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Date Palm Global Network Constitution Document

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**DATE PALM GLOBAL NETWORK
(DPGN)**

Constitution Document

**General Coordinator
Dr. A. Zaid**

**Technical Secretariat
Dr. E.J. Arias – Dr. Fawzi Taher**

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**DATE PALM GLOBAL NETWORK
(DPGN)**

PREAMBLE

The Date Palm producing countries:

- **Aware of** the problems and challenges facing the production, protection, processing and trade of date palm in the world, and
- **Conscious of** the economic and social importance of date growing in many countries in North Africa, the Middle East, Southern Africa, Australia and the USA,
- **Convinced** that the role and impact of the respective date producing countries will be enhanced through effective co-coordinated policy in relation to international date markets and to exchange information on the world date production and trade between them,
- **Have decided** to coordinate their efforts in the pursuit of their common objectives and hereby create a **Date Palm Global Network (DPGN)** under the terms of this Constitution.

ARTICLE I

Name, Legal Status and Seat

1. The name of this organization shall be "Date Palm Global Network" (DPGN), herein referred to as the Network.
2. The Network is established as an autonomous body. It has the capacity of a legal person to perform any activities appropriate to the fulfillment of its objectives as laid down in this Constitution.
3. The Network shall, in particular, have the capacity:
 - (a) to hold funds and operate currency accounts;
 - (b) to collect subscriptions from member institutions and proceeds from the sale of publications issued by the Network;
 - (c) to conclude agreements and contracts, to acquire, hold and dispose of immovable property and to institute legal proceedings;
 - (d) to accept loans, grants and donations in cash or in kind from governments, national and international organizations, development banks and other sources for the purpose of the Network.
4. The Network shall have its seat at the Date palm Research and Development Unit at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Coordinating Board shall be empowered to change the seat of the Network.

ARTICLE II

Objectives

The objectives of the Network shall be:

To increase technical co-operation among all (new and traditional) date producing countries in the relative aspects to the development and improvement of the date palm industry as well as to mobilize the collective efforts of the date producing countries towards achieving self-sufficiency in food, enhancement of the quality of life of their people, conservation of the eco-system and natural resources and development of the date palm agro-industry.

As a general outcome, the Network will contribute to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Collection and dissemination of information on production and planting, marketing, research, post-harvest and processing technologies of dates and date palm by-products and residues.
2. Promote collaboration in the collection, conservation, evaluation, propagation and utilization of date palm germplasm.
3. Create awareness at various policymaking and technical levels within member countries on the importance of the development of the date palm through an integrated approach.
4. Promotion of the ecological and social benefits of Date Palm as well as undertaking promotional activities to promote the nutritional, social and ecological benefits of date palm.
5. Encourage joint programs to be developed for the exchange of experiences, expertise, and information as well as organize training courses, workshops and meetings of experts for the effective use and sharing of transferable technical information and skills.

6. Contribute to the formation of national networks in each country to increase collaboration among national institutions as well as the NGOs and private sector, and particularly propitiating increased communication between scientific institutions and growers.

7. Promote the analysis of common problems, their study and search of solutions, particularly through the elaboration of joint research/development projects.

8. Develop common technical standards and specifications, as part of an overall quality system for the marketing of date fruits and date products, in local and international markets.

ARTICLE III

Functions

In pursuance of the above objectives, the Network shall assume the following functions:

1. Convene Coordinating Board Meetings at which general coordinator, technical secretariat, regional coordinators, technical working groups and national focal points will review the Network activities, progress and priorities for ongoing and future work;
2. Organize working parties and seminars to discuss specific problems and undertake technical studies;
3. Sponsor alone, or in collaboration with other institutions or organizations, seminars, training courses or workshops;
4. Facilitate communication among the different working groups and regional date palm networks and maintain links with agencies, institutions undertaking similar activities.

ARTICLE IV

Membership

1. The Network shall be open the following institutions dealing with date-palm:
 - (a) National institutions, public or private and producers associations, as well as existing regional and international networks.
 - (b) Agricultural universities and colleges and similar institutions of higher education.
 - (c) Other organizations or bodies as may decide by the coordinating board of the Network.
2. Membership in the Network shall be acquired by submitting an application to the general coordinator of the Network.
3. Members shall have the right to vote at the meetings of the Network bodies.
4. Membership shall be suspended automatically in the event of failure to settle the annual subscription for two consecutive years. All membership rights will be regained automatically upon payment of the total outstanding amount of the subscription.

ARTICLE V

Resources

The Network will seek funds from the following resources:

- (a) Annual membership subscriptions as established by the coordinating board;
- (b) National research and development programs;
- (c) National and international funds devoted to research and development;
- (d) Funds generated by the Network; and
- (e) Contributions from the private sector, including date palm growers, wholesalers, processing plants, auxiliary industries supporting the date palm agro-industry. The contribution of the network to the private sector should be in kind, providing services, technical support and consultations.

ARTICLE VI

Governing Bodies

The Coordinating Board will be the governing body of the Network.

ARTICLE VII

National Focal Points

National Institutions identified, as focal points in member countries will be the linkage between national institutions, NGOs, private industry and all stakeholders through out the date palm agro-industry chain in the country as well as the Network

One delegate shall represent national Focal Points members who are representatives of member countries in the general meetings of the Network. Their main duties are the following:

1. Organize and ensure functioning of national date palm networks;
2. Guarantee feedback to countries of information generated by the different components of the network;
3. Ensure communications within each country on matters related to the Network;
4. Guide overall co-ordination of network through the General Assembly or extraordinary meetings if required; and
5. Elect the Coordinator-General and Coordinating Board Members for a period of four years renewable once.
6. Linkage with the Network on all activities (sub-regional and regional research projects, training courses, workshops, conferences etc...)
7. Advise government agencies on matters related to policy, programmes and coordinated activities for the development of date palm agro-industry.

ARTICLE VIII

Coordinating Board

The Network will be guided by a coordinating board which will be chaired by the Coordinator General of the Network and will be made up of members of the Technical Secretariat, Regional Coordinators, and Technical Group Coordinators. The Coordinating Board will meet every year and will be hosted by the institution, which the Coordinator General represents. The Coordinating Board may form Technical Advisory Committees and ad-hoc committees to study and follow up on certain technical matters and specific tasks, or attend to some specific issues.

The Coordinating Board may also establish a think tank of date palm expertise from different technical backgrounds that can provide consultancy services to the different date producing countries as per their needs and requirements and/or due to urgent circumstances.

The main duties of the Coordinating Board are:

1. Facilitate communication among the different working groups and regional date palm networks.
2. Help the Coordinator-General in promoting technical activities both at the regional and global level.
3. Facilitate adaptation of the working arrangements of the Network to meet member requirements and to ensure efficiency of operations.
4. Cooperate to identify and obtain funding assistance from donors and financing agencies for strengthening the Network activities.
5. Plan, coordinate and follow-up of research, training and other work programmes.
6. Review and approve of the annual budget as well as the work programs of the working groups.

ARTICLE IX

General Coordinator

The General Coordinator will be elected by the National Focal Points for a period of four years renewable. He will provide the overall coordination of the Network with the following responsibilities:

1. Provide communication and feedback between the Working Groups.
2. Provide dissemination of information among member countries
3. Elaboration of regional project proposal to address questions of global concern for submission to potential funding agencies or donors.
4. Arrange for the convening of General Assembly Meetings (National Focal Points) every four years, to review progress and priorities and, if required, to renew for the Coordinating Boards and the Coordinator-General.
5. Arrange regular meetings (preferable every two years) of the Coordinating Board to review activities, progress and priorities for ongoing and future work (combined with international workshops, congresses, etc., in order to minimize costs).
6. Assist in planning and organizing training activities in relation to needs of subgroups and working groups.
7. Ensure regular publication of a newsletter and other tools (e.g. website/web pages) for enhancing information dissemination and exchange.
8. Promote specific meetings on technical subjects in collaboration with working group coordinators.
9. Ensure that the information system will be accessible for world benefit.
10. Promote efforts to obtain funding assistance from donors and financing agencies for strengthening network activities.

11. Stimulate collaboration among members, in close collaboration with FAO, to elaborate strategies for date palm expansion and rehabilitation to assist in defining diversification strategies.

12. Assume the administrative responsibilities of the Network, including the preparation of the annual budget in co-ordination with the sub-networks in the different countries.

13. Prepare evaluation criteria for the assessment of the performance and efficiency of the Network. An outside team of experts will perform evaluation of the Network.

ARTICLE X

Technical Secretariat

The Technical Secretariat will be composed from two concerned Officers from FAO Headquarters in Rome and FAO Regional office in Cairo. Their main duties will be to:

1. Conduct technical backstopping visits once every year through the annual meeting of the Network Coordinating Board.,
2. Review the progress of the Network according to a predetermined schedule, and to submit a report at the end of each review mission. In each of the reviews, a report will be presented.
3. Assist the Coordinator-General in promoting technical activities, both at regional and global level.

ARTICLE XI

Technical Working Group Coordinators

Four Technical Working Groups were defined to undertake the scientific and technical work of the Network. These Working Groups will include: **a)** germplasm/propagation, **b)** production, **c)** pests and disease management and **d)** post harvest technologies & marketing. A coordinator will lead each Working Group, while the Coordinator-General will provide the overall co-ordination of the Network.

Each Working Group will be led by a competent national institution in each of the member countries, which are most capable of contributing to the development of one of the specific areas identified per group.

The duties of the Working Group Coordinators are to:

1. Develop programmes and guide activities for the Working Group in accordance with the national strategies and priorities.
2. Ensure communication between Group Members.
3. Elaborate technical bulletins for dissemination of information.
4. Assist in establishing agreements and procedures for exchanging information and materials.
5. Provide the Coordinator-General with regular information on progress, results and needs of Working Groups.
6. Prepare and disseminate annual progress reports on Working Groups activities and promote appropriate scientific contributions to be included in the Network newsletter.
7. Assist in preparation of regional or sub-regional technical programmes of assistance for submission to funding agencies/donors.
8. Promote specific meetings on technical subjects within their groups' area of activity.
9. Develop communications, through electronic and other media, to facilitate sharing of information and intra-group contact.

ARTICLE XII

Regional Coordinators

The Network will operate with the support of six Regional Coordinators for these regions: South Africa, Middle East/Asia and South America. Additional regional coordination may be created as countries join the Network, i.e. Sahel and North America. The Coordinating Board will elect the Regional Coordinators.

The Terms of Reference for the Regional Coordinators are to:

1. Promote and encourage the establishment of joint projects on date palm research and development among countries that share common geographical and ecological situations in regards to arid lands.
2. Ensure communication between the focal points, the Coordinator General and Coordinating Board.
3. Arrange for regional meetings to review activity progress, problems and to formulate work plans.
4. Assist in the overall coordination for the preparation of project proposals to be submitted to donors.
5. Assist in the overall coordination for planning and organizing regional training activities, workshops and expert of meetings.

ARTICLE-XIII

Rules and Regulations

The General Rules of Procedure and Financial Regulations shall be prepared by the Coordinating Board of the Network and approved by the General Assembly. Amendments to the Rules and Regulations may be adopted by simple majority vote.

ARTICLE XIV

Auditors

1. Auditors shall be appointed at the National Focal Points General Assembly for the period until the next session. All the Network's accounts, records and documents shall be subject to inspection by the auditing at any time. The Coordinator-General shall produce an account of receipts and payments and statement of assets and liabilities, which shall be updated at least sixty days before convening the General Assembly.
2. A copy of the Auditor's report on the accounts and statements shall be made available to all members of the Network during or before the General Assembly.
3. The Auditor's honorarium shall be determined by the Coordinating Board.

ARTICLE XV

Quorum

The quorum at all meetings shall be fifty percent of the members of the Network.

ARTICLE XVI

Amendments to the Constitution

1. Amendments to the Constitution shall be considered only at a session of the General Assembly of the Network. Proposals for such amendments shall be made in writing, duly seconded, and circulated to all members of the Network at least sixty days before the Session.
2. Amendments to the Constitution shall be adopted by two-thirds majority vote of all members present at the session.