

International Events

REVIEW ARTICLE

International scientific date palm meetings, 1931 – 2011: A bibliographic study

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Abstract

Periodic international meetings of date palm scientists to present the results of new research and technologies have advanced the development of modern date palm propagation, farming practices, fruit production and processing, as well as biotechnology and molecular marker technology. From the first such event in Algeria in 1931, to the recent one in Saudi Arabia in 2011, a total of 35 international meetings have been held in 14 countries during the eight decades. Most commonly referred to as a conference or a symposium, these meetings have been organized around specific date palm themes, and in most cases a proceedings has been published. As an aid to date palm researchers, this bibliographic study attempts to summarize information about the time, place, general subject matters and publications generated by these meetings.

Key words: Bibliography, Conference, *Phoenix dactylifera*, Proceedings, Symposium

Introduction

International meetings of date palm specialists have made a major contribution to the scientific advancement of world date fruit production. The opportunity to make a presentation of research findings and to receive direct feedback from fellow scientists is quite valuable. Meetings also afford an opportunity for scientists to forge international relationships for future collaboration on research. In most instances, scientific meetings generate a formal publication of key papers for wider dissemination, as well as programs and books of abstracts. Conducting research on almost any topic related to the date palm includes consultation of work presented at international meetings, but identifying and locating those bibliographic resources is often difficult.

The purpose of this article is to summarize information about the 35 international date palm conference and symposiums which have held in 14 different countries, beginning with the initial event in Algeria in 1931 through the meeting in Saudi Arabia in 2011. No meetings were held in 2012. The criteria for inclusion in this study are that the

meetings be scientific and international in scope as evidenced by their titles, contents or participants.

Excluded are special sessions on the date palm which have occurred as part of a larger more general international conference, and domestic meetings to deal with certain date palm issues within a particular country. Two references are valuable information sources about earlier date palm meetings: Asif and Al-Ghamdi, 1986; Dowson, 1976.

Chronology of Date Palm Meetings

The following information, to the extent available, is presented in four categories: name, date and place of the meeting; objectives and recommendations, if made; publications and available internet links; notes.

Semaine du Dattier. 5 - 11 November 1931. Biskra, Algeria.

- General conditions impacting date growing, such as water, climate, geology; improved production through irrigation, drainage, fertilizer and pest control; general economic aspects affecting date fruit commerce. Recommendations included: promote Deglet Nour cv.; improve pest control; create date cooperatives; encourage date fruit consumption in France; encourage production of subproducts.

- *Semaine du dattier- Compte Rendu Général.* Imp. Imbert, Algiers. 764 pp.

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- Proceedings include lengthy bibliographies of topics covered in the meeting. Meeting language French.

Le Premier Congrès International de la Datte. 6-12 November 1950. Tunis, Tunisia.

- Date production and processing in North Africa. Recommendations included: conduct scientific research on date palm agronomy; adopt uniform fruit export standards; promote sanitization of exports; reduce export tariffs and shipping costs.
- *Congrès International de la Datte*. Bulletin d'information, No. 38, Office Tunisien de Standardisation, Tunis. 2 pts. 111 and 85 pp. See report on the congress: Pereau-Leroy, 1951.
- Participants from North Africa, Europe and USA. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

First FAO International Technical Meeting on Date Production and Processing. 5 - 10 December 1959. Tripoli, Libya.

- Date production and date processing; statistics; offshoots; palm spacing; metaxenia; variety studies. Presentations were not made; instead, background and other papers were prepared in advance and used as reference materials for discussion. Recommendations: have closer international collaboration; promote selection and breeding for improving date growing; prohibit transport of date palms into uninfected areas to avoid spreading pests and diseases.
- *Report of the first FAO international technical meeting on date production and processing*. FAO, Rome, 1960. 30 pp. R.W. Nixon editor. Titles of the 18 papers presented included. See report on the meeting: Nixon, 1960. Report, but not individual papers, available at FAO library in Rome.
- The meeting was an important step in FAO's support of date palm development and to the publication of several technical date palm books. Libyan postage stamps were issued to commemorate the event (Figure 1). Meeting languages English and French.

Second FAO Technical Conference on the Improvement of Date Production and Processing. 16 - 25 October 1965. Baghdad, Iraq.

- Range of topics: pests and diseases; country reports; date products. Recommendations: conduct research and training on date production and processing; facilitate international cooperation and exchange of technical information through FAO; promote research on control of diseases and pests, especially bayoud and palm borers; establish an

international date marketing council and adopt quality standards.

- *Report of the second FAO technical conference on the improvement of date production and processing*. 1966. FAO, Rome. 25 pp. Titles of 41 papers prepared for the meeting are listed. Report, but not individual papers, available at FAO library in Rome.
- Emphasis on improvement reflected in conference title. Participants from major producing countries of Middle East and North Africa, as well as USA. Iraq issued commemorative postage stamps to mark the event (Figure 1). Meeting languages English and French.

Third FAO Technical Conference on the Improvement of Date Production, Processing and Marketing. 30 November - 4 December 1975. Baghdad, Iraq.

- Cultivation; breeding; pollination; fruit development; processing. Recommendations: establish a regional palm and date research center; create an organization of date-exporting countries; take measures to control bayoud disease; recognize dates as an international food commodity.
- *Report of the third FAO technical conference on the improvement of date production, processing and marketing*. FAO, Rome. 48 pp. Titles of 36 papers prepared for the meeting included. Report, but not individual papers, available at FAO library in Rome.
- Scope of third FAO conference broadened to include marketing. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The First Symposium on the Date Palm in Saudi Arabia. 23 - 25 March 1982. Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia.

- Cultivation; production; pests and diseases; technology; economics; marketing. Recommendations included: emphasize tissue culture; survey and evaluate the best cultivars for propagation; determine water and fertilizer requirements; find new pesticides; study biological control of pests; adopt standards for commercial date fruits; establish a date palm information center at King Faisal University.
- *Proceedings of the first symposium on the date palm in Saudi Arabia*. 1983. Makki, Y.M. (Ed) King Faisal University, Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia. 762 pp. In English and Arabic.
Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php
- Participants from 22 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The Second Symposium on the Date Palm in Saudi Arabia. 3 - 6 March 1986. Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia.

- Culture and protection; pests and pest control; processing technology; mechanization; economics and extension; botany, physiology and biochemistry. Recommendations included: emphasize on-going research on tissue culture; support a germplasm bank at King Faisal University; establish nurseries for offshoot propagation; select superior male palms; establish water and fertilizer requirements; identify modern machinery for date palm agriculture; enhance processing industries; encourage standards for commercial varieties of dates; encourage biological control of pests; establish a date palm society.
- *Proceedings of the second symposium on the date palm in Saudi Arabia.* 1989. King Faisal University, Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia. Vol. I. 648 pp. Vol. II. 686 pp. In English and Arabic. Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php
- Participants from 12 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

Seminar on Date Palm Propagation and Growing in the Arab World. 5 - 10 September 1988, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates.

- Crop husbandry; plant propagation.
- *Date palm propagation and growing in the Arab world: seminar proceedings.* Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (Sudan), Khartoum. 1989. 496 pp. In Arabic.
- Proceedings not seen; information from AGRIS database.

Symposium Irako Francais sur la Culture de Tissus du Palmier Dattier. 26 - 29 September 1988. Baghdad, Iraq.

- Exclusively dealt with tissue culture of date palms.
- Ten papers presented. No proceedings published, but papers are cited: e.g. Zaid and Al-Kaabi, 2003.
- Meetings languages English and Arabic.

The Third Symposium on the Date Palm in Saudi Arabia. 17 - 20 January 1993. Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia.

- Propagation; agricultural practices; growth regulators; postharvest physiology; botanical, physiological, genetic and chemical studies; pest control; date processing and by-products; economics and extension; mechanization. Recommendations included: promote further studies of tissue culture; establish offshoot

nurseries for superior cultivars; expand date palm planting in Arab countries; carry out additional studies of evapotranspiration and fertilization; assess threat of red palm weevil; carry out surveys of pests, fungi, bacterial and viral diseases within environmental systems; establish quarantines of offshoots and palms to avoid spread of red palm weevil and bayoud disease; expand date fruit product lines to absorb increased production; apply unified Arab standards for date fruits and by-products.

- *Proceedings of the third symposium on the date palm in Saudi Arabia.* 1996. King Faisal University, Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia. Vol. I. 584 pp. Vol. II. 632 pp. In English and Arabic. Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php
- Participants from nine countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

International Workshop on Date Palm Cultivation in Oasis Agriculture of Mediterranean Countries. 25 - 27 April 1995. Elche, Spain.

- Plenary sessions devoted to the situation of Mediterranean date palm farming; workshops dealt with: genetic diversity in oases; in vitro culture; biological control in oases; agricultural systems; cultural techniques, technology and quality; *Fusarium* and leaf drop diseases; marketing.
- *Date palm cultivation in oasis agriculture of Mediterranean countries.* Ferry, M. and D. Greiner (Eds) Serie A: Séminaires Méditerranéens, No. 28. 1996. CIHEAM, Paris. 260 pp. Contains papers presented in plenary sessions, in either English or French.
- Participants from 21 countries. Meeting languages English and French.

Scientific Seminar on Date Palm Researches Carried out in Countries Members of Date Palm Research and Development Network. 25 - 26 February 1997. Tours, Tunisia.

- Disease control by various methods; tissue culture; research programs on production and protection in Egypt, Oman, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan and UAE.
- *Scientific seminar on date palm researches carried out in countries members of date palm research and development network.* 1997. ACSAD, Damascus, Syria. 171 pp. In English.
- Seminar documents not seen; information from AGRIS database.

Scientific Seminar on Date Palm Research. 16 - 18 February 1998. Rabat, Morocco.

- Improvement of production using different and traditional methods; tissue culture; disease control; economics, including use of dates in biscuits and children's food.
- *Proceedings of the scientific seminar on date palm research.* 1998. ACSAD, Damascus, Syria. 397 pp. In Arabic.
- Seminar documents not seen; information from AGRIS database.

The First International Conference on Date Palms. 8 - 10 March 1998. Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates.

- Keynote paper on date palm germplasm; pollination and growth regulators; date processing technology; date propagation genetics and biotechnology; pest control; fertilization and irrigation; postharvest; by-product utilization.
- *Proceedings of the first international conference on date palms.* Afifi, M. A. R. and A. A. Al-Badawy (Eds) 1998. United Air Emirates University, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates. 643 pp. Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php
- Participants from 19 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The International Conference on Date Palm. 9 - 11 November 1999. Assiut, Egypt.

- Technology of agricultural processes and propagation; ecology, pests and diseases; technology of packing and processing.
- *The international conference on date palm.* Conference book. 1999. Assiut University, Egypt. 255 pp.
- Proceedings not seen; meeting information incomplete. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The Date Palm International Symposium. 22 - 25 February 2000. Windhoek, Namibia.

- In vitro propagation and fingerprinting; production; diseases and pests; processing and marketing; international cooperation. Recommendations included: promote more rapid induction of somatic embryogenesis; design fertilizer applications to specific local conditions; develop IPM programs to control red palm weevil; participate in the Information Network on Post Harvest Operations; establish a Date Palm Global Network.
- *Proceedings of the date palm international symposium.* 2000. Ministry of Agriculture, Water

and Rural Development, Windhoek, Namibia. 350 pp.

- Participants from 21 countries. FAO co-organizer. Meeting language English.

The Second International Conference on Date Palms. 25 - 27 March 2001. Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates.

- Cultural practices; pest management; biotechnology; genetics and germplasm; postharvest; agricultural engineering; economics; processing; by-product utilization.
- *Proceedings of the second international conference on date palms.* 2001. Al-Badawy, A. A. (Ed) Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates. 2 Vols., 913 pp.

Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php

- Participants from 20 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

International Date Palm Forum. 15 - 17 September 2002. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

- Archaeology and the date palm; production; pests and diseases; date palm in UAE; culture; storage; marketing; international cooperation.
- *The date palm: from traditional resources to green wealth.* 2003. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi. 433 pp.

Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php

- Participants from 12 countries. Meeting language English.

The International Conference on Date Palm. 16 - 19 September 2003. Qaseem, Saudi Arabia.

- Cultivation; products and by-products; pests and diseases; postharvest technology; biotechnology.
- *Proceedings of the international conference on date palm.* (English Section) Riyadh. King Saud University, Riyadh. 502 pp. An Arabic language section of the proceedings apparently was published, but not seen.
- Participants from 11 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

Regional Workshop on Date Palm Development in the Arabian Peninsula. 29 - 31 May 2004. Dubai, UAE.

- Production; tissue culture; soil and water management; fertilizer use; diseases and pests; germplasm conservation; postharvest practices.
- *Date palm development in the Arabian Peninsula: abstracts.* 2004. International Center

for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Dubai, UAE. 32 pp. Only abstracts.

- Workshop documents not seen; information from AGRIS database.

The Second International Conference on Date Palm. 6 - 8 October 2004. El-Arish, Egypt.

- Production; propagation; protection.
- *The second international conference on date palm.* 2004. Conference papers. Suez Canal University, Egypt. Example of citation of paper from conference: Abul-Soad et al. 2004.
- Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The International Workshop on True-to-Typeness of Date Palm Tissue Culture Derived Plants. 23 - 25 May 2005. Marrakech, Morocco.

- Update scientific information on different aspects of in vitro propagation. Recommendations: develop a reliable marker to identify dwarfism and parthenocarpy; develop a database for date cultivar markers and related abnormalities; promote collaboration among researchers; refine micropropagation protocols.
- *The international workshop on true-to-typeness of date palm tissue culture derived plants.* 23 - 25 May 2005. Marrakech, Morocco. Proceedings only on CD.

Link:

<http://www.inra.org.ma/publications%5Couvrages%5Ctruetype.pdf>

- Participants from 12 countries. FAO co-organizer. Meeting language English.

First International Conference on Mango and Date Palm. 20 - 23 June 2005. Lahore, Pakistan.

- Breeding; cultivation; pests and diseases; harvesting; processing; marketing.
 - *Proceedings international conference on mango and date palm: culture and export.* 2007. Malik, A.U., M.A. Pervez and K. Ziaf (Eds) University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan. 337 pp.
- Link: <http://www.geocities.ws/mdce2005/>
- Date palm papers represented about 40% of the meeting. Despite dual focus, there was no presentation on intercropping of mango and date palm; the subject has been studied in Egypt (Abouziena et al. 2011). Meeting language English.

First International Symposium and Festival on Date Palm. 20 - 21 November 2005. Bandar Abbas, Iran.

- Irrigation; pests and diseases; bunch management; fruit processing.

- *Book of Abstracts.* Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture, Bandar Abbas, Iran. 43 pp. Proceedings not published.

- Limited international scope. Meeting languages English and Persian.

The Third International Date Palm Conference. 19 - 21 February 2006. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

- Current status of date palm cultivation in the world; research and development; protection; processing and marketing.
- *Proceedings of the third international date palm conference.* 2007. Zaid, A., V. Hegarty and H.H.S. Al Kaabi (Eds) Acta Horticulturae No. 736. 586 pp.

Links: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php and www.actahort.org/books/736

- Participants from 42 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

International Conference on Date Palm Production and Processing Technology. 9 - 11 May 2006. Muscat, Oman.

- Improvement of production; fruit quality.
- *Proceedings of the international conference on date palm production and processing technology.* 2010. Esechie, H.A. (Ed) Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. 283 pp.
- Participants from eight countries. Meeting language English.

The Fourth Symposium on Date Palm in Saudi Arabia. 5 - 8 May 2007. Al Hassa, Saudi Arabia.

- Cultivation; biotechnology applications; economics and marketing; environmental aspects of date palm; pests and diseases; fruit processing; secondary products.
 - *Book of abstracts.* King Faisal University, Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia. 427 pp. Publication of proceedings is underway.
- Link: www.dprckfu.com/english/seminars.php
- Participants from 23 countries. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

The First International Conference of Date Palm Integrated Crop Management of Date Palm and Its Impacts for Producing Clean and Safety Dates. 2 - 4 September 2007. Giza, Egypt.

- Plant protection and production.
- Proceedings published as special issue of Egyptian Journal of Agricultural Research 85(1) A/B. pp. 1-647.

- Strong emphasis on Egyptian research. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

1. The Third International Conference on Date Palm. 25 - 27 April 2008. North Sinai, Egypt.

- Research and practical experience with cultivation and technology; fruit processing under sanitary conditions.
- Apparently, a conference document contained the presented papers. Citations of papers from the conference are found in the literature e.g. Abul-Soad et al., 2008.
- Suez Canal University was the organizer. Meeting languages English and Arabic.

Biotechnologies du Palmier Dattier. 18 - 20 November 2008. Montpellier, France.

- Date production in Francophone African countries; genetic resources; conservation; micropropagation; genetic improvement; diseases; gender determination.
- *Biotechnologies du palmier dattier.* Actes du 3^e séminaire du réseau AUF-BIOVEG. 2010. Aberlenc-Bertossi, F. (Ed) IRD Éditions, Paris. 261 pp.
- Meeting language French.

International Dates Seminar. 28 July 2009. Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan.

- Date research in Pakistan; production; processing.
- *Proceedings of the international dates seminar.* Markhand, G.S. and A. A. A. Soad (Eds). Shad Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan. 121 pp.
- Small meeting focused almost exclusively on Pakistan, with the exception of a single presentation on dates in Egypt and the Arab countries. Meeting language English.

The Fourth International Date Palm Conference. 15 - 17 March 2010. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

- Production, propagation, protection and marketing; comparison of recent experiences in the UAE with those of other date growing countries; foster international technical cooperation on different aspects of the date palm production chain.
 - *Proceedings of the fourth international date palm conference.* 2010. Zaid, A. and G. Alhadrami (Eds), Acta Horticulturae 882. 715 pp.
- Link: <http://www.actahort.org/books/882/>
- Meeting languages English and Arabic.

International Symposium on Date Palm: Domestication, Distribution, Production and Marketing. 4 - 5 April 2011. Faisalabad, Pakistan.

- Domestication, distribution and characterization; propagation and production; postharvest and value added; biotechnology and plant protection; socioeconomic impact and marketing.
 - No proceedings published.
- Link to symposium program: <http://www.phdec.org.pk/download/programme.pdf>
- Information incomplete.

The First International Date Palm Symposium. 13 - 14 November 2011. Algiers, Algeria.

- Assessment of 50 years of research focused on botany and agronomy; technology and marketing; biology, biotechnology and genetics; stresses, pest and diseases and their management.
- Proceedings of the first international symposium on date palm. 2013. Bouguedoura, N., M. Bennaceur and J.-C. Pintaud (Eds), Acta Horticulturae 994. 394 pp.
- Meeting languages French and English.

The First Scientific Conference for the Development of the Date Palm and Dates Sector in the Arab World. 4 - 7 December 2011. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

- Date palm and fruit production; biotechnology; diseases and pest management; postharvest and storage; economics and value addition.
 - *Conference abstracts.* KACST, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 272 pp.
- Proceedings not published; however, selected papers published in a special issue on date palm of the Emirates Journal of Food and Agriculture 24(5) 2012.
- Link: <http://ejfa.info/index.php/ejfa/issue/view/419>
- Meeting languages English and Arabic.

Conclusion

The international date palm meetings outlined in this paper and the documentation they have generated, represent a key source of information to date palm scientists throughout the world. Just as reducing postharvest loss of date fruits can increase productivity and increase farmer income, full accessibility of information presented at date palm meetings has the potential to reduce future research expenditures by avoiding costly duplication. A documentation project to establish an archive of hard and electronic copies of this form of date palm information is recommended, ideally within the framework of an international date palm association and website.



Figure 1. Postage stamps issued to commemorate the FAO date conferences in Libya 1959 (left) and Iraq 1965 (right). The English printing on the Libyan stamps is: United Kingdom of Libya. 1st International Dates Conference, Tripoli - Libya, 5th-11th December 1959. The Iraqi stamps read: Republic of Iraq. 2nd F.A.O. Dates Conf. Baghdad 1965.

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