

SEKEM Insight

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

Editorial

Dear Readers,

many times, SEKEM Insight has reported on how SEKEM seeks to strengthen the role of women in life and work at the initiative. Due to the nature of the diverse SEKEM ventures, the operational context of the SEKEM companies offers particularly good opportunities to strengthen their social position, especially that of young working women in the context of their own work lives.

In recent years, already SEKEM's company Naturetex has already started with a gender-sensitive investigation of their own value chains. It was carried out in cooperation with a global development organisation. This project is being continued this year and SEKEM Insight will report on its progress in the coming issues under various thematic priorities.

In this issue we report on an equally relevant addition to the SEKEM kindergarten, a facility much liked among working mothers. The new nursery for babies and toddlers is a particularly useful supplement for mothers who wish to keep working during motherhood.

Your Team of Editors

Find SEKEM also on the Internet at:



Kindergarten

SEKEM Kindergarten
Receives Addition

Moringa

New SEKEM
Product in Egypt

Helmy Abouleish

Current Speeches
Now Available Online

SEKEM Sets up Nursery for Babies and Toddlers

The SEKEM kindergarten has long been a key component of the initiative's offers in early childhood education. Its services are also aimed at working mothers. Now they are supplemented by a new group for the smallest.



The services of the long-standing SEKEM kindergarten have now been expanded: a group available to very young children has been created to be able to support more working mothers employed on the original SEKEM farms.

Many years ago, SEKEM established in SEKEM kindergarten as a nursery that was also to provide services to young mothers working in SEKEM's factories. Over the years, the small facility has grown and become indispensable to many workers on the original SEKEM farm. Late last year, the much-liked service has received an addition. A new group specifically dedicated to caring for babies and toddlers has been inaugurated. The new offering

is again aimed at young mothers working in the factories on the farm. Due to its central and easily accessible location, working mothers can now bring their children with them even if they are still very young. They may be brought in at 8 in the morning right before the regular work day starts. Mothers will then pick them up again by 5 in the evening when they leave the premises.

Its location in close proximity to the various companies on the SEKEM farm



As soon as possible and practical, the SEKEM kindergarten employs elements of Waldorf education.

allows nursing mothers to take care of their children even during working hours. “We originally launched the nursery service focusing on babies and toddlers from 3 months of age on already a while ago. Meanwhile, the first children are 1-2 years old and are supervised by an experienced teacher in a small group”, says Sarah Abouleish who is responsible for the group. Her own two children are also cared for here. “The caretakers learned their work during a three-year tenure at the SEKEM Kindergarten. In fact, the facility entirely instructs its own pedagogical staff. Now they can take over an entire group of toddlers on their own. Thus, we decided to expand the service.”

This new group has also grown and the next children, now 2 years old, move on. In recent months, a third group was set up. It was again equipped with all necessary facilities and was located in close proximity to the already long-standing existing special education group.

Sarah Abouleish also oversees the group of caretakers that are educated at SEKEM. The pedagogical work is supported by a long-time educator who has been shadowing the group for a while and is constantly available to answer didactic questions of all kinds. Regina Hanel and Yvonne Floride, who also advises the SEKEM School on pedagogical issues, support the work with their experience and integrate the teachers into the teacher training programme. As soon as the children can walk and talk, early childhood education at SEKEM makes use of key elements of Waldorf education as practiced in many other countries of the world.

Regina Hanel, Sarah Abouleish

SEKEM Harnesses the Power of Moringa for its First Product

Everything in nature has its purpose and most of it can be employed for the benefit of mankind in many ways. However, only some have the technical means and practical expertise to explore opportunities. The benefits of many plants to human wellbeing remain hidden and new uses continue to be discovered every day.

One of these treasures that has remained hidden far too long is Moringa. Moringa is a tree that grows in dry and hot climates and still is characterized by very rapid growth. “Moringa Oleifera” is considered one of the fastest growing plants on earth. It can attain a height of more than two meters in less than two months and more than three meters in less than ten months. In three years, a Moringa tree may attain a height of 9 to 12 feet.

The Moringa family of plants includes about 14 different varieties and bears countless names all over the world that often reference its manifold benefits to human welfare: “Tree of Life”, “Miracle Tree” etc. Moringa plantations are especially useful for cultivating poor soils or arable land than cannot be employed for growing more demanding crops. Especially as a food source, a great future could await the family of Moringa plants, since most parts are edible and they can be easily grown in most developing countries.

The Moringa tree has been experiencing a boom for some time in many fields, whether as a scientific examination subject for medical, agricultural or industrial purposes, or as food. Moreover, Moringa probably hides countless other yet undiscovered useful applications. Obviously, a chance the SEKEM team of researchers has only been waiting for.

The product developers at SEKEM were quickly getting the impression that the Moringa tree indeed reflects parts of the core idea of the SEKEM initiative

as such. Eventually, it has its home in desert areas and can be easily used as a highly versatile food source. Thus, SEKEM began examining the benefits of Moringa in studies already several months ago.

One of its first discoveries were of Moringa’s usefulness for medical purpose. The plant can be used as a dietary supplement and to counter anemia and helps in the healing of skin infections and stomach ulcers. Moringa has also been successfully used for treating



SEKEM's first Moringa product: a natural tea produced free of pesticides and ethical.

high blood pressure and for the general regeneration of the nervous system. In addition, Moringa leaves contain plenty of calcium, vitamin C, magnesium, iron and vitamin A, some in higher concentrations than would be available through comparable quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables. For many, the Moringa tree is therefore even considered a “natural supermarket”. The seeds of the tree can also be used for water purification. This is particularly useful in many remote areas of Egypt where clean water is hard to find.

Based on a series of studies conducted by SEKEM’s scientific teams, the initiative has now launched a first product, a “Moringa Tea”, as an initial step into a very new market. A research team at the Heliopolis University is also working on other products to be released in the near future.



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

Fatma Sami

Impressions from SEKEM



The 10th grade of SEKEM School recently visited the Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development as part of a school trip. A total of 23 pupils with 3 of their teachers one day made the trip from the SEKEM School on the main farm of the initiative to the university campus on the outskirts of the city of Cairo. The aim was to use the laboratories of the university in addition to the practical, “hands on” lessons the children regularly experience on the SEKEM farm to observe various physical phenomena in greater detail. The children split up in 5 study groups and examined, for example, the accelerated motion of a vehicle. Employing practical trials in the sophisticated and well-equipped laboratories of the institution, experiments were first made and then discussed in the classroom.

The groups were accompanied by 2 assistants from the university and a physics teacher from Germany, who chose to support the group during his stay in SEKEM. Yvonne Floride, pedagogical advisor to the SEKEM School, also joined in.

Comprehensive Coalition to Protect Animals

The German ecological associations Bioland, Demeter and Naturland have joined forces to introduce a common set of control procedures to ensure the highest welfare levels for animals. A special working group has been formed and has already developed common criteria for a number of different animal species relevant to Demeter farms. They are transparent, accountable and serve to strengthen animal husbandry practices that are already mostly complying to the highest standards on certified farms. The nearly 10,000 member companies are to be supported to identify any remaining weaknesses. The common control method is effective immediately and is generally communicated to all partners by the three umbrella organisations. A growing share of SEKEM products, though not animal products, comply to the global Demeter standard.

In the future, a common "animal welfare checklist" will be verified against the standard through annual inspections. If malfeasance is detected, production will be halted to allow for rapid improvement. Appropriate follow-up shall ensure swift compliance. This coordinated approach shall further ensure the high credibility organic farming already enjoys.

"Strict guidelines are an important foundation of organic animal husbandry", says Jan Plagge, president of Bioland. A common checklist of the three major ecological producers associations strengthens the sensitivity of managers, consultants and inspectors. "Animal welfare must always remain in the focus on all Demeter farms", Plagge adds.

In February 2013, the associations had founded the Working Community on Animal Welfare. An important goal was to establish a uniform standard for the description and control of animal welfare on Demeter farms. Implementation will start this year.

Source: Demeter e.V.

! More information:
• <http://www.demeter.de> (in German)

Current Speeches by Helmy Abouleish Now Available Online

In recent months, Helmy Abouleish, Managing Director of the SEKEM Group of companies, has held various lectures in multiple locations worldwide. Some are now available online as video recordings.



At the BioFach fair in Nuremberg, Helmy Abouleish spoke about the challenges faced by the organic movement faces on the way to "100% organic". He also spoke at the anniversary event "90 Years of Biodynamic Agriculture". In both speeches, he focused on the vision of the environmental movement, the importance of sustainable agriculture and the development model of the SEKEM initiative. Demeter as well as IFOAM, the International Federation for Organic Agriculture, have both adopted the „Flower of Sustainability“, SEKEM's model for comprehensive sustainability in business. Both organizations have adapted the concept to suit their own needs.

Helmy also spoke at an event organized by the Sustainable Food Trust on the topic of integrated cost accounting in agriculture. This speech is also available online.

From 5-8 March, Helmy will now travel to Bhutan and participate in the "The International Conference on Organic & Ecological Agriculture in Mountain Ecosystems".

All speeches are available for viewing online at the links provided below.

Bijan Kafi

! More information:
• <http://bit.ly/1o0rqz4> (BioFach 2014)
• <http://bit.ly/1o0rrD0> (Sust. Food Trust)

SEKEM School Inaugurates School Garden

In recent months, the SEKEM School has begun with the establishment of an innovative new school garden that will form a part of the "A Thousand Gardens in Africa" network inaugurated by the "Slow Food" movement. The design of the garden, which is currently being presented in a separate blog run by the organizers, combines permaculture principles of cultivation and biodynamic methods. It is an entirely organic project that does not use any artificial fertilizers, pesticides or other chemical additives.

The organisers of the garden principally aim to disseminate knowledge on bio-dynamic agriculture and permaculture by developing a successful example project, a "best practice approach". The garden is therefore used as a research field in order to develop workable solutions that are tailored to Egyptian requirements. The garden is run by a highly motivated team that wholeheartedly supports the principles of sustainable agriculture. They hope that their model garden will be replicated widely in Egypt and so motivate students to care for sustainable farming practices. SEKEM Insight will report more on the project in future issues.

Bijan Kafi

! More information:
• <http://bit.ly/Nreh6F> (in English)



SEKEM

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

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