# Dear Reader,

all the organic products, which SEKEM produces for both the local, European and world-wide markets, for a long time already cannot be produced anymore on the mother farm near Belbeis.

More than 250 partner farms - from small-scale peasants to larger cooperative - co-operate with SEKEM and supply the quality products, which customers all over the world have come to expect. In order to guarantee this quality, various advanced measures are necessary for which SEKEM supports its partner farmers. Among them the necessity to guarantee pollutant-free raw materials or the observance of demeter regulations, for example.

No simple venture, if small biofarms are surrounded by substantially larger conventional plantations, for instance. This includes, for instance, the need to comply with strict regulations for demeter or other international or European certification agencies.

SEKEM now undertook a further, technologically even more advanced step towards the improvement of the product quality. Faithful to the ideals of the initiative, modern technologies are proactively used for the benefit of the well-being of the farmers as well as the consumers.

We report in this issue on how SEKEM introduced such systems now with the help of the IT company Salis IT services.

**Your Editorial Team** 

## Agriculture

### New farmers in the SEKEM Network

## Social

# 3. Summer School for SEKEM pupils

### Markets

New Products for Egyptian customers

# New Cotton Farms Enter SEKEM's Bio-Network

Network of demeter-certified farmers continues to grow in Egypt



A cotton-plant flower on one of the fields of SEKEM's partner farms

The propagation of the biological-dynamic agriculture in Egypt is one of the most important goals of the SEKEM initiative. It is thus a core aim to integrate more farmers into the network and share with more bio-dynamic practitioners the advanced training activities that the EBDA (Egyptian biodynamic Association) offers.

Participating farmers receive longterm cultivation contracts with the SEKEM companies and make an important contribution to environmental protection and the

development of a new understanding of agriculture in Egypt. At the same time, this offers a good way for SEKEM to expand the area particularly of its cotton production as more and more retailers on the the international markets begin to ask for premium quality organic cotton from Egypt. Just recently, SEKEM agreed on a long-term partnership for the cultivation and the marketing of organic cotton for Swiss customers with Paul Reinhart AG and Herrmann Buehler AG, two companies from Switzerland. Therefore 375 Feddan (approxima-

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tely 180ha) could be converted to organic cotton cultivation during the season 2007. The produced quantities will be sold in addition to the already existing cotton quantities.

For global customers the peculiar qualities of Egyptian Extra Long Staple cotton are particularly interesting because very fine, high-quality yarns can be produced from them, while the other varieties of Egyptian cotton are also perfect for production of baby textiles at Naturetex because they allow for extremely soft jersey qualities. The different cotton varieties are cultivated in different regions in Egypt, so that within the framework of the new agreement, also farmers from other areas will be enabled to cultivate their cotton for SEKEM.

This year the EBDA has further strengthen ed its training activities with the beginning of the new cultivation season in April. Each week new sessions on advanced issues in organic agriculture are now taking place. All farmers are invited to participate in these sessions that cover the most prevalent issues such as the practical conversion to organic cultiva-

# Deutsche Umwelthilfe

tion, administrative requirements for certification or special methods of combatting harmful pests or what can be done to improve the fertility of the poor soils of Egypt.

The training offers are always gladly accepted and extended with specialists working in the fields with the farmers. The training could be extended through the support of the fund "Hand in Hand" by the German company Rapunzel. It is being managed by the German Umwelthilfe agency. Rapunzel supports projects especially in the countries of origin with the sales of "Hand in Hand"-products.

For the coming years further extension of the arable surface is foreseen in order to be able to achieve the ambitious sales goals of Naturetex and the customers.

Christina Boecker



Only recently SEKEM presented new additions to its assortment for the local markets: variants of honey in different serving sizes, tomato ketchup and numerous sorts pasta. Honey is much loved in Egypt and held in high regard for its health-promoting characteristics. Already at the beginning of the year the honey assortment was supplemented by ISIS with new packing sizes: the most popular sorts, i.e. clover and black cumin honeys are now also available in 750g glasses.

In March two new varieties were added: Egyptian mountain honey and the spicy mountain honey from Yemen. Both products are slightly more expensive than

their competitors and sell therefore sell particularly well through
pharmacies while the family sizes
of clover and black cumin honeys
receive most inquiries through
supermarkets. The products are
packed in SEKEM's own facilities. The
sales figures on the honeys are already
available and show strong sales for the
new products as expected.

Two other new products complement SEKEM's product portfolio since June: tomato ketchup and various varieties of pasta. The ketchup is produced in 330g-bottles and manufactured and packed in co-operation with sub-contractors. It is again slightly more expensive than competitors due to its higher quality. Made of bio-dynamic tomatoes the sweet and aromatic ketchup is the ideal addition of the new assortment of pasta ISIS added in spring.

The marketing team around Tarek Nabil is eagerly waiting to see the sales figures particularly for the ketchup. For such a product, the relation of customers to existing brands is traditionally very strong. Ketchup is not selected on the basis of its positive health benefits and the success of this product on the markets is therefore keenly observed.

The new ketchup perfectly fits the newly introduced portfolio of pasta products that are now being offered in three varieties. They are presently being marketed unter the names "Penne", "Big Rings" and "Fusili". They are packaged in 450g-cartons by sub-contractors.

Christina Boecker



# Third Summer School for the Children of SEKEM's School

Summer School Project Launched for the Third Time

This summer the summer school for the pupils of the SEKEM School took place for the third time. Toward the end of the annual final examinations, the school years ends for the children by the end of May. After the final three exam days the lower classes are ready for the exceptional three-month holidays.

It is hot, often around 40°, throughout the night and the day, and most children spend their time without any structured everyday life. Therefore the teachers of the SEKEM School each year decide to offer some interesting and above all varied diversion to the children.

Each morning, the children again return to the SEKEM School and form groups to experience together games, the arts and many other activites that normally do not find appropriate room throughout the regular school year. This year the first class for instance again constructed a magnificent Egyptian model village including a mosque and its own pigeon houses, fields and water-bearing irrigation system. There even were villagers in front of the houses and working with animals on the fields.

The fourth class created model landscapes and maps and could thereby again lend shape and form to what was leanred during the school year. Among other things a sun dial was also built, as was a climbing tree, manually produced paper and, by the other classes, textile collages, pictures and objects from natural mate-



Children of the SEKEM School playing



The children of the SEKEM School can participate in the Summer School for the third time

rials such as felt balls. An exhibition concluded the school.

Parents, foreign guests and the Chamomile Children were invited to experience the plays of the first and second classes and the hand doll performance of the third graders. The third grade had not only sewn and decorated the dresses of their dolls with the help of the handicraft teachers. They had also with the assistance of their chief instructor constructed props and other items for the performance out of Papiermaché.

The middle classes had been particularly occupied with ensuring the physical well-being of all guests - and important issue during the Egyptian summer heat - and had arranged for coffee, sandwiches and many others kinds of Egyptian dishes in the Caféteria. They skillfully served "their" guests and cared for an exceptionally pleasant atmosphere.

As every year, the Summer School also makes room for specialised, individual projects. Eight pupils of the ninth grade decided to embark on a social project to tackle the renovation of two class-

rooms in a primary school of one of the neighboring villages. They painted the benches, cleaned the tables and provided the windows with new protection against mosquitos. Thus the two first classes will be received in this school in the new school year in an appropriate way. Subsequently, the pupils with two teachers and a teacher drove on the Sinai peninsula, where they admitred the sunrise on the summit of Mount Moses and enjoyed a lesson in Egyptian and world history during a visit to the St. Cathrine monastery.

Naturally the singular opportunity was also used to take a bath in the Red Sea. Thus play and sport were successfully combined during the summer school whose aim, above all else, it is first and foremost to create meaningful leisure activities and social experiences for the children. This year there was yet another characteristic to the event. Each Monday the sporting grounds were opened for the children of the surrounding villages and everyone enjoyed the games together with their teachers. All guests received free beverages.

Yvonne Floride

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# **Better Products Through New Technologies**

Salis IT Optimizes Traceability of SEKEM's Products



Modern technologies for better product quality

As global trade barriers are falling and global sourcing of fresh food is continuously increasing, European retailers are asking for higher measures of food safety. Food traceability has become a new buzz word in this industry. Today, European retailers and importers want to know the whole history of a product's life cycle starting from the initial input of the seed in the ground and the application of any inputs such as compost or fertilizers on the field level, til the final export of the product. Every step needs to be documented in details. This information then needs to be accessible at any time by the importer or retailer in Europe.

With the help of Salis IT Services SEKEM has recently implemented an electronic traceability system to electronically trace its organic fresh food products from the importer in Europe back to the field where it was planted and grown in Egypt. All main crops that are exported



Salis IT presents the new system to Dr. Abouleish

by SEKEM are now labelled with a barcode. This barcode contains all relevant information about the history of the product and can be automatically read with a special computer software.

This traceability project was supported by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) which launched a natio-

nal programme to support all Egyptian fresh food exporting companies to implement electronic traceablity systems.

As food traceability is becoming a more and more frequently discussed topic on the agenda of international trade organizations and national policy makers, the UNIDO Director Genreal Dr. Kandeh Yumkella from UNIDO's headquarter in Vienna has decided to visit Egypt in order to see a practical example of an electronic traceability system. The UNIDO elected SEKEM as the model which was to be presented to Dr. Kandeh Yumkella.

On the 10th of June Mr. Dr. Kandeh Yumkella visited the SEKEM farm in order to attend a live presentation of the electronic traceability system. Besides the live presentation, Mr. Yumkella was also invited to attend a farm tour, a classical concert conducted by the SEKEM Orchestra as well as a presentation about SEKEM's University project and SEKEM's renewable energy projects.

Mr. Yumkella's stay was planned to be very short, however due to his great interest in SEKEM's progressive projects in the fields of university education and renewable energy, Mr. Yumkella extended his stay at SEKEM and left in the evening inspired by new ideas and new contacts to connect SEKEM with other inspiring projects around the world to create new synergies that will help to improve the state of the world.

Inas Nureldin

# **Impressions from SEKEM**



The Egyptian metropolis is a key market for SEKEM

Cairo, the 20-million-people metropolis at the Nile, is the main market for of SEKEM's products. Nevertheless a quarter of the entire Egyptian population lives in the legendary and unbelievably vast city. Cairo is increasingly becoming a market sensitive to organic products, too. SEKEM sells its own products here through the SEKEM Nature's Best Shops, selected supermarket chains, independent food stores as well as pharmacies in case of selected products like the herb teas or some honeys for example. SEKEM supplies some products only to the largest supermarkets. They are often frequented on the one hand by customers open for organic products, and on the other hand often only they can guarantee appropriate selling conditions.



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