

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

News on developments in agriculture and food in Egypt.

Nile Nuggets

News on Developments in Agriculture and Food in Egypt

June 2015

RAMADAN KAREEM!: The Holy Month of Ramadan began on June 18, 2015 and is expected to end on July 18, 2015. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran to Muhammad according to Islamic belief. The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic root *ramiḍa* or *ar-ramad*, which means scorching heat or dryness. Fasting from dawn until sunset is obligatory for adult Muslims, except those who are suffering from an illness, travelling, are elderly, pregnant, breastfeeding, diabetic, or menstruating. While fasting, Muslims refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking, and other sacrifices.

RAMADAN MEANS SPENDING MORE ON FOOD: Egyptian families spend a higher percentage of disposable income on food during the month of Ramadan relative to the rest of the year. A survey done by the Egyptian Daily News revealed that families spend an average of LE2,000 (\$263) on food during the month of Ramadan, twice as much as what these families spend during the rest of the months of the year. The survey also found that wealthier families spend on average LE7,000 (\$921) during Ramadan compared to LE5000 (\$658) during the remaining months. Due to increased demand, shops actively load up with high-end food products that they would not normally carry. Given added demand, prices of food products always increase during Ramadan.

NEARLY 60,000 ACRES LOST SINCE 2011: The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) announced that 1,354,322 violations had taken place on agricultural fields since the January 25, 2011 Revolution that ousted former President Hosni Mubarak. The Ministry said the violations included land desertification and construction on agricultural lands. According to the MALR, the violations were responsible for the loss of approximately 59,422 acres or 25,000 hectares of farmland. Only 7 percent of the reported violations have been resolved. To remediate this situation, the MALR is said to be drafting a law that will penalize builders who have constructed on agricultural lands by stopping utility provision of water and electricity. It will also form local committees that will be on the lookout to forestall future violations.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TO FUND \$50 MILLION IN AGRICULTURE: The Government of Egypt's request for a \$50 million loan from the African Development Bank for agricultural purposes has been approved by the bank's board. The loan will be used to implement the Egyptian National Drainage program destined to improve the country's agricultural production and household income generation by developing irrigation systems as well as to avoid water logging and soil salinity which affect production. According to the Egyptian Government, the implementation of the project is expected to boost crop productivity by 15 to 21 percent for selected crops, increase farm income by 40 percent for a typical one hectare farm, improve food security, and reduce poverty in general.

LICORICE JUICE DURING RAMADAN: Licorice is the root of “*Glycyrrhiza glabra*”, a perennial legume, from which a sweet flavor is extracted. In Egypt, it is called Erk Sous and it is the favorite juice for many Egyptians in the summer months and during the holy month of Ramadan. Licorice juice can be made at home, but vendors are out in full force during Ramadan time and summers, conveniently providing this deliciously iced drink during the meltingly hot sunny summer days.

