenge", Burundi; Dr. Hans R. Herren, "Biovision", Switzerland; Dr. Ruchama Marton, "Physicians for Human Rights", Israel; Jacqueline Moudeina, Chad; René Ngongo, Democratic Republic of Congo; Nomewende Joël Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso, "Fédération Naam"; Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, Nigeria, "The



Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People"; Raji Sourani, Palestine.

The Right Livelihood Award

The Right Livelihood Award was established in 1980 to honour and support those "offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today". The Right Livelihood Award Foundation, based in Stockholm, Sweden, annually bestows the Right Livelihood Award to four of the most courageous and inspirational people in the world. Since 1980, it has awarded 153 people and organisations from 64 countries. There are 28 Laureates from Africa and the Middle East.

This meeting is the second in a planned series of regional conferences and is made possible by the resources provided by Church of Sweden.

Right Livelihood Foundation, Bianca Fliss

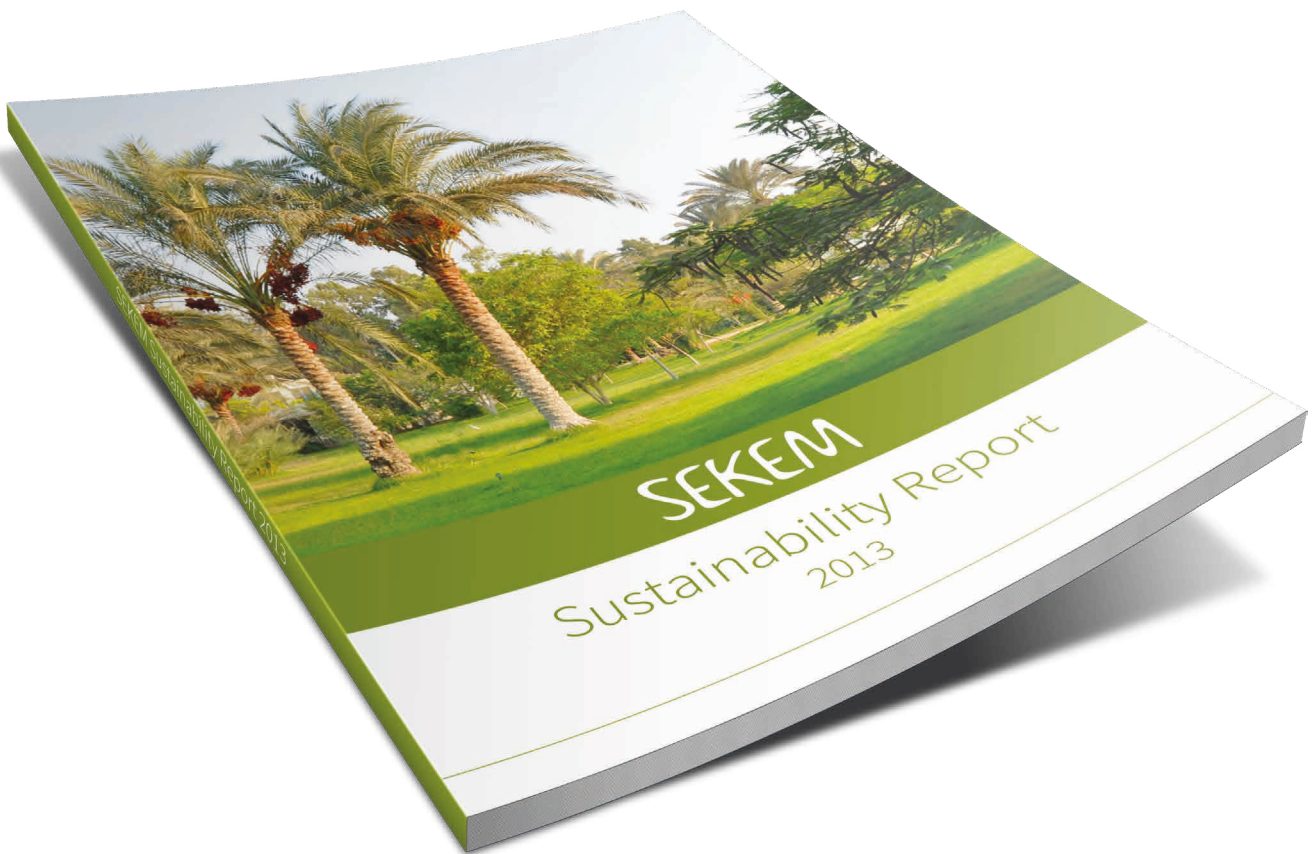
! More information:
• <http://www.rightlivelihood.org/cairo2014.html>

Impressions from SEKEM



The football enthusiasm of the Egyptians, well known throughout the world, knows no boundaries. Football games are always big events not only in Cairo but also in the countryside. In April it was again time in SEKEM for a great sports event that takes place annually. This time, the employees of the various departments of NatureTex, SEKEM's company for natural textiles, were "battling" it out while fighting for the Cup. After exhilarating games that dragged on for several days, the production department won the finals on 28 April. In the picture, Konstanze Abouleish, Commercial Manager at NatureTex, presents the trophy to the winning team.

SEKEM Publishes New Report on Sustainable Development 2013



SEKEM has published its annual Report on Sustainable Development at the Initiative 2013 on 17 May. Extensive data was collected over the period of the entire year and documented in a 34-page booklet. The report again highlights SEKEM's continued commitment to become more sustainable in all areas of its business conduct.

The report of this year is also for the first time fully integrated into the new website of SEKEM. The interactive new presentation now allows the reader to get a full overview of the past year's developments in just a few clicks.

Less Staff Turnover, Lower CO₂ Emissions, Less Waste

The main steps in development in 2013 include above all SEKEM's narrower "ecological footprint". The direct CO₂ emissions of the SEKEM

companies could be reduced from 7283 tCO₂-e to 5399 tCO₂-e, that is a relative figure of 21.2kg of CO₂-e per 1000 EGP in sales value. In addition, the SEKEM companies have been able to reduce the amount of accumulated waste from 2.12kg of waste per 1000 EGP in sales equivalents in the preceding year to just 1.13kg per 1000 EGP in 2013.

SEKEM has also achieved to reduce its staff turnover ratio from just under 20% to just 5% in the past year. Given the political and socio-economical circumstances in the country, this reflects a remarkable achievement.

In addition, SEKEM's Development Foundation was able to disburse another 105 micro-loans which made it possible for people in the villages around SEKEM to buy equipment and produce to set up their own shops or small businesses.

Thomas Abouleish

! More information:
www.SEKEM.com/sustainability.html

SEKEM

Masthead:
The editors of SEKEM Insight wish to thank all contributors to this issue.

Editor:
Bijan Kafi

Contact:
SEKEM-Insight
c/o SEKEM Holding
P.O.Box 2834, El Horreya,
Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt
insight@SEKEM.com

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1, 2: IFOAM, 4: SEKEM

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