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1. Market Dynamics

1.1. United Arab Emirates

Fruit and vegetable sales are currently strong in UAE markets and prices are generally reasonable. Sellers report that during Ramadan customers are primarily concerned about quality over price and are shopping accordingly.

Observers have noted that avocado and mangoes that appear to have been damaged due to the hot weather have been sold off at less than half price or discarded.

There’s strong demand for mango, which is currently a big seller. Most are from India with a few from Thailand and Pakistan. Three Indian varieties available in the wholesale market are Alphosno, Badam and Rajapuri, although the first two are most popular. Prices are considered to be reasonable.

Dried mango is not available in wholesale market but can be found at some Iranian sweet shops both wholesale and retail and there is good demand for it.

Fresh green chilies are mainly from India, Jordan, with a few from UAE. It is early for chillies, which will be in season in two months and there is limited supply. Dried chilies are available in wholesale market and prices are high.

Avocado is coming from the USA, Spain and Kenya. There are greatest volumes of Kenyan avocado, which is also the cheapest and attracts strong demand. Relatively few come from the USA and Spain and they are expensive.

Other current strong sellers are lemons, fresh leaves, tomatoes, capsicum, chillies, carrots, lettuce, oranges, grapefruit and watermelon.

1.2. Oman

Trade in the Oman market is strong with Ramadan boosting sales but also increasing prices. However, customers seem happy to pay what is required and stock levels are high.

Most vegetables are now out of season. Dried chillies and dried mango are not available in the market. Fruits, including grapefruits watermelon, orange, dates, mango and lemons, and vegetables such as carrot, cucumber and lettuce are strong sellers.

There is plentiful supply of mangoes and oranges however; chillies are now in very short supply and coming only from India. Avocado is only from Kenya and is popular with Arab buyers.

Strawberry, pineapple, banana, lemon, garlic, cucumber, zucchini, bitter melon, pumpkin, beans, drumstick, awla and pomelo are also in season.

1.3. Qatar

The Qatar market sales situation is particularly good, due in a large part to the extra demand created by Ramadan.

Chillies are in short supply as they’re not currently in season. Those available are from India and Jordan and prices are reasonable.

However, the mango season is now underway with strong supply from India and Pakistan and high customer demand.
Avocado also has very good supply and strong demand. Avocado is imported from Kenya and America, although the Kenyan avocado is noticeably cheaper.

Dried Mango and dried chilies are not available in this market.

Cantaloupe, orange, pineapple, tomato, banana, apple, cucumber, lettuce, carrot, potato, are other best sellers.

1.4. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Prices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia market have risen as Ramadan begins and are expected to continue to increase until the end of Ramadan on July 18.

Mango is only available from India and Pakistan and is very expensive.

Only local fresh chilies are available and its price continues to rise. Red chillies remain more expensive than the green ones.

Meanwhile, avocado from Kenya has maintained a price similar to last month although relatively few are available in the market.

While vegetables in general are expensive, tomatoes are particularly costly although there is supply from Jordan, Egypt and KSA.

There is still no fruit or vegetables from Syria and little produce from Spain.

Lemons are only from Egypt and Turkey and oranges are costly and in short supply, coming only from Egypt.

Sweet peppers are available only from Jordan with none of the previous supply from Egypt.

1.5. Bahrain

Prices of fruit and vegetables in the Bahrain market are increasing due to consumers bulk buying or Ramadan, which began on June 18 and lasts for a month. Price increases began a few days before Ramadan and usually peak in the first week, although are likely to remain high throughout the rest of the month.

Chillies are being supplied from India, Jordan, KSA and Thailand, while currently only Alphonso mangoes from India are available in the market and avocado is only from the USA.

The price of banana rises as well during this month. There are fewer varieties of oranges available as the heat soars and those available are from South Africa and are expensive. Watermelons have not been affected by price increases, as the supply from Jordan is more than adequate.

While prices have increased, it seems importers and sellers are prepared for the added demand of Ramadan and to date there is no shortage of supply.

2. Media

(*Where articles reference the Middle East in general or more than one ME country reported on, results are posted under UAE)

2.1. United Arab Emirates

* Multiple reports of inclement weather significantly damaging mango crops in India and Pakistan and impacting on supply and prices

* Nevertheless, UAE retailers and consumers enthusiastically welcome mango season with festivals promoting a record number of varieties of the fruit
A Pakistani government ban on the use of wood packaging including crates, boxes and cases for storing fruits and vegetables from May 20 could further affect supply to the UAE and GCC.

Food security remains an ongoing discussion with UAE meeting with numerous other countries to discuss trade ties and agricultural opportunities.

Ramadan sparks debate over pricing and excessive consumption.

Inclement weather in Uttar Pradesh has destroyed the mango crop to such an extent that the overall mango output is expected to fall by almost 50 per cent.

UAE alone accounted for over 60 per cent of India’s total mango exports followed by UK (16 per cent), Saudi Arabia (four per cent), Kuwait (three per cent) and Qatar (two per cent).

According to a study conducted by Assocham, mango production will be almost half of the 43 lakh tonne mangoes that are annually produced in the state.

Chausa, dashehari, fazli, gulab khas, langra, mallika and amrapali are the well known varieties of mangoes produced in Uttar Pradesh.

Mr D.S. Rawat, national secretary general of Assocham, said “prices are likely to swell by as much as 50 per cent and might even go up to 65 per cent in some pockets”.

India's mango exports might also go down significantly this year from a level of over 41,280 million tonnes (MT) of mangoes worth about Rs 285 crore which were exported from India to major destinations like UAE, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and United States in 2013-14.

Vietnamese fruit and vegetable grower and processors are not reaching their potential for exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

The six countries forming the GCC—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE and Oman import large volumes of soy protein, corn, vegetables, fruit, fruit juices, chocolate, and grains. In the UAE, in particular, there is great demand for organic fruit and vegetables.

Of the nations, Saudi Arabia is the largest importer of fruit and vegetables with sales reaching more than US$9 million, followed by the UAE at US$7.5 million. These two markets combined account for nearly 80% of fruit and vegetable exports to all GCC countries.

Overall the sales of Vietnamese fruit and vegetables to all six GCC nations reached US$31.9 million for 2014.

However, the department said Vietnamese farmers and processors have not devoted adequate resources to nurturing the market and exporters face fierce competition from nations with advanced technologies and more favourable locations such as Turkey, Egypt and Thailand.

The UAE will be the second fastest growing food market in the GCC at compound annual growth rate of 4.8 per cent by 2019 after Qatar’s 5.5 per cent on the back growth in the younger population, said Managing Director of Alpen Capital Mahboob Murshed.

Food consumption in the GCC, backed by encouraging macroeconomic drivers, is expected to grow at a 3.5 per cent between 2014 and 2019 to reach 51.9 million metric tonnes.

Rising population is one of the key drivers of food consumption in the GCC. The population in the Gulf is projected to increase at a 2.4% between 2014 and 2019 to reach 57.6 million.

Alpen Capital's Mahboob Murshed said that in a bid to secure food supply, the UAE acquired farms lands in North Africa and South Asia.

However, the strategy did not attain much success due to weak infrastructure and local unrest in such regions. Subsequently, the Emirates are now focusing on investing in the developed regions of Europe, Australia, and the Americas.

Food re-exports from Dubai are estimated to have grown by 10 per cent in 2014 from Dh10.6 billion ($2.9 billion) in 2013.

UAE residents’ food consumption have grown by 4.7 per cent since 2009 to Dh82 billion ($22.3bn) last year.
Among the food intakes, the data showed that meat intake will be fastest growing segment in the food category at 7.8 per cent followed by fruits (3.5%) and cereals (2.5%); while vegetable consumption remains static but milk segment is witness contraction.

The GCC’s arid climate, shortage of water resources and inadequate agricultural land have limited its domestic agricultural output. Only 1.8% of the total land in the GCC was under cultivation.

Subsequently, total food production in the GCC stood at 10.9 million metric tonnes in 2012 meeting only 26.5% of its consumption. (3)

Abu Dhabi’s Al Dahra Agricultural Company will invest 157 million dirhams to develop 560 hectares of olive farms in Morocco under an agreement signed Thursday with the Ministry of Agriculture. The agreement provides for developing two projects that aim at promoting production to reach 14 tons/ hectare. (4)

Mango markets in the Karimnagar district have no fruits to sell as gales, hailstorms and unseasonal rainfalls caused severe damage to mango orchards.

According to unauthorised statistics, about Rs 200 crore worth mango crop was damaged due to gales and hailstorm that hit the district three times in the recent past. Farmers and lease holders of mango orchards are facing trouble due to lack of mangoes.

A commission agent and owner of MNJ Jagityal Mango Centre, said this year the cultivation of mango crop was reduced by 50 per cent. Of that, 25 per cent of the crop was damaged due to gales, hailstorms and unseasonal rainfall.

Stating that there was no loss for farmers, he said people who took the orchards on lease were suffering due to the crop damage. Jagityal mangoes (gold color) are famous in other States and in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) as well and it is not possible to export this time as the quality of the fruit is not good, he said.

Taking the situation as an advantage, mango traders are allegedly trying to exploit farmers and paying meagre amounts for damaged fruits. Best quality mangoes in big size and attractive shapes are being paid up to Rs 25 per kilogram, while traders are not ready to spend at least Rs 5 for damaged fruits. Speaking to The Hans India, a farmer Chinnaiah, a native of Gorrepalli village of Mallapur mandal, said though his crops were not damaged much, commission agents were not keen on giving good price. (5)

AIRLINE connectivity is vital to growing Australia’s premium agricultural trade though enhanced access to emerging Asian export markets, says Trade Minister Andrew Robb.

“Fruit and vegetables picked on a Monday morning in Victoria can find their way onto Gulf States’ supermarket shelves before midday on Tuesday.”

According to Mr Robb, about eighteen months ago Qantas signed a strategic alliance with Emirates Airlines, at much the same as Virgin Australia reached a similar deal with Etihad Airlines.

As a consequence, the number of flights going through the United Arab Emirates (UAE), via Dubai or Abu Dhabi, have increased from 40 flights a week to around 150 flights a week, he said.

“In the subsequent 12 months this has led to an 18 to 20 per cent increase in the export of goods and services, not just to the UAE, but also to all the Gulf States, and a number of countries in the broader Middle East,” he said. (6)

Indian mangoes are likely to get costlier this year for consumers abroad, as world’s largest producer of mango, India, has suffered widespread damage to the crop due to untimely rain.

A majority of Indian mangoes are sold in EU, UAE, Vietnam, Qatar the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

While the supply of mangoes from northern and coastal states has plunged, the exorbitant price of mangoes in the global market may further give a blow to Indian mango exports.

Almost 50% crop damage has been reported across mango growing states that include Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The rain and hail from February to April have adversely affected the harvest of key mango varieties such as Malda, Alphonso, Kesar, Langra and Chausa that are popular mango varieties sold abroad.
Currently, the king of mangoes, Alphonso, reaps a market price of Rs 500 to Rs 1000 a dozen. The price is set to increase by 30% if recurrent rain and humid weather continues to hamper mango production. The supply shortage is not only affecting the domestic market where prices are sky high, it’s also impacting the global demand for Indian mangoes as export-grade mangoes are selling at between 2,800-3,500 per crate of five dozen in Mumbai and other wholesale market, up by 100% from last year. (7)

Australia’s mango season is wrapping up with 8.5m trays produced in 2014/15, up from 7.2m trays in the previous season, according to ABC Rural.

The increase in volume was matched by strong demand and profitable returns for most in the industry.

Exporting around 12 per cent of the crop, Australia’s major export destinations for mangoes include the Middle East, New Zealand, , Singapore and Hong Kong, with the industry sending its first shipments of mangoes to the US this year.

Australian Mango Industry Association CEO Robert Gray says the industry has a five-year export strategic plan, which is targeted at growing exports to 20 per cent of the crop. (8)

Boosting sustainable agricultural production and trade is one of the main priorities for the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean, where most countries produce insufficient quantities of food staples.

For this reason, recently, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), have co-organised the “Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region,” a two-day conference to discuss how the public and private sectors can collaborate to bolster food security in the region.

The countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region import half of their basic crops. Imports of agricultural food products to the region have risen by $69 billion, or 63 percent, between 2002 and 2013. Meanwhile, exports have risen fivefold since 2000, to $31 billion, including dramatic increases in fruit and vegetable shipments to the Middle East and North African markets.

EBRD Vice President Philippe le Houérou said the EBRD aims to invest over €300 million in the region’s agribusinesses to reinforce the private sector role in enhancing food security.

A forthcoming FAO analysis will show that natural-resource constraints support the region’s comparative advantage in growing higher-value crops such as olives and other fruit and vegetables. (9)

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries showcased their best food culture and innovative ideas at Milan’s EXPO 2015, a six month event that started on May 1.

The exposition will feature projects from 145 countries in the form of pavilions, from nations including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), while Saudi Arabia is absent this year. (10)

The Pakistan government’s decision to ban mango exports in wooden crates is likely to delay shipments to the UAE.

Importers of Pakistani mangoes, based in Dubai’s Al Aweer Fruit Market, fear that export consignments worth millions of rupees will perish in Karachi and other cities due to a surprise move by the Pakistani government, which banned the use of wood packaging including crates, boxes and cases for storing fruits and vegetables from May 20.

Pakistan’s Ministry of National Food Security and Research says it’s a phytosanitary measure since wood is a pathway to the introduction of pests.

Pakistan’s fruit exporters filed a petition challenging the ban, as they had already ordered wooden crates, which have been made and the ban would cause huge loss to them. A wooden crate costs Rs40 (Dh1.4) compare to the Rs110 (Dh4) for corrugated cartons.

Traders in Dubai said that the first shipment of Pakistani mangoes usually arrives in Dubai by the third week of May. “But now, since the wooden crates had already been made, it is impossible for the exporters to repack mangoes in corrugated cartons without raising the prices and deliver them on time,” they said.
During the three-month mango season the Dubai-based traders import 2.5 million crates through more than 130 ship trips. A crate of Pakistani mangoes weighing 8-10kg fetches Dh18-20 in the wholesale market.

Both Indian and Pakistani mangoes dominate the UAE market with almost a 70 per cent share, while products from Kenya, Sudan and Australia serve the rest of the market.

Last year India exported about 1.75 million tonnes of mangoes to the UAE.

The UAE-based traders imported Pakistani mangoes worth $6 million and approximately it had a share of 32 per cent in total Pakistani mango exports, which reached 90,714 tonnes in 2014.

With the advent of summer, Kaser, Rajaputri, Dasheri, Badami and India’s premier brand Alphonso capture the fruit shelves in the super markets.

By the end of May, Pakistan’s Sindhri starts arriving in the UAE, followed by Dasheri, Anwar Ratol, Chaunsa and Kala Chaunsa until September.

Mohammad Afzal, managing director of Bukhamas Trading Company, who has been importing mangoes from Pakistan to Dubai and Muscat for the last 38 years, said this year Pakistan harvested a bumper crop, especially in Sindh.

“This season we had a chance to increase our exports in Dubai and other GCC countries, but we are already behind schedule,” Afzal said, adding that his company imports around 80 per cent of the total mango stocks from Pakistan in the region.

“The UAE, especially Dubai, is one of the biggest markets for Pakistani mangoes. From here we supply it to other Gulf countries,” he said. (11)

Major foreign markets have warned Pakistan not to use wooden crates for exporting horticulture items as they are used for exporting pesticides. According to sources, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recently warned Pakistan of strict restrictions if export of perishable items continued in wooden crates whereas a similar warning was earlier issued by the European Union.

Dubai’s Fruit & Vegetable Traders Group, Central Fruit & Vegetables Market warned that Pakistan may lose the most lucrative market of fruit and vegetables if the ban on wooden crates was continued to be flouted. Sources said that Plant and Protection department of Ministry of National Food Security and Research's (MNFSR) has imposed a ban on the use of wood packaging including crates, boxes and cases, for storing fruits and vegetables intended for exports with effect from May 20, 2015. (12)

Watermelons dumped in UAE markets are safe as they are free of any pollutants, according to the ministry of environment and water.

The ministry, reacting to reports and public fears, said that radon tests on the fruits imported from Iran and other countries showed they do not contain any chemical substances, insecticides or other pollutants.

Earlier it was reported that Iranian watermelons had disappeared from Abu Dhabi following the decision of the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA) to ban sale of melons imported from Iran.

Abu Dhabi Cooperative Society, which has 40 per cent share of the market, confirmed that it is urgently trying to import Egyptian melons.

The decision to ban the sale of Iranian melons has led to a significant rise in the price of Jordanian watermelons from Dh2 to Dh5 per kg in shops Al Mina City and Madinat Zayed in Abu Dhabi. In small groceries, the price has reached Dh6.

However, traders in Abu Dhabi told Al Bayan that prices of some vegetables from Iran had shot up by 200 to 350 per cent. Iranian lettuce had jumped from Dh3 to Dh10 a kg and eggplant from Dh4 to Dh9 while cucumber has risen from Dh3 to Dh7.

Traders in Al Mina market expect prices of most vegetables to rise in the coming weeks. They say that prices of vegetables and fruits rise in UAE in summer as arrivals from Lebanon, Syria and Jordan decline. (13)

Pakistan has exported around 2,200 tonnes of mangoes, fetching $1.1 million, since the start of export season on May 20, according to local media sources.
Mango was being exported to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Afghanistan, CIS countries and Oman, among others, authorities claimed.

The fruit was being exported for about $500 per tonne this season compared to $250 last year, according to sources.

Improved earnings were attributed to the government ban on using wooden boxes for fruit and vegetable exports. (14)

Exporters are helpful that mango shipments would cross 100,000 tonnes fetching $60 million compared to 94,000 fetching $48 million last year.

Mango yields in Pakistan are expected to touch 1.8 million tonnes this year. Meanwhile in India, the All India Mango Growers' Association said in March that export of the fruit from India is likely to fall this year by 25-30 per cent. The fall was 25 per cent in the last fiscal. Unseasonal rain and hail during the flowering season have had a bad effect on the crop. (15)

Pakistan's department of plant protection (DPP) has an inadequate number of inspectors to monitor the export operations and to certify mango produce for exports, says Chairman of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's (FPCCI) Standing Committee on Horticulture Ahmad Jawad

He said that the department could overcome the shortage by hiring the services of some qualified inspectors and for this they might charge professional fee from exporters for properly exploring the UK and the EU markets. He said that the Dubai-based importers of Pakistani mangoes - Al Aweer Fruit Market - apprehend that export consignments worth millions of rupees might perish at Karachi and other cities due to recent ban on wooden packaging for fruits and vegetables with effect from May 20.

He said that although the first shipment of Pakistani mangoes usually land in Dubai in the third week of May, it was impossible for the exporters to meet the deadline by repacking mangoes in corrugated cartons without raising prices. Jawad demanded the government help farmers and exporters by setting up two mango development centres at production hubs and they must be equipped with ripening chambers and modern technology. (16)

Despite massive loss to the agricultural and horticultural crops due to unseasonal rains and hailstorms, the mangoes grown in Uttar Pradesh India are set to tickle the taste buds of patrons in the Gulf and South East Asian countries.

The mango belts in UP spread over 25,000 hectares, which produces world famous Dussehri variety, alone comprises about 30 of the state’s annual mango production of 40-42 million tonnes (MT).

Since, the crop damage was extensive in Lucknow and nearby areas, the export consignment would comprise other mango varieties of western UP districts viz. Langda, Chausa, Amrapali, Mallika etc.

These late maturing varieties are likely to be ready for plucking around June 20 and its expected that about 100 tonnes will be exported.

"We would export mango to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Japan and Singapore," Shahnaz Exports promoter Nadeem Siddiqui told Business Standard. He is UP's biggest mango exporter. "For the first time, we are sending two containers (around 30 tonnes) to Saudi Arabia to compete with mango exports from Pakistan."

The vagaries of nature has resulted in 35-40% loss to the mango crop in UP.

Due to extensive damage, UP mango production is likely to fall to 25-28 million tonnes MT, Mango Grower Association of India president Insram Ali said and added mango exports from the Lucknow belt would be a remote possibility this season.

Further, mango growers rue the lack of state government support to exporters. Although, the government provides subsidy of Rs 26 per kg (comprising Rs 13 each for brand promotion and air freight), the exporters say it is not sufficient apart from the cumbersome procedures to claim it. (17)

UAE agricultural experts say locally grown mangoes could help to fill the supply gap caused by storm damage in the Indian subcontinent.
Pakistan and India supply the UAE with 70 per cent of its mangoes, but heavy rain has severely affected production this year.

Fatma Al Kalbani, director of agricultural development at the Ministry of Environment and Water, said local mango farming was booming as the country’s hot climate encouraged growth.

“Sandy soil, high humidity and warm temperatures in the UAE actually help the growth of the crop if watered,” she said.

Mango farms were started in the 1970s and are now particularly prevalent in the country’s east and north.

Ms Al Kalbani said there were more than 109,000 trees across the country, spread over 1,600 hectares.

Many different varieties of mangoes are grown, including alfonso, saf, dushree and qurat. (18)

Pakistan as sixth largest mango producer in the world may increase its exports up to $80 million as against $60.7 million presently, with proper attention to control fruit fly disease, enhancement in the numbers of Hot Water Treatment plants, installation of Vapour Heat Treatment Plant and irradiation facility required by mango importer countries.

A study report on Mango Production and Export from Pakistan prepared by a member of Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Karachi, said that the competitiveness of Pakistan mango export has slightly improved during the last ten years.

Pakistan’s share of export against its production does not show improvement because a large part of crop is wasted every year due to lack of storage facility, he said.

Expansion in mango export in terms of quantity and value will transform into improving welfare and raising GDP of the country, it said.

It is pointed out that presence of fruit fly is a major concern of quarantine departments of all importing countries.

So far Pakistan does not have vapour heat treatment plant and irradiation facility required by Japan and USA respectively for mango import.

In global export market climate, quality and safety standards pose serious challenges for which policy options in terms of storage, processing, packaging and pricing are needed.

Mangoes’ major export markets are UAE, Saudi Arabia, EU, USA, Japan and those countries where Pakistani expatriates constitute substantial demand of Pakistani mango. (19)

Over the past four months, three countries have opened their doors to Indian mangoes, but the higher price and increase in freight costs are proving to be hurdles for exporters. Also, the lack of availability of ‘export-quality’ fruit, due to the recent unseasonal rains, is compounding their woes.

Trade sources expect this could lead to a fall in mango exports this year close to 30 per cent against 41,200 tonnes exports in 2013-14.

“The Alphonso season is nearing its end, but we haven’t done any export so far, despite the EU lifting the ban on Indian mangoes,” says Rajendra Jagtap, a mango exporter from Mumbai.

Faced with stiff competition from their Pakistani counterparts, the exporters in India have raised concerns about the lack of proper storage facilities and pack-houses at key mango growing regions.

“We have learnt that Pakistan is not only providing additional subsidy on freight for mango shipments, but it has also created a separate department for mango exports,” said a partner at M&J Enterprise, Vashi, Mumbai.

Since February this year, Japan, Mauritius and Switzerland have allowed imports of Indian mangoes with appropriate quality compliance. But the excitement among traders is absent because of higher prices and freight costs.

After incurring costs for purchasing, vapour treatment and radiation traders claim they get little return from exports.

“World market is about $17-18 per box. So increase in cost at any level of supply chain makes it unviable to export,” said Batuksinh Jadeja, an exporter.
The Mango Grower Association of India has estimated the overall mango exports from India at around 25,000-30,000 tonnes. The main destinations are UAE, Saudi Arabia, UK, Kuwait, Qatar, Bangladesh and Nepal. (20)

Pakistan produces 3.95 percent world’s mangoes being the fourth largest producer. The produce is usually exported to Middle East as well as Malaysia, Indonesia, Canada and Iran.

Mangoes usually arrive in the markets during the month of May.

Talking to APP, Azam Khan, a vendor said, “different varieties of Mangoes have although arrived in the markets but still these are not fully ripen and little sour in taste”.

He said Mangoes would be more sweet in taste after 10 to 15 days. The Mangoes would ripe further as the weather turns hot, he added.

He said the price of one kilograms Mangoes ranges from Rs 120 to 150 depending on the variety.

Langra, Dusehri, Samar Behisht, Chaunsa, Anwar Rator are famous varieties which are grown in Punjab. While Sindhri, Bagan Pali, Suwarneka, Neelum and Gulab Khas are leading ones from Sindh.

The annual estimated world production of mango is over 25-million tones. (21)

The mango export season has begun on May 20 and Pakistan has exported around 2200 tons of mangoes, fetching around $1.2 million dollars for the country. Mainly, this first batch of exports is heading towards United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Central Asian countries and other Gulf States.

According to Waheed Ahmed of Pakistan Fruits and Vegetable Association (PFVA), this season Pakistani mangoes are being exported for about $500 per ton compared to $250 per ton last year.

This year, production of mangoes in the country has been forecasted to 1.8 million tons out of which 0.1 million tons are targeted for exports. According to (PFVA), the country is expected to earn $60 million in revenue this year compared to $48 million recorded last year by exporting 94,000 tons of mangoes.

Pakistan is the world’s fifth largest mango producer and it ranks second after India in South Asia. Mango is the second important fruit crop in Pakistan after citrus.

The major hurdle which Pakistani mango export has faced over the year is the issue of the fruit fly, however, this year the sector has added close to 29 hot water treatment plants to deal with the problem.

Another, important issue is the ban the use of wooden boxes for the export of mango after growing complaints from the buyers.

The government waited to ban the wooden packaging completely right before the start of mango export season which has created significant issues for the small exporters who depend largely on big exporters for their packaging needs. This sudden shift in policy also created hurdles for the importers of Pakistani mangoes in the Middle East and created uncertainties. (22)

Citizens in the southern provinces of Mersin and Antalya in Turkey are seeking a positive change in the local economy, which deteriorated after exports to Arab states slumped.

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) deputy candidate Mehmet Kara said that the blocking of routes from Turkey to Middle Eastern countries due to the civil war in Syria and the non-renewal of a Ro-Ro ship agreement with Egypt, have hit the exporters of vegetables and fruits in Mersin as well as firms involved in carrying goods to the region.

He noted that major exporting firms of vegetables and fruits have gone bankrupt as a result of the slump in trade with Middle Eastern countries.

Elginsan, the largest citrus fruit producer and exporter operating in Çukurova -- Turkey's major agricultural region -- was shut down on May 13.

The company is located in Mersin and markets 50 percent of the citrus fruits produced in Çukurova region.

People living in Mersin are also anxious about the impact of the construction of a nuclear plant in Mersin's Akkuyu district.
Noting that a large portion of the population subsist on the cultivation of bananas and other fruits and vegetables, which can be grown only in Mersin and other southern coastal cities, he maintained that there is a high risk that this farming will cease due to soil contamination from nuclear waste.

The state does not issue “organic” certificates for crops grown within 50 kilometers of a nuclear plant and Kara said there is growing resentment on the part of Mersinites who fear the local agricultural sector will be dealt a huge blow. (23)

Fruit exports from Chile and Peru are off to a promising start in 2015 thanks in large part to better weather and increasing demand from key overseas markets.

Chile is optimistic that fruit exports this year will make important inroads in key overseas markets, while demand in burgeoning markets will fuel growth. Ronald Bown, president of the Chilean Fruit Exporters Association (ASOEX), said exporters were keen to diversify and to broaden their presence in emerging markets such as Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. New commercial and agricultural attachés for Indonesia, India, Thailand, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, and Morocco will take up positions this month. (24)

Two business forums are being held today in Georgia’s capital Tbilisi, being attended by official delegations from Austria and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Georgia’s Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili encouraged guests to look into investing in areas including agriculture.

Garibashvili, who hosted both business forums today, said the UAE was one of the biggest investors in Georgia, while Austria was “an important hub” for Georgia in its European integration process.

The Georgian official also announced the opening of a Georgian Embassy to Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates and a Consulate General of Georgia to Dubai, a city in the United Arab Emirates.

"The United Arab Emirates has invested $700 million USD in Georgia. Last year the trade turnover amounted $220 million USD. The United Arab Emirates is one of the biggest investors of Georgia." (25)

The Prime Minister of Mongolia Chimed Saikhanbileg called here Thursday upon firms from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to build joint cooperation ventures with their counterparts in Mongolia, state news agency WAM reported.

The prime minister said there are ample opportunities for UAE companies to invest in Mongolia’s mining, agriculture and livestock sectors.

The prime minister led a 50-member Mongolian delegation to Dubai. (26)

The agriculture committee at the Syrian Exporters Federation (SEF) on Tuesday dispatched the first of a series of cargo planes carrying fruit from Damascus International Airport to the United Arab Emirates. Head of the committee Iyad Mohammad said that the plane carries a shipment of 35 tons of cherries, apricot, plums, and green plums, and that the plan is to send one cargo plane per week at least to the UAE. He said that this step was taken as part of the SEF’s efforts to overcome obstacles hindering export after land border crossing were closed, noting that the SEF sent several shipments via containers ships and RORO (roll-on/rull-off) ships last month. The first of those marine shipments was made in mid April, with a ship carrying 40 refrigerated shipping container containing around 1,000 tons of apples left Tartous harbor for Egypt. (27)

As a joint venture between the UAE based Jenaan Investment and the Republic of the Sudan, Amtaar is today the country’s largest scale agricultural investment.

Amtaar’s aim is to become a vital organization in world food security, particularly in the Arab world where dry climates and barren lands make it increasingly difficult to feed the fast growing population.

With Sudan’s fertile lands and underdeveloped agriculture sector long touted as the answer to this problem, in 2010 Abu Dhabi based Jenaan investment signed a deal with the Sudanese government (60% Jenaan, 40% Sudan) to finally make this a reality.

“We started with 137,000 acres and now we have finished the infrastructure for almost thirty thousand acres. We believe, as this is only our pilot project, that within the next ten years we will be able to cultivate a minimum of one million hectares, but first we wanted to check Sudan’s conditions, and our technology.”
The company has set up a research and development facility and state-of-the-art irrigation system. “We have collaborated with a South African company to produce a new irrigation system which saves about thirty-five percent of the water and thirty percent of the energy.”

The semi-governmental organization from the United Arab Emirates also has subsidiaries in the United States, Spain, Egypt and Ethiopia. (28)

“New Urbanism” and “climate-smart” farming techniques are being proposed by experts as it becomes increasingly clear that harnessing new technologies and research related to climatic and soil conditions will become critical factors in achieving food security.

Saeed Al Gergawi, a UAE-based researcher suggests utilising fog and humidity, common in the Gulf region, and using hydroponics could help tackle water issues, while “urban farms” could be created in larger climate controlled warehouses.

Roof and vertical gardens as well as more edible rather than ornamental landscape practices were other solutions, said Martin Jose, marketing manager at Landex Green Environment Solutions in Dubai.

Food security and sustainable agriculture is a high priority for the authorities in Abu Dhabi, which established the Abu Dhabi Farmers’ Services Centre to provide technical and operational support to farmers and help them increase their productivity.

The establishment also helps market the produce of some 1,200 farms in the emirate under the brandname Local Harvest, offering consumers the chance to purchase fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, dates and honey.

The UAE is the second-largest food producer and consumer, after Saudi Arabia, accounting for 14.8% and 18.5%, respectively, of total Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) food production and consumption in 2012, according to the GCC Food Industry Report released in April 2015.

Although it produces more than half of its total fruit consumption and 30.5% of its dairy needs, the oil-rich country imports almost 79% of its food needs.

There are an estimated 7,600 greenhouses in Abu Dhabi, in which capsicum, strawberries, chillies, aubergines and leafy vegetables are cultivated. New greenhouses will feature temperature and humidity sensors that monitor the temperature inside and automate processes to ensure ideal growing conditions at all times.

During winter, farmers can sell their products several days a week at special farmers’ markets in Abu Dhabi and the emirate’s western region. (29)

Egypt will be the official partner country of Fruit Logistica 2016, the event to be held in Berlin from 3 to 5th February 2016.

During the 2013/2014 season Egypt exported two billion dollars worth of fruit and vegetables. Exports were destined mainly to Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UK, as well as Iraq, Arab Emirates, Libya, Italy, the Netherlands and Kuwait. The volume of exports grew from 1.7 million tonnes of the 2005/2006 season to 2.9 million tonnes of the 2013/2014 season – marking a 69% increase. The main Egyptian exports of the 2013/14 season consisted of citrus (1,142,000 tonnes), potatoes (688 thousand tonnes), onions (359,000 tonnes), grapes (99,000 tonnes), pomegranates (85,000 tonnes), strawberries (34,000 tonnes) and sweet beans (31,000 tonnes). (30)

In preparation for the Holy Month of Ramadan, the UAE Ministry of Economy has announced action plans to ensure maximum consumer protection, holding more than 50 meetings with suppliers of basic commodities, recommending that they increase imports during the Holy Month while maintaining prices at current levels.

Officials from the Ministry held similar meetings with representatives of major hyper-markets, retail outlets and cooperative societies in the UAE, as well as vegetable and fruit traders in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, to ensure that basic commodities are available in full measure to meet the spike in demand during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The Ministry has requested suppliers to increase imports of fruit and vegetable supplies by 30 percent to guarantee that demand is fully met while also ensuring that prices remain constant.

He pointed out that daily imports of vegetables and fruits in the Dubai market alone during the Holy Month of Ramadan are expected to reach 16,000 tons, while traders in Abu Dhabi will import a further 3,500 tons.
Dr. Al Naumi said that the Ministry of Economy, in collaboration with various co-operative societies and retail outlets across the UAE, has taken steps to fix the price of some 3,500 essential commodities that are needed on a daily basis. (31)

The reverse trade mission of 16 fruit companies based in Fraga, Aragon, and 10 large UAE importers closed last Thursday after five intense days. The first agreements for the export of cherries, the earliest product of the season, have been signed.

The new business relationships are vital to the future of Bajo Cinca, finding new destinations to tackle the impact of the Russian veto and the saturation of traditional markets.

Bajo Cinca has a production capacity of 280 million kilos per year and which is key to be able to cover the great demand from the UAE which also acts as a distribution centre of goods in the Middle East.

To facilitate the closing of deals, Aragon's producers also have another great asset: a direct air route connecting Zaragoza and Dubai, ideal for the transport of fruits with a shorter shelf life. The rest could be shipped by sea. (32)

More than 100 thousand tonnes of vegetables and fruits have been stored in 48 warehouses belonging to the Dubai Municipality, which will ensure sufficient provision of all kinds of fruits and vegetables during the period leading up to Ramadan, as well as during the month itself.

To achieve this, imports increased by 40% compared to other months, as traders in Dubai imported between 11 and 13 thousand tonnes per day, about 500 containers. The provision of these quantities of vegetables and fruits is intended to ensure price stability during the month of Ramadan. (3)

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) Standing Committee on Horticulture and Agriculture Production Chairman Ahmad Jawad said that value addition helps to widen market scope and reduce post harvest loses which gives the product a higher value.

He said that the processing and value addition is a necessary intervention in the mango sector to mitigate the staggering handling losses. Jawad said that the nation’s mango crop enjoyed limited access to exporting markets. Because of the unavailability of proper storage, big quantity of mangoes gets rotten. The use of advanced processing technology and preserving methods can prevent mangoes from being decayed.

A major percentage of Pakistani mangoes are shipped to Dubai and take their way into consumer markets of GCC countries.

However it is unfortunate that being the world’s largest producer and exporter of mangoes, India beats Pakistan, undoubtedly not in quality of the product, but in terms of a stronger functioning export mechanism, rigorous international marketing and a strategic mango diplomacy crusaded by their envoys in all parts of the world; Jawad added.

In the top producing nations India, Mexico, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Indonesia, Brazil and Egypt are, in that particular order, the top ten mango producing countries.

While on imports, USA’s is the highest with 43.2 percent following with China, Hong Kong, Netherlands, UAE, France, Malaysia, UK and Saudi Arabia, Germany and Singapore are other major importers of the highly demanded fruit. (34)

South Africa and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hope to strengthen their R28 billion trade relationship through investment in South Africa’s agricultural sector.

This was the focus of discussions between Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel and UAE Minister of Economy Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansoori during an official three-day visit to the country.

Patel said the partnership was important as it represented an entry for South Africa into the Middle Eastern market.

Patel said there was a growing market in the UAE for South African exports, which included citrus fruit and diamonds.

Al Mansoori said the current relationship between the countries was strategic, but both were now looking to develop a relationship in other sectors, specifically innovation and agriculture.
In collaboration with South Africa, they were keen to invest in agriculture.

“This industry has great potential. Our region is trying to address the issue of food security through co-operation with other regions, and geographically South Africa is the right partner for us,” he said. (35)

Officials of the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water have met with representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, FAO, to discuss the organisation’s initiative for sustainable management of water resources in the region.

The “Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity in the Near East”, launched by FAO in 2013 to provide preliminary regional review and gap analysis of the region’s water resources, seeks to support member countries in identifying and streamlining policies and best practices in agriculture water management, and beyond.

The initiative distinguishes between “supply-side” options, aiming at increasing the volumes of water available for food production, and “demand-side” options that focus on efficient use of water for food production.

Sustainable water resources management and enhancing the strategic water reserves are among the priorities of the UAE Vision 2021. (36)

Established in 2005, Al Ain-based Al Foah describes itself as the largest date company in the world.

The company has invested heavily, including improvements to washing lines, production and packaging, he said.

According to the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation, the UAE is the world’s eighth-largest producer of dates, with 250,000 metric tonnes produced in 2012.

The company is taking on the global market with five separate brands, from bulk brand, Al Saad, to boutique label, Zadina.

Hadeef Almessabi, export sales regional manager, said the company exports 80,000 tonnes of dates every year, to more than 47 countries in the world.

To spread its reach and take sweet Emirates dates to the world, the company has agents in a number of countries including Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Syria.

Shipments can range from just a few cartons to several pallets, and as much as whole shipping containers, he said.

Exports represent more than 90 per cent of the total company sales, the company recently reported.

The company works with more than 16,000 date farmers across the UAE. Company assets include its farm in Al Ain, which it describes as the largest organic farm in the world.

In 2014, the company paid out over Dh327 million to 10,000 farmers in the UAE. (37)

Abu Dhabi Farmers’ Services Centre will be discussing opportunities for growth in the Western Region with a number of public and private companies at the third annual Al Gharbia Development Forum 19th May, 2015 in Abu Dhabi.

The Western Region is home to over 8,250 farms, over 6,300 member farmers and 12 ADFSC Extension Centres. The Al Garbiaregion currentlysupplies ADFSC with 35 to 40 percent of its commercial produce including vegetables and dates.

“Al Gharbiaboasts some of the largest and most productive farms in the UAE and the agriculture sector is the largest employer in the region. Abu Dhabi Farmers’ Services Centre is working with farm owners in Al Garbia to update agricultural practices, increase farm productivity, and contribute to national food security and sustainable agriculture.”

Abu Dhabi Farmers’ Services Centre will be using the forum to seek out new opportunities in agriculture. (38)

The Prime Minister of Mongolia called upon firms from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to build joint cooperation ventures with their counterparts in Mongolia.
The prime minister, who led a 50-member Mongolian delegation to Dubai, said there are ample opportunities for UAE companies to invest in Mongolia’s mining, agriculture and livestock sectors. (39)

The three-day visit to Georgia of a high-profile UAE Delegation, led by Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy, is expected to usher a new era of economic and trade relation between the two countries. The UAE government and business delegation discussed cooperation and investment opportunities in a number of sectors including food, agriculture and tourism. (40)

A South Korean food security office will open in Abu Dhabi next month to help the UAE in its agricultural and fishery sectors, says the country’s ambassador to the UAE.

Kwon Hae-ryong said South Korea planned to work with the UAE in other areas including water security, energy and culture.

Agricultural experts backed the initiative.

Nicholas Lodge, managing partner of the Abu Dhabi-based agriculture consultancy Clarity said benefits could arise from cooperation in areas such as technology. For example, in low water production systems, cold-chain logistics and technology and even development of cultivars of crops suited to saline and dry climate conditions. (41)

Senior delegates, including chefs and heads of procurements in Abu Dhabi hotels, have visited a number of farms under the Zaarie programme, which was recently launched by the Khalifa Fund to support and empower Emiratis working in the agriculture sector in the UAE.

"The programme aims to empower Emiratis working in the agriculture sector and to help them to develop their farms through encouraging them to use the best technology and to spread non-traditional methods of farming to reduce water consumption," added Al Romaithi.

The delegates from popular hotels in Abu Dhabi expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Khalifa Fund in considering those products to cover their daily needs of vegetables and fruits.

Hydroponic techniques used on farms contribute greatly to reducing the negative impact of the weather and soil on agricultural products. In addition, it is a new farming methodology that will assist in reducing water consumption and increasing production in the country. (42)

As part of its efforts to promote Dubai as a lucrative business destination and to familiarise overseas investors with the emirate’s business opportunities, the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s representative office in Azerbaijan recently organised a conference on exporting foodstuffs to Dubai in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe.

The conference, aimed to provide a general overview of important aspects of doing business in Dubai as well as food packaging and certification guidelines for aspiring Tajik food exporters of agricultural produce to Dubai and the UAE.

He further stated that on its part Dubai Chamber attaches great importance to the issue of food security and is well aware of the CIS markets’ huge potential in meeting the food requirements of the emirate and the region due to the abundance of high quality agricultural produce in these marketplaces.

The International Offices Director at Dubai Chamber also expressed the Chamber’s desire to attract a number of Tajik food production companies to the Dubai market

In light of Tajikistan’s significant agribusiness potential and its vast supplies of organic fruits and vegetables, long-standing agricultural traditions, and climates to support year-round crop and animal farming, Dubai Chamber is seeking to attract Dubai investors to invest in Tajikistan’s agriculture and food industry, transport and logistics and warehousing sectors. (43)

Through innovative agricultural measures, Amtaar Investment looks to create a sustainable agro-business in Sudan and tackle food security issues in the Arab world

Amtaar is a venture between the UAE based Jenaan Investment and the Republic of the Sudan to utilize Sudan’s fertile lands and underdeveloped agriculture sector (60% Jenaan, 40% Sudan).

Our vision has been to help achieve food security for the UAE and the Gulf countries, says Khalil Al-Shamry, General Manager of Jenaan Investment. “We started with 137,000 acres and now we have finished the
infrastructure for almost thirty thousand acres. We believe, as this is only our pilot project, that within the next ten years we will be able to cultivate a minimum of one million hectares..."

Amtaar has set up a research and development facility and state-of-the-art irrigation system that increases productivity and saves energy.

The investment group’s parent firm Jenaan, a semi-governmental organization from the United Arab Emirates also has subsidiaries in the United States, Spain, Egypt and Ethiopia. (44)

Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) today offered an AED183.6 million concessionary loan to the Government of Montenegro to support agricultural development sector.

Aimed at accelerating economic development in Montenegro through supporting food security and boosting agricultural and livestock exports, the agreement supports mechanisms that elevate the quality and safety standards of agricultural and livestock production in the country, while opening up new markets for the country's exports.

Director General of ADFD, said: "As a catalyst for inclusive development and food security, the UAE, through the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, pursues an active policy in supporting agricultural investment across the developing world. To achieve this goal, ADFD is committed to ensuring necessary funding for development projects, especially in strategically important sectors that can significantly benefit the economies of developing countries."

ADFD is a national organization responsible for assisting developing countries through administering loans and direct grant aid on behalf of the Abu Dhabi government. The Fund aims to promote sustainable socio-economic development and private sector growth in target countries. Since its inception, ADFD has overseen the provision of AED64 billion towards financing 438 development projects in 76 countries around the world. (45)

The UAE took part in the agricultural forum featured in Expo Milan 2015 being held under the slogan, “From Expo Milano 2015 and Beyond: Agriculture to Feed the Planet taking place from June 4 to 5, 2015. The UAE’s participation in the forum reflects its commitment to the global effort to establish sustainable development throughout the international community.

The need to establish, enhance and implement national strategies for smart agriculture, and the value of integrating ICT into rural development to support food security and address food shortages was emphasised. (46)

Demand for organic food is growing rapidly in the emirates, according to a study conducted by UAE University.

Based on 300 respondents, the study attributed the rise to high per capita income, more awareness of healthy food and the diverse population.

“Consumers are willing to pay higher prices for certified organic food and that increases with age as they become more health conscious,” the study read.

“The three basic factors are income, education and the population. It’s been around in the UAE for the last few years but growth is not as it was expected because the production is still lacking.”

He blamed a lack of awareness by producers of organic farming systems.

“If consumers are asked to pay 30 to 50 per cent more, they want to make sure the product is organic.”

Agricultural experts say the GCC is experiencing an increase in lifestyle-related health problems and high disposable incomes have prompted some consumers to pay more attention to their diet and to favour healthier options, including organic.

Demand is increasing, with estimates for the growth in organic food indicating a market worth approximately US$1.5 billion (Dh5.5bn) by 2018, up from perhaps $300 million in 2009.” (47)

On Monday Poland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) concluded here a number of joint agreements on the cooperation in fields of innovation, small and middle-sized businesses, agriculture, higher education and tourism.

The agreements in specific fields of cooperation were signed by Polish ministers of agriculture, economics, higher education, sport and tourism and their counterparts from the UAE, respectively.
As emphasized by the Poland's Ministry of Sport and Tourism "since launching the direct flight between Warsaw and Dubai, the UAE has become a very attractive touring destination." (48)

About 700 farmers in the drought-stricken Beed district, India have proved that innovative thinking can save them from a drought that has crippled thousands belonging to farming community in Marathwada. These farmers have not only grown chillies and ladies’ fingers but also exported it to Dubai and are now aiming to send it to Europe.

Farmers in Jalna have, by means of gutsheti (group farming), pooled in their resources and successfully increased yields and doubled their incomes.

"Water scarcity has become a traditional problem for us. So we brought together farmers from three-four villages and encouraged them to grow cash crops like ladies’ finger that take only 40-45 days for harvesting. We managed to grow 100-150 kg of the vegetable from one acre. Similarly, we grew chillies and exported them to Dubai," said Vaijnath Karad who has initiated group farming under Vaidyanath Krishi Manch in Beed.

In Jiradgaon village where farmers successfully built a project of Kesar Mango on 1,000 acre land. In the second phase, fruits like pomegranate, sweet lime, amla and custard apple were grown. "We encouraged farmers to share resources like water, seeds, fertilisers and techniques. However, ownership of the land remained with the original owners." (49)

Somali agriculture is getting a boost from traditional donors like Kuwait and Dubai who are coming on board, constructing ports to export Somalia’s oranges, plums, groundnuts and camels.

Before 1991, when President Mohammed Said Barre was deposed, Somalia was the largest banana exporter in all of east East Africa. Today it is the world’s largest producer of frankincense.

In 2015, relative calm has returned. The Somalia Central Bank is leading the way, distributing loans, tractors and land ownership certificates to committed farmers.

Before the war’s onset all of the country’s land was nationalised. Now, financial remittances from Somalis working in Dubai, Europe and America swell up to $1.2 billion per year, support 41 percent of the population and oil the country’s vital agriculture sector.

Once again the main cash crop, bananas, are thriving.

Somalian agriculture has distinct natural advantages. Somalia’s main export port of Mogadishu is a five-hour flight to the Arabian Gulf, which is one of the world’s most lucrative agriculture markets.

Only 1.6-percent of Somalia is farmed. The other 69 percent is reserved for pasture. (50)

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently organised a quarterly economic seminar entitled, "Business Potential of the Baltic States" at its headquarters recently.

The seminar, which was attended by representatives of Dubai’s private sector, shed light on the economic potential of the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as their lucrative investment areas and companies looking for investors and joint collaborations.

As the Baltic States are targeting export-oriented crops production, Dubai businesses have opportunity to tap into their agribusiness supply chain. The seminar also focused on the rapid growth in organic farming, highlighting how acquiring agricultural land to grow and export crops to UAE and GCC countries would provide a much needed food security for the coming decades. (51)

Dubai Exports, the export promotion agency of the Department of Economic Development (DED) in Dubai, in association with its new overseas office in Brazil, organised a successful trade mission to two South American markets recently. The mission to Brazil and Argentina was aimed to build awareness on the export and re-export capabilities of Dubai as well as the practical aspects of doing business in the host countries and in Dubai.

Emirates SkyCargo, DP World and Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) also joined Dubai Exports in the mission.
“Both Brazil and Argentina are among the world’s topmost producers and exporters of food, which is important in view of the growing capabilities of Dubai in this area and the food security concerns in and around the Middle East,” said Al Awadi.

“Dubai offers unparalleled opportunities for South American exporters, with GCC food consumption set to exceed US$100 billion by 2018. (52)

An ASSOCHAM study has estimated that export of mangoes from India might fall by up to 40% and remain under 25,000 tonnes due to unseasonal rains between February and April, this year.

"Mango exports have fallen significantly in recent years in quantity terms i.e. from 55,585 tonnes in 2012-13 to 41,280 tonnes in 2013-14 thereby registering a fall of about 26 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y)," according to the analysis based on a study titled 'Mango: Anxiety on production & export front,' conducted by the Agri-business council of The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

Even previously, exports of mangoes had fallen by over 12% year on year, from over 63,440 tonnes in 2011-12 to 55,585 tonnes in 2012-13.

Though in terms of value, mango exports rose by about 26% year on year, from over Rs 209 crore in 2011-12 to Rs 265 crore in 2012-13.

But the growth in realisation had fallen drastically from 26% in 2012-13 to 8% in 2013-14.

However, export of mango pulp from India has risen both in terms of quantity and value by 18% and 27% respectively in 2013-14, further noted the ASSOCHAM analysis.

UAE alone accounted for over 60% of India’s total mango exports followed by UK (16%), Saudi Arabia (4%), Kuwait (3%) and Qatar (2%) in 2013-14.

While Kuwait registered a whopping 456 per cent jump Y-o-Y followed by Bahrain (28%), Saudi Arabia (3.4%) and UK (2.3%), US did not register any growth in imports of mango (quantity-wise) from India, rest all countries registered negative growth in 2013-14.

In freight costs are also proving to be a hurdle for mango exporters, said DS Rawat, national secretary general of ASSOCHAM.

"Stiff competition from other mango producing countries, together with dearth of proper packaging and storage facilities in major mango growing regions are other key concerns of the exporters," Rawat added. (53)

Emirate Airline will start transportation of mango from Multan to Gulf states and European countries in August 2015.

Emirates will operate four weekly flights with an Airbus A330-200 aircraft providing transport for fresh fruits like mango, citrus and perishable items like vegetables for their early and quick disposal to the destination on discount rates. Multan is a gateway to central Asian states and is a capital of South Punjab located in the South-west of the Punjab province in Pakistan renowned for cotton and mangoes and other items. (54)

Saudi Arabia and the UAE continue to witness growth despite lower crude oil prices, according to the latest CréditAgricole Private Banking research report ‘Macro comment – Mena update’.

Interestingly in the UAE, once again new orders and new export orders components reflected strong growth.

“In regards to food inflation, the recent softening of world food prices should bring significant benefits to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) consumers. This is indicated by the Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO) food price index in May 2015, which was down 20.7 per cent year-over-year and 1.4 per cent month-on-month. Given the large weightage on food items in consumers’ baskets, this lower food price scenario will be positive for consumers in the GCC countries where most of the food requirements are imported from other places,” Dr Paul noted.

“This situation will prevail provided no strong El Niño episode occurs. El Niño is a natural phenomenon, which is a key factor worldwide for the agricultural sector, as it contributes to extreme weather. A strong El Niño would put the crops of some agricultural commodities at risk, leading to higher food prices during and after its occurrence,” the chief economist added. (55)
Efforts by the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development at some of the country’s farms have started bearing fruit. Organic farmers financed by the fund are now supplying locally grown produce to supermarkets across the country.

The programme started last year and now has 40 members, all in Abu Dhabi emirate. The remaining 37 farms are expected to start producing by the end of the year. In January, funding of Dh130 million was approved for 130 farms under the programme.

The Khalifa Fund said it would organise the transport of the produce to retailers in partnership with Massar, an Abu Dhabi transport company.

The programme is expected to increase the share of local produce in the UAE markets by about 10 per cent.

Awareness about the locally grown produce, and its uptake among the local population, is growing, said a Lulu Group spokesman.

“The market is still dominated by imported produce, from nearby markets and others, but we have seen a healthy growth of local produce.”

About 60 per cent of the produce from farms in the UAE is organic, he said.

Lulu buys cucumbers, capsicum, herbs, strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes and leafy vegetables from 37 such farms across the UAE. (56)

Dubai resident Dan Frawley is an Australian engineer, who has set up a special aquaponics system that uses fish waste as fertiliser for the vegetables. He set it up two years ago and now has three growing beds and 1,000 litres of water for the fish. Mr Frawley initially bought his fish from a commercial farm but has since visited the Ministry of Environment and Water’s Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Centre for Marine Research in Umm Al Quwain who gave him all the fish he needed, (although some of the fish died in the summer heat). “I was also able to grow hundreds of tomatoes from five different varieties, thanks to heirloom seeds from Australia.” Crops such as mint, chili and lemongrass have also done well.

Agricultural engineer Hoda Jaffal aid the system was water-saving and organic, but could be costly. And vaporisation mean water consumption could be higher than expected. (57)

Mango production in Indian town Krishnagiri hinges largely on and is sustained by the pulp industry servicing primarily the Gulf countries.

Major varieties produced are Bangalura or Thothapuri variety (which is cultivated in 60 per cent of the area), followed by Senthura, Neelam, Humayudin, Malcova, and Malliga in the remaining area. The entire Bangalura mango production goes to the pulp industry.

According to the Agricultural Marketing Department figures, of the annual mango production of 3 lakh metric tonnes, 2.5 lakh metric tonnes goes to pulp and the remaining .5 lakh metric tonnes to domestic sales. There are 71 pulp units in the district. A subsidy of Rs. 9,500 per ha is given as planting subsidy and subsidies are issued under the area expansion scheme for drip irrigation. Furthermore, a capital subsidy of 50 per cent is given for pulp industry under the National Fruit Processing Mission. Now, the State Horticulture department has signed an MoU with Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority for setting up a cold storage for freezing of mangoes through the Individual Quick Frozen technology. “The peel of the mango is removed and is then frozen under minus 30 degrees, and is used as and when required. (58)

### 2.2. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

* Saudi retailers and consumers enthusiastically welcome mango season with festivals promoting a record number of varieties of the fruit

* KSA banned the import of green chillies because of the presence of high pesticide residues.

* Saudisation of fruit and vegetable markets continues with inspections and dumping of produce deemed to be illegal or unfit for consumption.
Food security remains an ongoing discussion with countries keen to partner with KSA to help meet its needs.

Ramadan sparks debate over pricing and excessive consumption.

Deputy General Manager of Mohammed Abdallah Sharbatly reflects on changes in the industry including consumer preferences and trends.

Mohammed Abdallah Sharbatly Co. Ltd. is one of the largest fruits and vegetables distributors in Saudi Arabia. The company also provides frozen food products and owns and operates cold storage facilities. Mohammed Abdallah Sharbatly is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia with additional offices in Al-Ahsa, Buraidah, Khamis Mushayt, Dammam Madina, Makkah, Riyadh, and Tabuk, Saudi Arabia; Bahrain; and Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Sharbatly says the Saudi Arabian market is very price sensitive, and market demands have changed.

“Twenty years ago we used to only sell 20 kg cartons, but now I’m making and selling ready-to-go packaged plates that have an apple, banana, and an orange on it.

“When I joined 20 years ago, normal red apples had the highest demand, now it’s the bicolor Royal Gala apple. We have more demand for golden apples, not Granny Smiths. The Saudi market look at fruit as something sweet, the Granny Smiths are too bitter, and grapefruit never did well in the market. Bananas are the number one fruit – Cavendish banana is the highest selling fruit because the price is reasonable and the protein fills you up. Many of the local sweet dishes are made out of bananas as well.

The consumption of fruit by Saudi Arabians is still not as high as Americans or Europeans, but it’s increasing. For economic reasons, it’s cheaper to buy a 20 kg carton of Royal Gala apples than a birthday cake.

My biggest challenge is perishable fruits, and I’m always working with deadlines and attempt to improve the transit time

We try as much as possible, but even if you’re 100% careful, you still only have 10-14 days of shelf life to transport it from Jeddah port to all the restaurants and grocery stores.

Riyadh hosted the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 7 May.

Following the meeting the parties signed the protocol on further steps to develop cooperation between the two countries in trade, industry, agriculture, science and technology, education, healthcare and sport.

National Agricultural Marketing Co. is developing the concept of healthy supermarkets in Saudi Arabia, bringing ideas from stores in Europe and adapting them to the Saudi culture. Managing Director, Eng. Sari Almaayouf, says Saudi Arabia is unable to provide truly organic food which therefore must be imported.

He talks about development of the supermarket and also the wholesale and catering sides of the business.

“We focus on importing vegetables and fruits to the market through the wholesale channel and the wholesale market we focus on things that others don’t import. For instance, very good quality of mango, we are one of the biggest suppliers of strawberry to the market, berries, all types of berries, peaches, also lemon and mandarin from Turkey and Morocco. So, we have become strong in the market and we have a very good share of the market in the wholesale. So, we supply Carrefour indirectly because they don’t like the name. So, we sell to the people who sell them.”

Meetings have been held to discuss future strategic cooperation between the Sudan and Saudi Arabia especially within the fields of agriculture and animal production and food security.

An Azerbaijani-Saudi Arabian business forum was held in Baku on May 15 to discuss increased co-operation between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia is interested in investing in the development of the agrarian sector in Azerbaijan, said Saleh al-Abdad, the representative of the Saudi Fund for Development.

He said that the fund is ready to finance the agricultural sector of the country through Azerbaijani banks.

The joint Sudanese-Saudi agricultural ministerial committee has commenced meetings in Khartoum.
Sudan’s minister of agriculture and irrigation, Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, invited Saudi public and private sectors to invest in several fields including agriculture.

Saudi Arabia is Sudan’s second largest trade partner following China. Its investments in Sudan exceed $4 billion.

Last April, a high-level technical delegation from Saudi Arabia discussed in Khartoum ways for implementing the Arab food security initiative in Sudan.

Sudan’s National Investment Authority (NIA) said it offered to the Saudi delegation six agricultural projects in various states in north and east Sudan to carry out the food security plan. (6)

The Saudi-French Business Council has reviewed ways to promote private investment in France, especially in agriculture and food security sector.

The head of the Saudi side in the Council, Dr. Mohammed bin Laden pointed out, during the meeting, which was held at the French Ministry of Agriculture that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is looking to take advantage of French expertise in the field of manufacturing and agricultural production. (7)

The University of Hail and University of Arizona is to work together to implement sustainable strategic social agriculture programs in the villages of Hail Province.

Social agriculture is an arrangement or strategy that provides village farmers with access to appropriate innovations to achieve economic profitability while fostering environmental sustainability.

In the short term, the collaboration aims to address specific agricultural challenges in a given village in Saudi Arabia. In the medium term, it will introduce sustainable agricultural development practices to promote income and healthy lifestyle for farmers in the rural areas to promote economic growth, alleviate poverty and enhance food security. (8)

In the first few days of June tomato prices increased by 100% compared to the levels registered in the summer and the holiday period and a few days ahead of Ramadan, according to vegetable suppliers and traders in Jeddah.

The retail price per kilo has ranged between 9 and 11 Riyal (2.13 to 2.6 Euro), while normally it would not exceed 5 Riyal (1.18 Euro). Meanwhile, the price reached by street vendors around mosques and inside residential neighbourhoods is of up to 15 Riyal per kilo (3.55 Euro), compared to the usual 10 Riyal (2.37 Euro). Meanwhile, the wholesale price of a kilo of tomatoes in the central fruit and vegetables market of Jeddah has reached 5 Riyal (1.18 Euro) while before the increase it cost 2.3 Riyal (0.54 Euro).

Suppliers have attributed these increases to the shortages expected in the local tomato production. (9)

Del Monte, a top marketer and distributor of high-quality fresh and fresh-cut fruit and vegetables, recently launched a retail concept in Saudi Arabia, offering a wide offering of fresh food and beverage options on-the-go.

The menu at Del Monte Fresh Market includes a combination of ultra-fresh juices, smoothies and freshly made salads, wraps and muffins, for all tastes. (10)

Frequent municipality inspections of the fruit and vegetable market (Halaqah) are considered unfair by workers, who report that even fruit and vegetables that have not become rotten are destroyed, and that the legal workers are apprehended without committing any violations and their goods are confiscated.

An experienced market operator described how his sponsor brings the vegetables from the sunset (Maghreb) auction and he sells the vegetables for a profit of SR3 and SR5 a carton.

He said there is a demand for fruit and vegetables throughout the month of Shaban, but it decreases in Ramadan and Shawwal and during the summer vacation. (11)

Despite Saudization, expatriate workers have once again tightened their grip on the Kingdom’s fruit and vegetable markets, Al-Riyadh newspaper reported.

As a result, many Saudis are also calling on the authorities to clamp down on the illegal process of non-Saudis running fruit and vegetable businesses under the name of Saudis in return for fixed sums of money, a process known in the Kingdom as “tasattur”. (12)
The Saudi Arabian grocery retailers Azizia Panda United (APU) are set to establish 16 commercial chains and modern markets in various Egyptian governorates, said Minister of Supply Khaled Hanafy. (13)

Saudi Arabia's Central Department of Statistics released the following April consumer price data on Sunday, showing inflation flat at its March level, which was the lowest since at least September 2012 when the current data series began. Prices of housing and utilities rose 3.1% from a year earlier in April, while food and beverage prices climbed 1.3% percent. The data are based on the 2007 consumer basket with the series beginning in September 2012. (14)

Food and retail companies in Saudi Arabia have performed strongly this year after a royal handout spurred consumer spending, and the outlook remains positive ahead of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The retail and food sectors saw profits rise 15.5% and 11.6% respectively in the first quarter - some of the best performing sectors on the Saudi stock market, according to Al Rajhi Capital.

Saudi Arabia, which plans to open its stock market to direct foreign investment in June, is the second-largest retail market in the region after Egypt, and has one of the world's youngest and fastest-growing consumer bases.

Savola Group, the largest company in the food sector in terms of turnover, has said it plans to add 100 convenient stores and 20 supermarkets to its existing capacity of 405 outlets. Savola also owns the Panda retail chain and a 36.5% share in Almarai, the second-largest firm in the Saudi food sector.

Food remains the largest retail sub-sector in Saudi Arabia.

(15)

The Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) has urged concerned authorities to closely monitor the market and control rise in prices of commodities and food items before the holy month of Ramadan.

According to consumers, vegetable and fruit prices have already increased. Nusrat Zaman said marrows are available in the market from SR10 to SR11 per kilo, when normally it's available for SR3 to SR4 per kilo. Tomatoes, which were being sold for SR5.95 per kilo last week, are now at SR7.95 per kilo.

Another consumer, Ishrat Ahmed, complained that the prices of all commodities, especially those needed in Ramadan, are increasing. "Lemon was available for SR5 per kilo and it is already SR11 per kilo now, potatoes were SR3.95 until last week and prices have now increased to SR4.95/kilo," she said. (16)

With Ramadan approaching shops are in fierce competition with one another to lure customers with attractive product promotions and low prices often leading to increase in consumption by Saudi families during the holy month by up to 500 percent.

Mohammed Al-Qahtani said many customers purchase more food than the family can consume in order to take advantage of the "low price" offers. 'Housewives prefer to buy goods during Ramadan in large quantities which saves them time and effort during the fasting month.'

Nayef Al-Sharif head of the food and beverage committee at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the Ministry of Commerce has put an end to false offers by shops and will not allow them to offer promotions before obtaining a specific permit after providing a list of prices to the ministry for approval. (17)

A number of fruit and vegetable importers and traders in Saudi Arabia have been preparing for Ramadan. The majority have aimed to increase the quantities imported in anticipation of the expected increase in demand. These have stressed the importance of consumers not being wasteful by buying more than they need, as this could have a negative impact on the prices of the most demanded items, such as tomatoes.

Mohammed Saifullah Sharbatly, an entrepreneur and member of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, expects an increase of between 10 and 15% in the fruit and vegetable volumes imported by the Kingdom from overseas suppliers. He stated that fruits and vegetables arrive to the Saudi markets from various countries, especially Egypt, Italy, France, and Chile.

Engineer Mutasim Abdullah Abu Zinada estimated that the usual daily demand for tomatoes stands at around 150 tonnes, while in the month of Ramadan it increases to about 200 tonnes per day. (18)

Saudi Arabia, the fifth largest importer of fresh vegetables from India, has banned the import of green chillis because of the presence of high pesticide residues.
The country’s agriculture ministry imposed a ban on the import of green chillis after issuing an advisory to India’s Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) that high levels of pesticides were found in some shipments of the commodity.

According to the Indian Spices Board, chili peppers are one of India’s largest foreign currency earners, and 181,500 tons of the commodity worth about $3 million were exported during April-November 2013. (19)

Using the skills he learned at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the 22-year-old Mohammed Qahwaji is set to run an indoor business in aquaponics, a fairly new agriculture technique that is growing in popularity worldwide.

The cycle begins with the fish.

The fish eat the food. The faeces excreted by the fish filters through adjacent bins and pipes and winds up in a tub full of plants. The nutrients act as fertilizer feeding the plants. The plants absorb the waste and the clean water is then pumped back into the tank with the fish. The cycle repeats.

Through the process, a variety of fruits and vegetables can be harvested and sold to the community. The technique requires less space and saves thousands upon thousands of gallons of water, that would otherwise be needed to tend to crops. (20)

Saudi CPI rose to 2.1 percent year-on-year in May, up from 2.0 percent in April, its first rise in nine months, but was mainly due to a lower base effect. Food price inflation recorded a small year-on-year rise, but showed a deceleration in monthly terms.

The slower growth in food prices compared to April follows a subdued price environment since the start of the year, with food price inflation generally being lower compared to previous years. The generally subdued food price environment already contributed to last year’s surprising fall in food prices ahead of Ramadan. We also see that the relatively muted rise to foodstuffs ahead of Ramadan this year is mainly driven by the continued deflationary trend in international food prices. It perhaps also reflects attempts by the government to supervise unjustifiable increases in prices ahead of Ramadan. According to a statement by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued last week, stability in prices of foodstuffs can be attributed to the increase in the volume of supply, as well as other factors including the regulatory measures issued by the Council of Ministers. We do, however, note that the recent uptick in wholesale food inflation gives an indication of further rises to consumer foodstuffs in the coming months. (21)

Inspectors from Al-Shawqeya branch municipality in Makkah raided a random market and razed number of illegal stalls that were selling rotten fruit and vegetables. A number of street peddlers who were violating the residency law were also arrested. Some 80 stalls were removed and fruit and vegetables that were not good for human consumption destroyed. Teams from police and municipality had formed a task force to raid all random markets in the city. (22)

Food security concerns of countries like Saudi Arabia are prompting strong growth of Dutch exports of farm technology ranging from advanced greenhouse lighting and irrigation systems to drought-resistant seeds.

Private Dutch firm Dalsem designs complete greenhouses, kitted out with lighting, climate control and power systems, allowing farmers to become ever more productive. For example, tomato yields in modern Dutch greenhouses can be 20 times higher than in the open field, up to 90 kg per square metre a year, according to Rabobank economist Cindy van Rijswick.

However, many farm businesses are burdened with heavy debts after investing in ever more advanced, industrialised crop cultivation while their cost savings have often been passed on to powerful buyers such as supermarkets.

Abroad, tomatoes can grow in very different hostile environments using hi-tech greenhouses. In the Gulf, specialist glass protects plants from the desert sun. (23)

2.3. Qatar

* Qatar retailers and consumers enthusiastically welcome mango season and festivals showcase a huge variety of mangoes from numerous countries.
Work to establish bilateral trade relations and establish food security are an ongoing topic.

Consumers complain of Ramadan price hikes, but traders claim many products are stable.

Lebanon's land exports to Gulf markets have been choked off, leaving millions of dollars in goods stranded after the closure of a vital crossing on the Syrian-Jordanian border last month.

The Nasib border point was the last remaining gateway for Lebanese truck drivers transporting agricultural and industrial products to Iraq and Gulf countries.

"Exports by land have stopped entirely," said Ahmad Alam, whose company exports Lebanese fruit and vegetables to Arab countries.

The agriculture ministry says that agricultural products make up 6 per cent of GDP and 17 per cent of total exports.

Road closures have hit agricultural exports the hardest, since they rely predominantly on land routes and cannot be easily transported by air or sea. (1)

Qatar Charity (QC) has implemented an agricultural project as part of its ongoing relief for Syria.

The project involves potato cultivation designed to compensate for the shortage of food, encourage farmers to engage in agriculture and revitalise land left to ruin when people fled the region.

The potatoes are planted in the northern countryside twice a year: spring term, which is the most important and extends from February 10 until March 10, taking into account the variety and weather conditions available during planting; and autumn term, from July 20 until August 20, and gives half of the production and profits compared to the spring term. (2)

Kenya and Qatar have signed an agreement to step up bilateral maritime cooperation, the Kenyan presidency announced. Under the maritime deal, there will be direct shipping between [Kenya's Indian Ocean port of] Mombasa and Doha, which is set to boost trade in Kenya and the East Africa region. Qatari Airways, would soon begin operating cargo flights from Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport as well. Kenyan exports to Qatar include unprocessed agricultural foods, while imports include chemicals, fertilizers, plastics and furniture. One of Kenya's major projects, which Qatar has agreed to assist in, is the Lamu Port-Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor known as LAPSSET. (3)

Safari outlets held The Mango Festival featuring over 100 varieties from India, Pakistan, the US, Thailand, Kenya, Australia, Yemen, the Philippines, Brazil and other Latin American countries. The festival also features mango-related products. (4)

Lulu Hypermarket Group ran a mango festival under the title ‘Mango Mania’ for one week. The idea behind the festival is to promote the agricultural produce of India and make it popular among the local community and in the Middle East at large. This year the festival is showcasing over 120 variety of mangoes from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam, Kenya, Brazil, Ivory Coast, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Thailand, Malaysia, Uganda, Ghana, the Philippines, Yemen, Ecuador and Africa. (5)

Mango lovers in the country have a lot to choose from this season. With many retail outlets holding special festivals dedicated to the fruit, a wide range of mangoes from across the globe is available in the local market right now.

The number of source countries, too, has increased significantly. While mangoes from barely six-seven countries were available here earlier, retail outlets now boast of varieties from over 20 nations around the world.

“One 40ft container of mangoes is not enough to meet the daily requirements in the country at this point," said an importer, adding that the ongoing trend would continue until the end of July.

India, is the main source of the fruit and some 75 varieties of mangoes – up from the usual 40-45 options said one supermarket official.

Besides Alphonso, chiefly sourced from the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Goa, Sindooram, Neelam, Badami, Tottapuri, Rajapuri, Kesar, Kilchundan, Palgova, Roja and Panchavarnam are among the Indian varieties that have become popular.
Popular varieties from Sri Lanka, such as Neelam, Jaffna, Senbatta and Karathakolamban, among others, are also available.

Thailand, whose mangoes made their foray into the region’s markets only about a decade ago, is a fast-growing exporter to the Gulf. Some of their varieties cost as much as QR29 a kg.

An official at Safari Hypermarket said the mango season is expected to last at least until the first week of August and imports from regular sources such as Pakistan are still to arrive.

Usually, mangoes from Pakistan come only when rains start there next month. This time, mangoes from the south Asian nation are expected to arrive when Ramadan starts and the imports may continue for a full month, he explained.

Mangoes from the Philippines, Yemen, Kenya, Uganda, Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Mexico, Malaysia, Ecuador, Indonesia and Ivory Coast, too, are making their presence felt. The fruit is generally sold between QR6 and QR30. (6)

Romania will send an agricultural attaché to Doha (Qatar) to develop an entry point for Romanian agricultural goods, Agriculture Minister Daniel Constantin announced during a visit to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. (7)

Bulgaria has been discussing opportunities for bilateral economic cooperation and trade with Qatar, including agricultural products. (8)

Qatar University College of Arts and Sciences (QU-CAS) and Al Sulaiteen Agriculture Research, Studies and Training Centre (SARSTC) signed an agreement to stimulate scientific research and training in agriculture in the region in view of a lack of local food production and heavy reliance on imports.

The agreement will support scientific research and development in agriculture, water, renewable energy, food security, agricultural production systems, management, marketing opportunities, nutritional security and diet diversification. (9)

A 22nd two-day meeting of the GCC Technical Committee for Agriculture and Food Products Specifications Sector, hosted by the Environment Ministry’s Specifications and Standards Department, was held in Qatar focusing on the issue of food security and associated sustainability of natural resources and bio-diversity. (10)

Qatar took part in the 39th session of the biennial Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to discuss issues including food status, agriculture, markets of food commodities, global food security, FAO-related Millennium Development Goals, and FAO policies and organizational issues. (11)

The 26th meeting of GCC Agricultural Cooperation Committee yesterday approved a proposal to set up a special centre for food security for member countries. (12)

Consumers reported sharp increases in the price of food items and vegetables during the initial days of Ramadan.

The prices of some food items had gone up by 50 percent compared to the previous week. Customers said prices of some vegetables, such as tomato, cucumber and those used in salad, jumped around 5-15 percent. However, prices of other vegetables were stable. But traders claimed prices were normal and had dropped in case of some vegetables. For example, a foam box of tomato last month cost QR30-35 and now QR20-23 as supply had increased.

They said prices of some vegetables had increased by five percent because many trucks had stopped coming from Syria due to political instability. (13)

OHA: Qatar Red Crescent (QRC) has launched a new project to provide agricultural machinery in Arara, under a QR22.63m grant by Qatar to develop and rebuild West Darfur. The project is part of QRC’s QR3.65m economic empowerment programme to support poor families by enhancing their productive abilities and training them in agriculture, ranching, handicrafts and income-generating projects. (14)
2.4. Oman

* The arrival of mango season is celebrated in grand style by retailers offer a massive variety of the fruit.
* Authorities try to plan for Ramadan but complaints still arise about monopolies and high prices.
* Research into a rare banana, the Dubas bug and organic waste could benefit agriculture in general.
* An emphasis is being placed on locally grown produce in partnerships with hotels.

Through a partnership with The Research Council (TRC), researchers at a British university are looking at sustainable ways to control the dubas bug infestation in Oman.

Dubas bug, which is said to be responsible for 30 per cent of the losses that date palm farmers incur in the country, last year resulted in widespread damage of the crop.

Scientists hope to find predators that consume the dubas bug as biological controls. (1)

The Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) announced the launch of its new community initiative, Farming for Hospitality, which connects local farmers with hotels in the Jabal al Akhdar region and helps improve their profits by giving them greenhouses and training them in modern agricultural methods. Farming for Hospitality, initially launched as a pilot programme in May 2014, provides local farmers with modern greenhouses to grow produce which was previously imported from abroad, or from elsewhere in Oman. The fresh produce is both for hotels and the local community. (2)

Lulu Hypermarkets in Qatar launched a 12-day mango festival on May 18. The annual summer festival features 101 varieties of mangoes. Some of the most popular currently on display are Alphonso, Badami, Langra and Totapuri. The fruit is sourced from Oman, India, Kenya, and Thailand in addition to Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Brazil. Ghana, Vietnam, Uganda along with Mexico and Sri Lanka also bring their varieties here.

Oman, has recently seen a marked rise in the cultivation of mangoes, making the local produce a preferred choice amongst the Omani market. (3)

Oman and Indonesia, plan to set up a joint business council, which is expected to be formed by the end of this year to facilitate bilateral trade. The launch of direct flights from Muscat to Jakarta by Oman Air in December last year has provided an opportunity for businessmen in Oman and Indonesia to further explore each other's markets. Foreign investment opportunities in the agriculture sector include seed industry, farm management, post harvest, processing and other sorts of partnership on agribusiness.

Food security and agroindustry are becoming a priority in the agricultural development. (4)

Farmers in Jebel Al Akhdar have been given the opportunity to work and earn on farms set up by Omran as it launches its 'Farming for Hospitality' project on the mountain.

The project aims to provide farmers of Jebel Al Akhdar community a platform to grow produce that does not grow naturally on the mountainside due to adverse environment and geographical characteristics.

The four greenhouses currently grow tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce which are sold in the local market and to the nearby Alilah Resort.

It is expected that the greenhouses will be able to produce 7000 kilogrammes (kg) of goods annually in just a 35-square metre area.

A grower said the produce is sold according to the Mawaleh vegetable market prices. For example, a kg of tomato could fetch between 400 and 500 baizas.

"There is no special price for the resort." (5)

A rare banana found in an oasis in Jebel Bani Jaber near Tiwi has pest-resistant characteristics that could help protect the global banana industry, said a German plant scientist.

Dr Andreas Buerkert, from the University of Kassel in Germany, together with Dr Sulaiman Al Khanjari, his former Omani PhD student and later colleague, discovered the banana, referred to as the Umq Bir banana after the oasis where it grows, in 2003, and has been studying it ever since. The unique banana has now been found
to have pest-resistant qualities that make it rare among bananas, a trait that could potentially be shared with other types of bananas, a fruit that is under threat from fungal diseases and beetles worldwide. (6)

A total of 138 tonnes of vegetables and fruits were confiscated at the Central Market in Muscat, Oman, including 1,065 kilos of apples, 2,530 kilos of oranges, 25,460 kilos of carrots and 108 tonnes of potatoes that were no longer fit for consumption.

Over 4,500 inspection visits were carried out to stores selling fruits and vegetables, restaurants, cafes and stores for refrigerated and frozen food preservation to make sure all sanitary and food safety regulations were enforced. This has resulted in the finding of 20 health violations and the closure of an establishment. Municipal vehicles had to transfer 1,395 tonnes of various spoiled foods to Maradim. (7)

A research project by Caledonian College of Engineering, funded by The Research Council (TRC), is looking primarily at how organic waste from the Mawaleh Central Fruit and Vegetable Market can be anaerobically treated to generate a biogas that can converted to fuel or electricity. It is suggested the process could be applied to waste throughout Oman.

They say that from all the wilayats (in Muscat Governorate) there are 5,000 tonnes of waste, combining all kinds of biodegradable waste, per day. According to the research, five tonnes of biodegradable waste per day can produce 240 KW power, worth $100 per day in useable electricity. (8)

Millennium Resort Mussanah is meeting changing market needs through using saking smart technology and empowering farmers in the Governorate of Al Batinah by using locally-sourced fruit and vegetables to strengthen the local supply chain. In the past year, the resort has bought nearly 66,000 kilograms of fresh fruit and vegetables from eight farms in the region to supply its four onsite restaurants. (9)

The Public Authority of Consumer Protection (PACP) has said that it would ensure the availability of all necessary commodities at normal prices during the holy month of Ramadan in coordination with different departments and shopping malls.

The PACP will provide a Ramadan basket containing 19 basic food commodities to be held at reasonable prices and the chairman held meetings with vegetables and fruit vendors in the central market to coordinate with them on ensuring an uninterrupted supply of items.

PACP teams will undertake round-the-clock field visits in the markets during Ramadan and authorities would strictly enforce the rules laid down during Ramadan with penalties for raising prices without justification and without obtaining approval from the authority. (10)

The Muscat Municipality reported the arrival of 699 containers loaded with an estimated 13,980 tonnes of different varieties of fruits and vegetables to the Central Market in the period between 30 May until early last week, as part of the efforts to ensure a sufficient supply of products from various exporting countries, especially Iran, Pakistan and India.

Also as part of the preparations to receive the holy month of Ramadan, the municipality has ensured the storage of nearly 6,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables. Market management specialists have overseen the implementation of inspection campaigns on cold stores to guarantee the good quality of the goods stored, which have resulted in the destruction of 102 tonnes of produce during the aforementioned period. (11)

A monopolised and unregulated food industry in the KSA is resulting in rising prices and a struggle for Saudi citizens to provide for their families during Ramadan, Al-Riyadh reported.

The Ministry of National Economy and Planning reported the sector in Saudi Arabia has not been following global price trends since 2008.

Economy expert Fadhil Al-Bouaiynain said traders in the food industry were raising food prices in line with international trends, but not reducing them when prices deflate.

He said international food prices are currently in deflation and the price of oil has deflated by 50 percent, which means production prices are now cheaper. An increase in the US dollar value meant the Saudi riyal has also increased in value, making importation expenses very cheap.

He added the industry is monopolized, allowing the few sources of importation to manipulate pricing as they wish and called for regulation of traders’ profits.
He added Ramadan is a highly profitable season for the food sector and the ministry should be more proactive in regulating the prices of the market.

“Our neighboring countries have been successful in regulating more than 400 food products. “Abroad, religious seasons are the times for sales with discounts of over 50 percent while we are allowing Muslim and non-Muslim traders take advantage of our needs during Ramadan and empty our wallets of our hard earned money.” (12)

Al Mawalih Central Market has been well stocked for the holy month of Ramadan.

The market is one of the largest in the Sultanate, with a total area of 185,000 square metres and provides markets in the governorates with various types of vegetables and fruits received from outside the Sultanate through land, air and sea borders. It also re-exports products, whether Omani or foreign, to markets in neighbouring countries.

The Muscat Municipality oversees the market through government offices such as Al Mawalih Central Market Administration that includes the technical, health and financial management sections. The market’s management building comprises offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and two companies for customs clearance.

The market currently consists of 63 wholesale stores, 26 retail stores, and 188 cold rooms, two areas for selling onions, and two sheds for selling local products, containing 438 stores.

The market sees 25 to 30 trucks entering daily from outside the Sultanate through land border posts, receiving and inspecting more than 120 tonnes of agricultural products daily. On some occasions, like Ramadan, Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha, the number could double.

On the instructions of the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP) to monitor market traders and ensure stability in prices during Ramadan, Ibrahim bin Hamad Al Ghafri, director of the PACP in A’Seeb said that the authority, in co-ordination with the municipality, began to form a team to monitor daily during the first three weeks of the holy month to ensure that traders comply with the laws and regulations. (13)

Japan-Oman robust economic relationship is set to leap to a new level with the signing of an investment agreement between the two countries, which is expected in the second quarter of this year.

The agreement is expected to boost bilateral trade. In 2014, imports from Oman to Japan were around $3.84 billion and exports from Japan to Oman were around $3.50 billion.

Vegetables are among Japan’s regular imports from Oman. One Japanese trading company is involved in the export of Omani green beans to Japan, providing around 90 per cent of fresh green beans on supermarket shelves in winter.

Middle Eastern and African countries that currently have investment agreements with Japan in effect are Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey and Mozambique. An investment agreement with Saudi Arabia has already been signed. (14)

2.5. Bahrain

* A new law to be implemented after Ramadan will insist on 12 month import schedules demonstrating “vegetable health”.
* A fiscal deficit is resulting in plans to scrap farmer subsidies.
* Authorities worked with traders to try and avoid shortages during Ramadan.

Bahraini farmers will have to operate on solar energy as the government plans to scrap subsidies on water and electricity, according to experts.

It follows government plans to axe meat subsidies from August 1 and compensate eligible Bahrainis with payments into their bank accounts.

MPs have threatened to block the national budget for this year and next if the government insists on reducing subsidies.
However, the Agriculture Directorate has plans in place to help Bahraini farmers with the transition. A lot of water is used for cooling and electricity for green houses not to mention to grow crops. Two years ago self-sustaining solar powered green houses were introduced through the Bahrain International Garden show. So there is a system there for farmers to switch to when the price of water and electricity increases. 

A dramatic drop in the oil price, which accounts for more than 80 per cent of government revenues, has contributed significantly to a reduction in national income. As a result, Bahrain is facing a fiscal deficit of BD1.47 billion this year and BD1.563 billion next year and last November raised its debt ceiling from BD5 billion to BD7 billion to meet the shortfall. (1)

The implementation of a 12-year-old law on fruit and vegetable imports that has never been properly enforced has been delayed until after Ramadan. Under the law, which was enacted in 2003, importers are obliged to provide the authorities with a full 12-month schedule of planned imports from certified suppliers. Fruit and vegetable importers will also be required to supply certificates of origin or a health clearance certificate with every order coming into the country.

The business community feared the law would create a bureaucratic headache if fully implemented, and after raising the issue to the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry it has been decided to extend the grace period for importing fruit and vegetables without a Vegetable Health Certificate or certificate of origin until after Ramadan “The new procedure for fruit and vegetables will take effect on July 22. (2)

Bahrain stepped up preparations ahead of the advent of the holy month of Ramadan in line with the directives of His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa to ensure all Ramadan commodities are available in the markets. A meeting was held with food traders, representatives of hypermarkets and companies concerned with Government subsidies focusing on food stocks, prices and planned Ramadan promotions, taking into account consumers’ purchasing power. Traders said that more than 200 tons of fruit and vegetables imported from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa and other countries would be available daily in local central markets across Bahrain. (3)

Russia is looking to its Middle Eastern neighbours to help it recover from sanctions – and is finding Arab states eager to scale up economic ties and a host of Arab ministers showed up to the St Petersburg International Economic Forum on Thursday. Zayed Al Zayani, the Bahraini trade minister, said he “would like to see Russia use Bahrain as a basis for Russian investments in the GCC and Middle East”. “There are a lot of synergies that exist between Russia and Bahrain and we believe that it is time to explore these.” (4)

Fears that perishable goods arriving at Khalifa Bin Salman Port in Bahrain could spoil due to delays clearing customs have been allayed. Officials from the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) had been inundated with complaints about hold-ups caused by alleged problems with scanning equipment at the port. BCCI Food and Agriculture sector committee chairman Khalid Al Amin told the GDN that there had been cases of shipping containers filled with perishable goods spoiling but assured traders that the clearing process had returned to normal.

The scanners were allegedly down for more than a week, Al Amin added. (5)
3. Price Information

3.1. United Arab Emirates

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<th>High Price (Dhs)</th>
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### 3.5. Bahrain

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