Egypt

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EGYPT

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GENERAL ASPECTS

Certified Organic Agriculture started in Egypt 23 years ago in a small farm (SEKEM) of about 17 ha in the eastern desert to produce medicinal herbs for the export market. Expansion of this activity was quite slow until 1988. Thereafter a rapid growth occurred in the bio-dynamic production of vegetables, fruits, cereals, and cotton, beside the medicinal herbs. This rapid growth was initiated mainly by Sekem and some other growers in Fayum and Kalubia governorates. In the fall of 1994 a new group of organic growers initiated the establishment of the Union of Growers and Exporters of Organic and Bio-dynamic Agriculture. Members of this union produce and trade mainly in organic herbs, vegetables, fruits, potatoes, onion, and some cereals. Shortly after, in the summer of 1998 a new organic project was started by Al-Hoda for agro-manufacturing due to the market demands for organic fruits and vegetables. In the meantime Ever Green Egypt, Sonak, Sultan Farm, Fayum Society of Small Organic Farmers and others have been involved in the organic movement in Egypt. The expansion of Organic Agriculture activity in Egypt is growing very fast due to public awareness as well as the increasing demands for organic food and fibers in both local and export markets. The number of farms reached more than 500 with total acreage of more than 10 000 hectares. The total cultivated area in Egypt according to the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture survey in the year 2000 is 3 083 333 hectares. Thus, organic farmed areas represent about 0.72% of the total area. Beside the certified Organic Agriculture production, there are more than 210 000 hectares that are cultivated traditionally without any use of chemicals in the remote areas which depend on rain or underground water for irrigation.

REGULATORY ASPECTS

No national regulation is present in Egypt. Certification is assured by local and foreign organizations.

Certification Bodies

Egyptian Center of Organic Agriculture (ECOA)
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Email: info@ecoa.com.eg
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Inspection, certification, research, environment**,** biodiversity

Center for Organic Agriculture in Egypt (COAE)
Contact person: Dr. Yousri Hashim
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STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

Two large organic and bio-dynamic projects are now well established in Egypt: the Sekem initiative and UGEOBA. More than 3500 ha are farmed organically in Egypt, and a very wide range of organic products are available for both local and export markets. Tables 1-3 show the organic activities of the different groups and organic projects for the years 2003/04.

Table 1. EBDA company project activities in summer / winter 2003/04

District	Cultivation season							
	Summer 2003 (biodynamic)		Winter 2003/04 (biodynamic)		Summer 2004 (biodynamic)		Summer 2004 (organic)	
	No. of farms	Area (ha)	No. of farms	Area (ha)	No. of farms	Area (ha)	No. of farms	Area (ha)
Behira	19	330.54	17	324.24	17	306.6		
Tahrir	1	4.2	1	4.2	1	4.2	16	263.34
Gharbia	3	61.74	4	57.54	4	57.54		
Dakahlia	1	12.6	1	12.6	1	12.6	5	39.06
Sharkia	9	152.04	13	142.8	13	274.26		
Ismailia	10	147	9	132.3	10	155.5	2	11.76
Sth of Sini	2	7.56	2	7.56	2	7.56	2	14.7
Cairo	1	6.3	1	6.3	1	6.3		
Qualubia	5	41.79	5	41.79	5	41.58		
Minofia	3	28.14	3	28.14	3	21.42		
Giza	5	31.5	5	31.5	5	31.5	1	4.2
Fayum	18	320.04	19	349.02	19	349.02		
Beni Sweif	9	65.1	9	65.1	9	65.1	1	21
Minia	23	130.2	26	152.04	26	152.46		
Assiut	6	42.84	4	43.68	4	43.68		
Sohag	13	167.16	15	216.3	15	210		
Qina							1	8.4
Aswan	1	12.6	2	33.18	2	33.18	1	25.2
Total actual acreage	129	1561	136	1650	137	1733	29	388
Total cropping acreage*	129	3122	136	3300	137	3466	29	776

* Total cropping acreage = Total actual acreage x no. of growing seasons.

Table 2. Al-Hoda farm activities in 2003/04

Main product	Area (hectare)
Grape	100.8
Apricot	12.6
Citrus	72.24
Mango	147
Salad onion	147
Green beans	147
Peas	63
Peanuts	42
Hot pepper	4.2
Sweet pepper	4.2
Husk tomate (Physalis)	2.1
Baby corn	29.4
Roads	63
Compost site	21
Total actual acreage	856
Total cropping acreage*	1712

* Total cropping acreage = Total actual acreage x no. of growing seasons.

Table 3. ECOA company project activities in summer & winter 2003/04

District	Number of farms	Area (ha)	Main products	
			Winter	Summer
Sohag	15	160.2	Garlic, onion	Peanuts, corn
Qina	5	63	Onion, fennel, anise, chamomile	Corn (fodder), corn
Dakahlia	1	71.4	Wheat, clover, chamomile	Rice, mint, geranium
Aswan	1	6.72	Date palm (permanent)	
Alexandria	3	33.81	bean	Sweet potato
Sini	3	24.36	Green bean	White bean
Ismailia	5	108.36	Bean, pepper	Peanuts
Wadi gedid	3	54.6	Date palm, liquorice (permanent)	
Assiut	5	81.9	Onion, garlic, fennel, cumin	Corn, sesame
Minia	16	177.66	Onion, garlic, mint, majoram	Mint, majoram, sweet basil, sesame, cotton, sunflower
Rasheed	1	3.36	Cucumber, pepper, onion, garlic	Pepper
Giza	16	577.5	Bean, pepper, eggplant, olive	Bean
Fayum	81	1196.58	Chamomile, marigold, coriander, parsil, anise, onion, garlic, lemongrass (permenant)	Sweet basil, marjoram, Cotton, hibiscus, sunflower, Hot pepper, senna, tomato
Sharkia	11	382.62	Wheat, grape	Rice, peanut, hibiscus
Beni sweif	21	418.74	Herbs of fayum, onion, bean,garlic, lemongrass (permenant)	Sunflower, cotton, hot Pepper, tomato, mint, sweet basil
siwa	4	20.16	Liquorice, date palm ,olive	-
Kaliubia	3	21.84	Jasmine, sour orange, rose, bean, rose	-
Minofia	6	169.68	Grape, orange, bean	-
behira	43	1029.84	Potato, bean, sweet potato, (greenhouses of pepper, cucumber, eggplant)	Potato
Total actual acreage	243	4602		
Total cropping acreage*	243	6661		

* Total cropping acreage = Total actual acreage x no. of growing seasons.

Table 4. IMC project activities in 2003/04

District	Number of farms	Area (ha)	Main products
Ismailia	3	103.11	Vegetables, fruits and peanuts
Kafr El-Shiekh	1	20.16	Wheat, fruits and vegetables
Fayum	1	75.6	Herbs, onion and garlic
Giza	2	42	Potato, onion and herbs
Luxor	1	504	Vegetables, onion and garlic
Siwa	1	41.69	Olive, date palm and medicinal herbs
Alexadria	2	224.39	Fruits and potato
Total actual acreage	11	1011	
Total cropping acreage*	11	1763	

* Total cropping acreage = Total actual acreage x no. of growing seasons.

Farm numbers and production for all projects are increasing quite fast, and organic production techniques are improving greatly. Organic activities in general are spreading rapidly around the country and all over the southern Mediterranean. This was particularly true after the establishment of the Mediterranean IFOAM group (AgribioMediterraneo) in July 1997, with a permanent secretariat in CHEAM, IAM-B, Via Ceglie, Valenzano, Bari, Italy.

Producers' Associations

Egyptian Biodynamic Association, EBDA
Address: Sekem, Hiekstep, Belbeis Desert road, Egypt.
Number of members: about 137 growers plus Sekem Holding Companies
Products Types and Quantity: go to table 5
Products destination: Local and Export markets.

Union of Growers & Exporters of Organic and Biodynamic Agriculture, UGEOBA
Address: Agrofood Co. 3 Kampis Str. From Mesadaq, Dokki Giza Egypt
Number of members: about 120 growers plus 7 Companies
Products Types and Quantity: go to table 5,
Products destination: Local and Export markets.

Egyptian Center of Organic Agriculture Society, ECOAS
Address: 17a Hadaik Eloubor, Suite 2 12th floor, Salah Salim Str, 11371 Nasr City , Cairo Egypt.
Number of members: 30 Scientists, growers and environmental activists.
Products Types and Quantity: Growers are involved in many projects (Al-Hoda, UGOBA, BCS and IMC groups)
Products destination: Local and Export markets.

El Wafaa Society for Organic Agriculture Development
Senores Fayum
Tel: 084 6570621
Fax: 084 6338169
E-mail: eoa009@hotmail.com

Products destination: Export market, Germany, UK, USA and Australia.

Products Types and Quantity: Medicinal plant, Essential oils, Onions, Garlic, Leak, Fresh vegetables, Fresh Fruits, Wheat, Rice. Certified by ECOA Co.

Number of Members: 150 members, farming in 20 farms, of total acreage of 1200 fed. In Assut, New Valley, Menya, Beni Sweif, Fayum, Giza, Menofia, Behira, Mansoura.

Development Association of Small Organic Growers in Fayum, DASOG
Address: Egypt, Fayum, Ibshaway, Kaser Bayad,
T/Fax: 002 084 6440546
E-mail: dasog@hotmail.com
Website: www.dasog4t.com

Number of members: 40 Researchers, growers and traders. Products Types and Quantity: Medicinal plant, Onions, Garlic, Fresh vegetables, Fresh Fruits, Wheat, Rice. Certified by BCS/ ECOA Co. Products destination: Local and Export markets, Germany. Italy and Austria.

Al- Hoda
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TRAINING

Sekem primarily takes care of Bio-Dynamic practice training. ECOAS takes care of Organic Agriculture training activities. ECOAS organized a training workshop for junior inspectors from eight African countries through project 4 of Organic Agriculture up until '99. A seminar was also held in Tunisia with ECOAS in that country to impart their experiences in establishing organic projects in the region. The Chairman of ECOAS is currently coordinating the Organic Agriculture Committee of the Agriculture Commodity Council (ACC) at the Ministry of Economic and Foreign Affairs, as well as the ad-hoc committee for formulating the Organic Agriculture rules and regulation in Egypt.

AGRONOMIC ASPECTS

Organic farming practices have long been documented in Egyptian agricultural traditions. Safe use of environmental resources, build-up of soil fertility, biodiversity, and the concept of natural equilibrium were used in the ancient Egyptian agricultural system of more than five thousand years ago. Animal manure and Nile mud were the only fertilizers. Crop rotation was the only means for conserving soil fertility, and solarization and birds were the means of plant protection and disease control. Meanwhile, social aspects were very important in the agricultural community, not only in Egypt but also in most Mediterranean countries far back in history. In recent times, in both conventional and Organic Agriculture in most countries south of the Mediterranean, a socially, culturally and economically integrated system is the main feature of the county -side.

Today in Egypt, the organic farming system depends on reasonable and continuous applications of composted animal manure and farm wastes and the use of natural additives for enriching compost, such as rock phosphate, orthoclase, gypsum, desert shale, bone meal, as well as plant and seaweed extracts. Waste recycling is the predominant method of compensating for the nutrients removed from the soil. Comprehensive composting operations in Egyptian organic farming use the most sophisticated technology. Balanced crop rotations that involve at least 20% legumes are used,

with both deep- and shallow-rooted crops. Plant biodiversity is fostered, and the farm environment is modified through evergreen hedges and different plant species to accommodate birds and insects. Green manuring and cover crops are also used. Precautions and biological control measures are considered, besides the safe use of plant extract and other natural substances for protecting plants against pests and diseases. A successful example is sulfur mixed with bentonite and lime for control of mildew. Jojoba oil and other mineral oils are safely used as insecticides. Pheromone sticky trap sheets and mating disruption perfumes are also methods of pest control while cover crops are very successful. Sheep have made this economically viable.

Integrated animal and plant farming is the most successful way to establish organic farms on newly reclaimed land in the Egyptian desert in a very arid climate. Minimizing the use of inputs from outside the farm was a successful concept for enhancing the economic feasibility of the organic farming operation, particularly after governmental subsidies for most agricultural production inputs were stopped.

The main issues facing the progress of Organic Agriculture in Egypt are those relating to the following:

1- Some regulatory aspects concerning the long conversion period (three years) in the EU rules. EU conversion requirements sets, as in most European countries, the growing season at no more than 4 5 months per year. In Egypt there are three growing seasons a year. In addition the manure limits per unit area is quite low for the desert soil which is very poor in organic matter contents, (less than 0.1%). Furthermore, there are other regional differences related to the desert climate prevailing in the country.
2- The availability of organic seeds is limited and is sometimes not found at all . If available, they are very expensive. There is local organic seed production for many products, particularly vegetables.
3- Disease and insect control is still not easy; biological control agents are imported and expensive. Local practices need to be developed through intensive research programs.
4- Nitrogen requirements are still not fulfilled according to the permitted rates of application in all national and international rules and regulations. More research activities are needed for soil fertility conservation in the desert environment.

MARKET ASPECTS

The export markets represent about 85% from total organic markets, and 15% as local markets. There are many efforts in this field to improve local markets and encourage organic markets in general. Export markets mainly the EU countries, Scandinavian countries, USA, Japan Australia and Gulf countries.

SOURCES

Information sources	Contact person	Type of the information		
		Technical-agronomic	Market	Legislative
ECOAS	Dr. Ahmed El-Araby *Address*:17a Hadaik Eloubor, Suite 2 –12th floor, Salah Salim Str., 11371 Nasr City, Cairo, Egypt. *Email*: ecoas@internetegypt.com *Tel.& Fax*: +202 4048167	✓	✓ Local & Export	✓
EBDA	Mr. Tahir *Address*: Sekem, Hiekstep, Belbeis Desert road, Egypt. *Email:* helmy.abouleish@sekem.com *Tel.& Fax:* +202 6248819	✓	✓ Local & Export	✓

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Information sources	Contact person	Type of the information		Source
		Technical-agronomic	Market	Legislative
IMC	Miss. Asmaa Sobhy *Addresses:* 19 El-Nakhely St., El-Mohandeseen, Giza, Cairo, Egypt. *Email*: imcegypt@imcert.it *Web*: www.imcert.it *Tel.& Fax*: +202 3359650	_	✓ Local & Export	✓
BCS	Mr. Abdu Atta *Addresses:* 6 Hilal Ibn- Omaya St., Heliopolis, 11351, Cairo, Egypt. *Email:* bcsecoeg@menanet.net *Tel.& Fax*: +202 6234237	_	✓ Local & Export	✓
ECOA co.	*Contact person*: Eng. M. El. Banna *Addresses:* 18 Mena St. From El-Anssar St. Dokki, Giza, Cairo, Egypt. *Email*: info@ecoa.com.eg *Web*: www.ecoa.com.eg *Tel:* +202 3365261 *Fax:* +202 3451376	_	✓ Local & Export	✓
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