



# Foodex Saudi promotes Kingdom's agriculture

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Saudi food exports will become a major non-oil industry over the next five years, according to Prince Abdul Aziz bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz, who inaugurated the four-day 6th Foodex Saudi 2018 took place from November 12 to 15 at the Jeddah Center for Forums and Events.

During the opening of the largest Saudi international exhibition specializing in the food sector, the prince emphasized the importance of concerted efforts and international partnerships to achieve agricultural development and sustainable food security.

He said the participation of 52 countries represented by 500 international brands reflected the position that Saudi Arabia occupied economically. "It also shows the leading role played by the Kingdom in the Middle East as the largest

and most attractive market for all investors," he said.

The prince said the achievements of food and beverage industries in Saudi Arabia during the first quarter of the current year had reached 82 percent and total funding had increased by 217 percent, according to information issued by the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources. This also revealed that

total Saudi exports in the food sector during the past year amounted to SR14 billion for 2017, and the sector ranked fourth in the list of major non-oil exporting industries.

Haya Al-Sunaidi, chairwoman and CEO of Reed Sunaidi Exhibition, organizer of the exhibition, told Arab News that the launch of Foodex Saudi had seen wide participation from international brands,



Prince Abdul Aziz bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz launches the event.

including the latest products in fresh, chilled and frozen foods, dairy products, food services, canned goods, meat, poultry, snacks and sweets.

"This year, we have more exhibitors than those in the last edition or any previous edition of the exhibition. We have both public and private participants," she said.

"The government has been encouraging farmers to produce organic products. Now we can see that we are producing olive oil, a thing that I had not imagined we could really have," she said. She added that Saudi Arabia was now exporting dates, poultry and dairy products.

However, Al-Sunaidi said Saudi Arabia was still importing 80 percent of its total food consumption, which is why she believes imported brands will not affect homegrown food production.

Organic food products were noticeably present at the exhibition, proving that Saudis are reconsidering their eating habits. Al-Sunaidi said that Saudi investors and consumers are demanding more organic food products.

Al-Sunaidi said the exhibition, which is seeing European and Asian participation, offers business networking opportu-

nities for industry professionals working in the food and beverage sector. She added that it is also showcasing new food products entering the Saudi market for the first time.

Al-Sunaidi said that leading local, regional and international companies trust the Saudi market. "Saudi Arabia has the largest food market in both the GCC countries and the Middle East. It is also one of the world's strongest economic and consumer powers," she said.

"Food and beverage imports are expected to increase up to SR135 billion in 2020 compared to the present rate of SR80 billion. In addition, fast-food market volume exceeds SR5 billion per year and retail sales have surged by 66 percent," she said.

Meanwhile, general manager of a Kenyan tea company, Naveed Ariff, told Arab News that the Kenyan tea they are promoting at the exhibition is the finest tea in the world. "Unlike any other tea elsewhere, our tea production is always fresh throughout the year, the quality is incomparable and the price is reasonable," he said.

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) was also present at the exhibition

through its booth, which spread its awareness messages to visitors on the latest food security standards aimed at protecting consumers' health.

The winners of nine awards for food industry innovators will be announced at the exhibition.

Thomas A. Gugler, the president of the World Association of Chefs' Societies, has announced receiving the nominations for best cold drink, best hot drink, best dairy product, best product in red meat and chicken, best product in the bakery and confectionery sector, best product in the spices and sauces sector, best frozen or cold food product, best organic food product and best healthy food product.

He said the selected candidates were highlighted to visitors, specialists and pioneers of the food industry, and they were assigned a place inside the suite dedicated to the competition at the exhibition.

In contrast, the world's most famous chefs are competing at the "Salon Culinaire," held under the auspices of the World Association of Chefs' Societies and the Saudi Chefs' Table, during which 200 chefs from the world's most famous hotels and restaurants compete in 17 categories. ♦

