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SNAPSHOT

Egyptian Food Processor Becomes Food Safety Compliant and Shares Learnings with Other Agribusinesses



Land O'Lakes, Inc. sanitation supervisor, Sherry Gruber, with Sekem Safety and Quality Assurance and management Team during the training conducted on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) in Sekem facility.

“The training and technical support by US volunteers impacted our performance as company and helped us in taking critical and substantial decisions in improving food safety practices...”

~Mohamed Anwer, Factory general Manager in Sekem

Sekem Group, an organic food producer and processor in the Sharkia Governorate of Egypt, has grown to be a leader in the food processing sector in Egypt over the last 40 years. The company leverages a network of over 500 farmer-suppliers and is seen as a model for other smaller and nascent food businesses. The Farmer-to-Farmer Food Safety & Quality Program (F2F FSQ) is helping private sector food businesses, like Sekem Group, advance their food safety culture and understanding by tackling their food safety gaps and ultimately sharing their learnings with other private companies.

In Egypt, changing the culture around food safety for food handlers is difficult. Until recently, food processors in Egypt were able to easily pass third party audits and gain the food safety certificates that wholesalers and retailers required without much improvement of their practices. However, when the National Food Safety Authority (NFSA) was created in 2017, that changed. NFSA's mandate of modernizing and upgrading Egypt's food safety and quality requirements has resulted in many processors no longer being compliant with standards and finding it difficult to know how to do so.

With the help of the Global Markets Program (GMaP) self-assessment tool created by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), F2F FSQ helped Sekem Group identify their food safety gaps. The program engaged five food safety expert volunteers over two years to help the company fill those gaps and upgrade the company's food safety culture and practices. Over 200 hours of training, guidance and support to 70 employees and suppliers has resulted in the company passing NFSA's audit and registering on its "Whitelist," a small but growing list of food businesses that meet NFSA's standards for food safety. Since being added the Whitelist, the Sekem Group has reached several new international markets including the US, Saudia Arabia, Russia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) markets and has seen an increase in revenue of \$560,000 per year.

Early adopters like Sekem Group can be crucial in changing the culture of food safety in the country and disseminating information. Sekem Group has not only made improvements to their own infrastructure and practices; they understand that food safety improvements must be made across the entire food



Clifford Wener, US volunteer expert, recommending best food safety practices to Sekem quality manager during the field visit he conducted in Sekem facility.

system. To that end, Sekem Group invites clients, suppliers and peers to join food safety trainings and have disseminated their own learnings widely. Most recently, Sekem Group has volunteered to be the first mentor company through a new mentorship program with F2F FSQ.

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