

## October newsletter 2016

*In this newsletter, you will see a summary about the medjoul dates season, update on Palestinian wheat going organic for the first time, exclusive pictures and captions from our participation in the “fair trade breaks poverty week”, Terra Madre event, our new HACCP systems and the opening of the olive oil season!*

### Happiness and satisfaction among Palestinian date farmers



*From the beautiful rough hands of hard working date farmers  
come the finest medjoul dates you'll ever taste!*



# Medjoul dates 2016 season



***Reception of medjoul dates after lab analysis - Transportation to Al Reef factory for fumigation - Grading - Filling and packaging – Export to international markets!***



## Inside medjoul dates season 2016:

This date season was a satisfying one for Palestinian date farmers as most of them have increased their investment in planting new trees which have become mature this year. In addition, Eid El Adha and the pilgrimage season coincided with the date season this year where date farmers were able to sell their produce and generate income very quickly, as dates are used mainly for hospitality in those two occasions. Moreover, despite the higher production of medjoul dates this year, the productivity of the trees was less than the last year due to lower rain fall percentage during winter and many sequential hot waves that hit Palestine.

## What is special about medjoul dates?

Medjoul dates are widely considered as the best variety of dates. They are the largest in size and the richest in taste according to many consumers. Their wrinkled yet soft texture, rich moist and the juicy sweet taste make medjoul dates an everyday must-have food. In addition, they are full of minerals, fiber and vitamins and provide an alternative natural sweetener for sugar.



*The special and delicious Palestinian medjoul dates*

## Did you know?

- Medjoul date trees were first planted in Palestine in 1997 when PARC (Agricultural Development Association) distributed medjoul dates seedlings to farmers in Jericho. The Palestinian date sector was very weak and it didn't include the medjoul date variety, which is the finest kind of dates.
- Jericho and Jordan valley area is the best place to grow medjoul dates due to the very high temperature and low humidity.
- It is called the crown jewel of dates, natural energy booster, the diamond of dates, the king of dates, do you know other nicknames for medjoul dates?
- Medjoul date production for 2016 season exceeded 6000 tons.





# What's happening at Al Reef?

## “Fair Trade breaks poverty weak”

Al Reef Fair Trade participated in the “Fair Trade breaks poverty weak” from 16-22 Oct; which is a social media campaign. Farmers were very happy to participate in this event to show the world how fair trade can impact positive change and help communities eliminate poverty! See below pictures and captions from producers of different products!



Through handmade couscous production, the women of the cooperative have been able to gain a sustainable and fair income, develop skills and knowledge that expand to the needs of the external market while preserving the Palestinian food culture and heritage.

***“To eliminate poverty, it’s very important to recognize the role of women empowerment”. – Women’s Couscous Cooperative in Jericho- Palestine.***



Fair Trade Breaks Poverty through selling the finest medjoul dates to international markets.

Currently, fair trade prices in Palestine have increased the general market price (supply and demand), and consequently, farmers who are not involved in fair trade have benefited indirectly, where traders now take into consideration the fair price and try to pay something closer to it, as farmers now are more empowered and have a decision in the price of their produce.

***“Poverty is powerlessness. And the best thing about fair trade for us is becoming decision makers”. - Palestinian medjoul dates farmers in Jericho – Palestine.***



# What's happening at Al Reef?



***“Poverty is lack of opportunities, money and investment”.  
– Olive oil farmers from the Holy Land Cooperative in Al Zababedah – Palestine.***

By selling organic extra virgin olive oil to international fair trade markets, Holy Land Cooperative members have managed to provide their families with better living conditions, while protecting the environment and providing consumers with a healthy product.

## Palestinian Wheat Goes Organic – for the first time

An organic certification program for wheat has just started, as part of the efforts of Al Reef Fair Trade and the Agricultural Development Association (PARC) to develop the Palestinian agricultural product quality and fight against the use of harmful chemicals in the agricultural production process.

The program will be implemented in the governorates of Tubas and Jenin in cooperation with agricultural cooperatives, Chico Mendes, and the Company of Organic Agriculture in Palestine (COAP). It is expected that during the next two years to finish the transition period for the organic wheat in addition to the training and auditing so that farmers get the organic certificate for wheat.

The organic certificate for wheat will help in boosting couscous sales in international markets.





# What's happening at Al Reef ?

## HACCP systems for couscous, dates, almonds and mixed thyme

Engineer Sara De Vecchi, from Italy visited us on behalf of our Italian fair trade partner “CTM Altromercato”. She visited Al Reef Fair Trade for one week from 02/09/2016 until 09/09/2016 where she conducted several visits to the Al Reef company's headquarters in Al-Ram, the women's Couscous Cooperative in Jericho, dates farmers in Jericho and Al Reef factory for dates filling and packaging to examine the whole production process.

Sara's visit comes as part of PalPass project which is implemented by the Agricultural Development Association (PARC) and Al Reef and funded by Italian Fair Trade institutions; to work with the Quality Assurance Department in Al Reef to build HACCP systems for couscous, dates, almonds and zatar which are exported to international markets, especially to Italy.



## “Terra Madre “ event in Italy

Al Reef Fair Trade and the Agricultural Development Association (PARC) participated in “Terra Madre event which is organized by the Slow Food International Organization. Shadia Farawnah, a member of Women's Couscous Cooperative in Jericho and Khamis Al Qadi, a member of Bani Zaid Al Sharqeyeh Cooperative participated as representatives of the agricultural cooperatives.

It's worth-mentioning that this event was held in Turin – Italy where more than 6000 producers from all over the world attended the event. The participants presented a traditional Palestinian meal called (Maqloubah) prepared with organic extra virgin olive oil as part of the Palestinian food culture; which was served to some attendants.





# What's happening at Al Reef?

## Retreat day for Al Reef staff



*Al Reef Fair Trade team enjoying retreat time after finishing almonds, dates and wheat season, and getting ready for olive oil season.*

## ISO 22000 system

Al Reef has succeeded in renewing its ISO 22000 Quality Assurance systems after being assessed by the Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance.



## New packaging design



*Our new packaging design for medjoul dates!*



# Olive harvest campaign “we are with you” 2016

Agricultural Development Association (PARC) has launched its campaign (We are with you) to help olive oil farmers in picking olives in the areas affected by the Israeli apartheid wall and the settlements. “We are with you” campaign is one of the most important and largest campaigns to provide support and solidarity with Palestinian olive farmers.



School and university students, local and international volunteers participate in “We are with you” campaign; encouraging the volunteerism spirit in the Palestinian society and within foreign supporters who participate in this campaign.



Olive oil season is a main component of the Palestinian culture where olive trees are a symbol of survival and steadfastness for Palestinian people and symbolize their ancient roots and ties to their land.

In our next newsletter:

- You'll see a special cover up for the olive oil season.
- Productivity, quality and influencing factories on this season.
- Stories from the field



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