

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- *Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq* -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

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No Till Agriculture Training In Balad (Salah ed Din province) - 30 farmers attended a 3-day no-till drill training presented last week by the Directorate of Agriculture in Balad. 40 farmers were trained the previous week in the science behind no- or reduced tillage practices and maintenance and operation requirements to get the most out of the drill. Attendees heard from farmers who've used the drills to plant wheat and barley the past two seasons and reported better uniformity and yield.



Ag Advisors Bring Micro-dairy Processing to Kirkuk – Micro-dairies are a new “user-friendly” technology that is properly scaled for the small, dispersed size of Kirkuk’s dairy industry. Dairy processors are being trained in business management and dairy processing. PRT Advisors guided the process of forming producer associations; wrote the CERP proposal; advised on the manufacturer’s design of the micro-dairy; designed a training curriculum for the program; are monitoring the dairies initial start up; and will evaluate the impact of the program.



Baghdad Date Processor Visit – Embassy officials visited the Iraqi Date Processing and Marketing Company recently. This public-private operation exports much of its product to the UAE but also has limited sales in Canada, some of which makes its way to the U.S. The company has new Italian equipment for cleaning, sorting and packing dates, provided with assistance from UNIDO. Iraq was the world’s largest date exporter into the 1980s and looks to re-establish a presence in the date trade.



Improving Grain Handling in Wasit – To address lengthy waits for grain delivery at silos in Wasit province attributable, in part, to manual sampling, PRT AgAdvisor George Stickels has submitted a CERP request for mechanical samplers to be installed at the three Wasit province silo sites. Wasit farmers will benefit from more accurate sampling and grading which will contribute to a smoother wheat and barley delivery and storage process. From year to year, Wasit province is among the leading producers of wheat and barley.

Personnel Update - There are currently 31 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units.

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