


## FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa

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### FAO awards Siwa Oasis, the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Certificate and signs the first project within Strategy to develop Dates Sector in Egypt



@fao\_rne Group of photos from the event

**Siwa, 28 October 2016:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO) awarded the Dates Production Sector in Siwa Oasis, the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Certificate which makes the Oasis a globally important agricultural heritage system because it preserved the environmental and heritage ecosystem in the cultivation of Dates.

The GIAHS Certificate was announced during the Egyptian Dates Palm Festival that took place in Siwa from 27-29 October 2016 and that was organized by the Khalifa International Award for Palm Dates and Agricultural Innovation in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Egypt, (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR).

The Festival aims at developing the Palm sector and reactivating the production of Egyptian dates; getting aware of the best and rarest types of dates; in addition to identifying the problems facing the production of Dates and accordingly looking into the successful solutions; and encouraging the Dates production sector to increase the local capacities in their efforts to target international export markets.

H.E Dr. Tarek Qabeel, the Minister of Trade and Industry attended the Festival representing the the President of Egypt, in the presence of H.E. Dr. Essam Fayed, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, General Alaa Abou Zeid, Governor of Marsa Matrouh; General Mahmoud Ashmawy, Governor of the New Valley; Dr. Hussein Gadain, representative of FAO in Egypt; Mrs. Giovanna Siggili, the Regional Director of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); Mr. Goma Mubarak El-Gineiby, Ambassador of UAE in Egypt; Dr. Abdelwahab Zayed, Secretary General of Khalifa International Award for Date Palms and Agricultural Innovation; and representatives of Siwa tribes, Local Councils, community members; media; and NGOs along with Egyptian producers of Dates from all over the country; in addition to experts in the cultivation and production and preservation of Dates from pests and representative of farmers who are experts in the cultivation and production of Dates.

Commenting on the Festival, Dr. Hussein Gadain, FAO representative in Egypt said: “we are celebrating with the Palm Dates Production Sector for winning the GIAHS which was founded by FAO back in 2002 and defined as a living, evolving system of human communities in an intricate relationship with their territory, cultural or agricultural landscape or biophysical and wider social environment.

Within this context, the GIAHS booklet was handed over to the Ministers of Industry and Agriculture, and the Director General of FAO will give the GIAHS Certificate to the Minister of Agriculture as soon as it is ready.

FAO also developed a Strategy for the Development of Palm Dates in Egypt with the cooperation of MALR, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Khalifa International Award for Palm Dates and Agricultural Innovation, UNIDO, and those working in the sector of Palm Dates.

An agreement was signed to finance the first Project to implement the Strategy that was translated into an ambitious Action Plan accompanied with a specific Time Table, according to which the Date Palm sector will be developed to improve and increase the export competitiveness of Egyptian Dates which will eventually increase export rates from 38 thousand tons to 120 thousand tons annually over the next 5 years.

H.E. Dr. Tarek Qabeel, Minister of Trade and Industry awarded Dr. Hussein Gadain, the Ministry's Award as a token of appreciation for FAO's efforts in making Siwa a Globally Important Agriculture Heritage System and for its efforts in developing the Strategy for the development of the Palm Date sector in Egypt.

During the Festival, Dates Factory was re-opened with the support of the Khalif International Award for Date Palms and Agricultural Innovation.

Siwa Oasis, includes about 700 thousand Palms that leads to the production of about 84 thousand tons of dates, i.e. an average of 120 kilograms per Palm tree which is considered of high productivity that can be capitalized on economically. It is also worth noting that Egypt is considered as the biggest producer of Dates at the international and regional level in that it produces 18% from the overall international produce of Dates and 23% from the Arab World produce.

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