

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Nile Nuggets for June 2016

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News on developments in agriculture and food in Egypt.

# Nile Nuggets

News on Developments in Agriculture and Food in Egypt  
June 2016

**PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION TO ALLOW 0.05 PERCENT ERGOT IN WHEAT IS ON HOLD; CONFUSION OVER POLICY CONTINUES:** After several months of uncertainty over the permissible levels of ergot fungus in wheat, Egypt's prime minister said on Tuesday, June 21, 2016, that Egypt will comply with international standards in its wheat imports and allow for 0.05 percent ergot. An official decree to follow that statement was expected on Wednesday, June 22, 2016, but never materialized. A number of grain shipments are still waiting at Egyptian ports for clearance. Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture said that the decree was delayed because of a months-old judicial order from the Egyptian Prosecutor General that bans all shipments with ergot from entering the country. The order followed the rejection of a French wheat shipment in December 2015. The international trading giant, Bunge, subsequently filed a lawsuit contesting the decision, which is still in court.

The disagreement between government authorities over the acceptable level of ergot has hamstrung the country's ability to purchase wheat from international markets. Egypt's wheat standard accepts 0.05 percent ergot, which is in line with Codex and international standards. In spite of this, the Egyptian plant quarantine administration's internal regulation stipulates a zero tolerance. During the last 6 months, quarantine authorities rejected several imported wheat shipments from different origins due to the presence of ergot. The two other Government of Egypt inspection authorities, the Ministries of Health and Trade, accepted the same cargoes as ergot levels were below the 0.05 percent, in line with the Egyptian wheat standard.

**EGYPT REJECTS WHEAT FRAUD ALLEGATIONS:** Egypt's Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade (MoSIT) dismissed allegations that its 2016 local wheat procurement figures were inflated and promised penalties for domestic suppliers that misreport stocks. The ministry announced a government-led inspection and recount of wheat silos this month after an unusually high procurement figure prompted widespread fraud allegations from top industry officials, traders and parliamentarians. The MoSIT announced last week that it bought nearly 5 million metric tons of local wheat from farmers compared to the 3.7 million tons procured last year. According to wheat millers and traders, this year's high procurement figure was a result of private suppliers misreporting their stocks to collect government payments for highly subsidized local wheat that is not actually in their silos. If the numbers were misrepresented, Egypt may have to buy more foreign wheat to meet domestic demand while contending with a dollar shortage that has already sapped the country's import capability.

**NEARLY 25,000 HECATRES LOST SINCE 2011 REVOLUTION:** On June 18, 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) announced that 1,538,354 violations impacting agricultural lands had taken place 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 caused the loss of approximately 25,000 hectares (ha) of farmland. Only 20 percent, or 309,040 violations, have been resolved, impacting 7,315 ha of land.

**BREAK YOUR RAMADAN FAST WITH DATES:** Ramadan (in Arabic: رمضان, *Ramadān*) is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. During the whole month, observers of Islam fast from sunrise to

sunset. During the fast, no food or drink is consumed, and thoughts must be kept pure. Breaking the fast with dates is a Ramadan tradition, as this particular food has numerous health benefits to those fasting.



When people fast for more than 16 hours the body can develop mild health problems such as headaches, low blood sugar, and lethargy. To avoid such problems, one should carefully monitor their eating habits once fasting for the day has ended. Dates are an excellent source of fiber, sugar, magnesium, potassium, and have carbohydrates which will aid the body in maintaining health. The carbohydrates found in dates also make the fruit a slower digesting food. Some people will eat a couple of dates in breaking the fast while others mix them with a cup of milk.

### **Crop News**

- **Wheat procurement:** As of June 22, 2016, the Egyptian Government announced the end of the 2016 wheat procurement season. According to statement released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, the government purchased roughly five million tons of local wheat since the start of harvest on April 15<sup>th</sup>. The stated goal for this year's harvest was to buy four million tons of domestic wheat during the 2016 procurement season.