

FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES MIDDLE EAST

FEBURARY 2015



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1. Introduction

This is the First 2015 report in a series of monthly investigations into various markets in the Middle East/GCC.

The initial focus is on fresh and dried mango as well as chillies in the GCC area. Additionally there will be monthly comment on the global market for mango puree and juices. This comment should be viewed in conjunction with the ITC Market Insider platform:

<http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-insider/fruit-juices-pulps-and-purees/>

Being the second of these reports, we would particularly ask for feedback. As the reports are filed, a clearer picture will emerge of market trends and the ability to forecast market sizes and prices will improve.

2. Market Dynamics

2.1. United Arab Emirates

Solid demand for chillies continues and although they are available from many countries, customers continue to demonstrate a preference for those from India. Dried chillies are also available, but only from India.

There's high demand for dried mango, which is currently only available from Thailand and commands a high price.

Other mango is coming from Kenya, Australia, Brazil, and Egypt but the season is not due to start in earnest for another month.

The avocado season is not yet in full swing, with greater supplies expected in a few weeks. While traders have the option of produce from Kenya or the United States, Kenya is favoured as it is cheaper.

With plenty of customers, market prices for many vegetables including acorn squash, bitter melon, beans, baby marrow, celery, green bean, pear and papaya etc. remain high.

Bitter melon, acorn squash, banana, broccoli, baby marrow, beetroot, cauliflower, cabbage, eggplant, long pakoda, okra, pumpkin, snap pea and watermelon are all in season and traders report that customers are happily buying whatever they need.

2.2. Oman

Green and red chillies are experiencing good demand and a high price, due largely to limited supply. However, dried chillies are not available in the market, nor in demand from customers.

Meanwhile, short supply of mango is keeping the price high, though there is little customer demand for it and dried mango is not available at all.

Other items not currently available in the market include lettuce (as its season has just ended) and gawar, green bean, pakoda and cantaloupe, which should be available in the market in greater numbers soon, as the season is just beginning.

The market is currently stocked with a good supply of carrot, eggplant, paprika, pumpkin, papaya, snap pea and tomato which are now in season, as well as end-of-season supplies of bitter melon, baby marrow, beetroot and cauliflower, while acorn squash and banana remain available year round. Early season watermelon is commanding a high price.

Traders advise that customers seem content with prices and availability.

2.3. Qatar

Red and green chillies from India continue to be available in Qatar and enjoy good demand from customers. However, dried chillies are not available and nor is dried mango. Other mango is available, but the price is high, as they are ahead of the main mango season due to start in a month. However, Arabic customers are still buying the early fruit.

Market trends are positive, with a good number of customers and generally high prices. Eggplant, pumpkin, papaya, beet root, cauliflower, broccoli and baby marrow are plentiful and in season. Okra and watermelon season is starting. Bitter melon, beans, baby marrow, coconut, celery, carrot, green bean, okra, pear and papaya are particularly expensive. Although supply is good, the cost of living and transportation is keeping the price inflated. However, while Qatar customers are not concerned about price they remain very careful about quality.

2.4. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The only mangoes available are from Kenya and Yemen, keeping a stable and standard price in the market. High quality Egyptian frozen mango is also available.

Avocado from Kenya is available from the market all year round, but avocado from Lebanon has also now appeared for the first time. Both are high quality.

Chillies are hard to find at present, and only limited supply found of the reported produce from Bangladesh.

While there is plenty of produce from Cairo, including oranges, strawberries, lemons, onions, guava and tomatoes, there is a notable weakness in the presence of Turkish products with only lemons and grapefruit apparent.

Overall prices are competitive, especially for local Saudi vegetables.

3. Media

(*Where articles reference the Middle East in general, results are posted under UAE but may also include other countries)

3.1. United Arab Emirates

Buyers from UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are among those expected to contribute to five to seven million dollars in orders for fruits and vegetable before the end of the four-day Expo Pakistan 2015 event in Karachi. Waheed Ahmed, Chairman, FPCCI Standing Committee on Fruits and Vegetable Exports, and Co-chairman, All Pakistan Fruits and Vegetable Importers, Exporters and Merchants Association said that last year, the exports from the sector were US\$625 million which are expected to boost US\$1.5 billion in three years and US\$6 billion in 10 years. While delegates are mainly from South America and Africa, Pakistan hopes to market to the world and has moved towards value-added products like mango and guava pulp, tomato paste and apple juice, besides initiating research and development (R&D) on dates. Waheed Ahmed said the association was trying to enter African markets. At present, the buyers are the Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Kingdom, Kuwait, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Mauritius and Canada. (1)

Dubai residents can now pick up organic and gluten-free foods at a new market in their community malls. Beginning this month, Biorganic, a local brand promoting natural and organic food, has been holding regular markets in four Emaar community malls. The bio-organic market sells everything from fruit and vegetables to meats and gluten-free bakery goods.

“We highly encourage local supply of fruits and vegetables. Whatever the UAE’s soil and nature provide, we source. For the rest, we just follow the seasons,” said Zaccour. The market sells tropical fruits and vegetables from Africa and Europe besides green leaves from Lebanon. (2)

The results of a survey carried out by the Farmers' Services Centre in Abu Dhabi have revealed that the United Arab Emirate's fruit and vegetable market size currently stands at about 1.05 million tonnes with a total value of up to 2.4 billion dirhams (575.5 million Euro), with local produce estimated to represent a 16% share of the total.

Nasser Mohammed Al Junaibi, president of the Farmers' Services Centre, which conducted the survey to determine the market share not only of local vegetables, but also meat products in the UAE, stated that the results of the study showed that the total domestic production volume has reached an annual growth rate of 300%, while value is increasing by 500%. (3)

India's mango exports are expected to rise by 40%-50% next fiscal following lifting of a seven-month ban on import by the European Union. EU is the second largest export destination for mangoes after the UAE. The world's biggest mango producer, India has made significant improvements in plant health controls and certification system, clearing the way for them to return to the 28-member bloc by March.

The minister said that the country has put in place a system to trace movement of mango shipment from each state and adoption of best agri-practices, as sought by the EU. In 2013-14, India exported mangoes worth US\$8.9 million to EU nations. Overall, India exported mangoes worth US\$50.7 million in 2013-14 and US\$ 43.9 million in the first six months of current fiscal. In volume terms, India exported 41,280 tonnes of mangoes in 2013-14, of which 3,381 tonnes were shipped to the EU. (4)

While India eyes new markets for mango exports, it is confirmed that UAE remains the primary market, accounting for over 50% of the imports. In order to provide impetus to mango exporters and explore the Japanese markets, the country's agricultural export promotion body, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), has decided to bear 90% expenses incurred for stationing of the quarantine inspector till 2017. However, exporters will have to commit to exporting a minimum amount of mangoes per year. The move has been well received by mango exporters, who believe that it will help reduce their export expenses. After two decades of ban on the king of fruits, because of suspected pest infestation by fruit flies, Japan allowed imports from India on June 23, 2006. (5)

Indian mango exporters will now have to give their products 'hot water treatment' before exporting them to the European market. Mangoes, eggplant, two types of gourd and the taro plant from India were banned by the European Union following concerns raised about high levels of contamination, mainly from non-European fruit flies.

Last year, around 310 tonne of mangoes were cleared by the Regional Plant Quarantine Station (RPQS) in Mumbai. According to data provided by the Apeda, around 41,280 tonne of mangoes were exported to the Middle East, South-East Asia and the United States. Significantly, last year, maximum quantity of mangoes went to France, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Other markets include Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Singapore, the UAE, Hong Kong, and Bahrain.

Like last year, mango production has been affected by unseasonal rains, which could result in a late start for the mango season in 2015. Estimates say around 30% of the area has been affected. (6)

A key supplier of mangos to the Middle East, India experienced unseasonal rains and winds, which could affect its crop and delay the start of the season officially due by March 10-15. Rains have been lashing Konkan and other mango growing parts of the state. The present season is crucial for the crop, as the government has completed the process of registration of mango farmers for exports. One orchard owner an orchard owner said if the rains could result in the loss of as much as 6%-80% mango yields. (7)

Mango exporters in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania have sealed business deals in the Middle East after participating in one of the world's largest food and hospitality exhibitions, as part of a project implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC). (8)

A termination of the sanctions currently imposed on Iran would benefit trade with the UAE, say analysts. Sanctions imposed on the country since 1979 by the United States and by the UN since 2006. Negotiations that are ongoing between Iran and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United States and Germany are likely to reach a successful conclusion in the next six months, analysts said. Hussein Asrar Haghghi of the Iranian Business Council in Dubai, predicted trade figures would double. The net effect was likely to be positive for the UAE, he said, in particular Dubai, which is the traditional gateway for goods to reach Iran, but negative for most other countries in the Gulf. (9)

In promoting successful exports of Mexican berries to China, Mexico's Exifrut head, Maldonado Hinojosa, affirmed that the prices which their berry products currently reach, about four dollars per kilo, are very similar to those registered in Europe, which, he said, is a very good price in Mexico. Currently 11 companies have the capacity to export to China and they have already consolidated as exporters to the United States, Canada and 15 countries in Europe, as well as the Middle East and Dubai. (10)

Peru showcased its range of produce at Gulfood 2015 after it was revealed that total exports to the UAE grew by 700% between 2011-14. Peru is the second ranked exporter of asparagus and avocados, number four exporters of evaporated milk and a top 10 mango producer.

Trade, Tourism and Investment Office of Peru in the UAE's director Alvaro Silva Santisteban said Peruvian exports are already consolidated in the American and European market, and the GCC is one of the platforms the company wants to capitalise on.

"In addition to the UAE, Saudi Arabia has shown a very big growth, as well as Kuwait and Qatar. The latest figures that we received, in terms of fresh produce, from 2013-2014, is that the exports of fresh produce from Peru to Dubai have increased by 250%. This is the most solid market. The firm also plans to fortify its presence on the superfood side, along with increasing citrus food exports, and on avocados, mangoes, grapes and asparagus. (11)

Emirates SkyCargo, the freight division of Emirates, has bolstered its operations on its African trade route network with the introduction of a weekly freighter service to Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. Ouagadougou is the 27th African destination to join the Emirates SkyCargo network. Via its advanced cargo handling and storage facilities at its hub in Dubai, Emirates SkyCargo anticipates transporting goods into Burkina Faso such as pharmaceuticals and electronics from cities as far as Mumbai and Guangzhou, and bringing local products and commodities such as mangoes and fresh beans from Burkina Faso to cities like Frankfurt and Dubai. The service represents thousands of tonnes of capacity each week on our routes into Africa and the new scheduled freight service to Ouagadougou will take Emirates SkyCargo's import capacity to Africa to 3,700 tonnes per week. (12)

French multinational retailer, Carrefour, is looking for managers to run its local operations in Kenya, a move that signalled its imminent entry into the country. The retail giant had initially secured one of the larger stores in two high-end shopping malls, the Two Rivers and The Hub Karen malls, which will be completed before the end of the year. The two retail stores will be operated by Dubai-based Majid Al Futtaim Retail (MAF). MAF holds the exclusive franchise for Carrefour in the Middle East and Africa. The company has appointed Franck Moreau, who was formerly the vice president in charge of development for the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain, as the new country manager for Kenya. (13)

Shahid Abu Bakar, the Consul (Agriculture) at the agriculture section of the Malaysian Consulate-General in Dubai, to Bernama said he was working on introducing an agrobazaar in Dubai. The agrobazaar is based on three concepts - retail, fruits and restaurants. There is a good market for Malaysian agricultural and food products. "We also see Dubai as the springboard to penetrate the Middle East market." He sees the potential of Malaysian fruits in Dubai like the star fruit, water melon and guava.

"Only the Malaysian pineapple has established its presence in Dubai with an annual sales figure of up to RM3.9 million. Even for the other Malaysian fruits, we have the upper hand but the price may not be competitive. To ensure their freshness, these fruits have to be sent through air freight that is costly." (14)

A growing number of UAE gardeners are cultivating a wide variety of fresh organic produce extending their growing seasons and repertoire. They use cool houses and polytunnels to protect their plants from the worst of the summer heat; and soil is prepared from late July, with a view to planting in August where possible – but nothing goes outside until they're sure that temperatures won't exceed 40°C. For homegrown vegetables, October to May is a more manageable and realistic growing season. (15)

Tunisian exporter of fresh produce, Alyssa Fruits, has been exporting premium potatoes for several years, and though they're expanding their export program into new markets. About 15% of Alyssa Fruit's potato exports now go to West African countries. Dubai and Qatar have also grown in importance. A bad crop in Iran, war in Syria and ban of Saudi Arabian exports allowed Tunisian exporters to get a part of the market in the Middle East. Tunisian exporters had already sent stone fruit there in the past. Gaddas estimates they now send about 500 tons of potatoes there every year.

"We can't compare with Egypt or Israel in quantity, but we have much better quality," said Walid Gaddas, managing director of Alyssa Fruits. (16)

The three-month melon season is important in creating thousands of jobs in Honduras. Dubai is among new markets for the fruit, which are also exported to the U.S. and Europe. The fruit reaches its productive peak in summer, and thus preparatory work begins from mid-October. They cultivate around 2,817 hectares of land per cycle, whose production is shipped mostly abroad. Agrolibano's lands produce about 80 million melons throughout the season, while other companies produce some 40 million more.

The melon production is estimated to be increasing by 3 to 4% on average per season. The varieties produced in southern Honduras are mainly white, Galia and yellow melon, as well as Italian and Piel de Sapo. (17)

The first Lane Late oranges loaded into containers bound for the UAE and other markets in Asia. According to Manuel Baidés, purchasing manager at Alquimia Fruits, prices in the current citrus campaign are still averaging similar levels to last season's, although there is also growing pressure in overseas destinations as a result of increased shipments since the introduction of the Russian veto, which has also led to a greater pressure on prices in Europe.

"In the UAE and Asian markets we have to compete with aggressive pricing from Egypt for oranges and Turkey for lemons," states Manuel. However, he points out that in these markets, demanding in terms of quality, "We continue to maintain higher prices than in Europe thanks to the sustained quality of our shipments and the good work of the company's quality control team."(18)

The United Arab Emirates is one of the target markets of a new export agreement for Brazilian fruit, inked in January by the Brazilian Fruit Producers-Exporters Association (Abrasfrutas) and the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil). The deal will be valid for two years, with Apex-Brasil investing R\$4.2 million and Abrasfrutas committing R\$ 1 million in promotional actions, training to businesses and overseas market positioning. The main object of the agreement with Apex-Brasil is to increase fruit exports from Brazil, which are still meagre. Brazil is the world's third leading fruit producing country, after China and India, but only ships 2% of its production overseas. It aims to double its average annual fruit exports of US\$ 650 million within five years.

"The UAE have been selected because it's a hub, meaning it can distribute to the entire region, because the Middle East has high purchasing power and are habitual fruit buyers. Besides, the logistics are good and we can get shipping transit times lower than 30 days, from 20 to 30 days," he asserts.

The project's manager at Apex-Brasil, Eduardo Caldas said the UAE has become a priority at the behest of the companies themselves. Some have been to the region to attend trade shows and believe good deals can be done with the Gulf country.

According to Abrasfrutas data, melon is the most exported fruit from Brazil: 55% of output gets shipped abroad. To the United Arab Emirates, the top export product is also melon, followed by watermelon. According to Barcelos, grapes and mangoes are also beginning to be sold from Brazil to the UAE.

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Abrafrutas 29 affiliated companies include producers of mango, apple, grape, melon and banana, which account for 87% of the sector's exports. (19)

Exports of Extremaduran stonefruit to countries outside the European Union (EU) have increased, despite the Russian veto, by 15% in 2014 compared to the previous year, as highlighted by the Association of Fruit Growers of Extremadura (Afruex).

Brazil and UAE remain the main non-EU markets for the fruit. In terms of volume, The manager of the Afruex Association observed that stonefruit consumption is falling in the EU, unlike in the rest of the world, where it continues to grow. (20)

The Fresh Fruits Company, specialised in the import and export of fresh agricultural products to and from the Middle East, announced the expansion of its Chiquita Fruit Bar chain across the United Arab Emirates.

Over the next five years, the firm plans to open 50 new Chiquita Fruit Bar branches in the Middle East; a new concept designed to provide fresh fruit juices on demand, as well as other cold drinks made with fresh fruit.

CEO Reza Mansouri said: "We currently have 25 Chiquita Fruit Bar branches in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, the Czech Republic, Kuwait and the UAE. We aim to continue expanding in the Middle East and North Africa as an exceptional alternative for people interested in healthy food."

Mansouri also stated that his company is able to supply the market with fresh products carefully selected directly at the source. (21)

The Brazilian export of fresh fruit and vegetables was 6% down in 2014, compared to the previous year. In total almost 680,000 tonnes was exported, compared to 720,000 tonnes in 2013. A report on Brazilian exports reveals that while it is not a primary market, over the years the United Arab Emirates is the only real growing market. In 2014 14,200 tonnes was exported there (directly). Lemons and melons are the main products. (22)

Australian stonefruit harvest growers are expecting to produce around 100,000 tonnes across all four categories (peaches, nectarines, plums and apricots), according to Summerfruit CEO John Moore. He notes that that exports to Middle Eastern destinations (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar) are showing significant increases in early season trade compared to last year. The stonefruit season in Australia is in full swing, with Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland having nearly finished their harvests. Victoria, Central-Southern New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia will be harvesting through until the end of March or mid- April most likely. (23)

Residents are more inclined to buy local produce as farmers continue to expand their output of fresh fruits and vegetables for local consumption, according to a new report published by the Abu Dhabi Farmer's Services Centre. The centre's market position survey found that Abu Dhabi is growing four times faster than the production of local goods for consumption. Local produce makes up 16% of fruit and vegetable sales in the UAE. The market is worth Dh2.4 billion for more than 1 million tonnes of produce grown locally and sold domestically.

While cucumbers, capsicum, herbs, leafy vegetables and tomatoes enjoyed a high local share of farmers' output, the survey showed onions, potatoes, cabbage and pumpkin are opportunities for future growth. (24)

The Thai region is looking to increase exports to the Middle East. Prachuap Khiri Khan prepares agricultural exports to the Middle East market in response to the demand for Thai fruits and agricultural products.

The Governor of Prachuap Khiri province, Khan Veera Sriwattanatrakul said it has been looking for markets of fresh and processed pineapples which are considered a key agricultural produce and a visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain showed that the Middle Eastern market showed a high demand and purchasing power for agricultural products, making it a potential export destination for pineapples and other Thai fruits. (25)

UAE is a major market for fresh and dried pineapples, which are a top fruit export from the Philippines. The value of the UAE market is US\$3.12 million, The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in Davao Region reports. Agricultural products remain as the top export commodity in the region, including banana, coconut, pineapple, and rubber, among others.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in Davao Region reported that exports in the region posted a 12% increase in freight on board (FOB) value to US\$595.05 million, as of the third quarter of 2014 as compared to US\$531.39 million in the same period in 2013. (26)

Exports of kinnow began to flow out of Pakistan at the beginning of December. Grower and shipper, Roshan Enterprises expects to ship about 11,000 metric tons of the fruit this season. Export destinations feature the UAE and Saudi Arabia alongside Indonesia, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, the Bangladesh, Canada and countries throughout Europe. Both increased demand, due to the Russian ban on European fruit, and improved production techniques could lead to more exports - both this season and in future years. Roshan hopes to double production next season. New traceability techniques will help fulfil the requirements of receiving countries. Roshan also exports a variety of other products besides kinnow, including mangos. "The European Union banned Indian mangos and gave a warning to Pakistani mango exporters," explained Mahmood. Roshan added a hot water treatment plant to ensure its fruit would be accepted in European countries. (27)

Recently concluded free trade agreements with Japan, South Korea and China could pave the way for greater exports of premium Australian vegetable products according to a discussion paper released today by AUSVEG titled 'Exporting Australia's vegetables to the Middle East & Asia: Market analysis & overview'.

"Lower returns domestically can be attributed to an excess supply of fresh produce, which has a downward effect on price. This oversupply could be re-directed overseas to growing markets in the Middle East and Asia, where there is an increasing demand for premium vegetables," said Mr Steve Razdan, AUSVEG Economist. "Australian vegetable growers are currently enduring tough business conditions locally, with farm profits having decreased by a staggering 25% over the last financial year due to rising production costs and low returns," said Mr Razdan.

According to the discussion paper, Australia's higher quality vegetables are prime for exporting, with a rapidly growing middle class in Asia and projected growth in the food sector in the UAE stimulating demand for a greater variety of vegetables.

"Growth in the food and hospitality sector in the UAE is forecast to increase by 20% per annum through to 2018, so there are definitely opportunities to export more Australian produce to countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE," said Mr Razdan. (28)

A major Iranian producer, The Ario Fruit Co and has just launched the kiwifruit season. Production is expected to increase by 10%-20% and the company plans to increase its exports. Already in several markets (Middle East, the Russian Federation, Eastern Europe), the company plans to consolidate its position and to increase its market share in the Russian Federation. (29)

Early estimates suggest the Spanish cherry and stonefruit season will yield large volumes and good quality. Producer IMG will export to new markets including in the Middle East, established last year in response to the Russian veto. IMG will start the campaign in late April with French-type, orange-fleshed apricots from Badajoz and Murcia, as well as cherries, flat peaches, peaches and nectarines from Lleida, and from Aragon until late October, which are mainly intended for export. However, the campaign's result will be affected by whether or not the Russian veto ends in July. (30)

The market for table grapes in the southern hemisphere, with a 6.3% annual growth, is now expanding more rapidly than the northern hemisphere. Noteworthy is the greater volume exported to Asian markets (22.8% annually), the Middle East (15.9% annually), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (8.9% annually) and Latin America (8.7% annually). Although the market is dominated by the Red Globe, seedless varieties have grown significantly in volume during this period, with high prices, as in the case of the Crimson, Midnight Beauty or Sugrathirteen. Like Asia, the Middle East presents challenges in terms of logistics and post-harvest for the varieties exported from the southern hemisphere. (31)

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Prices of bananas rise according to international celebrations and cultural events, like Ramadan, according to Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) Executive Director Stephen Antig. Demand for the fruit usually rises during the Chinese New Year but is expected to drop when festivities end.

Antig said Filipino exporters are not really concerned about the decline in prices since the peak season of the other two major banana export markets are expected to start by March.

He said demand for bananas in Japan is high from March to May, and in the Middle East from July to September, in time for Ramadan. (32)

High demand for Ukrainian products in foreign markets including the Middle East, has helped drive up prices by more than 74% in the past three months according to APK-Inform: Vegetables and Fruits. Ukrainian onion started being shipped more actively to the Middle East, making them the most expensive in the borsch set of vegetables, with prices this week increasing by over a third. (33)

The South African topfruit season is running around two weeks earlier than normal this year and the Middle East is among its growing markets. Some hail affected central areas of Langkloof, but the Ceres area, which was badly hit last year, is back to normal production this season. Exports to Africa are seeing a 10% increase year on year, which is expected to continue, especially due to the high stocks in Europe. The Middle East market also continues to grow, but not as fast as Africa. (34)

The Middle East will be among markets receive some of the excess apple production in Poland where good conditions have led to a bumper crop of quality fruit which, combined with the Russian veto will mean a lack of adequate export markets to absorb the volume of fruit. (35)

Mexico only consumes 3% of the berries it produces as it exports 97% of its berry production, mainly to the United States, Europe and some countries in the Middle East. Eighty-five percent of the production goes to the United States and the remaining 15% is sent to Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, which has had significant growth recently. (36)

Exports of perishable fresh fruits and vegetables from Pakistan to the UAE represent around US\$300 million worth of trade. Compared to last year, in the last two to three months we have seen an increase in the exports of fruits and vegetables with better packaging and properly waxed. So this year we expect a growth of US\$100 million to US\$150 million in fresh fruits and vegetables exports. "We see the UAE as the economic hub of the entire Mena region. It is now emerging trade centre, and we are looking to benefit from the UAE's strategic location for our exports to the region." (37)

Producers from Spain's Aragon region are targeting new export markets ahead of the 2015 summer fruit season to avoid a repeat of 2014 losses suffered as a result of the Russian veto. Backed by the regional government of Luisa Fernanda Rudi Producers, growers and agricultural organisations have staged a series of meetings with companies from UAE and Qatar and have invited several Middle Eastern companies to visit the region ahead of the new season to see firsthand what it has to offer in terms of fruit exports. "With some 10m inhabitants, the UAE is not only an interesting market in its own right but also because it serves as a distribution hub for the entire Middle Eastern region," said Ignacio Martínez de Albornoz of trade promotion agency Aragón Exterior. "We know that demand exists for the kind of fruits we produce as they are already importing it from Southern Hemisphere suppliers like Australia and South Africa and we could play a complementary role." (38)

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted Gulfood Connect networking event considered ways of strengthening mutual cooperation in the food and beverage industry and how to benefit from Dubai's strategic location in the import and export of food products.

Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice-President, International Relations, Dubai Chamber, stated the UAE's reliance on food imports amounts to more than 80% of its food needs thus raising the prospects for the growth of the food sector, especially in light of the expectations of a compound annual growth rate of 8% in spending on food and beverages in the UAE during the period 2012 to 2018.

He also pointed out at the expected compound annual growth rate of per capita consumption of fresh food in the emirate amounting to 5.5% during the period 2012-2018 and highlighted Dubai's status as the region's major re-exporting hub. It was estimated that that fruits and vegetables occupied 55% of

the total fresh food market with an expectation of 7% compound annual growth rate of fresh food products during the period 2014-201. (39)

The Ethiopian horticulture industry is working on widening market destinations for its products to include markets in Qatar and Bahrain, the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer-Exporters Association says.

Growers and exporters are working to expand destinations to add to the traditional destinations of the Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), alongside the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Germany, France and Italy.

Some 160 growers are cultivating horticulture products on 1,400 hectares of land. Ethiopia's vast land, favourable climate, and water and land resources combined with proximity to Europe and the Middle East attract major importers worldwide, leading to the steady growth of the sector. (40)

The range of fruit and vegetables sourced from Turkey, including lemons, oranges, mandarins, grapefruit, apricots, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, grapes, figs and cherries impressed a Turkish delegation visiting Al Maya supermarkets. The UAE-based business conglomerate has more than 40 supermarkets in the GCC countries in addition to other businesses. The group recently expanded its reach in Oman and Abu Dhabi by opening several new outlets last year. (41)

3.2. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The cold wave that has swept Saudi Arabia's Eastern Region has caused farm productivity to drop by almost 50% although the majority of agricultural products remain at low price levels due to large supply volumes, both from Eastern Region Farms and other areas.

The region's aubergine production has dropped to 6,000 boxes compared to the 12,000 of the previous week, while prices remained at 7 riyals per 5 kilo box. The courgette production dropped from 3,000 to 1,000 boxes, with prices still at 8 riyals per 5 kilo box, and tomatoes registered a 40% drop, from 14 down to 10 thousand boxes in a week, while prices have stabilised at 10-12 riyals per 5 kilo box. (42)

The extent of the losses caused by the current cold wave to agricultural crops in Saudi Arabia, as well as the impact this will have on fruit and vegetable trade is still difficult to assess, though for now, Jeddah's market has not reported any shortages in the volume of fruits and vegetables available.

Dr Adel Dheifallah, Professor at the Faculty of Agriculture, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, said that crops grown in greenhouses will naturally not be as affected, but the extent of the damages to open field crops sensitive to cold temperatures is difficult to estimate.

Deciduous trees, like figs, apricots or pomegranates, among others, will not be as affected, and that the snow may even have a positive effect on them, and that the most damaged will likely be the crops that grow in the ground, like potatoes. (43)

Farmers in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia say they have lost 40% of their crops because of the sandstorms last week, with fears that the cold snap over the past few days would cause further losses.

Abbas Dahi, an investor, said most of the farms in the Eastern Province were affected because the dust destroyed the produce-bearing flowers on plants and trees. He said it is expensive to counteract the sandstorms because large amounts of water are needed to wash off the plants and trees. Most farmers prefer to leave them covered with dust until they wither and die, or grow again.

He said eggplant, tomato and beans fields were severely affected by the recent sandstorms. Planting a 6,000 square-meter open field costs between SR20,000 and SR25,000. Open fields make up 50% of Eastern Province farms.

Ali Marzouq, an investor, said Eastern Province farms were affected despite being far away from the wave of bad weather. He feared that the low temperatures would create frost and freeze the dew on leaves in the morning, which can ruin plants.

FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLE MIDDLE EAST

Farmers across the country have reported losses from unusually cold weather in the Kingdom over the past three years, damaging their crops just as they are about to start their harvest season. (44)

Saudi Arabian mangoes have been part of a project to test a new fruit fly solution being offered by British integrated pest management solutions company Russell IPM.

The government-sponsored programme, starting in January 2015, for the testing of a new solution that will help tackle a wide range of fruit flies has also already been tested on peaches and citrus in Tunisia, citrus in Turkey, apricots in Iraq, by peaches in Jordan. This year trials will also be conducted on citrus in Iraq.

Performance is also good against the cucurbit fruit fly and could technically be used against any other fruit fly species.

The fruit flies attack the fruit at the ripening level, which limits the amount of pesticides that can be used for control. The goal was to find a suitable solution for the problem on a small-scale level, without resorting to spray, thus allowing for a residue-free production. The new system attracts and kills the male and female separately. Its implementation has made it possible to reach a 95 to 97% protection rate without a single chemical spray application. "Currently our best system requires 200 pieces per hectare, which we aim to reduce to 50 around the border and 100 within the hectare, and this single application could work for up to four months," explains Dr Al Zaidi.

Russell IPM is happy to provide any interested growers, exporters or cooperatives around the world with the necessary material to test the system on one hectare, along with a protocol and advice for its application. (45)

The Middle East region has again been hit by cold winds and snow storms; Jerusalem has had 30 cm of snow, only the 2nd time in 50 years that it has snowed there! Saudi Arabia's neighbour Jordan has had 40 cm.

Istanbul, Turkey was the first to suffer with 60cm of snow falling on Thursday. Open ground production will be most affected produce grown under cover will only have a delay due to low temperatures.

Meanwhile in Jordan they have already seen three heavy snow storms this year. This has affected fresh produce prices as deliveries from the producing valleys will not be able to reach the markets due to blocked roads.

For example Beuqi said tomatoes which would normally sell at 0.35 Euro have been going for 0.90 Euro in the last couple of days, as people are stocking up, cucumber, courgette and aubergine have also risen in price this week.

Lebanon has also been hit by the storm, the third one this year, it has been reported that Lebanon's greenhouse, citrus and banana farmers will have lost about a third of their annual agricultural produce.

Ramiz Osseiran, head of the Farmers Association in south Lebanon, told The Daily Star, that close to 30% of greenhouse-grown vegetables across Lebanon have been destroyed so far this year, warning that the current storm will damage another 40% of what is left from this quarter's harvest. (46)

UABCS researchers are assisting growers of the Mexican town of Santiago in the production of organic mangoes through a project funded by Produce.

Mangoes of the *Mangifera indica* L species are one of the most commercially important fruits worldwide; fifth in the ranking of main fruit products. In 2011, global production totalled 26,697,390 tonnes, with India as the largest producer, followed by China, Thailand, Pakistan and Mexico.

In the same year, Mexico was the largest mango exporter to countries like the United States, Saudi Arabia and Japan. However, the process currently carried out for the cultivation of conventional mangoes has a significant environmental impact, as it involves the use of fertilisers and pesticides that cause water pollution, damage to human health and soil erosion, among other factors.

To make mango cultivation fully organic, it has been necessary to stop using industrial fertilisers, using vermicompost instead. The project also excludes the use of chemical pesticides to make way for natural enemies that kill pests on plantations and aims to solve the water crisis.

So far, the project has had great success amongst producers in Santiago, who are satisfied with the results. Mangoes weighting up to half a kilogram have been harvested, whose market value increases because of their organic origin. For now, 400 growers have already joined the project.

Two manuals are also to be published: "Manual for the production of organic mangoes in BCS" and "Manual to improve the quality of mangoes in BCS". (47)

Spanish lemon shipments to non-EU destinations are growing significantly this year, by about 70%, according to data supplied by the Interprofessional Lemon and Grapefruit Association (Ailimpo). Up to 31 December 2014, lemon shipments to Saudi Arabia increased by 4,884% (942,372 kg) and those to UAE, by 311%, alongside increases to other countries. Though 90% of produce is shipped to the EU.

Although during the months of January and February lemon sales are usually slow, the current campaign is continuing normally, with stable prices for the Fino lemon ranging between 0.15 and 0.24 Euro per kilo at origin. According to José Antonio, "sales are expected to reactivate from the second week of February, leading to a greater balance between supply and demand."

Turkey has recently been hit by frosts, and although exact figures of affected acreage are still unknown, "it appears that the Turkish lemon export season will finish earlier than usual, not only because of the frost's impact, but also due to their more advanced ripening stage," explains José Antonio García. (48)

Campaigns to crack down on expatriate street vendor sites have seen Riyadh Municipality authorities seized a total of 4,800 boxes of fruit and vegetables, which were subsequently given to charity, as well as two vehicles that were used to store fruit and vegetables without meeting the necessary health requirements.

A number of street vendors were also arrested for indiscriminate selling of horticultural products in a number of neighbourhoods. (49)

A black market for vegetables and fruits has emerged overnight in Jeddah following the strict enforcement of Saudization regulations in the Central Vegetable and Fruit Market. The market is apparently an alternative to the central market where the Saudization Committee of the Ministry of Labor has barred any transactions of expatriate vegetable traders.

An informed source said the expatriate traders were behind the market and used to control nearly quarter of the market stocks and that cold storages used to hoard vegetables in order to create artificial scarcity as they recently did with tomato with the aim of pushing up its price. (50)

Saudi Arabia's deputy minister of agriculture, Khlaid AlFuhaid, stressed the government's support for organic farming in the kingdom and predicted the further growth of the sector in the coming years, at the opening of a weeklong Agriculture Festival in Riyadh. A recent study forecast that organic farms would make up around 5% of the kingdom's total farming area by 2017. There are currently over 130 organic farms in Saudi Arabia, covering an area of some 35,000ha. At the same time, AlFuhaid talked about the need to phase out production of water intensive crops due to water shortages, wheat, soya beans and animal fodder being the greatest drain on resources. (51)

A Russian veto and oversupply mean Catalan apples and pear prices are 20-30% lower than in the past according to data provided by the Association of Fruit Businesses of Catalonia (Afrucat). Saudi Arabia and UAE are on a target list of destinations for diversification that were minor destinations in the past and have become more relevant since the summer. (52)

Indian fruit exporter IG International is focusing on markets in the Middle East with a brand labeled 'Rich banana' launched to cater to customers seeking quality fruit for both the domestic and the export market. Director Tarun Aurora explains that "Currently we have ripening facilities for Rich Banana in Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai. The variety used is the Robusta, which is sourced from Solapur, Maharashtra."

Internationally, the company is currently focused on the Middle East, with shipments to Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. "We add value to the product by using high-end packaging, as well as ethylene absorbers and MAP bags, which combined with the fact that the entire supply chain is under cold conditions, allows us to guarantee a perfect quality on arrival," explains Tarun Aurora.

“We are packing 4, 5 and 6 hands in 13kg boxes and 7, 8 and 9 in 7kg boxes for export. For the domestic market we are packing 20 kg in crates and 16 kg in corrugated boxes.”

IG International aims to be able to supply the fruit all year round with consistent prices. “We work directly with growers and are investing plenty of time and money to make the project a success. Our plan is to cultivate our own 10,000 acres in three years from now.” (53)

Saudi Arabia is the largest Arab investor in Egypt with their investments reaching some US\$5.7 billion. The UAE was the second largest investor at US\$4.5 billion. The volume of trade between the Kingdom and Egypt is estimated at US\$5 billion. Major commodities exported by Egypt to the Kingdom include agricultural products, notably citrus, rice, onions, potatoes, fresh vegetables and fruits, and juice concentrates. (54)

Major Middle East retailer Lulu Hypermarkets’ Saudi Arabia Citrus Fest highlights the wide variety of sources for fresh produce. Around 40 varieties of oranges from 40 different countries of the world were displayed at the festival. Customers could taste and shop the different orange varieties, such as baby mandarin from China, Clementine from Morocco and Spain, grapefruit from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and United States, and mandarin varieties from India, Pakistan, China, Turkey, and Spain. (55)

Middle East’s biggest retailer Lulu Hypermarket – launched the inaugural Saudi Arabia’s one week campaign Saudi Agro Fresh Fest “From Our Land” that opened in February in their four outlets located in Riyadh and Al-Khobar. Lulu outlets exhibit more than 100 varieties of fruits and vegetables that are produced in different parts of Saudi Arabia. Al Kharj, Al Quassim, Hail, Jizan, Qatif and Al Ahsa are the places from where Lulu procured a major part of its local fruits and vegetables. Last year Lulu procured around 75 thousand tons of vegetables and fruits, 2,500 tons of Saudi produced onion and potato are procured annually for Lulu Saudi Arabia. (56)

3.3. Qatar

Prices for fresh vegetables are at their lowest at the Central Market as traders struggle to cope with the low turnout of buyers caused by the cold weather and the competition from shopping centres.

According to one seller a kilogram of carrot was being sold at QR2.5 while on normal days it was sold for about QR3.5 and it is being priced at QR5 in grocery stores and some supermarkets.

Other big price drops were seen on pepper being sold at QR4 a kilogram while it sold at QR7 in December in the same market. Prices of potatoes also were down by about QR1 from the usual QR3.5 to QR2.5 a kilogram. Also a box of tomatoes worth 7kg at QR10 while a kilogram of tomatoes was sold at QR3 in a large supermarket. A box of cabbages with three big pieces is available at QR6 while a single cabbage was sold at QR3 in large supermarkets.

Mohammed Shahajahan says that business had gone down in the last five years due to more supermarkets expanding and opening up in residential areas. “Buyers are reluctant to come to the markets as they are often far from their homes and there are supermarkets selling the same products almost everywhere,” he said. (57)

Prices of several types of fruits and most green vegetables in the Central Market have dropped significantly, with large number of people rushing to the market early morning to buy fresh stocks sourced from neighbouring countries and local farms.

“Prices of some citric fruits and most seasonal vegetables have come down by up to 30% compared to a couple of months ago,” Abdur Rahman, a frequent visitor of the wholesale market was quoted as saying by a local Arabic daily. He said some perishable items such as tomato and leafy vegetables at times are sold at throwaway prices to clear stocks.

A box of Jordanian tomatoes (about 8kg) was sold for QR16, Saudi cucumber (7kg) at QR10, eggplant (3kg) at QR5 and Jordanian capsicum (6kg) and marrow (7kg) at QR18 and QR15, respectively.

Similarly, Lebanese lemon and apple (5kg) was available at QR15 and QR25, respectively, Lebanese orange (6kg bag) at QR15 and Philippine banana (13kg bag) at QR40.

“This is a normal phenomenon almost every winter season. Not only large quantities of fruits and seasonal vegetables start coming from local farms, the market is also flooded with cheaper quantities from overseas, including Saudi Arabia,” said Mahmood Abdul Hafiz.

He said the price decline is not only because of plenty of local produce; it’s also due to the monitoring by the Consumer Production Department and growing competition among traders.

Hafiz said since it’s not commercially viable to keep unsold vegetables and fruits in warehouses, traders clear stocks on the same day at any price because people would not like to buy them the following day.

Another trader, Wessam Yusri, said prices have come down due to good weather and a high yield in exporting countries. The situation is expected to continue over the next few months until weather changes in those countries, he added. (58)

The prices of most vegetables and fruits have recently dropped considerably at the Abu Hamour Central Market. Increased supply of locally produced vegetables, including tomatoes, eggplants, cucumber, zucchini, on account of the good weather, and stable demand are attributed as two main reasons for the price drop.

The price of a box of around 7-8 kgs of tomatoes now ranges between QR5 and QR10 depending on the size and quality. The minimum price earlier was QR15. A box of relatively good quality cauliflower of about 5-6kgs is now being sold for prices as low as QR5, while a few weeks ago the price was almost QR15.

Other prices include QR5 for a big box of corncobs, QR3-6 for low quality broccoli, QR10 for a box of around 7kg of Lebanese oranges, QR3-5 for a pineapple, and QR10-20 for a box of grapes, depending on quality and quantity.

Local farm owners had previously indicated that they were not gaining much, or were even sustaining losses as their products were sold at lower prices, sometimes even below production cost at the Central Market.

Accordingly, the Central Municipal Council had issued a number of recommendations to the parties concerned to help local producers to sell their products to the major shopping centres and supermarkets at reasonable prices. (59)

Major General Yassin Tahir, Governor of the Egyptian Governorate of Ismailia, stated that the total value of Ismailia’s agricultural exports, including fruit and vegetables, field crops and medicinal and aromatic plants, during the months of January and February amounted to US\$ 110 million.

The main destinations for Ismailia's exports were countries including Qatar, India, Italy, Kuwait, Germany, Jordan, Tunisia and the European Union and the Russian Federation. The total export value of fresh and frozen vegetables amounted to US\$ 10.5 million, while the value of fresh and frozen fruit shipments reached US\$ 54 million.

For his part, Dr Engineer Fathi Mahrous reported that the total export value of agricultural products during the month of February amounted to US\$ 51.9 million, with a total volume amounting to 1,611,834 tonnes, including products like oranges, onions, green beans or peppers. (60)

Three new central markets should be established and equipped with sophisticated display and storage facilities, including one devoted to vegetables and fruits, the agriculture committee of Qatar Chamber (QC) has suggested.

An urgent need to come up with new legislation for food security and agriculture in the country was discussed. The private sector's active participation would be key. The proposed "agricultural city" project would address the four main areas of concern in this sector: shortage of freshwater resources, unfavourable climate, and unavailability of adequate space and lack of fertile soil. (61)

The Qatar government is set to build three central markets, which will each have a main market (selling fresh vegetables and fruits). Of the three, the Al Wakra Market will be the largest, nearly three times larger than the other two, with an area covering 59,393 sq m, it stated. The markets are expected to be ready for operation by the middle of 2016, it added. (62)

Qatar is considered a pioneer in the field of protected farming in the Gulf region. It has carried out five experiments at Al Utooriyya Experimental Station on peppers, cucumber, flowers and various plants. Several agricultural experiments have also been carried out on horticulture in controlled environment as part of the researches to produce better and new varieties. Varieties of tomatoes were also farmed in a greenhouse under a special drainage system with the use of sand and organic fertilizers.

Among the most important products of Qatar's protected green houses are cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, beans, sweet melon, strawberry, and flowers. Products from the open fields include onions, potatoes, sweet corn, courgette, carrot, clover and various other vegetables. In 2008 Qatar had 23,903 hectares of arable land but only 12,274 hectares (or roughly 51%) of this arable land was actually under cultivation.

The average size of productive farms in Qatar was 27 hectares, and on average only about eight hectares was used for crop production, with roughly equal areas devoted to fruit trees, vegetables, and fodder crops. (63)

Qatar Airways Cargo will be participating in the third Air Cargo Africa exhibition from 25 to 27 February 2015, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Mr. Ulrich Ogiermann, Qatar Airways Chief Officer Cargo said: "Air freight in Africa has grown strongly in recent years, and the Middle East is positioned perfectly as an ideal distribution hub for the African continent. We have ambitious plans for our growth in this region.

Qatar Airways Cargo operates freighters to six African destinations and carries cargo on passenger aircraft to 19 destinations in the continent. In December 2014, freighter services commenced to the West African destinations of Lagos and Accra.

The Swiss city of Basel was the first Qatar Airways Cargo freighter launch destination for 2015, commencing on 28 January, and was followed by the addition of service to Ahmedabad, India, on 3 February.

QR Fresh, an airfreight service for perishable products such as fruits, flowers, vegetables, meat and fish, provides a temperature-controlled environment during transit. (64)

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) has supported eight Qatari companies through its export arm, Tasdeer, during the 2015 Gulf Food Exhibition (Gulfood) held at the Dubai World Trade Centre from February 8 to 12.

From organic vegetables to dates, frozen meat, and olive oil, the companies showcased "best-in-class" Qatari products. (65)

Organic food is catching on in Qatar as more and more people are becoming health-conscious. "Demand for organic food is increasing. We have seen more than 20% rise in the number of customers and turnover compared to last year," a senior official of a leading hypermarket said yesterday.

He said local farms have also started producing organic vegetables — tomatoes, cucumber and eggplants so far — in small quantities and most produce is sourced from the United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Lebanon and other countries. (66)

Organic vegetables offered by a local farm are being sold for the first time at Al Mazrouah Yard, almost at the prices of original produce. The prices of organic vegetables are about five times more than those grown traditionally in local markets (malls and shopping complexes) but are more affordable prices at the yard, said the Ministry of Environment in a statement.

Organic produce at the winter market is attracting a large number of consumers. A total of 972 tonnes of fresh vegetables and 398 tonnes of fruits have been sold in the past seven weeks at seasonal vegetable markets — Al Mazrouah Yard, Al Khor Yard and Al Wakra Yard. (67)

3.4. Oman

Oman government plans to establish three separate agencies to support farmers of dates, vegetable and fruits as well as livestock.

All these companies, which are being established with socio-economic objectives, are jointly promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, in coordination with Oman Food Investment Holding Company (OFIC), which is being established by the government to invest in food security projects that focus on import substitution and rural development.

The new company for marketing fruits and vegetables also has certain social objectives. "This will be a commercial company supported by the government for marketing vegetables and fruits. We had the Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (Pamap), which was closed down in 2000. Thereafter, farmers depend on major markets like Mawaleh for selling their agricultural products."

As per the plan, the company will set up procurement centres in select wilayats (especially Batinah region) for packing and grading agricultural products. "Oman's agricultural season is between December and April and during the period, the country produces several agricultural products like tomato and cucumber," said Al Abdali, adding; "The company will build infrastructure -- cold storage, warehousing and transport facilities."

He said the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries would float an international tender soon to appoint a consultant to conduct a detailed feasibility study on the whole scheme. It may take three months to complete the study and the process to form the company will start thereafter. (68)

Coating of fruits with wax to make them look shinier and increase their shelf life is a practice that continues to raise health concerns. Experts have said that such fruits can only do harm and should be avoided.

Abdul Wahab, a wholesale dealer of fruit and vegetables at the Mawaleh Central Market, said apples imported from a certain western country come with a wax coating, but there have been no complaints on it so far. (69)

Oman is being looked at as a potential market by Australia-based Sundrop Farms, for the company's eco-friendly technology that could revolutionise greenhouse farming by harnessing its abundance of sun and seawater to grow high value crops in greenhouses and tackle the issue of food security.

Sundrop Farms is the only company in the world with the technology and know-how to develop and operate greenhouses in locations that have little or no access to arable land, fresh water sources, or grid energy.

Oman imports over 65% of its food and the plan could help reduce its import dependence in key fruits and vegetables segment.

Sundrop harnesses solar energy to produce freshwater for irrigation, electricity to power greenhouses, and energy to heat and cool the crops. The ventilation system uses seawater to clean and sterilise the air, making it possible to grow crops using natural pest management. The salt and nutrients collected during the desalination process can be either reused to fertilise crops or sold to other agricultural producers.

Additionally, valuable farmland and soil is conserved as greenhouses can be set up on degraded land and in arid climates.

Maqsood added, "Sundrop's unique approach to growing vegetables in arid climates is highly complementary to the solutions GCC states are looking at."

"The crop mix would be a function of market demand. Our greenhouses have the capacity to grow a large variety of horticultural produce, including tomatoes, peppers, chillies, cucumbers and a variety of fruits." "any countries in the Middle East possess these characteristics and it is therefore our next region of priority," stated the company. (70)

Oman was ranked 14th in the 2015 Islamic Growth Markets Investment Index which ranks countries investment potential relatively within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member country grouping, said a report.

The Index is based on a set of nine metrics covering the categories of a country's growth fundamentals, growth momentum, investment momentum and relative country risk. The index highlighted zero percent relative country risk for the Omani market, latest report by Thomson Reuters in partnership with Dinar Standard, an Islamic markets research & advisory firm. Among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies led by UAE are also on the top 10 list including Qatar and Saudi Arabia. (71)

The latest statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on the consumer price index shows that inflation rose 0.4% in January compared to the same period in 2014. However, it decreased 0.2% compared to December 2014. The January rise has been attributed to increase in prices of all commodity groups except food and beverage (down 1.44%) and apparel (a fall of 1.18%). Fish, vegetables, and bread and cereals declined 8.59%. (72)

A new partnership with the aim of promoting value chain, food processing, and logistics support within a growing multibillion dollar regional food industry was formed between Sohar Port and Freezone and Essa Al Ghurair Investment at the Dubai World Trade Centre during Gulfood 2015.

With accelerated population growth, this partnership will enhance direct access to Oman and other key export markets in the GCC, as well as Iran, Pakistan, and East Africa, said Essa Bin Abdullah Al Ghurair, Chairman of Essa Al Ghurair Investment.

Essa Al Ghurair Investment is the second company to sign a deal with SOHAR in the last week, after Dubai's Centre Point Logistics entered into a contract to lease a 50,000 square metre plot as a stepping stone to its planned expansion into Saudi Arabia. (73)

Spar, one of the world's largest food store retailer, has opened its first supermarket in Oman, near Taimur Mosque in Al Khuwair. The 700 square metres supermarket will deliver a wide assortment of fresh produce including fruits and vegetables. (74)

4. Price Information

4.1. United Arab Emirates

No.	Item	Origin	Low price (dhs)	High price (dhs)	Variety	Size	Pack
1	Chillies (dried)	India	140	140	Red	15 kg	1box
2	Chillies long green	India	45	50	Green	8 kg	1 box
3	Chillies green	India	24	24	Green	4 kg	1 box
4	Chillies green fat	Jordan	22	22		1 kg	
5	Chillies red	Thailand	9	9	Red	1 kg	
6	Chillies sweet long green	Tunisia	14	14	Green	1 kg	
7	Chillies green	Oman	7	7	Green	1 kg	
8	Chillies green	Jordan	9.5	9.5	Green	1 kg	
9	Chillies long red	Morocco	14.5	14.5	Red	1 kg	
10	Chillies green	UAE	60	60	Light green	4 kg	1 box
11	Chillies red	Oman	16	16	Red	1 kg	
12	Mango (dried)	Thailand	240	240		5 kg	1 box
13	Mango alphonso	India	14	14		12 pcs	1 box
14	Mango	Kenya	21	21		8 pcs	1 box
15	Mango r2e2	Australia	26	26		1 kg	
16	Mango tomi	Brazil	11	11		1 kg	
17	Mango round	Kenya	9	9		1 kg	
18	Mango kent	Egypt	34	34		10 pcs	
19	Apple kanzi	Holland	160	160	Kanzi	16 kg	Ctn
20	Apple pink rose	New Zealand	11	11	Pink rose	1 kg	
21	Apple green	USA	130	130	Green	140 pcs	Ctn
22	Apple royal gala	France	90	90	Royal gala	112 pcs	
23	Apple fuji fancy	China	80	80	Fuji fancy	100 pcs	Ctn
24	Apple green	Italy	138	138	Green	15 kg	Ctn
25	Apple red	USA	132	132	Red	100 pcs	Ctn
26	Apple	Iran	18	18		45 pcs	1 box
27	Avocado	Kenya	28	28	Green	12 pcs	Box
28	Apple jazz	New Zealand	12	12	Jazz	1 kg	
29	Arvi	China	40	40		12 kg	Ctn
30	Acorn squash	China	14	14	Green	10 kg	Ctn
32	Banana	Philippine	40	40		16 kg	1 box
33	Broccoli	Oman	9	10	Green	1 kg	
34	Bitter melon	India	42	42	Green	10 kg	Ctn

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No.	Item	Origin	Low price (dhs)	High price (dhs)	Variety	Size	Pack
35	Beans	Iran	26	26	Green	7 kg	1 box
36	Baby marrow	Iran	13	13	Green	13 kg	Ctn
37	Beet root	Oman	5	5	Red	4 kg	Ctn
No.	Item	Origin	Low price (dhs)	High price (dhs)	Variety	Size	Pack
38	Chikoo	India	16	16		1 box	
39	Coconut	India	30	30		25 pcs	Ctn
40	Capsicum orange	Holland	18.5	18.5		1 kg	
41	Cauliflower	Oman	22	22		10 kg	Ctn
42	Cabbage	Iran	8	8	Green	10 kg	Bag
43	Capsicum yellow	Egypt	11	11		1 kg	
44	Cucumber	KSA	40	40	Green	10 kg	Ctn
45	Celery	China	21	21		3 kg	1 box
46	Capsicum green	Iran	8	8		1 kg	
47	Capsicum red	Holland	17.5	17.5		1 kg	
48	Cantaloupe	India	36	36		8 pcs	Ctn
49	Citnass	South Africa	55	55		8 kg	
50	Capsicum red	Egypt	85	85		8 kg	Ctn
51	Capsicum yellow	Holland	16	16		1 kg	
52	Carrot	China	16	16		10 kg	
53	Drumstick	India	45	45	Green	6 kg	1 box
54	Eggplant	Oman	12	12	Black	8 kg	Ctn
55	Eggplant jumbo	Oman	12	12	Black	8 kg	Ctn
56	Fresh leaves	USA	10	10		4 kg	1 beg
57	Ginger (fresh)	China	20	20		8 kg	
58	Guava	Egypt	10	12		16 pcs	
59	Grapefruit	India	40	45		4 kg	1 box
60	Gawar	Oman	7	7		1 kg	
61	Garlic	China	35	40		7 kg	Ctn
62	Iceberg lettuce	China	16	17	Green	6 pcs	Ctn
63	Kiwi	Italy	30	30		30 pcs	1 box
64	Kholrabi	China	22	22		8 kg	
65	Lemon	India	30	30		12 kg	Box
66	Long pakoda	Oman	32	32	Red	10 kg	Box
67	Lettuce	Iran	25	25	Green	30 kg	Ctn
68	Mandarin	China	30	35		1 box	
69	Mushrooms	China	60	60		4 kg	

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No.	Item	Origin	Low price (dhs)	High price (dhs)	Variety	Size	Pack
70	Nectarines	Jordan	28	28		3 kg	
71	Orange	Lebanon	35	35		42 pcs	Ctn
72	Onion	India	30	30		35 kg	Ctn
73	Okra	Oman	42	42		10 kg	Ctn
74	Pomegranate	Iran	28	30	Red	16 pcs	Ctn
75	Pineapple	Egypt	20	20		10 pcs	Ctn
No.	Item	Origin	Low price (dhs)	High price (dhs)	Variety	Size	Pack
76	Potato	Egypt	24	24		8 kg	Ctn
77	Pear	China	11	11		1 kg	1 box
78	Pumpkin	Oman	40	40	Red	10 kg	1 box
	Papaya	Oman	6	6		1 pcs (middle size)	
79	Papaya	India	35	35		8 kg	1 box
80	Parval	India	45	45		10 kg	1 box
81	Potato	Pakistan	60	60		20 kg	1 box
82	Rambutan	Vietnam	20	20		1 box	
83	Strawberry	Egypt	80	80		10 box	
84	Snap pea	Oman	20	22		7 kg	
85	Sandra	China	25	25		1 box	
86	Sweet potatoes	Oman	8	10		6 kg	
87	Suran	India	14	14		1 pcs (middle size)	Ctn
88	Tomato	KSA	20	20		20 kg	Ctn
89	Tangerine	Pakistan	20	20		8 kg	1 tray
90	Turnip	KSA	10	10		5 kg	
91	Taro	Sri Lanka	26	26		8 kg	Ctn
92	Water melon	Oman	2.5	2.5		1 kg	
93	Zucchini	Iran	16	16		15 kg	Ctn

4.2 Oman

No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
	Chillies (dried)	Not available	X	X	X	X	X
1	Chillies red	Oman	0.8	0.8	Red	1 kg	
2	Chillies	Oman	7	7	Green	10 kg	1 box
3	Chillies	India	4.5	4.5	Green	5 kg	
	Dried mango	Not available	X	X	X	X	X
4	Mango round	Kenya	1.4	1.4	Green	1 kg	
5	Mango alphosno	India	1	1	Green	1 kg	
6	Apple fuji fancy	China	11.5	11.5	Fuji fancy	100 pcs	
7	Apple	Iran	1.2	1.2	Yellow	1 kg	
8	Apple	USA	2	2	Green	1 kg	
9	Acorn squash	Oman	0.4	0.4	Green	1 kg	Ctn
10	Avocado	Kenya	4	4	Green	10 pcs	Ctn
11	Arvi	China	3	3		5 kg	Ctn
No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
12	Banana	Philippine	4	5		12 kg	1 box
13	Bitter melon	Oman	4.8	4.8	Green	8 kg	Ctn
14	Beans	Oman	0.5	0.5	Green	1 kg	
15	Baby marrow	Oman	0.4	0.4	Green	1 kg	Ctn
16	Beet root	Oman	1	1	Red	4 kg	Ctn
17	Coconut	India	4	4		20 pcs	Ctn
18	Cauliflower	Oman	1.5	1.5		8 kg	Ctn
19	Carrot	China	0.2	0.2		1 kg	1 bag
20	Cucumber	KSA	3.5	3.5	Green	10 kg	Ctn
21	Capsicum (peppers)	India	1.2	1.2		1 kg	
22	Eggplant	Oman	3	3	Black	10 kg	Ctn
23	Eggplant jumbo	Oman	2.8	2.8	Black	10 kg	Ctn
24	Grapefruit	China	2	2		3 kg	1 box
25	Garlic	China	6	6		10 kg	Ctn
26	Guava	Egypt	2	2	14 pcs	1 tray	
27	Kiwi	Iran	5	5		5 kg	1 box
28	Lemon	India	1.2	1.2		1 kg	Box
29	Orange	Lebanon	3	3		40 pcs	Ctn
30	Onion	Pakistan	4	4		35 kg	Ctn
31	Paprika	Oman	0.8	0.8		1 kg	
32	Pomegranate	Egypt	3	3	Red	12 pcs	Ctn

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No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
33	Potato	Pakistan	4	4		10 kg	Ctn
34	Pear	China	2.5	2.5		5 kg	1 box
35	Pumpkin	Oman	2	2.2	Red	4 kg	1 box
36	Papaya	Oman	0.6	0.8		1 pcs	
37	Strawberry	Egypt	1	1		12 pcs	1tray
38	Sweet potatoes	India	2.6	2.6		8 kg	
39	Snap pea	Oman	3	3		5 kg	
40	Turnip	Oman	2	2		4 kg	
41	Tangerine	Pakistan	4	4		6 kg	
42	Tomato	Oman	2	2		8 kg	Ctn
43	Taro	India	0.8	0.8		1 kg	Ctn
44	Water melon	Sri Lanka	0.3	0.3		1 kg	

4.3. Qatar

No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
	Chillies (dried)	Not available	X	X	X	X	X
1	Chillies long	India	10	10	Red	1 kg	
2	Chillies	India	20	20	Green	4 kg	Ctn
	Dried mango	Not available	X	X	X	X	X
3	Mango	Kenya	43	43		10 pcs	Ctn
4	Mango	Africa	40	40		10 pcs	Ctn
5	Mango	Australia	32.5	32.5		1 kg	
6	Mango	Thailand	29.5	29.5		1 kg	
7	Apple fuji fancy	France	108	108	Gala	12 kg	Ctn
8	Apple	USA	110	110	Green	16 kg	Ctn
9	Avocado	Kenya	28	30		4.5 kg	Ctn
10	Banana	Philippine	68	68		14 kg	
11	Bitter melon	India	10	10		1 kg	
12	Beans	India	10	10	Green	1 kg	
13	Broccoli	Australia	18	18		1 kg	
14	Baby marrow	Doha	54	55	Green	6 kg	
15	Beet root	KSA	21	21		7 kg	Ctn
16	Coconut	India	3	3		1 kg	
17	Celery	Australia	18	18		1 kg	
18	Cauliflower	Doha	19	20		6 kg	Ctn

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No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
19	Cabbage	KSA	15	15		12 pcs	Ctn
20	Carrot	Australia	50	50		10 kg	Ctn
21	Cucumber	Doha	27	27		6 kg	Ctn
22	Cantaloupe	Oman	10	10		4 kg	Ctn
23	Capsicum (peppers)	Jordan	30	30		6 kg	Ctn
24	Drumstick	India	11	11	Green	1 kg	
25	Eggplant	Doha	18	18	Green	6 kg	Ctn
26	Grapefruit	Turkey	30	30		6 kg	Ctn
27	Garlic	China	53	53		10 kg	Ctn
28	Green bean	Doha	48	48	Green	4 kg	
29	Guava	Egypt	15	15		2 kg	
30	Kiwi	Iran	27	27		33 pcs	Ctn
31	Lettuce	Jordan	48	48		10 kg	Ctn
32	Lemon	Turkey	78	78		15 kg	
33	Orange	Egypt	45	45		15 kg	
34	Onion	India	55	55		30 kg	Ctn
No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyal)	High price (riyal)	Variety	Size	Pack
35	Okra	India	10	10		1 kg	
36	Onion	Pakistan	48	48		30 kg	Ctn
37	Pomegranate	India	42	43		3 kg	
38	Potato	Egypt	18	18		6 kg	Ctn
39	Pineapple	Philippine	75	75		8 pcs	
40	Pear	USA	88	88		10 kg	Ctn
41	Pear	Lebanon	20	20		3 kg	
42	Pumpkin	KSA	3	3		1 kg	
43	Papaya	India	10	10		1 kg	
44	Strawberry	Egypt	35	35	Red	6 packs	
45	Sweet potatoes	Egypt	15	15		3 kg	Ctn
46	Tangerine	Pakistan	40	40		10 kg	Ctn
47	Tomato	Jordan	21	21		7 kg	Ctn
48	Tomato	Egypt	10	10		20 kg	Ctn
49	Taro	Sri Lanka	27	27		10 kg	Ctn
50	Water melon	Iran	3	3		1 kg	

4.4 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyals)	High price (riyals)	Variety	Size	Pack
1	Short green chillies	Bangladesh	15	15	Green	1 kg	Bag
1	Mango	Yemen	35	35		10 medium pieces	box
2	Mango	Kenya	45	45		9 pieces	box
1	Mango (frozen)		10	10		1kg	pack
1	Apple green	France	110	120	Green	18 kg	Ctn
2	Apple red	Chile	110	110	Red	17 kg	Ctn
3	Apple (yellow)	France	75	75	Yellow	17 kg	Ctn
4	Apple	Lebanon	25	25	Yellow	6.5 kg	Basket
5	Apple	Lebanon	25	25	Red	6.5 kg	Basket
6	Apple fuji	France	80	80	Sweet	17 kg	Ctn
7	Avocado	Lebanon	27	30	Green	2.5 kg	Ctn
8	Avocado	Kenya	30	35	Green	12 pcs	Box
9	Banana	Yemeni	10	10		2 kg	Bag
10	Banana	USA	55	55		13 kg	Box
11	Banana	Yemeni	65	65		24 kg	Box
12	Beans	KSA	40	40	Green	8 kg	box
13	Beet root	KSA	10	10		68 kg	bag
14	Carrot	KSA	10	10		8-10 kg	Bag
15	Cauliflower	KSA	20	25		8 pieces	Ctn
16	Cauliflower	KSA	25	25	Small	16 pieces	Ctn
17	Cabbage	KSA	10	12	Green	6 pcs	Bag
18	Cucumber	KSA	10	10	Green	5 kg	Ctn
19	Cucumber	KSA	20	22	Green	15 kg	Ctn
20	Capsicum (peppers)	KSA	30	35	Red	15kg	Ctn
21	Capsicum (peppers)	KSA	5	5	Green	1 kg	bag
22	Eggplant	KSA	20	25	Black	10 kg	Ctn
23	Grapes	South Africa	10	10	Red	1.5 kg	Bag
24	Grapes	India	10	10	Green	1.5 kg	Bag
25	Grapefruit	Turkey	60	60		16 kg	box
26	Garlic	China	35	35	10 packs	0.900 g	Ctn
27	Ginger	China	35	35		9 kg	Ctn
28	Green bean	KSA	5	5		0.750 g	Box
29	Guava	Egypt	9	10		1.5 kg	box
30	Kiwi	Iran	20	25		27 pieces	Box
31	Kiwi	Greece	25	27		27 pieces	box

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No.	Item	Origin	Low price (riyals)	High price (riyals)	Variety	Size	Pack
32	Lemon	Egypt	30	30	Big pieces	10 kg	Ctn
33	Lemon	Egypt	10	10		2 kg	Bag
34	Lemon	Turkey	20	20	Big pieces	6kg	Ctn
35	Lemon	Turkey	18	18		5 kg	Ctn
36	Lettuce	Egypt	40	40	10 pieces		Ctn
37	Lettuce	KA	3	4	Green	1 kg	Bag
38	Mandarin	Morocco	80	80		10kg	Box
39	Mandarin	Pakistan	35	35		10 kg	Box
40	Orange	Lebanon	18	20		6.5 kg	Basket
41	Orange	Egypt	35	35	Juice	70 pieces	Ctn
42	Orange	Egypt	20	20		8 kg	Ctn
43	Onion	Egypt	15	15		10 kg	Bag
44	Onion	Egypt	5	5		3 kg	Bag
45	Onion	KSA	10	10	White	2.5 kg	Bag
46	Okra	KSA	10	10		1 kg	Bag
47	Pomegranate	India	35	35	Red	3.5 kg	Ctn
48	Pineapple	Malaysia	30	30	Big	8 pcs	Ctn
49	Potato	KSA	10	10		5 kg	Bag
50	Potato	KSA	5	5		1.5 kg	Bag
51	Pear	South Africa	9	10		1.5 kg	Basket
52	Pumpkin	USA	12	12	Small	4 kg	Bag
53	Red beet root	KSA	35	40		10 kg	Ctn
54	Spinach	KSA	4	4		1 kg	Pack
	Papaya	Oman	6	6		1 pcs (middle size)	
55	Strawberry	Egypt	20	20	8 packs		Ctn
56	Strawberry	Egypt	10	10		1 kg	Pack
57	Sweet pepper	Jordan	45	45	Yellow	4.5 kg	Ctn
58	Sweet pepper	Jordan	45	45	Red	4.5 kg	Ctn
59	Tomato	Egypt	20	20		8 kg	Basket
60	Tomato	KSA	35	40		20 kg	Ctn
61	Taro	India	35	40	Small	10 kg	Bag
62	Zucchini	KSA	15	20		8 kg	Ctn
63	Zucchini	KSA	25	30		15 kg	Ctn

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