

**27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture**  
**Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members (English version)**  
Item 4.6 Proposal for an International Year of Date Palm

Member Name	Comments
Peru (Thu 24/09/2020 10:03)	<p>I. Background</p> <p>The FAO Director invites Member States to participate in the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), to be held virtually from 26 September to 2 October 2020. He also asks Member States to review the proposal by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish observance of the International Year of Date Palm in 2027 and to provide guidance as deemed appropriate on the Draft Conference Resolution presented in Appendix A, and submit it for the consideration of the 165th Session of the Council for adoption by the 42nd Session of the Conference.</p> <p>Official Letter RE (DAS) no.2-9-B/182 informs that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requests that the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) appoint representatives to the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG).</p> <p>Official Letter no. 865-2020-MINAGRI-SG/OGPP communicates the appointment of the sectoral representatives to the Director of Social Affairs of the Directorate-General of Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>II. Importance of cultivation</p> <p>During the last FAO Conference on 27 June 2019 in Rome, Italy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia initiated a side event “promoting dates as extraordinary fruits for economic, environmental and social development”. The event increased awareness and promotion of partnership opportunities among the date producing and importing countries. It placed particular emphasis on the nutritional value and bioactive properties and other commercial uses of dates and other date palm products.</p> <p>The date palm arrived on the coasts of Peru and Chile at the end of the 16th Century and in some places edible dates are still produced (Rivera et al., 2013). The date palm has been growing for four centuries on the central coast of Peru. In 1612, the Jesuit scholar Bernabé Cobo observed ripe dates in the Río Pisco Valley, which he wrote about in 1653 and compared them to those brought back from the African Barbary Coast, now the eastern countries from Morocco to Libya, which suggests that this region was the original source of seeds (Johnson et al., 2013; Rivera et al., 2013).</p> <p>The date palm produces an average of 40kg of fruit a year, with possible yields of more than 100kg with more intensive management. When grown with low levels of inputs and low levels of farming management, dates can produce 20 kg of fruit or less per year. The female plants begin to produce dates when they are between 4 to 6 years old and reach their height of production during their 15th to their 20th year (Chao and Krueger, 2007).</p> <p>Date palms are critical for agriculture in many hot, arid and semi-arid regions and are the most important agricultural product for many Persian Gulf countries (Al-Dous et al., 2011). The successful production of ripe dates on the American continent is only possible in the arid regions of Peru, Chile, Baja California (Mexico) and south east USA. In other areas, the date palm is grown purely for ornamental purposes (Rivera et al., 2013).</p> <p>The largest date producers in the world are the Asian and African countries (Egypt, Iran, Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, etc.), and among them they produce 98 percent of all the dates in the world (MINCETUR, 2009- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism).</p> <p>III. Cultivation and production of the date palm in Peru</p> <p>In the hot and dry valleys of the semi-arid and arid planes, such as those in the province of Ica, and in particular in those of Nazca and Pisco, the fruits ripen to perfection (Rivera et al., 2013). It is estimated that in the region of Pisco and Ica, there are 50 000 producing palms; however, 90 percent of these are abandoned. It should be noted that the plants in Peru are not pruned nor watered and are neither aided by artificial pollination nor pest control (Johnson et al., 2013).</p> <p>The vast majority of the fruits are eaten locally, and a small amount make their way to markets in nearby cities and Lima, however, dates as fresh fruit are practically unknown in Peru (Johnson et al., 2013). National date production in 2008 according</p>

	<p>to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, was 426 tonnes, from an area of 80 ha, in Ica the sole region where these date palms exist.</p> <p>Some areas where the few plants that subsist without any care can be found are in the deserts of Lanchas and Villacurí. These are remote areas in the Ica Valley, mainly Cachiche and Ocucaje and in the valleys of Sta. Cruz, Río Grande, Palpa, Ingenio and Nazca, and even in Acari en Arequipa (MINCETUR, 2009).</p> <p>Several efforts have been made in Peru to exploit dates and create plantations of modern cultivars, but to-date very little has been achieved. Date palms in the country are also free from the main pests and diseases that attack this crop (Johnson et al., 2013). The most important varieties that are known and exist in our country are: Medjool and Deglet Noor, which are found in the palm groves of Ica (MINCETUR, 2009).</p> <p>Given its geographical location the Peruvian coast receives more solar radiation and higher temperatures throughout the year than North Africa and the Middle east, which are essential factors for ripening dates more quickly. This means that they are available for commercial production sooner so that they may be exported, which is why it is important to promote the adoption of appropriate productive technologies to help obtain profitable and competitive crops and a unique potential for productivity with countries that have more advanced technology. An efficient agricultural management and good use of irrigation technology will help obtain yields of between 10 000 and 12 000 kg/ha (MINCETUR, 2009).</p> <p>In our country the commercial window is between October and February, which is out of season (for the Northern hemisphere), which facilitates the selling of the product to foreign markets during the months of shortage in the European Union. The main markets for dates are France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Holland and Spain. (MINCETUR, 2009).</p> <p>IV. Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to support Saudi Arabia’s initiative, promoting the date palm as extraordinary fruits for economic, environmental and social development in arid and semi-arid regions of the world.</li> <li>• Nationally we also have ancestral crops that adapt to the fragile regions of the country that would need to be promoted and presented as a national initiative.</li> <li>• Peru has the potential to cultivate dates and efforts have been made to exploit this, as well as establishing modern cultivars, but to-date little has been achieved; in terms of promoting dates we must consider part C of the proposal (Challenges and opportunities for sustainable date production).</li> <li>• In order to expand the area of this crop as suggested in the main objectives of the International Year of Date Palm we need to consider the law on Forestry and Woodland Fauna and its regulations governing the development of agricultural activities.</li> </ul>
Thailand (24/09/2020 23:20)	Thailand endorses the proposal to establish observance of International Year of Date Palm in 2027 as per draft Resolution in Appendix A of the related document, to be submitted to Council 165 for approval and to Conference 42 for adoption.
EU (Thu 24/09/2020 19:00)	<p>2. Before commenting on the proposal before us, we would like to recall that the UN ECOSOC has adopted criteria for the proclamation of International Years and that, in 2013, the FAO Conference adopted its own policy lines on the proclamation and implementation of international years. We urge FAO to present a careful assessment against this framework in the text of any future proposals.</p> <p>3. We recognise the role that date palms play as an important income-generating crop for millions of rural smallholders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).</p> <p>4. We also recognise that date palms can improve nutrition and socio-economic status of farmers in drylands due to its tolerance to drought and therefore can be a supportive element in adapting to climate change. It can also play a role in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in reducing poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2).</p> <p>5. Based on the above, we can agree to the submission of the related Draft Resolution to the FAO Council for further consideration.</p>