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The Reality of the Dates sector in the Algerian State of Biskra Production and Export

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ABSTRACT

Dates are considered as the most important products that can contribute to the development of exports outside hydrocarbons Algeria is considered one of the main producers of dates, known for its diverse and rare date varieties in comparison to other date-producing countries . The province of Biskra is considered the top date producer nationally, with the majority of date palm orchards located in the Western Zab region (Touggourt, Foughala, and Ourlal). This region is estimated to have around 4,286,354 date palm trees, contributing to a total date production in the province of 364,703 quintals. Daqlet Nour, in particular, represents a significant portion of this production, contributing 4,216,355 quintals, which is approximately 65.63% of the total date production in the province. Despite these natural ingredients in date production compared to other countries. but Algeria's revenues from date exports do not reflect at all the areas of date palms or the number of palm trees, not even the volume of production and does not reflect the efforts made and implemented In all the plans taken by the government that did not yield convincing results. The study's significance lies in attempting to diagnose the current state of the Algerian date sector and the obstacles facing Algerian date exports.

Keywords: palm, dates, date production, date exports.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is considered one of the most important sectors to be activated in Algeria, as it presents an optimal solution to address the crisis of falling oil prices. It possesses significant resources that allow for self-sufficiency in many agricultural crops and the export of our products to international markets. This sector has received widespread attention and support from the government for its development. Efforts have been made to achieve a qualitative leap in the agricultural sector, taking into account climate changes and the instability of natural factors.

This is evident in various support programs implemented, some of which target date palm cultivation and date production. Dates represent a fundamental pillar of agricultural activity in the southern regions, given their significant nutritional, social, economic, and environmental impact in the areas where they are cultivated. (Ben Aichi, 2002). The economic significance of this agriculture is reflected in its role in stabilizing the population in these regions, providing employment opportunities, and the annual revenue generated from the domestic and international markets through the export of its products. (Benziouche, 2012). The industrialization in agriculture is also an important factor of in cultivation process. In

countries with little industrialization and predominantly agricultural economies or in pre-industrial times, environmental degradation was negligible (Emek, M.L., 2023).

Algeria is considered one of the main producers of dates, known for its diverse and rare date varieties in comparison to other date-producing countries. This distinctiveness enhances its competitiveness by enabling higher production, sales, and a larger share in the global market. Algeria's date palm wealth is estimated at approximately 19 million date palms covering an area of 167,000 hectares, representing about 2% of Algeria's total land area. (Ministry of Agriculture, 2022)

The primary date-producing regions in Algeria are the central Algerian Sahara and the southeast bordering Tunisia. These regions, along with the states of Biskra, Ouargla, El Oued, and Adrar in the far southwest bordering Morocco, Mauritania, and Mali, are significant date production areas. The three states of Biskra, Ouargla, and El Oued collectively occupy 61% of the total land area dedicated to date cultivation, accounting for over half of Algeria's date production. In 2022, Biskra contributed 50.14% of the total date production, while El Oued accounted for 29.88% and Ouargla for 15.99%. (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2020) (Directorate of Agricultural Interests, 2022)

The province of Biskra is considered the top date producer nationally, with the majority of date palm orchards located in the Western Zab region (Touggourt, Foughala, and Ourlal). This region is estimated to have around 4,286,354 date palm trees, contributing to a total date production in the province of 364,703 quintals. Daqlet Nour, in particular, represents a significant portion of this production, contributing 4,216,355 quintals, which is approximately 65.63% of the total date production in the province.

Despite these natural ingredients in date production compared to other countries. The export situation of dates in Algeria does not reflect the efforts made and implemented in all the plans taken by the government that did not yield convincing results.

The central question of this study revolves around the following:

What is the current state of the date sector in the Algerian province of Biskra in terms of production and export?

To answer this main question, the following sub-questions are posed:

- What is the current state of the date sector in Algeria?
- What is the contribution of the province of Biskra to the national date production and its export?
- What are the challenges facing date exports in Algeria?

The study's significance:

The study's significance lies in attempting to diagnose the current state of the Algerian date sector and its potential contribution to diversifying the national income sources.

The study's objectives include:

- Assessing the current state of the date sector in Algeria.
- Analyzing the key structural characteristics of the date sector in the province of Biskra.
- Examining the contribution of the province of Biskra to national date production and exports.
- Identifying the challenges faced by date exporters in Algeria

Study Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology, considered suitable for the nature of the research. This methodology focuses on describing the distinctive characteristics of the phenomenon and elucidating its dimensions by examining the current state of the date sector in Algeria, both in terms of production and export, with an emphasis on identifying its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, it includes a review of relevant academic literature through an exploratory approach.

1. THE REALITY OF THE DATE PALM SECTOR IN ALGERIA

Algeria possesses substantial areas of date palm groves, yielding various date varieties. However, the utilization and employment of this wealth encounter numerous obstacles and issues that reduce the levels of production and exports.

1.1. The Evolution of Date Palm Groves in Algeria:

The majority of Algerian date palm groves are situated in the northern desert states and in the southern Saharan states. In Algeria, 17 states are entirely dedicated to date production, showcasing significant genetic diversity (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2019). The date palm grove area has multiplied fourfold between 1962 and 2019. Presently, there are approximately 19 million date palm trees, including 16.13 million productive ones that yield over 1.058 million metric tons of dates, representing all varieties combined, with 54% of them belonging to the Deglet Nour variety. (SAHIA, 2023, p. 34)

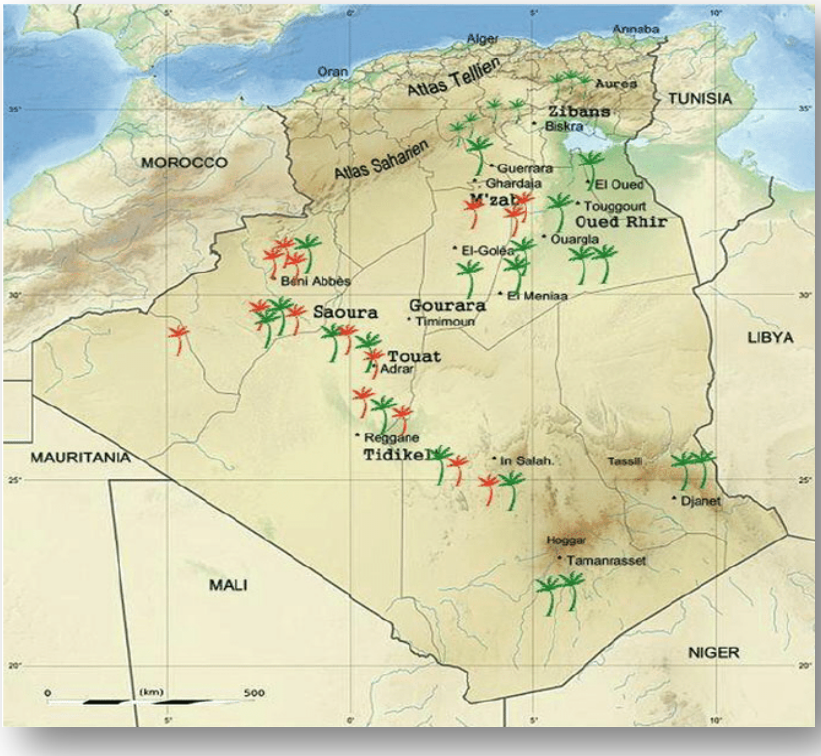

Figure 1. Distribution of Date-Producing Provinces in Algeria

Source: *Bouguedoura Nadia And Others, Date Palm Status and Perspective in Algeria, Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht, 2015.*

Algeria's date palm groves witnessed significant development between 1983 and 1995 as a result of the issuance of Law 18-83 concerning agricultural land ownership. This law encompassed the distribution of vast agricultural lands, the development of lands located in desert regions, and the renewal of date palm groves. Consequently, the date palm tree area increased from 65,000 hectares to 87,020 hectares, marking an increase of 22,020 hectares. (Abderrahman & others, 2018)

During the period from 1995 to 2005, the total area reached 147,906 hectares, an increase of 60,886 hectares, thanks to the theoretical plan for agricultural and rural development (PNDAR). This led to an expansion of date palm groves, particularly in major date-producing provinces like Biskra, El Oued, Ouargla, Ghardaia, and Adrar. (AFC Agriculture and Finance Consultants GmbH, 2021, p. 03)

From 2006 to 2021, there was a notable initial increase at a rate of 24,127 hectares, reaching 172,033 hectares in 2021. This reflects the level of attention the state has dedicated to the date sector through incentives provided to farmers, mainly focused on preserving and renewing date palm groves, in addition to establishing packaging and export units. (Youssef & Mohammed, 2010, p. 243)

1.2. The Evolution of Date Palm Grove Production in Algeria:

The development of date production continued, especially in the desert and southern regions of the country. This development can be characterized by key periods.

Between 1983 and 1999, there was significant growth in date production. During this period, production increased from 181,539 thousand tons to 427.6 thousand tons, mainly due to Law 18-83 concerning agricultural land ownership (APFA). This law allowed for the allocation of extensive agricultural lands and the development of lands in desert regions.

From 2000 to 2009, production increased by 39%, rising from 365.6 thousand tons to 600.7 thousand tons, primarily due to the implementation of the National Agricultural Development Plan, especially in provinces like Biskra, El Oued, Ouargla, Ghardaia, and Adrar. (SAHIA, 2023, p. 35)

The period from 2010 to 2019 witnessed further growth in production, from 644.7 thousand tons to 1.13 million tons, representing a 76% increase. In 2020, it reached 1,151,909 tons. This growth was attributed to the National Agricultural Development Program, the Policy for the Renewal of the Agricultural and Rural Economy, and the establishment of new farms by new farmers. (SAHIA, 2023, p. 36)

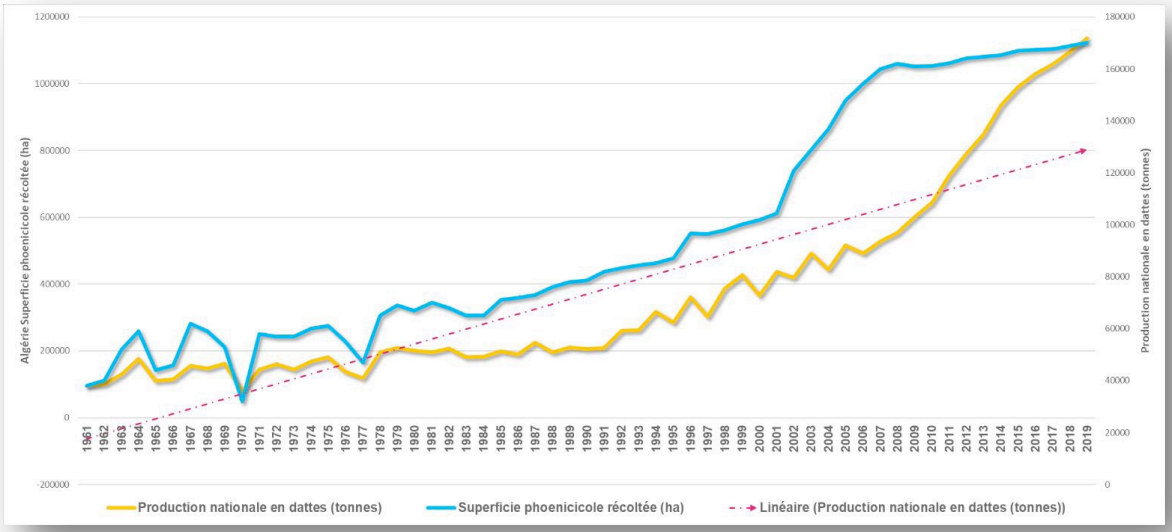

Figure 2. Evolution of Date Production in Algeria

Source: *RAPPORT DE MISSION ,Analyse de la chaîne de valeur de la datte dans la wilaya de Biskra, Agriculture and Finance Consultants GmbH ,2021.p 04.*

1.3. Major Date-Producing Provinces in Algeria:

The majority of Algerian palm groves are located in the north of the Saharan wilayas and in the south of the steppe wilayas. 75% of dates are produced in the South-East of the country**.** (AFC Agriculture and Finance Consultants GmbH, 2021, p. 04)

Date palm trees are predominantly found in the southern regions of Algeria. There are 17 date-producing provinces in these areas, including Ziban (Biskra), Souf (El Oued), OuedRigh (M'Ghair, Touggourt, etc.), Ouargla, Mezab (Ghardaia), Tamanrasset, Gourara (Tamanrasset), Tidikelt (In Salah), El M'Ghair (Béchar), El Golea (El Bayadh), El Ouad (Naâma), El Bayadh, Timimoun (Adrar), In Salah (Tamanrasset), and Djanet (Illizi). Additionally, small date palm groves are found in the southern provinces of the Saharan region, including Tébessa, Khenchela, Batna, Djelfa, Laghouat, M'Sila, El Naâma, and El Baida. (MAACHI, 2021/2022, p. 36)

In terms of area, the provinces of Biskra, El Oued, Adrar, Ouargla, Béchar, Ghardaia, and Tamanrasset dominate when it comes to the area allocated for date palm groves. Biskra occupies 25.84% of the national area designated for date palm cultivation, equivalent to 44,051 hectares. This reflects the significant importance of date palm trees among the population of Biskra. El Oued holds the second position with 22.58% of the national area for date palm cultivation, covering 38,495 hectares. Following them are the provinces of Adrar, Ouargla, Béchar, and Ghardaia with areas of 28,320 hectares, 22,909 hectares, 13,919 hectares, and 11,368 hectares, respectively. These provinces collectively represent 45% of the total area allocated for date palm cultivation. (MAACHI, 2021/2022, p. 37)

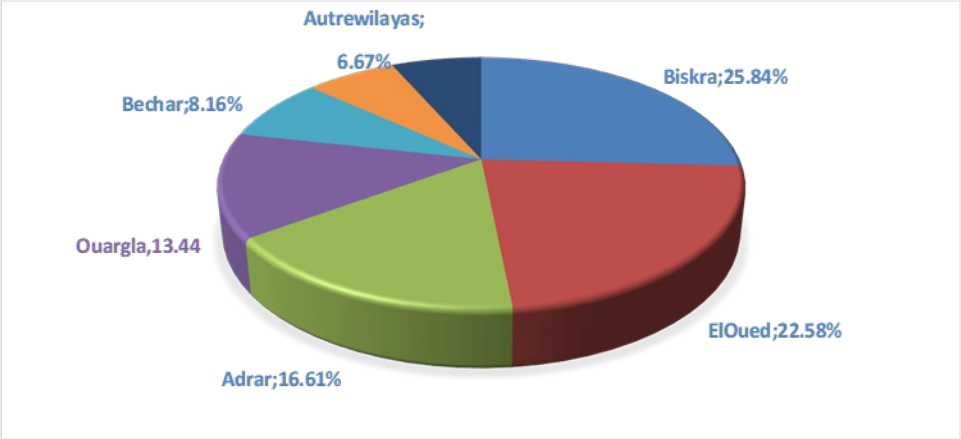

Figure 3. *Date Palm Grove Area in Date-Producing Provinces in Algeria 2020*

Source: *MAACHI Lilia, Enquete aupres des exportateurs de la wilaya de Biskra: Contraintes et perspectives, MÉMOIRE DE MASTER, Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra, 2021/2022,P38*

2. THE DATE PALM SECTOR IN THE PROVINCE OF BISKRA

The province of Biskra is rich in significant resources and capabilities that have made it a leader in the production of various agricultural products at the national level. In the following, we will attempt to present the various components of agricultural development in Biskra, mainly focusing on its natural and water resources.

2.1. Geographic Location (Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, 2021, p. 09)

The province of Biskra is located in the southeastern region of the country, under the slopes of the Aurès Mountains, which represent the natural boundary between it and the north. It covers an area estimated at 1,024,600 square kilometers and includes 27 municipalities and 10 districts. It is bordered by:

- Batna province to the north.
- Khenchela province to the northeast.
- Ouled Djellal province to the southwest.
- El Oued province to the south.

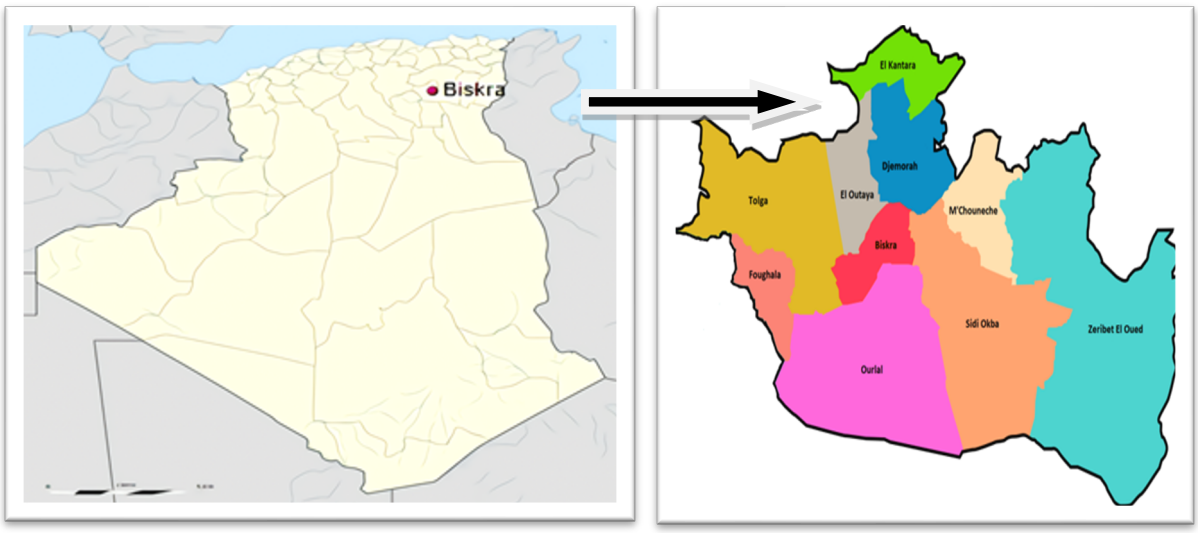

Figure 4. Geographic Location of the Province of Biskra

2.2. Natural Resources of the Province of Biskra:

Topography:

We will summarize our discussion about the topography of the province by presenting the fundamental homogeneous components, which are as follows (Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, 2021):

Mountains:

Mountains represent a small percentage of the province's area, approximately 13%. Most of these mountains are concentrated in the north, and many of them have sparse natural vegetation cover.

Plateaus:

These are at a lower altitude compared to the mountainous region and are mainly found in the foothill areas, extending to the southwestern region, forming what is known as the Ouled Djellal Plateau (Ouled Djellal and Sidi Khaled districts).

Plains:

These extend along the Loutaia-Touggourt axis, stretching east to include the plains of Sidi Akkacha and Zeribet El Oued.

Lowlands

Located in the southeastern region of the province, these are flat areas of gravel that trap thin layers of water, represented by the "Chatt Melghig" and other notable salt flats. The average depression is around -33 meters below sea level, making it the primary natural collection area for surface water in the region.

Climate:

Understanding the climatic characteristics is essential for all human studies due to the significant impact of climate on human activities, particularly in agricultural practices and development projects. The climate in the province ranges from semi-arid to arid, with hot and dry summers and cold, dry winters.

The agricultural land:

The agricultural land is a fundamental and important resource for agricultural development, as land is one of the main determinants of agricultural production. Inventorying available land resources and understanding their utilization is the first step in proper planning for desired agricultural development. (ADJLANE & KHIARI, 2023, p. 13)

The total agricultural area in the province is estimated at 777,768 hectares, which is approximately 76.28% of the total land area of the province. The arable land area is about 161,493 hectares, accounting for 15.84% of the agricultural land. Out of this arable land, 108,543 hectares are irrigated, representing 67.21% of the arable land suitable for agriculture. It's important to note that irrigation is primarily dependent on groundwater, which can involve significant costs. (Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, 2021)

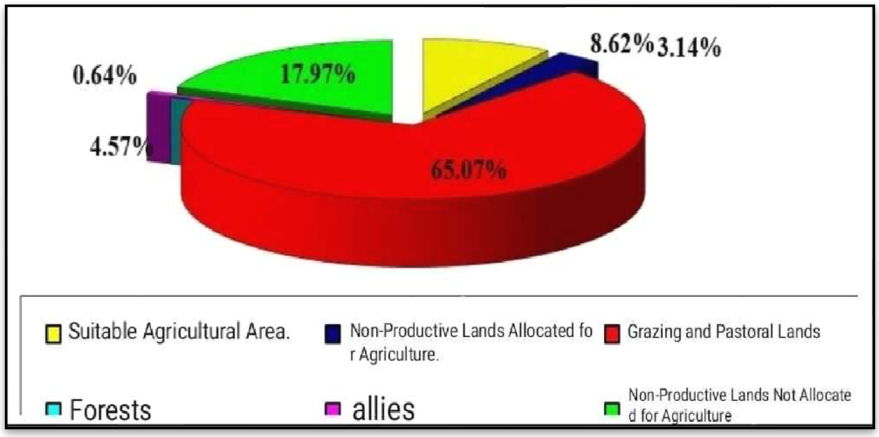

Figure 5. Distribution of Agricultural Lands in the Biskra Province in 2021.

Source: Directorate of Agricultural Interests, Biskra, 2021

Water Resources:

Water resources are one of the main foundations for development, given their direct relationship with human biological, economic, and social activities (ADJLANE & KHIARI, 2023, p. 14). Water resources in the Biskra Province are distributed into:

Surface Water:

Divided into three groups as follows (Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, 2021, p. 15)

Wadis with a source in the Aurès Mountains:

These wadis originate from the heart of the Aurès Mountains and include large basins, such as the Oued El Hay, Oued Abdi, Oued Arab, and Oued Qatane, which form the OuedZeribah where they meet.

Wadis in the southern slopes of the Aurès:

These wadis are characterized by smaller basins, resulting in less regular and limited flow. For example, the wadis in the eastern Zab region only reach the riverbed when they flood. Most wadis in the Ouled Djellal region feed into the Oued Djedi.

Wadis in the Loutaia area contribute to the replenishment of groundwater through infiltration into the soil.

Wadi djedi:

Its basin covers 26,000 square kilometers and is 500 kilometers long. It is the main and natural collector of all waters from the Saharan Atlas. Like most Saharan wadis, it is usually dry and its large basin only fills during flood periods.

Groundwater:

There are two types of groundwater, including:

- **Shallow groundwater layer**: The depth of this layer does not exceed 40 meters. It includes groundwater layers like Wadi Gedi, Dousn, Saada, Toualka, and Lishana.
- Deep artesian aquifer: Important layers of groundwater include:

- The Albian layer: This layer has an average depth of about 1,500 meters and is currently exploited in Ouled Djellal, Sidi Khalid, and Dousn.
- The limestone groundwater layer: This is present north of Toualka and is called the Toualka groundwater layer. It has moderate depth and increasing salinity in its water quality.
- The sandy groundwater layer: This layer is found in the eastern Zab area, is of moderate depth, and is utilized. However, special techniques are required for drilling and maintenance due to the presence of its water reservoir in a layer of gravel and sand.

2.3. Palm Groves in the Ziban Region:

According to Dubost and Larbia-Yousef (1998), the term 'Ziban' comes from the Arabic words that mean a collection of 'O sis,' known for its high-quality date production. However, the delineation of the Biskra region is divided into two parts: the eastern region referred to as 'Zab al-Sharqi' (East Zab) and the western region known as 'Zab al-Gharbi' (West Zab) (Bouamar, 2010). According to Colonel Niox (1890), as cited by Lallawani and Alkama (2009), the region is distributed into: (ABSI, 2012 – 2013, pp. 14-15)

- **Zab al-Biskri (the Oasis of Biskra):**
- This is the entrance to the Ziban.
- **Zab al-Sharqi (East Zab):**
- Encompasses areas like Shtima, Sidi Khalil, Suryana, Qarta, Sidi okba, Ain al-Naqa, Sidi Salah, Zriba al-Wadi, Lishana, Khanqat Sidi Naji, Badus, Zriba Hamed, Fayed, Sidi Muhammad, al-Hush, and includes the entire eastern Ziban region located between the southern foothills of the Aurès Mountains and the western shore of Lake M'louh.
- **Zab Qubli (South Zab):**
- Comprising locations such as M'liliBiqo, Awrl, Ben Tayus, SuhyrLwaya, Oulad Jalal, and Sidi Khalid. These oases are all situated in the WadiJ'di region.
- **Zab Dharawi (North Zab):** Separated from Zab Qubli by a strip of sand dunes and marshes, it includes locations such as BūShaqrun, Lishana, Z‘ātsha, Farrar, Tolqa, Burj, Fughala, and Al-Amari.

2.4. Date Varieties in the Ziban Region:

From the perspective of diversity of date varieties, based on Belhadi et al. and others (2008), inventory operations conducted in local Ziban oases revealed that the SidiAkba region is home to the largest number of date varieties (84) (see Table below). It is followed by the Ghumara, Awral, and Tulqa regions, each with 40 to 60 varieties. On the other hand, the Fayed region, primarily used for grazing, recorded the lowest number of varieties (11), while other localities reported relatively fewer varieties. (ABSI, 2012 – 2013, p. 19)

Table 1. Number of Palm Varieties and Their Distribution Across the Municipalities of Biskra

Region	Number of Varieties	Region	Number of Varieties
Sidi okba	84	Bousshqroun	31
Mazira	60	Laghrous	31
Al-Hawsh	57	Mlili	29
Jamorah	51	Aoumash	25
Liwa	50	Mashunsh	24
Aorlal	45	Al-Hajib	24
Touliga	44	Ain al-Nagah	19

Region	Number of Varieties	Region	Number of Varieties
Loutaya	40	Fughala	19
Birj bin Aziz	39	Shtma	18
Sidi Naji	39	Al fayd	11
Lishana	35	Mukhadmah	34

Source: ABSI Rima, 2012, p19.

2.5. Presentation of the Date Palm Sector in the Biskra Province:

The Biskra region is known as a leading date palm cultivation area in Algeria, spanning various municipalities within the province. The region is home to 140 date palm varieties, with some of the most common ones being Daqlet Noor, Al-Ghars, Al-Daqla Al-Bayda, and MeishDaqlet.

- **The date palm orchards in Biskra:**

have seen continuous growth. The date palm cultivation area increased from approximately 20,954 hectares in 1993 to 24,745 hectares in 2000 and expanded further to 39,156 hectares in 2005, as reported by DSA Biskra in 2019. By 2022, it had reached around 44,251 hectares. This expansion is due to the intensive cultivation of new date palm orchards and the rejuvenation of existing ones, driven by state initiatives to enhance the date palm sector, notably through the National Agricultural Development Program (PNDA) in 2000.

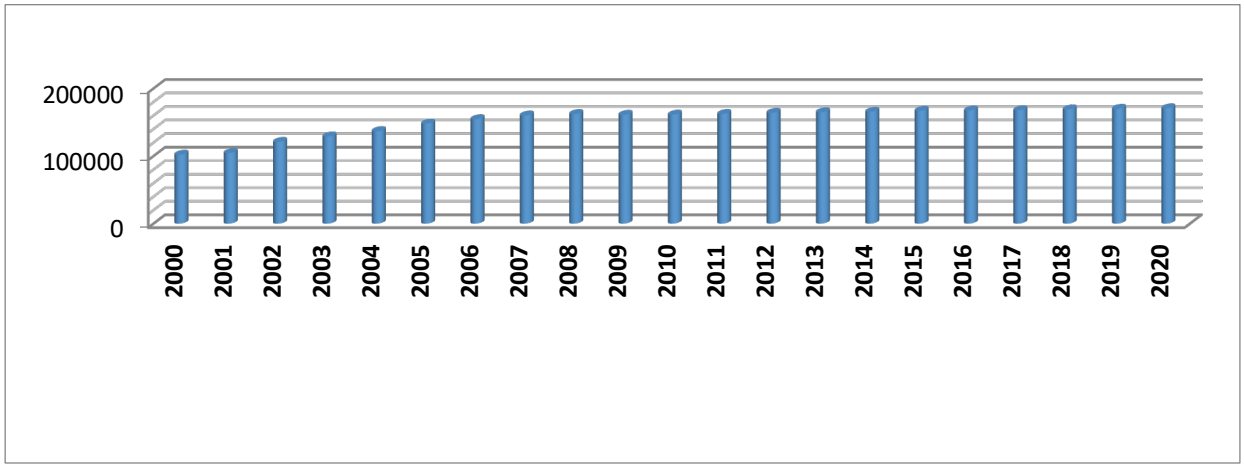

Figure 6. Evolution of the Date Palm Area in the Ziban Region, 2000-2021

Source: *Compiled by the researchers based on DSA data, Biskra.*

The majority of date palms in the Biskra province are concentrated in the Western Ziban region, representing approximately 77% of the area allocated for date palm cultivation, covering 18 municipalities. In contrast, the Eastern Ziban region, consisting of 15 municipalities, accounts for the remaining 23%. In terms of municipality areas, the largest area dedicated to date palms in 2021 is found in the municipality of M'lili, with approximately 5349 hectares. However, it may not be the top producer. It is followed by Touggourt, Lyoua, Sidi Akkacha, with areas of 3124 hectares, 2898 hectares, and 2839 hectares, respectively. (Directorate of Agricultural Interests, 2022)

- **Production Evolution of Date Palm Orchards in the Biskra Region:**

Production trends in date palm orchards in the Biskra region have shown continuous growth during the period 1993-2022, according to the Directorate of Agricultural Affairs in Biskra. This growth was consistent except for years with drought conditions. Date production increased from 1,263,244 quintals in the year 2000 to 4,380,041.4 quintals in 2016, reaching approximately 33,354,140 quintals in 2022, as illustrated in the following figure:

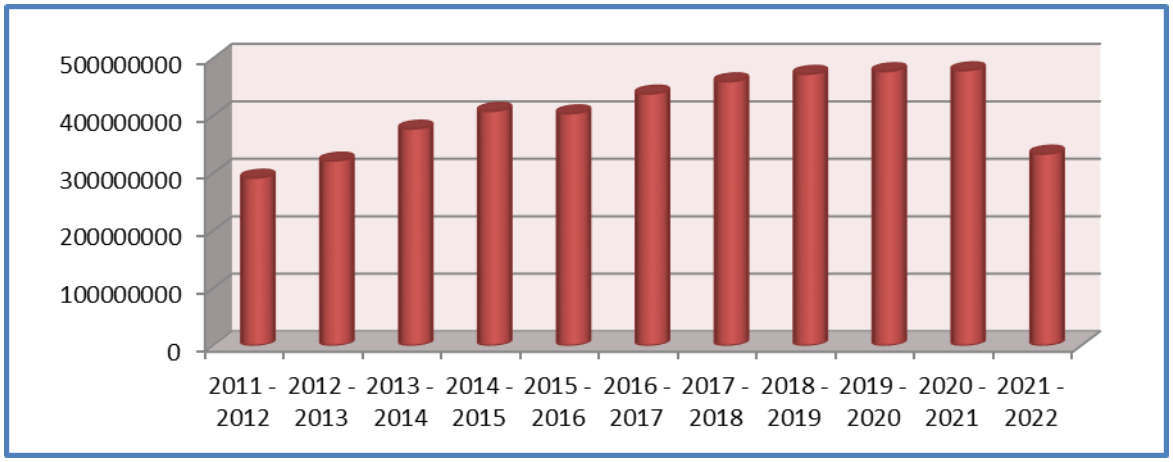

Figure 7. Date Production Evolution

***The source**: Compiled by the researchers based on DSA data, Biskra.*

- **The number of palm trees in the Biskra province has evolved as follows:**

The PNDA (National Agricultural Development Program) has had a significant impact on palm tree cultivation and their numbers in the Biskra province. Over the period of 2011-2022, the total number of palm trees, both productive and non-productive, has witnessed a substantial increase. In the year 2000, there were 3,221,035 palm trees, out of which 1,998,575 were productive. By 2005, these numbers had risen to 4,021,117 palm trees, including 2,345,596 productive ones. In 2010, the total number reached 4,171,447 palm trees, with 3,037,722 of them being productive. Finally, in 2022, the number of palm trees has reached a total of 3,803,623, all of which are productive. This progression is illustrated in the following figure:

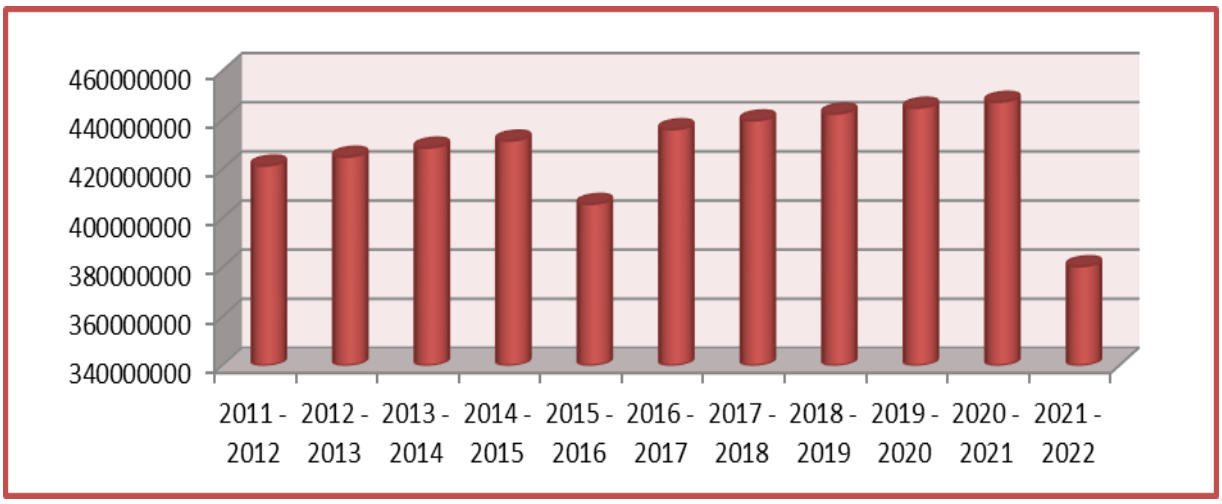

Figure 8. Evolution of the Number of Productive Palm Trees

Source: Compiled by the researchers based on DSA data, Biskra.

3. ALGERIAN DATE EXPORTS AND THEIR ROLE IN EXPORT DEVELOPMENT

Algeria has shown significant interest in elevating its agricultural sector, especially after the crisis caused by declining oil prices. The country has earnestly embarked on exploiting the economic potential offered by date products. Dates are considered products that can effectively compete in international markets due to their high quality and competitive prices.

(This approach is part of a broader export strategy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Algerian date products, as discussed in the study published in the Journal of Economic Growth and Entrepreneurship in 2019. (Hamri & Elbez, 2019, p. 67)

Despite the natural resources Algeria possesses for date production compared to other countries, and at a time when promoting non-hydrocarbon exports is a national priority, the state of date exports does not reflect the efforts made and the various plans adopted by the government, which have not yielded convincing results. To assess the reality of Algerian date exports, we rely on two indicators:

3.1. Quantity of exports:

Algerian date exports to foreign markets fluctuated during the period 2000-2017. The lowest value was recorded in 2004, when it was estimated at 7883 thousand tons; in 2011, it rose to 28,143 thousand tons, Then it decreased to 20,862 thousand tons in 2013; However, in recent years, it has witnessed an increasing trend, It reached 126,277 thousand tons in 2022; This reflects the success of the policies and mechanisms that Algeria has taken in recent years to increase the value of exports, especially dates

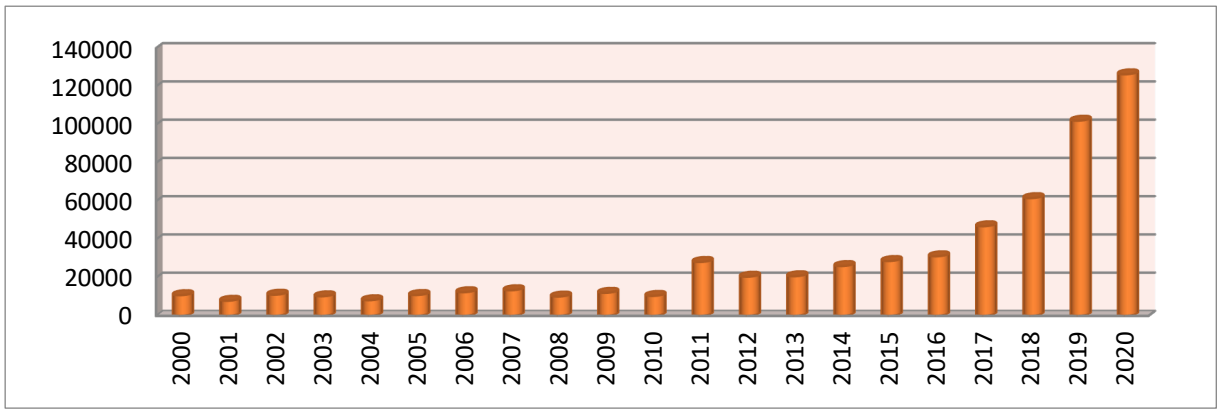

Figure 9. Evolution of Quantity Algerian date exports.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on DSA data, Biskra.

Algeria ranks at the bottom in terms of date exports, which is insufficient considering the current potential and product quality. As we mentioned earlier, this is attributed to several factors, such as financing being the main issue that appeared for date exporters, as they did not benefit from the available credit like other producers. Additionally, the absence of technical support, calling for the necessity to protect Algeria from fraud, counterfeiting, speculation, and smuggling. (MAACHI, 2021/2022, p. 00)

3.2. Value of Exports:

The value of exports fluctuated as a result of fluctuations in their quantity during the period 2000-2017. From Figure 12, we notice that it reached its maximum value in 2013 to 297 million dollars, while its lowest level was recorded in 2014 at about $390 million; It then witnessed an increasing trend, as it rose from one 523 million dollars in 2017, to 1170 million dollars in 2020.

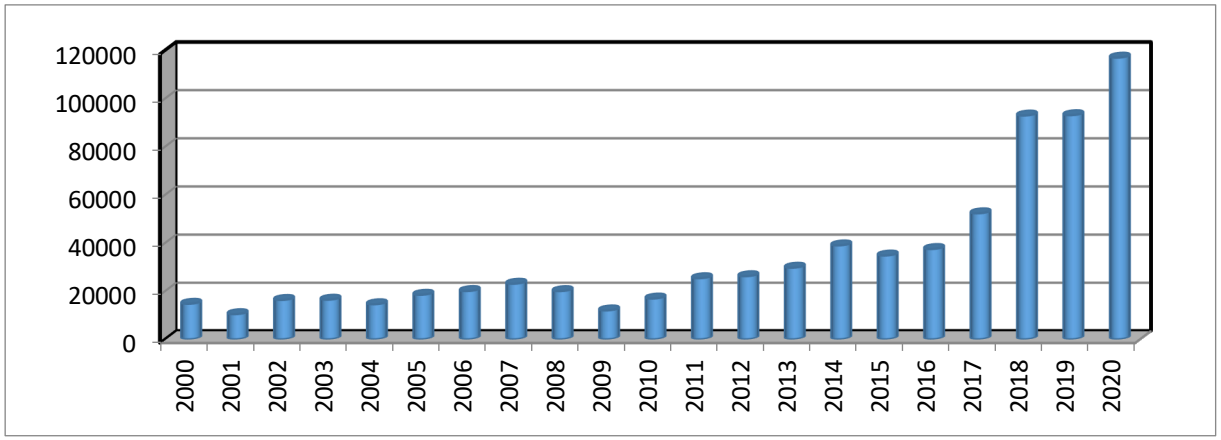

Figure 10. Evolution of Value Algerian date exports.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on DSA data, Biskra.

3.3. Geographical Distribution of Algerian Date Exports:

Europe is the primary market for Algerian date exports, with a significant focus on European markets, especially France, ranking first with a share of 62.09% of the export value,

amounting to 14,347.5 thousand dollars, on average for the period (2001-2016). This is due to the presence of a large Algerian, Maghrebi, and Muslim community in the country, which is known for its high date consumption, especially during Ramadan, making dates a cultural symbol for Muslims in Europe that cannot be forsaken. Other segments of the French population consume dates to a lesser extent, typically for dietary reasons and during end-of-year celebrations. (Meghari, sabba, & Mansor, 2018, p. 29). Russia follows as the second-ranked country with a value of exports amounting to 1,573.62 thousand dollars, representing 6.81% of Algeria's total date exports to the world, and Morocco ranks third. Additionally, Niger, as the second-ranked African country based on the quantity of exports, follows France, with an average quantity of 1,555.4 tons, accounting for 9.42% of Algeria's average date exports to the world. (Mahamdi, 2022, p. 435)

Algerian date exports to Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Jordan represent only 9% of the total export value. The United Arab Emirates and Morocco dominate these markets, presenting an opportunity for potential expansion in these significant markets. (Mahamdi, 2022, p. 436)

Developing Algeria's export of dates requires finding new markets, The Algerian delegation was able to conclude a contract with the Indonesian authorities to develop Algerian date exports to Indonesia, during the International Agricultural Food Products Exhibition, held in November 2015 in Jakarta (Indonesia). Thus, Indonesia may be a route for Algerian dates into the markets of the Asian continent. (Abderrahman & others, 2018, p. 30)

3.4. The obstacles facing Algerian date exports:

Algeria occupies advanced positions in terms of the number of palm trees and the quality of dates, especially the Deglet Nour variety. It also represents the most prominent exports outside of hydrocarbons. However This sector faces a number of obstacles and problems, which are as follows: (AFC Agriculture and Finance Consultants GmbH, 2021, p. 21) (mustapha, 2021, pp. 144-145)

- Difficulties related to the morphological and taste aspects of dates.
- Challenges linked to the high prices of raw materials.
- Distance from the relevant production areas.
- Logistic system stagnation, including costly and irregular transportation, the absence of accredited laboratories, expensive and incompatible packaging.
- Difficulty in connecting to the foreign exchange market (official/unofficial exchange rate).
- Institutional shortcomings, such as insufficient agreements with potential markets, especially Arab and African markets.
- Weak promotion of Algerian "Deglet Nour" dates.
- Absence of certifying authorities and accredited laboratories.
- Limited utilization of research and development achievements.
- Lack of organization within the date export sector due to coordination issues among various stakeholders.
- Decrease in production compared to the increased palm tree cultivation area.
- High costs, especially labor costs, associated with certain date varieties.
- Intense competition in the global and Arab markets for Algerian date exports.
- Proliferation of intermediaries and stakeholders within the date industry.
- Inefficient marketing mechanisms, particularly in terms of advertising and promotion affecting foreign demand for Algerian dates.

- Delayed support from organizations responsible for assisting exporters, particularly financial support such as compensation for transport and participation in international exhibitions.
- Multiple entities with export support responsibilities outside of hydrocarbons, resulting in coordination issues and conflicting statistics provided by each agency, making it difficult to assess the actual situation of non-hydrocarbon exports.
- Neglect of Arab and African markets by Algeria and Algerian companies, despite the accessibility of these markets, with a preference for attempting entry into the European market with stringent quality standards and numerous barriers.

CONCLUSION

Algeria holds a significant position in the global date production, ranking fourth in the Arab world. The country possesses a vast wealth of palm trees, estimated at around 20 million date palms, producing approximately a thousand varieties of dates. Recent years have witnessed substantial growth in date production, thanks to agricultural policies, particularly within the framework of the National Rural Development Plan. Despite this, Algeria's date exports remain limited due to various obstacles, with the most significant ones being the high production costs, particularly labor costs, which raise the final product's price. Additionally, marketing factors are affected by weak advertising and promotion. To overcome these challenges, a reevaluation of the export strategy is necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Develop new exportable date varieties, ensuring they meet quality standards and competitive pricing.
- Enhance marketing channels through the application of modern advertising and promotion methods, including participation in international exhibitions to introduce the national product and access new markets.
- Provide necessary and suitable conditions for land and sea transportation while considering the rapid spoilage of dates, requiring efforts from various sectors to facilitate successful export.
- Establish an integrated information network related to date exports so that exporters are well-informed about global market developments.
- Maintain product specifications and standards for dates and their types, and work diligently to obtain international certificates for product quality and sustainability, such as ISO, Euro cap, HACCP, etc.
- Develop date processing, packaging, and labeling to align with advancements in food packaging and protection, while diversifying packaging sizes to match foreign consumer buying and consumption patterns.

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