

SEKEM Insight

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

Editorial

Dear Readers,

in our series „How it all began“ we occasionally look back to the beginnings of SEKEM. In past issues, the medical doctor Hans Werner has already recalled on his work at the initiative and his contribution to its flourishing during its very early days.

Almost everyone who has already visited SEKEM has heard the story of “40 cows” which had to be shipped from Europe to Egypt to lay the foundation for the breeding of healthy livestock as prescribed by Demeter standards.

In this issue, Angela Hofmann, who is in charge of biodynamic farming at SEKEM, recalls the “famous” (and infamous) journey of the 39 (pregnant) cows and one bull to the hot Egyptian desert – and the enormous commitment of Frieda Gögler, who had supported their acquisition and organised the trip.

In addition, we also report on a Dutch television programme featuring SEKEM and a new German city book series also devoted to Cairo that contains several contributions by long-time SEKEM friends.

Your Team of Editors

Find SEKEM also on the Internet at:



How It All Began

40 Cattle on a Trip to SEKEM

Green Gold

Dutch Film Cites SEKEM Example

ISIS

Redesigned website and technology

How It All Began: 40 Cattle On a Trip to SEKEM

In 1981 the foundation stone for SEKEM's livestock breeding was laid by transferring 40 cattle of German origin to Egypt. Angela Hofmann, who accompanied the trip, recalls the circumstances.



SEKEM still raises livestock in accordance with the principles of Demeter agriculture. Today, however, next to the original “Braunvieh”, there are also plenty of black-and-white cattle populating the stables.

On 12 November 2014 Frieda Gögler, one of SEKEM's oldest long-time supporters who has actively accompanied the development of the initiative almost from the beginning, would have been 100 years old. SEKEM Insight would like to mark the occasion of her birthday by remembering her support to biodynamic agriculture at SEKEM specifically and in Egypt in general.

Frieda Gögler's commitment to the

development of the holistic farming method at SEKEM began in 1981 when several members of a small group of German travellers to Egypt was made aware of SEKEM through a chance encounter while visiting the temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt. A few days later already, the group visited the farm just 50 kilometres outside of Cairo. Frieda Gögler was a member of that group and a horticulture teacher from Pforzheim, Germany. She immediately made

the decision to pledge her support to SEKEM.

First, Frieda consulted with Georg Merckens, an agricultural specialist who then proceeded to introduce Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish himself to biodynamic agriculture. Georg Merckens had been working for the international promotion of Demeter agriculture for many years and would continue to support SEKEM for many years to come.

Soil Fertility Through Livestock Breeding

Restoring fertility to the desert soil at SEKEM was paramount. To do so in an ecologically sound way, large-scale production of high-quality compost turned out to be indispensable. Compost production at the scale envisioned, however, required large quantities of cow dung that was hardly available in Egypt. Moreover, neither the suitability of the milk nor the meat produced by cattle already locally available seemed satisfactory. Thus, the decision was made to import brown cattle from Germany, a robust species suitable for the production of substantial quantities of both.

Brown cattle of this kind are commonly found in European mountain regions and in many places even in the lowlands. This variety is not as overbred as other breeds. Therefore Frieda Gögler found it particularly suitable for the harsh desert climate. It was determined that 40 pregnant cows including a breeding bull were needed for a start.

But where should the money for this purchase come from? Frieda Gögler approached and convinced the German GLS Bank to support SEKEM through a loan that allowed the purchase and the transport of the animals. Later this loan was even converted into a donation.

In October 1981 I myself visited SEKEM for the first time for a month together with Frieda Gögler. We prepared everything for the arrival of the animals: clover had to be grown as animal feed, stables had to be constructed and a group of farmers had to be trained.

So far, they only had experience in feeding and milking Egyptian cows. But the biggest challenge was the production of the compost. Back in the day, everything had to be done by hand.

Back in Germany I travelled to the national Brown Cattle Association in Biberach together with Frieda Gögler. With a representative of the Association, we visited many farmers who had offered cattle for sale. We were even able to procure some from Demeter farms. Thus we began putting together our herd. On 13 February 1982 we were ready.

A Difficult Journey

First, the cattle had to be transported to Genoa by train and then loaded onto a transport ship in appropriate boxes. In Alexandria, on Egyptian soil for the first time, they were loaded onto 4 trucks that had to drive through the desert in a convoy during nighttime.

At midnight, the convoy of humans and animals eventually reached the farm. We brought the cattle to our lovingly furnished stables – but they were so tired from the long journey, that they wanted to just lay down and sleep. Even the bull Altan was as timid as a lamb. I could easily chain him to the railings provided, an action that even earned me the respect from some Egyptian peasants.

When all of the 40 animals were eventually sleeping peacefully, a wonderful mood set in. I went to the place where I stayed in and looked back to the stables – when at that moment a shooting star came down right above it. Today, there are still brown cattle at SEKEM, the descendants of those first 40 animals. They are accompanied but additional black and white Friesian cows and hybrids. We think back to Frieda Gögler with gratitude and respect. She has greatly supported SEKEM's work through her deep understanding of organic agriculture, love, and energy.

Angela Hofmann

SEKEM You can visit SEKEM yourself:
WWW.SEKEM-REISEN.DE

SEKEM's "Green Gold" on Dutch TV

A few weeks ago the critical Dutch television station VPRO aired the documentary „Groen Goud 2“ (Green Gold 2) that intends to draw attention to initiatives of land reclamation and reforestation by organic means in India, Spain and, of course, in Egypt. The second part of the film now shown also includes SEKEM. A previous part showed the draining of the Huangtu plateau in China. Both parts can still be viewed on the internet (in Dutch).

With his own hands Jadav Payeng has reforested 300 ha of eroded soil in Assam, India. Following his work, elephants, tigers, deer, rhinos and many birds returned to the formerly deserted area. In Spain, large areas have dried up as a result of the faulty implementation of agricultural subsidies, unwise land and water use, and large-scale erosion. Agro-engineer Pedro Alonso Fernandez initially began with a small land reclamation project in Ayoo de Vidriales and was then able to show that organic methods can indeed recover eroded and saline soils that seemed beyond repair.

This kind of land reclamation on arid ground was presented comprehensively using the example of the SEKEM initiative. The TV report shows field work, harvesting, social work and also features extensive interviews with Dr. Ibrahim and Helmy Abouleish. "A more convincing confirmation that land reclamation and social innovation can and do go hand in hand can hardly be found", explains the documentary programme.

Both films are accompanied by live discussions on the subjects of land reclamation and reforestation by organic means in a number of Dutch cities.

Hendrik Jan Bakker
SEKEM Friends Holland

! More information:
• <http://tegenlicht.vpro.nl/afleveringen/2011-2012/Groen-Goud.html>

Impressions from SEKEM



In 2008 the small publishing house “edition esefeld & traub” has begun with the publication of a series of books focusing on the world’s major cities deal by publishing texts and pictures written and produced by major commentators and artists. Beyond mere size and population density, what makes a city a city? The city books by esefeld & traub are looking for answers. The latest publication in the series “MYCAI - My Cairo” is out now. The volume contains numerous essays on the city and its people, including contributions by Hans Werner and Bruno Sandkühler, two long-time supporters of SEKEM. Photographs by Barbara Armbruster and Hala Elkoussy form the foundation of the book, tracking the unknown sides of the megalopolis: exotic Cairo in Muslim neighbourhoods, the modern centre at Tahrir square, to the suffocating climate of gigantic satellite towns encircling the city itself. Recounting of daily life on the streets of Cairo is as important as the observation of curious scenes. Orders: edition esefeld & traub, Humboldtstr. 6, 70178 Stuttgart, <http://www.edition-et.de/>.



Stuttgarter
Kairo Tage
13. - 15.11.2014

Städtepartnerschaft



Kairo



Stuttgart

Freitag, 14. November 2014

9:30 - 15:30 Uhr

Rathaus Stuttgart, Großer Saal, 3. OG

Arab Business Center

Eintritt: frei

- 9:30** Eröffnung und Begrüßung - Fritz Kuhn,
Oberbürgermeister der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart
- 9:40** S.E. Dr. Mohamed Abdelhamid Ibrahim Higazy
Botschafter der Republik Ägypten
- 9:50** Osama Basha - Wirtschaftsattaché
Botschaft der Republik Ägypten
- 10:15** Max Czipf - IG Metall Esslingen
Ausbildungswerkstatt Luxor
- 11:00** Kaffeepause
- 11:30** Helmy Abouleish - CEO Sekem Holding
Brückenbauer zwischen Orient und Okzident
- 12:00** Axel Frerks - Leiter Marketing und Vertrieb Davert GmbH
Süße Snacks aus den Basisrohstoffen Ägyptens
- 12:30** Dipl.-Ing. Ibrahim Samak - Engcotec
alternative Energien und Photovoltaik
- 13:00** Mittagessen - Ratskeller
- 14:00** Dr. Stephan Jäger - Amereller Rechtsanwälte
- 14:30** Erfahrungsbericht
- 15:00** Diskussionsrunde
- 15:30** Ende der Veranstaltung

Moderation: Arab Business Center - Dipl.-Ing. Tarak Mtibaa



Podiumsdiskussion: Art and Public

Freitag, 14. November 2014

Beginn 16:00 Uhr

Künstlerhaus Stuttgart,

Reuchlinstr. 4b - 70178 Stuttgart

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

Eintritt: frei

Über die Bedeutung von unabhängigen Kunstorten und künstlerischen Interventionen für die Entwicklung einer Stadt: Welche Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Beteiligung sehen Kulturschaffende an urbanen Entwicklungsprozessen? Anhand von Praxisbeispielen in Kairo und Stuttgart werden Chancen und Risiken, Erwartungshaltungen und Perspektiven künstlerischen Handelns im Stadtraum diskutiert.

Grußwort:

Dr. Susanne Eisenmann, Bürgermeisterin für Kultur, Bildung und Sport der LHS Stuttgart

Begrüßung:

Elke aus dem Moore, ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

Einführung:

Didem Yazici, Adnan Yildiz, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart

Moderation: Demian Bern

Podium:

Sarah Rifky, Projektraum „Beirut“, Kairo

Paula Kohlmann, Projektraum Lotte, Stuttgart

Laura Bernhardt, Calwer Passage, Stuttgart

Nora Al-Badri und Jan Nikolai Nelles, Berlin,

(Street-Art-Projekt „World Wide Wheat“, Kairo)



Lesung mit Wafaa El-Saddik

Freitag, 14. November 2014

Beginn 19:00 Uhr

Bibliothek am Mailänder Platz 1 - 70173 Stuttgart

SEKEM-Freunde Deutschland e.V.

Anschließend Gespräch und Erfrischungen

Eintritt: frei

Dr. Wafaa El-Saddik, ehemalige Generaldirektorin des Ägyptischen Museums in Kairo, liest aus ihrem Buch „Es gibt nur den geraden Weg“. Ihre außergewöhnliche Biografie zeichnet zugleich ein Bild des tief greifenden Wandels, den Ägypten zurzeit durchlebt.

Im Anschluss an die Lesung wird es Gelegenheit zum Gespräch geben.

Moderation: Dr. Martin Kilgus, Robert Bosch Stiftung

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Nora Al-Badri und Jan Nikolai Nelles, Berlin,

(Street-Art-Projekt „World Wide Wheat“, Kairo)

Hochschulkooperation

Samstag, 15. November 2014

10:00 - 16:00 Uhr

Universität Stuttgart, Senatssaal

Keplerstr. 7 - 70174 Stuttgart

SEKEM-Freunde Deutschland e.V.

Eintritt: frei

Akademische und Kommunale Zusammenarbeit

Diese Veranstaltung findet in englischer Sprache mit Übersetzung ins Deutsche statt

Im Mittelpunkt der Darstellung werden herausragende Projekte der deutsch-ägyptischen Zusammenarbeit stehen, die sich auf Nachhaltigkeit beziehen. Der Blick wird sich insbesondere auf das Potential für künftige Zusammenarbeit richten, aber auch Studien und Forschungsmöglichkeiten für Studenten sowie Universitätspartnerschaften ansprechen.

„ISIS“-Website Receives Face Lift



Since 2010, customers are able to find background information on all products from ISIS available in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries on a central page. The site features extensive in-depth information on the entire range of products, its ingredients and preparation methods. The site has now been significantly reworked.

This comprehensive revision of the entire Internet presence, which is available both in English and Arabic, began in the summer of 2014. ISIS products are among the most popular organically produced foodstuffs in Egypt and other countries in the region. It was the goal of the developers to create a site that was generally more appealing and much more visually compelling. By bringing all the products to the foreground through large, colourful pictures and fundamentally rethinking the navigation, the site is now more customer-friendly. It is also now based on the corporate visual identity of the SEKEM initiative itself and harmonises well with all other eight SEKEM companies.

Thomas Abouleish

Event with SEKEM in Basel, Switzerland

On 14 November 2014 SEKEM's contact for the press and public relations in Europe, Bijan Kafi, will take part in the podium discussion „FairTrade: Is fair fair enough?“ for the initiative. The event will take place in Basel (Switzerland) at the unternehmen mitte, Gerbergasse 30, a central location in a downtown quarter of the city. Bijan Kafi speak with other key players from the international FairTrade field about questions such as: Is FairTrade working? Is it enough? How can we make it even better? The event, which also offers workshops, will be organised by Oikocredit. Interested participants are welcome without registration.

! More information:
• <http://www.isisorganic.com>



Ist fair fair genug?

Fairanstaltung

Sechs herausfordernde Thesen für eine Branche mit Verantwortung

14. November 2014
Unternehmen Mitte, Gerbergasse 30, 4001 Basel

18.30 h Podium mit AkteurenInnen des Fairen Handels
Moderation: Andreas Zumach, Journalist und Uno-Korrespondent

20.15 h Denkwerkstatt

Was danach? Faire Bohnen und Kräuter

Mit:
Bijan Kafi, Öffentlichkeitsarbeit SEKEM
Marie-Claire Pellerin, Geschäftsleiterin clario fair trade
Martina Straub, Vorstandsmitglied Oikocredit International
Fabian Waldmeier, Leiter Internationale Zusammenarbeit und Mitglied der Geschäftsleitung Max Havelaar Schweiz





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

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