



UNCTAD

The United Nations Conference on  
Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
International Business

# Dates Sector

National Green Export Report

Dr. Omar al Jabri

# Date Palm

- Only half of the dates produced is used for human consumption
- Other half being primarily utilized for animal feed or considered surplus and wasted.
- Dates are consumed mainly as fresh Rutab,
- Date syrup, date sugar and other by-products.
- Main pests in Oman are Dubas bug and red palm weevil.
- Problems: Traditional methods of cultivation, small farm size, labor availability and poor postharvest handling and marketing.
- New offshoots produced from tissue culture with the primary focus on superior cultivars that are kept, among other cultivars, in the date palm ex situ gene bank.
- Processing still lagging behind for dates and by-products.

# Consumption

- Fresh whole dates sold in 3 forms namely Dates, Rutab and Bussor in few countries with fresh dates representing more than 60% of total production
- Local annual p/c date from less than 2Kg to 38Kg.
- Reaches peak during Ramadan.
- Date Demand income elasticity is hypothetically low
- Demand price elasticity is also very low indicating low impact of price variations on quantity demanded (-0.3)
- Local consumption comes from citizens. Expats are not big consumers (in Oman they consume around 5% of average local consumption)





Recipes by Anna and Liz






# Dates Supply Chain

- This sector (Worldwide, regional, and domestic) witnessed developments and modernization in many functions performed in SC (harvesting, packing, processing and marketing).
- Local consumption 60 to 70% in most countries (with the exception of North African Countries)
- Framers/ producers play significant role in dates marketing together with small traders
- Date export has not developed with same pace in all countries of the region.

# Export



- Most active channels handling large proportion of production are traditional.
- Trading procedures and industrial organization do not guaranty basic GSO quality standard 1916/2009 on loose dates.
- Few companies have started production of quality dates with diversified packing as a response to local demand from high revenue consumers and export demand
- Packaging by local companies remains in low and medium segments; it does not carry any image of the country.

- 
- Dates identified by ITHRAA as one of a total of 50 thrust products with most potential.
  - Competitiveness of Omani dates in Indian market was rated as particularly high.
  - Unlike other countries, no particular quality label or Geographical Indications (GI) nor Protected Geographical Indicators established in palm date sector in Oman

# Marketing constraints

- Heavy involvement of farmers
- Narrow range of varieties for processing / packing.
- No outstanding variety
- Limited range of processed products
- Packaging substandard relatively to competitors
- Dispersed operators, with small own resources for promotion and development



- 
- 
- No processors / exporters organization
  - GSO specific Technical Regulation(s) for dates exist, but neither applied nor enforced
  - Lack of promotion of Omani dates by tourism industry or air carriers
  - Lost opportunities for by-products valorization

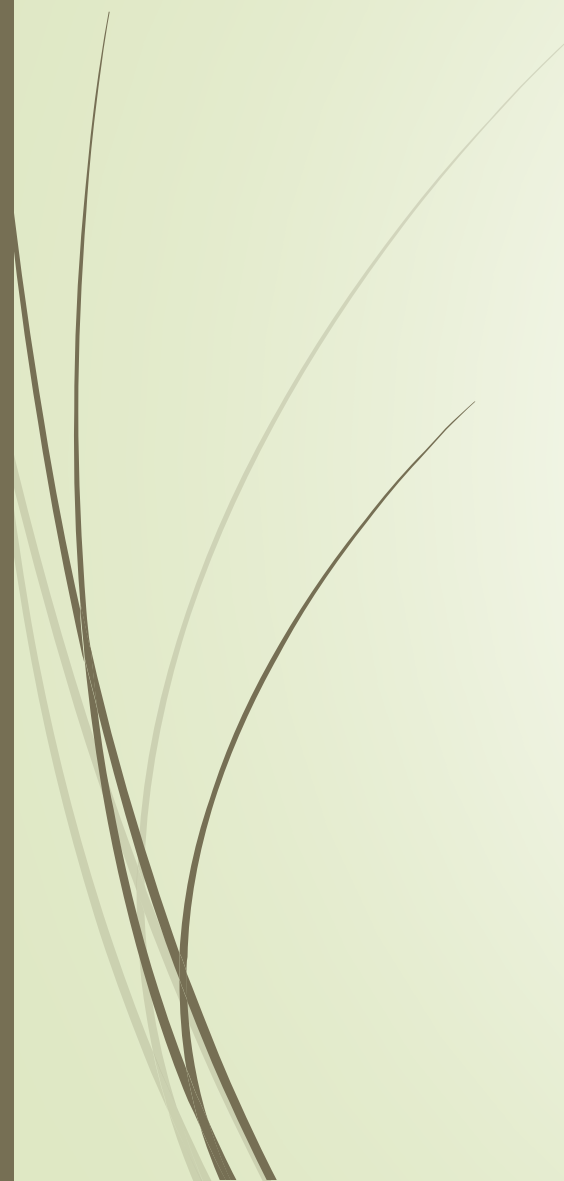


## Tangible opportunities/ encouragements for rewarding marketing


- National plans for tourism development
- Active and demanding regional market both for fresh and processed products
- Potential of differentiation through new varieties in EU/US markets because of two dominant varieties “Deglet Nour” and “Medjool”
- appropriate legislation (intellectual property) has been drafted.



# SWOT



# Strength





- Recognition from government on importance of Date sector
- Availability of infrastructure and agencies that help promote export (ITHRAA, Handcraft Authority, OmanAir, MoT, ..)
- Potential to grow many high value variety
- High nutritional value of Omani dates
- Traditional attachment to date palm
- High number of date palms that could improve production and productivity if managed
- Capability of Omani to work with dates (traditionally and heritage inherited)




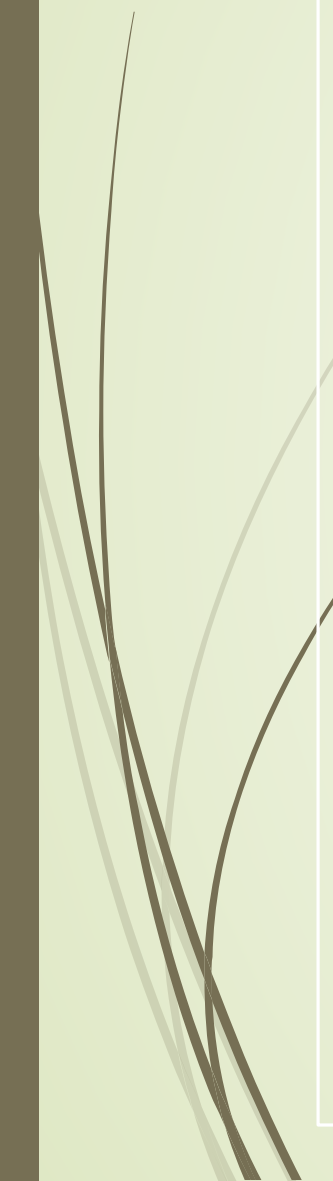
# Weakness

- Lack of innovation in farming and cultivation of date palm.
- Farm cultivation practices that have not coped with technological advances and innovations.
- Sanitation and diseases threats that affected quality and increased losses at harvest level.
- Lack of industrial coordination between production and post-harvest functions of storage, packaging, processing and transportation.
- Dominance of traditional local markets and marketing procedures

- 
- 
- Distorted date-business industry with insufficient storage facilities and logistics.
  - Non-competitive market organization to the advantage of local or international intermediaries.
  - High losses of dates and palm date by-products and lost opportunities for unused dates
  - Low product diversification
  - Low returns to date palm cultivation at the national level and consequently low returns to water and land resources and low contribution of the sector to agricultural GDP.

# Opportunities

- Recognized as thrust product within a coherent, Government-led export strategy, to be elaborated further.
- Active and demanding regional market both for fresh and processed products
- Potential of differentiation through new varieties in EU/US markets because of two dominant varieties "Deglet Nour" and "Medjool"


- 
- 
- Dates selected as one of thrust products by ITHRAA, consequently significant budgets are likely to be devoted to enhancing its exports in its programming process
  - Upgrading value added of date products and palm date by-product
  - Enhancing export revenues
  - Creating new employment opportunities through new investments in the industry
  - Tourism export by utilizing date sector to promote



# Threats

- International competition worldwide
- Competition of imported dates
- Leaving farms managed by expat labor and mismanagement
- Uncontrolled pesticide use



- 
- DISCUSSION WAS FOCUSING ON DATES ONLY
  - WHAT IS GENERATED FROM DATES / DATES PALMS
  - WHERE DATES ARE FOUND



# Date & Tourism: Linkages















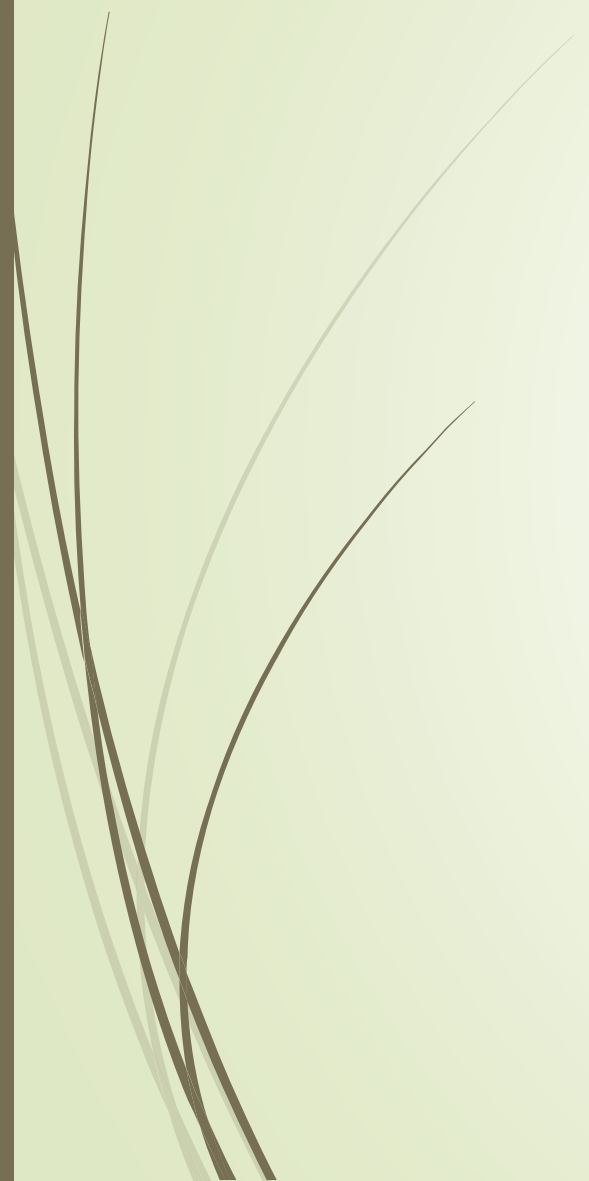


© D/W/A. Al-khazrafi





THE  
NATIONAL  
MUSEUM





# Recommendations

- Promote date palm related handcraft
- Initiate date palm society
- Optimizing fruit size
- Optimize nutritional content and rapid cultivar selectivity
- Employing modern orchard layouts and mechanization of labor dependent cultural practices
- Optimize and promote byproducts
- Utilize date sector and link with other sectors such as tourism
- Create a brand name for Omani Dates



Thank you