



PRESS RELEASE

43rd Cairo Climate Talks

November 19, 2016

“Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Agriculture in Luxor”

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The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo organized the 43rd Cairo Climate Talks on Saturday, November 19th 2016, at 3pm in the Egyptian Public Library in Luxor under the title “Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Agriculture in Luxor”. The panel was held within the framework of the German Days in Upper Egypt, a four days event in the cities of Luxor, Qena, Sohag and Minya, initiated by the German Embassy in Cairo and implemented together with numerous German organizations, such as DAAD, GIZ, Goethe-Institute, DWZ and DAI. It was the first time for a CCT to be held in Luxor and the second time ever outside Cairo.

“Sustainable Agriculture is a very important topic here in Luxor, as the agricultural sector is considered the main employer in the governorate, especially after the heavy decline in the tourism sector”, said H.E. Julius Georg Luy, German ambassador to Egypt, in his opening speech of the 43rd Cairo Climate Talks. “Agriculture is being severely affected by climate change. On the long term, only a sustainable approach to the use of relevant resources like water, soil and energy could ensure the farmer’s yields and secure their livelihoods. Consequently, there is a need for the promotion of innovative ideas and new technologies as well as a raise of awareness among policy makers and farmers alike”, he added. Concluding his speech he expressed his support to the already existing sustainable farming projects in Luxor and his interest in learning more details during the discussion.

During the panel, Ms. Mona El-Khodeiry, co-founder and manager of El-Khodeiry Company, talked about the establishment of her company which is founded on the principle of transforming a problem into a fruitful solution. The company works on establishing biogas units inside farms in order to exploit animal residues to produce a substitute for natural gas while at the same time treating and transforming the dung into high quality organic fertilizer. Ms. El-Khodeiry presented a detailed but simple explanation of the technique for the production of biogas with the help of bacteria, ensuring a farmer’s self-dependence with regards to energy production. In

addition, and as a result of this process, the animal residues are being transformed into a high quality liquid fertilizer: “Thereby, farmers have already disposed their waste and moreover, they have produced manure that can be dissolved rapidly on soil as the output of the biogas unit is liquid”, Ms. El-Khodeiry explained. Then she added: “We are ready to provide the farmers the training they need to be able to use the unit. We already built and activated more than 125 units on several farms in Luxor from which the biggest unit produces 30 cubic meters/day of gas. These figures have proven the success of the project as well as the readiness of the farmers to accept the changes when they are offered effective solutions to their problems.” Ms. El-Khodeiry concluded her speech with some figures: “The residue of 4 heads of livestock is enough to produce 2.5 gas tanks which are enough to fulfill the farmers’ needs of gas for 4 hours/day and the needed manure for almost 2.5 months.”

Dr. Abulmaged Amer, Director of the Luxor Branch of the Ministry of Environment, talked about the relation between sustainable agriculture and the protection of the environment. He then informed about the policy adopted by the Ministry of Environment for the promotion of environmental projects by offering grants to the project owners, supporting them to succeed and become independent. Once the projects are able to be self-managed, the Ministry of Environment leaves the full management in the hands of the project owner: “Unfortunately, we did not apply such policy in Luxor yet, but we have the intention to do it soon.” Moreover, Dr. Abulmaged expressed his support for the project of rice strew recycling instead of burning, explicitly stressing the economic benefits of recycling besides the environmental ones.

An insight into farmers’ problems was given by Haj Moustafa Saleh, Secretary General of the Farmers Union in Luxor. According to him, farmers are facing a shortage of fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural equipment while also complaining about corruption in the process of crop weighing before contracting. Haj Moustafa gave an example with sugar cane crops: “When we deliver the crop of the sugar cane, 10 tons will be registered only as 6 or 7 tons. This is unfair to the farmer. The government has to create a certain dynamic in order to control those who are in charge of weighing the crops at the moment of the handover.”

At that moment, Mr. Alaa Al-Ashry, Manager of “Al-Doctor” company that exports dried tomatoes and recycles agricultural waste, interacted with Haj Moustafa, indicating that what is implemented by his company as well as Al-Khodeiry Company could be considered a good solution for the fertilizers problem. Farmers would no longer depend on the government to obtain chemical fertilizers, but use the manure instead – whether it was compost or animal dung. Mr. Al-Ashry gave a snap of his company which recycles sugar cane strews and transforms them into fodder. “The waste we cannot use in fodder industry, can be used in compost industry as a manure, instead of being thrown into public places or being burnt to get rid of it”, he added. “We are collecting waste from farmers for some fees, and after that we sell the fodder and manure back to them for a very low and competitive price.” Mr. Al-Ashry then moved to his company’s third product besides fodder and manure: dried tomatoes which are being produced in Luxor and then exported to Europe. He clarified that there were two main reasons for this strategy. First, Luxor is sunny all over the year, on the contrary to Europe. The sun and the high temperatures in Luxor provide excellent prerequisites for tomato production while at the same time Europe

constitutes an important buyer. Second, cultivating and selling fresh tomatoes in Egypt is very common. In the high season the market is usually saturated with tomatoes and selling prices are becoming very low – sometimes lower than the production costs, causing a monetary loss for the farmers. Here, “Al-Doctor” company helps solving the problem of the over-supply in the market while also attracting hard currency to the country as a second benefit. The simplicity and the rapidness of the process were explained by Mr. Al-Ashry as follows: “Tomatoes are left under the sun for 5 to 7 days. Then they are canned and sent to Europe. The European importers would then develop the Re-evaporation and humidification process.” According to Mr. Al-Ashry, 1500 tons of tomatoes have to be cultivated and harvested on the area of 50 to 60 Feddan to export 150 tons of dried tomatoes. “It’s easy and the demand is very high”, Mr. Al-Ashry stressed. The company uses the mechanism of a “preset contract” with farmers, where tomato prices remain fixed over the contract period. This way, farmers feel secured because of the stability of their income. Consequently, this has a positive impact on market behavior with farmers becoming more willing to conclude this agreement.

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted by the German Embassy in Cairo in close cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Science Center (DWZ), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). For more information, please visit our website www.cairoclimatetalks.net or contact press@cairoclimatetalks.net.