

SEKEM Insight

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

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Biodynamic agriculture is celebrating its 90th anniversary. Around a third of that time SEKEM has been actively supporting its growth and development. It even co-founded the Demeter movement in one part of the world, in Egypt.

Therefore, both SEKEM and the Demeter movement have reasons to be happy. Both have come a long way during this time. Today, „organic corners“ are well-established in even the largest Egyptian supermarkets in just the same way as in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. The profound societal changes this development required, however, may be easily overlooked: the question of how we produce our food has become a much more urgent one in Egypt, too.

Demeter and SEKEM have reasons to optimistically look into the future. Organic can and should become the standard in all countries. The challenges that may lie along the path of the organic food movement will be the topic of a lecture by Helmy Abouleish at BioFach 2014. More on this on page 4 of this issue.

Your Team of Editors

Find SEKEM also on the Internet at:



Demeter

90 Years of Bio-Dynamics

Heliopolis Uni

Students Produce Video

Cooperation

SEKEM and EL PUENTE

SEKEM and Demeter Celebrate 90 Years of Bio-Dynamic Agriculture

Demeter celebrates its anniversary and with it the success story of almost one century of bio-dynamic agriculture. SEKEM joins the celebrations by looking back at 37 years of Demeter cultivation in Egypt.



The positive impact of organic and bio-dynamic farming on our nature and the worlds of animal and human life have become reality on the fields of the SEKEM farm, which have been mere desert sand before SEKEM's farmers arrived.

The Demeter movement is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year - and SEKEM joins the festivities. Under the name of "Demeter", the umbrella brand for bio-dynamically farmed products, both organisations have been marketing healthy foodstuffs for many decades. At the same time, the SEKEM Initiative, being the leading Egyptian Demeter producer and original bio-dynamic pioneer in North Africa, has double reason to celebrate: SEKEM is also celebrating

its own 37 years of existence – and pioneering work in the promotion of products that are healthy for mankind and its natural environment.

A Success Story – Around the World

About 1,400 farmers and 330 processors in Germany alone today follow the regulations of bio-dynamic farming. As a global organic brand Demeter is represented on all five continents. From Argentina to Hungary in



Careful animal husbandry is an integral part of each Demeter farm.

around 50 countries, 8,000 farmers cultivate nearly 160,000 hectares according to farming practices certified by the international Demeter association. SEKEM, too, share its view: bio-dynamic agriculture is a future-oriented way of producing natural, healthy products from the earth and the practice has answers to many of the key questions that concern societies today: less pollution, healthy food, waste reduction, cleaner natural environments, positive effects on climate change, but also new economic and social perspectives.

SEKEM, based in Egypt, was not only a pioneer in organic food production, but also bio-dynamic farming. With two additional institutions founded in 1994, SEKEM quickly proceeded to spread the vision behind its initiative. The EBDA (Egyptian Association for Bio-dynamic Farming) and the COAE (Centre for Organic Agriculture) both help to promote SEKEM's ideals for a cleaner and healthier production of agricultural products. Both are today certifying additional Demeter and organic producers in the country. The EBDA also supports the Demeter farmers and those who wish to convert through consultancy services, training, and applied research. "For us, bio-dynamic agriculture stands for integration: concern for sustainable soil fertility, species-appropriate animal husbandry, care of animal welfare, protection of our seeds, careful processing practices using only qualified additives", says Helmy Abouleish, Managing Director of the SEKEM Group of companies.

Animals an Integral Part of Farm Life

The bio-dynamic principle to consider the farm as a potentially closed,

locally adapted organism, has become the foundation of organic farming. This overarching ideal also guides the development of the SEKEM Farm: only so many animals are kept, that can be fed using the food produced on the farm. In turn, the animals provide the manure, which – in the form of compost – feeds cultivated plants without the risk of over-fertilization. This principle goes far beyond the simple omission of chemical fertilizers and other artificial pesticides. It also ensures that less waste is left behind.

Good for the Climate

The assertion that organic farms are more harmful to the climate is above all a matter of perspective. "Especially dairy farms are particularly climate-friendly because they build up humus in the soil that accumulates about 200 kg of carbon per hectare per year", explains Alexander Gerber from the board of Demeter in Germany. SEKEM harnesses this capacity of an integrated farm organism and, with the help of its own animals, produces around 100,000 tons of compost a year. Manure is a key ingredient in organic compost. That compost is spread on its own fields and is sold to other farms.

New Global Economies

For SEKEM, bio-dynamic agriculture is not only a question of cultivation. It is also about the development of new models of interaction, that is new economic practices that take effect across the entire value chain from growers on the farm to processors, traders and consumers. One of SEKEM's key instrument for achieving this is the IAP, a sort of "round table" of partners in the global North and South taking part in its trade relations. Through negotiation and common projects, they all work together to help heal the earth and produce healthy food which serves the development of the body, soul, and spirit alike. This value chain is being transformed into a "chain of appreciation", states the German Demeter Association. However, this is a long-term goal that will require many

more participants engaging in lasting dialogue and cooperation.

Seeds for the Future

The basic principle of the individual farm organism is also a fundamental principle in the fight against global monopolization of the agricultural industry with sometimes dubious techniques. To further this goal, SEKEM is also engaged in the production of seedlings to help conventional farms to use healthier plants that require less fertilizer and pesticides. This way, the seedlings also ensure that the use of chemicals is reduced. The production is supported by another subsidiary of SEKEM which breeds beneficial insects for biological control. These two elements are ingredients that allow a reduction of the use of chemical agents that is as comprehensive as possible. The foundations for SEKEM's expertise have been set in the



SEKEM's company „El Mizan“ produces organic seedlings for healthier plants.

90s when it was able to demonstrate by means of pheromone traps that a chemical-free cotton production is possible.

SEKEM congratulates the Demeter movement on its 90th Anniversary and thanks all international partners and customers for their cooperation and assistance during the past 37 years.

Bijan Kafi with material from Demeter e.V.



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

! More information:
<http://www.demeter.net>

Impressions from SEKEM



Since its opening in winter of 2012, the Heliopolis University has enjoyed steadily rising student numbers. The fact that the 350 male and female students that are presently studying at the new institution SEKEM enjoy doing so became clear early on. Now they have even produced a video on their own that reflects on some of the key events from the first year of study and their personal impressions.

The 12-minute clip tells of the shared fun of sporting events, artistic actions, eurythmy exercises, discussions, outdoor activities such as the planting of trees, as well as the importance of sustainable development for their learning and personal career plans. The video also reports on competitions for research on practical solutions to everyday problems in Egypt such as the environmental impact of the large-scale burning of rice straw.

The video is an expression of the enthusiasm of the students for their university and can be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Heliopolis University: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDSGsRvArJM>



SEKEM, EL PUENTE Together for World Day of Prayer 2014

Each year, the German Fair Trade Organisation EL PUENTE prepares a special portfolio of products for World Day of Prayer. This year, Egypt is the country at the center of interest at the world-acclaimed ecumenical day of worship on 7 March. Thus, EL PUENTE has chosen to partner with SEKEM to put together a selected range of fairly traded goods on the occasion of the day.

This year's World Day will be organised following the theme "Water Streams in the Desert" and will reflect on the events of societal turmoil of the past years in Egypt. It aims to send a sign of solidarity to a people whose country is in upheaval. "We want to draw attention to people in trouble who intend to stand up for their rights, for freedom and justice in their country", says Martin Moritz, managing director of the EL PUENTE GmbH.

SEKEM provides the bulk of the items: From earrings made from nummulites, lovingly crafted children's toys made from organic cotton, to tea, dates and sesame bars. "By providing these articles SEKEM can also increase the awareness of its brand in Germany and approach many new customers. The 800 world shops where they will be sold have been known for high-quality Fairtrade goods for 30 years and have a loyal customer base", says Andreas Kalbhenn, who runs the project for SEKEM.

World shops and church groups order the products and regularly organise events around the World Day of Prayer making use of them. Demand has been very high since early January already.

Source: EL PUENTE

! More information:
<http://www.el-puente.de>
<http://www.weltladen.de>

Dr. Ibrahim Receives „Global Thinkers Award“ in Athens

The international organization Global Thinkers Forum recently conducted its annual awards ceremony in Athens, Greece. The event was organized in collaboration with the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

On the occasion of the event, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish received the „Global Thinkers Award for Excellence in Positive Change“. A video of the event including a speech by Dr. Abouleish is available via the link provided below.



Mr Giorgos Kaminis (Mayor of Athens), His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser (The High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations), Ismail Abou Zeid (UN Ambassador) as well as entrepreneurs, investors, ambassadors and other dignitaries attended the event. The gala ended with a concert by the composer Dirk Brossé who had received the „Award for Excellence in Cultural Creativity“ at the same event.

Discussions on issues of leadership, successful collaboration, and cultural understanding in a rapidly changing world as well as entrepreneurship and the future of the Greek economies were all part of the extensive forums that formed a section of the event. It was the first time that the prize was given in Athens. The mission of the Global Thinkers Forum is to share and promote the importance of human creativity, originality, and foresighted thinking in solving contemporary problems.

Source: Global Thinkers Forum

! More information:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krXk2V97AVE>


SEKEM, Helmy Abouleish Again at BioFach 2014

Nuremberg, Germany, again seems the world's leading organic food fair this year. From the 12.-15. February the "Who-is-Who" of the global organic industries will meet on the Nuremberg fair grounds at BioFach 2014.

Naturally, SEKEM will be back, too, with an area at the joint booth of the Demeter association. Helmy Abouleish will also visit BioFach himself and give a talk on "Organic 3.0 – in the mainstream trap?". His contribution will focus on the problems the organic movement will face on the way to "100%" – becoming the standard of food production. "What are the risks which threaten the movement? What are its most crucial traps? Helmy will talk about alternative strategies as well as different approaches to environmental (rural) economies. He will then join his co-speakers for a plenary discussion: Prof. Dr. agr. hab. Gerold Rahmann (Johann Heinrich von Thünen- Institute for Organic Farming), Hilde Fauland-Weckmann (Märkisches Landbrot GmbH), and Prof. Dr. Pablo Titonelli (Wageningen University & Research Centre) will all be there for a lively debate. Fair and Congress are open only to trade visitors.

Source: BioFach

! More information:
<http://bit.ly/Kx8Y3O>



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

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