

November Newsletter, 2019

Dates Season of 2019 and New Prospects of Organic Production In Jericho and Jordan Valley



The “Moon Valley” medjoul dates factory in Jericho

By the middle of September every year Al-Reef starts operating the medjoul dates factory in Jericho, after finishing the harvest process and receiving the high quality dates from the skilled Palestinian small farmers into the factory, the dates pass through multiple stages in order to get ready for export to international markets throughout our long-term external partnerships.



Al-Reef staff receiving the dates from farmers

Stage 1: Cleaning and Sterilizing

After doing the laboratory tests and sterilizing the dates, they get washed by water and special brushes.



Stage 2: Drying

Dates are dried by passing under some fans and heaters to prevent it from acidification.



Stage 3: Filtering

High humidity and damaged fruits are taken out and put aside by the factory's experienced workers.



Stage 4: Grading

Each fruit of dates is ordered on a cup for taking the piece's weight by a balance and determining the percentage of lose skin (air) by a specialized camera, then these information is sent to a computer, depending on that, the computer automatically sends each piece to its specific station.



Stage 5: Filling

Dates are sorted in boxes by the factory's workers to check the sizes to avoid any computer errors that might occur. Then a sticker that shows type and size and a nutrition label are put on the dates boxes.



Stage 6: Packaging

The filled dates boxes are sent to the packaging machine in order to wrap up the box with a nylon layer, then the carton cover is put and the boxes are placed on the palette.



Stage 7: Storing

The end product of the dates boxes is reserved in cooling refrigerators.

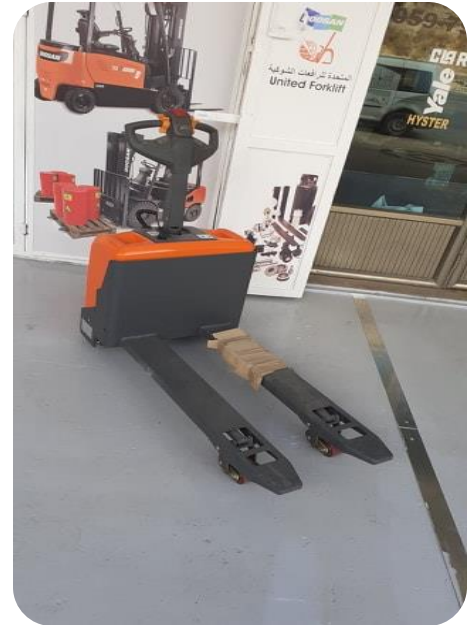


The above stages are controlled and observed by the financial department, production department, quality assurance department.

What is new at the factory this season?

Electric Forklift Machine

Al-Reef purchased an electric forklift machine to facilitate the handling process between workers and improve working conditions inside the factory.



A new packaging machine

Al-Reef is always keen to provide comfort to the factory's workers, this is why Al-Reef has purchased a new packaging machine which is effort and time saving; the speed is up to 500 packages per one hour, in addition to the high quality of the end result of the packages.



Improving working conditions

Al-Reef established a lunch room for the factory's workers, after chatting with some women, they said that lunch breaks are essential in helping them to de-stress and re-charge for the rest of the workday, they have fun times eating and interacting with each other and sharing their stories. They said that this room has made them feel like a family by drinking and eating on the same table every day. This led to improve their mental well-being and increased their job satisfaction.



The new lunch room

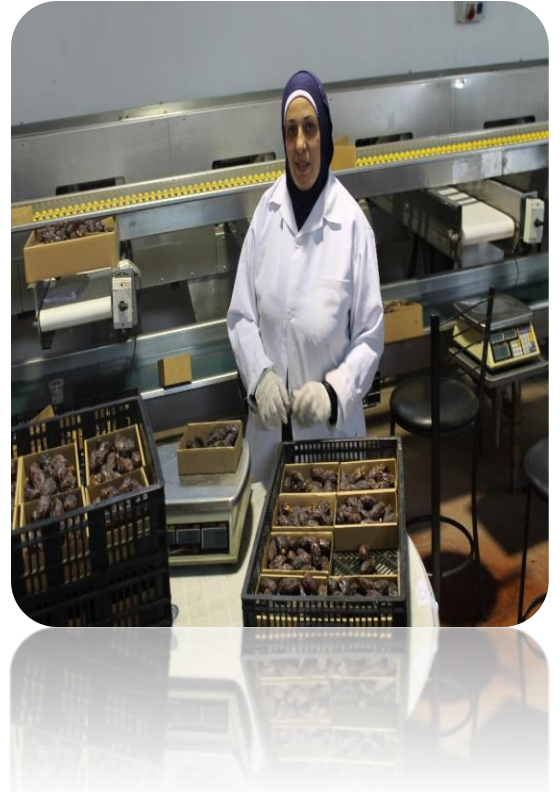
Meet some of the skilled workers:

Shadia Farawla

15 years of experience at Al-Reef

Working at the dates factory has taught me everything about dates with the help of Al-Reef's engineers, starting from the palm trees in the farm till they arrive to the factory and how to sort the dates and fill them. My dream is to have my own dates farm, by working at the factory I have gained the needed experience and knowledge in this field.

This job, in addition, has helped me support my family financially and built a future for my five children by contributing for their education. It has made me change my role from a typical housewife into a working woman, I have built an independent personality and established relationships which helped me learn from other people. This has enhanced my self-esteem and confidence.



Khawla Balu

10 years of experience at Al-Reef

I love my job! Due to the learning experience and Al-Reef's reputation. My salary helps me face life's challenges and supports my family's economic status.

This job has taught me how to distinguish the size and quality of each piece of dates. It helped me get myself out of life's routine and change the traditional role of women, it also makes me feel active all the time. I feel proud that my work gets exported to international markets, this is an evidence for Al-Reef's success and quality mastering.



Ibrahim Hreibat

Trainee at the Agronomists Training Center in Jericho

I studied BA in Sustainable Environment and Agriculture at Khaddoury University in Toulkarem city. The training center is very beneficial; it enables me to see the application of education in reality. As a fresh graduate, training at the dates factory has improved my skills and experience. Now, I have the ability to identify different kinds of dates, I am also getting introduced to the factory’s machines and workflow system. I have realized that Al-Reef is in a continuous progress and it gives me special feelings knowing that it exports Palestinian agro-products to international markets despite the Israeli occupation and the regulations it puts on the Palestinians.



New Prospects of organic production

Pioneers in production and marketing the Palestinian organic medjoul dates

The number of organic farms, organic farmers and organic retail shops are in a continuous growth globally. The development of organic agriculture is rising, and organic markets are showing a positive trend and a high demand whether on a local level or international level.

Al-Reef has strategically believed and adopted the idea of organic farming (safe agriculture) in order to maintain the access and competition in international markets; our objective is to achieve optimum quantities of produce of high nutritional quality without the use of artificial fertilizers or chemicals. The entire world is now aware of the importance and necessity of having a sustainable ecosystem, food security and good nutrition. Within our sustainable strategic approach for planting and producing healthy products for humans and safe for the environment and the ability to compete domestically and internationally. Since more than 12 years, Al-Reef initiated and in cooperation with Palestine Agriculture Relief Committee (PARC) and Company of Organic Agriculture in Palestine (COAP), to invest in knowledge, capital and human resources to achieve this strategy in collaboration with the Palestinian agricultural cooperatives. This journey succeeded by obtaining organic certifications for 12 cooperatives and an olive oil press, in which contributed to expand the external markets for this product. In the recent years, this plan extended to small scale farmers to earn organic certificates for producing wheat (to make Maftoul) and for the Palestinian medjoul dates.

This season Al-Reef succeeded to be the first company in Palestine who has organic dates certification from COAP for the company's dates farm and factory, also COAP certified a dates farm in Jiftlik, Jordan Valley area for the farmer; Amjad Barakat. Al-Reef supports him by purchasing his produce and markets it in international markets in fair prices.



Al-Reef and farms organic certificates issued by COAP for the year of 2019:



Aman Farm for producing wheat certificate



Al-Reef's certificate for Dates, Maftoul and Olive Oil



Al-Reef's dates farm certificate



Amjad Barakat's dates farm Certificate

Our long-term Partners visit us:

JORD&FRIHET

Our long-term partner from Jord & Frihet Organization from Sweden which imports Palestinian farmers' organic product since many years, visited the "Moon Valley" dates factory in Jericho, a Za'tar Farm in Immatin village, an organic olive oil cooperative and a press in Kofr Kadoum village. An agreement was made to export this season 20 ft. container of organic extra virgin olive oil, za'tar, maftoul and organic medjoul dates. In addition, the delegation volunteered in "we are with you campaign" with PARC, in order to support Palestinian farmers and their families in the olive picking season and give them the needed help.





Oxfam Wereldwinkels – Belgium

Within the approach of Al-Reef’s strategic partnership over the 25 years, our partner from Oxfam Fair Trade, Belgium visited us, represented by the procurement manager (Marion Meyvis) and the quality assurance manager (Tom Feyaerts) and a film maker and photographer (Yel Ratajczak) for reviewing and evaluating the mutual cooperation activities and setting a future plan to export (3 containers) of organic medjoul dates, organic Maftoul and organic extra virgin olive oil to Fair Trade retail shops in Belgium for this season, 2019. The Belgian delegation visited the filling and bottling olive oil station in Al-Ram, an organic olive oil farmers’ cooperative in Eastern Bani Zeid village, a press owned by the coalition of cooperatives, a women cooperative for producing Maftoul, the medjoul dates factory in Jericho, a dates farm in Jiftlik and an organic wheat farm and wheat mill which is organic certified in Jenin. The delegation participated in the production work for the first Palestinian documentary film related to the organic medjoul dates production chain, which will be translated to several languages and will be a promotional material for the Palestinian organic medjoul dates around the world in cooperation with the Palestinian journalist Adel Abu Nema.



A visit to Bani Zeid organic press in Ramallah



*** Oxfam’s organic dates packs***