



Research, Technology and Innovation Platform for the Date Palm Integrated Production System in Near East and North Africa region



©Anwar Haddad (JDA)



Rationale

Date palm is one of high economical value crops in the Near East and North Africa region (NENA) in general and the Arab Peninsula and North Africa Sub-Regions in particular and considered as an important part of the religious, cultural, and economic heritage. Date palm represents a large cultivated area with an estimation of 1.30 million hectare in the region.

The production and distribution systems of the date palm dominate value chains through modernized sustainable production systems and expanding exports, which contribute to the achievements of a number of sustainable development goals (SDGs). However, constraints to these value chains limits the competitiveness of the date palm sector in local, regional and international markets.

The region is experiencing a huge knowledge gap, as the information and knowledge produced locally are not easily accessible. To close the gap, FAO and AARINENA joined efforts to explore opportunities to sustainably improve the quality and quantity of date palm production and support the small-scale producers. This joint effort resulted in establishing a research, technology and innovation date palm virtual platform.

This innovation platform provides, for the first time, a digital mean for collaboration and interaction between researchers, producers, funders, policy makers, private industries, government agencies and other stakeholders to maintain high competitiveness of date palm products in a dynamic global market.



Objective

This innovation platform aims at establishing an interactive and collaborative multi-stakeholder regional platform to promote the date palm integrated production system in NENA Region. The **immediate objectives** of this platform are:

- to interconnect relevant stakeholders effectively;
- to share, exchange and consolidate available knowledge, information, technologies and innovations related to date palm value chain;
- to actively contribute to addressing major problems in the palm production in the region.



©Anwar Haddad (JDA)



The function

The platform was designed to facilitate a full cycle model from idea to innovation and vice versa. Includes the backend server and software for storing data, processing information, providing artificial intelligence support and providing web services to communicate with other parts of the platform. The frontend applications provide interface to various stakeholders and display reports,

statistics via a dashboard, discussion forums, projects, news and activities. The platform demonstrates a model of collaboration among relevant stakeholders and partners on date palm issues, research, development, innovations, regulations and funding. The platform can also actively enhance the capacity of producers and young professionals in the region.

Activities

- Coordinate stakeholders on aspects related to date palm production systems.
- Identify research and knowledge gaps, technical innovations and practices related to the date palm value chain.
- Develop a regional model for an innovation platform including a monitoring and evaluation system for date palm integrated production system.
- Building the capacity of various stakeholders.
- Promoting awareness on the importance of date palm technical innovations.
- Scaling technologies to small-scale producers.

Outcomes

- An inventory of relevant stakeholders related to date palm production system.
- Identification of research priorities, technologies and technical innovations related to the date palm value chain.
- Interactive protocols established and functioning.
- Operationalized a distance-coaching protocol.
- Established backend server and software for

storing and processing information, providing technical support, and web services for communication among the innovation platform partners.

- Frontend applications providing interface to various members and partners, display reports via the dashboard, and provide instant real-time statistics on date palm.

This digital innovation platform was launched in the opening ceremony of the 7th International Date Palm Conference in March 14, 2022 in Abu Dhabi.



See you at: <https://aarinena.org/palm/>

Contact:

Office of Innovation • E-mail: OINR-Chief@fao.org • Rome, Italy

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

AARINENA • E-mail: a.aarinena@gmail.com • Amman, Jordan

Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East & North Africa



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence

