



Anwar Sarhan of Groasis is one of about 250 exhibitors participating in the Global Forum for Innovations in Agriculture exhibition that runs through Wednesday in Abu Dhabi. Mona Al Marzooqi / The National

# Product to 'turn the desert green' on display in Abu Dhabi

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March 9, 2015 Updated: March 10, 2015 10:52 AM



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ABU DHABI // A product that claims to be able to turn the desert green without using traditional forms of irrigation was one of several inventions on display at the Global Forum for Innovations in Agriculture conference in the capital on Monday.

Anwar Sarhan, head of Middle East operations for Groasis, demonstrated the Waterboxx, a 50x25cm planting container that feeds young plants, using stored water instead of continually irrigating them.

Mr Sarhan said his product had grown ghaf, sidr and arak trees throughout the GCC region, with 90 per cent less water.

"It's a sustainable water security solution for the Middle East," he said. Up to 250 exhibitors are displaying products at the three-day conference, which seeks to address the challenges of feeding an estimated world population of nine billion by 2050 with less water and less energy, while acknowledging the threats posed by climate change.

On Monday, Britain's Prince Charles provided a videotaped address that acknowledged the food security challenges of the future, including climate change, soil damage, and the depletion of freshwater sources.

"I sincerely hope that you will begin laying the foundations of not only more productive farming in the short and long term, but to do so in ways that sustain the natural systems and human communities upon which we must inevitably continue to rely," he said.

United States secretary of state, John Kerry, also made a video address, saying: "There's no greater challenge than feeding the world's growing population. Across the globe over 800 million people are going hungry because they don't have access to nutritious food. If we want to ensure that this crisis doesn't grow worse we need to find a way to produce far more food and waste much less."

Mohammed Jalal Al Rayssi, of the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, said: "We need to come up with unique solutions. This is knowledge we are trying to share to build a better future as human beings."

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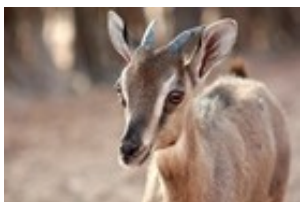
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