



Dear Reader,

the unprepared visitor from Europe will quickly notice the abject poverty and difficult sanitary conditions that are still widespread particularly in rural Egypt. Even where waste could be easily removed and the beauty of the Egyptian desert employed to make any village more attractive to its inhabitants and visitors, this is often not done. Waste is accumulating and there is little understanding of the possibilities of how to make life in the village both healthier and friendlier.

The reason for this, the difficult economic conditions in the countryside and therefore the lack of financial means aside, is the little awareness of the people about what could be achieved easily, together, and with little money. In the past, SEKEM has repeatedly helped villagers to improve their living conditions through projects like the 2002 "Al-Ponte-Youth Project". But actions like these regularly suffer from their locally restricted impact and a lack of sustainability.

In the last edition, we introduced our readers to the "13-villages-project", an attempt to solve the problem with a comprehensive approach to human development assisted by European aid to bring sustainability to the Egyptian countryside. In this issue, we will report on what exactly SEKEM and its social workers do in the fields of health care and sanitation in rural Egypt. The series will be continued the following months with reports on the remaining parts of the project.

Your Editorial Team

News

New Solar Dryer in Development

Projects

13 Villages Project: Health

Businesses

SEKEM Ingredients Win Award

Education for Health and Security

13-Villages-Project Helps Women in Pregnancy, Maternity



Children in the countryside: cheerful plays even in abject poverty

The set of actions on "health and sanitary conditions" to be employed in the villages surrounding SEKEM is an integral part of the "13-Villages-Project" SEKEM has been carrying out since mid-2006 with assistance of the European Union in the area of the mother farm. SEKEM Insight has reported on the project in its last edition. The activity package on the subjects of health protection and preservation of particularly women of the 13 villages that had been selected for the project, contains a set of measures dealing with the most critical issues: the quality of medicinal care and access to it, pregnancy and maternity care in the country-

side, as well as training of midwives and long-term awareness-raising.

The project is lead by Dr. Ahmed Ismail, doctor in chief of SEKEM's hospital – the Medical Center. Other doctors and social workers of the initiative are also involved. Initially, they had found people in all of the villages that supported its ideas and were willing to assist in the implementation of the project.

The programme includes the training of 13 midwives that have just arrived in the area or are already in service. Training material is being prepared and distributed by an experienced physician. The training schedule comprises intensive

Continued on page 2



commitment to issues like the midwives' ways of dealing with pregnant women, measures to increase personal hygiene, sterilization of equipment and women's hygiene, symptoms of delivery at risk, referral procedures involving other medical personnel, after delivery diseases, and basic instruction on how to fight female genital mutilation, its dangers to girls' health, and its impact on pregnant women during childbirth.

A part of the programme focuses on the care of pregnant women in the countryside. The pregnancies of approximately 350 women were monitored through a special examination scheme. This way, their first examinations could be conducted in the Medical Centre under the supervision of SEKEMs gynecologist, Dr. Salwa Amin, and the nurse Rasha Badway. Additionally, an informational booklet was produced on issues related to pregnancy and maternity and distributed among the women under examination. For women who could not read, special curricular material was produced to allow them to be educated on these subjects. SEKEM also used material from the Egyptian Ministry of Public Health and adapted it for special use.

To raise the level of general health care in the long term, 25 social workers were selected and their training in basic medicinal care has begun. External medical expertise was also brought into the project for this action and to develop additional training materials. Several social workers were selected for this measure. They could participate in a number of intensive, eight-day training programmes throughout the summer of 2006. The programmes also intended to train these social workers in the necessary communication abilities to enable them to discuss critical subjects such as individual health, domestic sanitary conditions, or the proper care of newborn children with affected women personally. Several information sessions were staged in both the villages and the Mahad, SEKEMs



Waste and lack of hygiene lead to parasites and widespread illnesses

adult training institute. All enjoyed great interest among the local population. Moreover, it was also the task of the social workers to further confidence in the women to seek a doctor in case of illnesses and to commit themselves to the care of the Medical Center regularly for routine examinations.

SEKEMs staff furthermore developed an outreach programme in this context in the scope of which social workers worked directly in the villages to reach a populace as effectively as possible. The programme had been developed by an experienced gynecologist and was attended by more than 180 villagers. It was supplemented by awareness-raising actions to instruct the population on how to deal with the most prevalent domestic hygienic problems. Quarterly meetings were also set up to aid this cause in the long term. Approximately 65-150 people attended each of these meetings.

To promote the sessions, the social workers used innovative ways to reach the population. They published notices that were presented on walls in the villages' centers, and also made use of the loudspeakers of the local

mosques to announce the place, date and time of the events.

Not surprisingly, SEKEMs staff encountered almost no skepticism concerning their activities at all. Too good is the reputation of both the Medical Center, its doctors, and the workers and nurses who often themselves come from the surrounding villages. This notoriety greatly increases the chances of success of their project. As expected, the project managers could file a very positive interim report at the end of the first stage.

However, at all the meetings in the 13 villages, one thing repeatedly caught the attention of SEKEMs staff: the poverty and dirt so prevalent in the dwellings, that it cannot easily be overcome by the villagers themselves without additional help. The widespread issues related to parasites and their adverse effects to their health was noticed in particular. It necessitates even more training and physical aid on how to deal with wastes and their removal or recycling, a part of the project SEKEM Insight will focus on in the next issue.

Bijan Kafi & Yvonne Floride



New Solar Drying Facility in Development

EBDA Tests Innovative System

Proper drying of herbs and medicinal crops is a vital and critical step in the production chain. At the moment, small-scale growers are using traditional systems which pose a risk to the production of high-quality products in terms of microbiological contamination. This can have negative effects on the farmers themselves, as their products can either not be exported at all, or may need upgrading through expensive methods of de-contamination.

The main objective of the ongoing project run by the EBDA (Egyptian Biodynamic Association) is to develop a solar drying system with optimum capacity to cope with crop pattern, transportation means and existing facilities' energy supplies. An improved drying system would help small scale farmers to overcome the above-mentioned disadvantages. Within the scope of the project, a prototype was constructed, run through stress tests and subsequently modified several



The new dryer works more efficiently, produces better products and is cost-efficient

times. The facility is now being tested on one of SEKEM's farms to monitor its drying characteristics that need to be identified for various crops over a longer time.

The fact that such a facility is economically feasible is the main result of product testing in the first year. The second year shall provide the ability to disseminate the test results more widely to other stakeholders: farmers

still need to understand the added value of such a system, new actors must be won as potential owners and operators, talks will commence with representatives of financial institutions to provide loans to farmers, and local entrepreneurs must be found to eventually manufacture the system.

*Nermeen Asham,
Amr Mostafa*

ISIS, Libra Renew demeter-Certification

COAE Assesses SEKEM's Farms, Acknowledges Good Production Methods

Even though it could be pure routine by now, all employees of SEKEM's two farms Libra and ISIS are always anxious to receive the two inspectors Eng. Bahaa Mustafa and Dr. Yousri Hashem from the COAE (Centre of Organic Agriculture in Egypt), the Egyptian certification body for organic and demeter products.

In compliance with the regulations of the European Union on the production of organic food and the international standards of demeter, all relevant stages in the production process must be duly checked: actually produced quantities of products must correspond to those stated in the documents, only organic raw materials are allowed to be used and must

be stored separated from conventional materials. Pesticides are not allowed as are any other additives. The inspectors check all relevant stages of the entire process of production of organic and demeter-produce.

As in prior years also this time the inspectors could confirm that both Libra and ISIS are producing in correspondence with all relevant regulation from both the EU and demeter international. Their reports have been presented to the certification directorate which subsequently renewed their certifications. Now Libra and ISIS can continue to market their products as "bio" and "demeter-certified".

The COAE was established in 1992 and has been recognized as a private con-



trolling body by the Egyptian government. Since 1999 the COAE has been accredited by the European Union following their regulation on the production of organic food products and has ever since enjoyed an excellent reputation. The COAE monitors over 200 farms in Egypt for their compliance with European standards and also inspects processing factories of foodstuffs and textiles. The COAE also verifies compliance with fairtrade/FLO regulations and is active in other African countries.

Christina Boecker

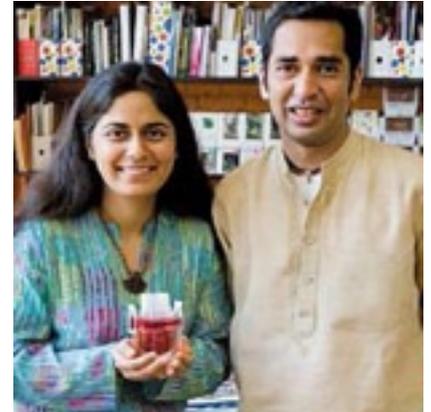


SEKEM Customer Wins With SEKEM Spearmint

Indian Tea Grower Use SEKEM Spearmint in Award-Winning Product

SEKEM's customer, Shashank Goel from INEEKA, scored first his outstanding beverage, a spearmint tea, at an international competition recently. The spearmint used by INEEKA in its Himalaya "Spearmint Lavender/Charm" tea comes from SEKEM's plantations. The NASFT-prize for outstanding beverages and other products that is awarded by the US-magazine "Specialty Food" was given to INEEKA in July at a ceremony in New York. INEEKA also scored another impres-

sive success by coming in as finalist in the competition for most innovative product design and packaging. "We have the best quality, cleanest, purest tea, with a strong social and environmental mission behind it," Goel says of the 14-variety line. His statement also underscores the relevance of SEKEM being a supporter that is both environmentally and socially aware in the way it produces and markets its products globally.



Bijan Kafi

SEKEM's Customer Shashank Goel with his wife

SEKEM's Teachers Build Musical Instruments

That artistic education plays an important part in Rudolf Steiner Schools is a well-known fact. Every child, for instance, learns to play the flute already in the very first classes. Sometimes the musical instruments used are even built by the parents themselves under professional guidance from teachers. However, the time required by daily duties generally does not allow teachers to actually build the instruments themselves. Not so at the SEKEM school. Mrs. Karin Posthumus from SEKEM's support association in The Netherlands has recently shown SEKEM's teachers how to do it.

Together with older pupils and some teachers, Mrs. Posthumus, who has visited SEKEM repeatedly in the past, has manufactured flutes that receive their holes only after a certain time. With these flutes, the teachers can now personally enrich the rhythmical parts of the main curriculum every morning and learn to play the instrument better together with their classes. Mrs. Posthumus has visited SEKEM for the third time this November and together with other participants built one class set of flutes and practiced playing them together with the teachers how to play them and incorporate their use in their curricula. Since



SEKEM teachers in the SEKEM school during music class

these flutes initially do not have any holes, the pupils can concentrate on controlling the flow of their breath through the instrument. Trained in basic handling of the flute, the first hole is drilled into the instrument that now allows two-tone-songs to be played or songs to be accompanied by singing.

Such handling of a musical instrument in primary education holds experiences for children that go far beyond those of regular everyday play. The

pupils have to learn how to precisely control their breathing. Moreover, they have to get accustomed to handling the instrument accurately with their small fingers – a fundamental capacity important for their entire life. This also trains them to coordinate their breath and the movements of their fingers and mouth as well as their concentration and perseverance in mastering the new challenge.

Angela Hofmann



Impressions from SEKEM



A rainbow over the SEKEM farm, Christmas Eve 2004

A rainbow overarches SEKEM with its date palms and lush vegetation on Christmas Eve. As one would expect, rainbows make only seldom appearances in the desert. Even though it usually rains at least once or twice a year, this normally happens only during the winter months between November and February. Then, temperatures even in SEKEM can easily fall to approximately 8° centigrade at night and there are more clouds in the sky than normally. The winter rains in Egypt can then become torrential floods as the city is not prepared for any rain that can sometimes even briefly green the desert.

Bijan Kafi

Conytex Develops New Eco-Product Range for Toddlers

Distribution starts in all Alnatura Supermarkets in Germany

SEKEM's Conytex together with its long-standing partner German partner Alnatura launches a new product range of textiles for babies and toddlers made entirely from fair-trade and organically grown cotton: biobaby. The assortment is made up of 60 pieces in total and offers a full outfit for the newborn including underwear and clothes in warm shades of cream, bright red or blue, as well as colourful patterns. The series is complemented by a range of lively accessories matching patterns and colours.

The cotton used for the biobaby line comes from SEKEM's organic plantations and is grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers and plucked by hand. Furthermore, all textiles have to comply with the regulations of the international association of the organic textiles industry. Conytex' new products are on sale in Germany beginning immediately at the 27 Alnatura shops.



The new product range in colourful patterns

Bijan Kafi



Imprint:

Publisher: *SEKEM*, Egypt

The editorial team of SEKEM Insight would like to thank all correspondents who have contributed to this edition.

Editors:
Christina Boecker
Bijan Kafi
Natascha Floride

Contact:
SEKEM-Insight
c/o Sekem Holding
P.O.Box 2834
El Horreya, Heliopolis,
Cairo, Egypt