Emir. J. Food Agric. 2014. 26 (11): 1021-1025
doi: 10.9755/ejfa.v26i11.18988
http://www.ejfa.info/

International Events

REVIEW ARTICLE

Overview of the Khalifa International Date Palm Awards

D. V. Johnson*

3726 Middlebrook Ave, Cincinnati OH 45208 USA

Introduction

In 2007, the annual Khalifa International Date Palm Award (KIDPA) program was established in the UAE with the objective to enhance the standing of the Emirates in the field of date palm research. The general goal was to provide encouragement to and recognition of individuals and institutions in the advancement of date-palm cultivation and production, as well as to increase fruit consumption and to promote broader food and nonfood product use of the palm. The awards program takes its name from its patron, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the then President of the UAE. His Highness was honored in 2012, the fifth anniversary of the awards, when the UAE Central Bank issued a commemorative silver 50 Dirham coin (Figure 1).



Figure 1. KIDPA commemorative coin. The face of the coin depicts a portrait of the President and on the reverse the KIDPA logo.

KIDPA established five award categories: I. Distinguished research and studies; II. Distinguished producers; III. Best new techniques; IV. Best development projects and V. Distinguished figure. In the first four categories a first and second class winner was to be selected; for the last category only one individual was to be honored. A Board of Trustees and Scientific Committee were designated to guide the selection process. The award consists of a trophy, a certificate and a monetary prize of AED 300,000 for first winners and AED 200,000 for second winners (3.7 AED = 1 USD). Award ceremonies are held in Abu Dhabi in March of each year with the winners invited to attend to receive their awards in person. The initial competition was opened in 2008 with the first set of awards made the following year. Six sets of awards were made from 2009 through 2014.

KIDPA Awards for Research

Because of the focus of this special issue, this article is focused on the awards given for research. The KIDPA awards thus far for research are presented in Table 1. A summary of awards in the other four categories are listed in Table 2.

KIDPA Information Dissemination

KIDPA publicizes their awards and other activities in promoting the date palm through several means. A primary information outlet is the KIDPA website, www.kidpa.ae. An annual Yearbook is published, in Arabic and English, highlighting the year's award winners and other annual KIDPA accomplishments. Publication of

Received 21 February 2014; Revised 19 March 2014; Accepted 21 March 2014; Published Online 15 October 2014

*Corresponding Author

D. V. Johnson
3726 Middlebrook Ave, Cincinnati OH 45208 USA

Email: djohn37@aol.com

The Blessed Tree magazine, inaugurated in 2009, is another notable KIDPA contribution. This magazine is a handsome glossy full-color quarterly periodical in Arabic and English. It features technical and general articles on a broad range of subjects related to date palm, and is available in printed form and is accessible electronically as an open source through the KIDPA website.

Examples of other KIDPA activities include organization of the annual photographic competition "Date palm through the eyes of the world," in cooperation with the Abu Dhabi International Association for Photography; co-sponsorship of the Fourth International Date Palm Conference in Abu Dhabi in 2010; a cooperative effort with the Kuwait Establishment for Scientific Progress to produce a documentary film about date palm insect pests and diseases; and publication of a book in English entitled Arish: Palm-Leaf Architecture by Sandra Piesik, Thames & Hudson, London, 2012, which documents in text and photographs the widespread and culturally-important utilization of date palm leaves and stems as building materials in Abu Dhabi and surrounding countries.

Conclusion

Over its first six years, the 11 KIDPA research awards have been widely spread across the world of date growing and the research which supports it. Institutions and individuals from eight countries have been recognized for outstanding research achievements; for all five categories combined, award recipients represent a total of 18 countries. This is incontrovertible evidence that the KIDPA awards are achieving their goal of being truly international in scope. KIDPA is having a significant impact on the date palm's future development through its various activities. The idea of creating the Khalifa International Date Palm Award program is highly commendable. I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of the KIDPA secretariat in Al Ain, UAE, in the preparation of this article.

Table 1. KIDPA Award Winners for Date Palm Research, 2009–2014.

Year	First Winner	Second Winner
2009	Award withheld.	National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA) Morocco. Founded in 1914, INRA is one of the oldest national research institutes in a date-producing country, and it is a leader in scientific, technical and economic studies of the date palm sector. In particular, the award cited INRA's efforts to combat bayoud disease through the creation of new cultivars bearing high-quality fruit combined with disease resistance. See: book review of three INRA publications in this special issue. Website: www.inra.org.ma
2010	Dr. Benaichi Bachir, Algeria, was cited for research on date production economics. Dr. Bachir's research has emphasized the importance of agricultural extension services to assist growers in resolving production problems. He is a professor at the University Mohamed Khider-Biskra, Algeria. See: Bachir, B.A. 2007. Production and marketing problems of date palm in the region of Biskra, Algeria. Acta Hort. 736:543–555. Email: bachir452003@gmail.com	Dr. Joel A. Malik, Qatar. As the leader of a team of more than a dozen scientists, he was honored for the team's work on de novo genome sequencing and comparative genomics of the date palm, resulting in a draft assembly of the Khalas cultivar genome. Dr. Malik is Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine and Director Genomics Laboratory, Cornell Medical College, Qatar. See: http://www.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/research/datepalmGenome/download.html. Email: jom2042@qatar-med.cornell.edu
2011	Dr. Ibrahim Saqar Al-Mssallem, Supervisor, Date Palm Genome Project, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Riyadh, KSA. He was cited for his leadership and coordination of the Joint Genome Research Center in collaboration with King Faisal University and the Beijing	International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, Dubai, UAE. The Center was recognized for its research on the potential of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi technology to enhance growth and production in date palm. ICBA is a non-profit autonomous international agricultural research center.

	Genomics Institute, China. The objective of the project is to construct a genetic map of the date palm. Dr. Al-Mssallem is Associate Professor of Molecular Genetics, King Faisal University, Al Hofuf, KSA. See: PLoS One. 2010 Sep 15:5(9):e12762. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0012762. Email: imssallem@kacst.edu.sa	Website: www.biosaline.org
2012	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Aleppo, Syria. The award mentioned ICARDA's achievement in the development of 1000 microsatellite markers across the date palm genome. ICARDA was founded in 1977 with headquarters in Aleppo, Syria; its offices are temporarily located in Beirut, Lebanon. See: Hamwich, A. et al. 2010. Development of 1000 new microsatellite markers across the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.) genome. Acta Hort. 882:269–278. Website: www.icarda.org	Dr. Saher Yousef Al Oukabi, Egypt. Dr. Al Oukabi was named for her research dealing with antioxidant and estrogen-like activity of date-palm seeds. She is a scientist at the Department of Food & Nutrition, National Center for Research, Cairo, Egypt. See: www.sciencepub.net/report/0103/01_0742_Doha_pub_report0103.pdf Email: S_Y_alokbi@hotmail.com
2013	Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, UAE. Dr. Mohammed Ali Mubarik Al Farisi and the Authority were cited for development of new date paste products for the food industry, including the use of dried and roasted date-seed powder to enrich date paste and provide more dietary fiber. Website: www.adfca.ae/english	National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA) Morocco. Dr. Moulay Hassan Sedra was recognized for his detailed molecular and genetic findings related to date palm cultivation and diseases. Dr. Sedra is head of the Regional Center of INRA in Marrakech. See: Sedra, M.H. 2011. Development of new Moroccan selected date palm varieties resistant to bayoud and of good fruit quality. In: S.M. Jain et al. (Eds.) Date Palm Biotechnology. pp. 513–531. Springer, Dordrecht. Email: sedramh@hotmail.com
2014	*The Famous Date Varieties in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, General Directorate of Public Relations and International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This dual-language Arabic and English book was published in 2006 and established a new scientific standard for the morphological study of date palm cultivars at the national level. Website: www.moa.gov.sa	Dr. Frédérique Aberlenc-Bertossi, France. She was cited for her work on male-specific DNA markers that provide genetic evidence of an XY chromosome system, a recombination arrest and allow the tracing of paternal lineages in date palm. The ability to determine gender through DNA analysis represents a new threshold for date palm development. Dr. Aberlenc-Bertossi is a biologist at the Research Institute for Development (IRD), Montpellier. See: Aberlenc-Bertossi, F. et al. 2010. La détermination du sexe chez le palmer dattier. In: Biotechnologies du Palmier Dattier. pp. 227–234. IRD, Montpellier. Email: frederique.aberlenc@ird.fr

Source: Compiled from information at the KIDPA website, KIDPA yearbooks and *The Blessed Tree* magazine.

Table 2. KIDP Award Winners for Distinguished Producers, Best New Techniques, Best Development Projects and Distinguished Figure, 2009–2014.

Year	Category	First Winner	Second Winner
2009* (First)	II Distinguished producers	Atul Company, Gujarat.India	Emirates Bio Fertilizer Factory, Al Ain. UAE
	III Distinguished figure	Rakan Maktoum Bin Haroun Al Qubaisi. Chairman, Organizing Committee of Dates Festival. UAE	#
2010 (Second)	II Distinguished producers	Al-baten's Date Project, Saleh Abdul Al-Rajhi, Awqaf Administration. KSA	Al Foah Organic Farm, Abu Dhabi. UAE
	III Best new techniques	Palm Fibre Polymers (PFP), Dr. Ridha	Red palm weevil early detection.

		Ibrahim Salih, Abu Dhabi. UAE	Eng. Kassem Tofailli. USA
	IV Best development projects	Developing the Australian date industry, David and Anita Reilly, Loxton, South Australia. Australia	Award withheld
	V Distinguished figure	Dr. AbdulRahman Ibrahim Al-Humaid, Qassim University, Buraidah. KSA	#
2011 (Third)	II Distinguished producers	Mr. Abdullah Mohammad Arar. A model date palm production farm. Zahran, Jordan Valley. Jordan	Mr. Abdulwaab Ali Naki Al-Naki, Tissue culture date plantation. Kuwait
	III Best new techniques	Award withheld	Engineering Authority of the Defence Ministry. A new detection machine for the red palm weevil. Egypt
	IV Best development projects	Al Dhahra Agricultural Company. A modern collaborative date palm plantation in Namibia. UAE	Agriculture & Fisheries Development Fund, date palm development projects. Oman
	V Distinguished figure	Mr. Belhassan Mohammed. Head, National Federation of the Producers of Dates, Morocco	#
2012 (Fourth)	II Distinguished producers	Award withheld	Mr. Hamad Ali Salman Al Mazrouei and Mr. Salman Ali Mansour Mohammed Al Mazrouei. UAE
	III Best new techniques	Mr. Dieffal Abdelhamid. An image based system for automatic date sorting. Algeria	Dr. Nazir Hussain, Ministry of Environment, Qatar. Contribution of Zeolite soil conditioner in continuous holding of irrigation water and increasing yield of dates. Qatar
	IV Best development projects	Improved Date Palm Nutrition Program, Abu Dhabi Farmers' Services Center. UAE	Project development and sustainability of Al Ain Oasis. Al Ain Municipality. UAE
	V Distinguished figure	Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Saif Al Falasi. Department of Municipal Affairs of Al Ain Municipality. UAE	#
2013 (Fifth)	II Distinguished producers	Gulf Palm Company for General Trading. Kuwait	Award withheld
	III Best new techniques	Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Al Hamden. Controlled atmosphere to make fresh barhee dates last longer. KSA	Eng. Amin Zouba. A new date palm growing medium. Tunisia
	IV Best development projects	Dr. Essam Abdullah Mawloud, Ministry of Agriculture, Iraq. Rehabilitation of the date palm sector in Iraq	Dr. Hamid Ibrahim El Mously. Dissemination of small-scale date palm industries based on secondary products. Egypt
	V Distinguished figure	Dr. Mohammed Saeed Al Makki. Date researcher. Jordan	#
2014 (Sixth)	II Distinguished producers	Mr. Boumaraf Messaoud. Algeria	Award withheld
	III Best new techniques	Industrial production of liquid sugar from Zahidi dates using acid technique for clarification. Dr. Moayyad	Evaluation of a solar tunnel date dryer, Dr. Mohammad Ali Basunia, Sultan Qaboos

	Mohammed Rushdy Al-Hakin. Iraq	University. Oman
IV Best development project	Al Foad integrated dates receiving, handling and storage system. UAE	Sudanese date palm society. Eng. Emad Idris Fadel AlMawla Youssef. Sudan
V Distinguished figure	Dr. Philip Barry Tomlinson, Emeritus Professor, Harvard University, USA. UK.	#

* In 2009 (First) awards were made in only three categories, expanding to five categories in 2010 (Second) awards.
# Only a First Winner award is made each year for Distinguished figure.
Source: Same as Table 1.