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Indicator of OCCI members

December 2017

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1,575

Renewed companies
13,062

Companies that changed its capital
264
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The diversification of the sources of national economy is one of the priorities for the Omani government as it is the ideal way for ensuring sustainable development and enhancing the growth of the public and private sector as well.

The government is making endeavors to enhance the growth of food security sector by establishing a number of infrastructure projects that will hopefully provide alternative sources of income. They will also help in ensuring food security.

The report published by Economist magazine of U.K pointed out that the Sultanate came second on the Arab level in food security index and 28th on the world level. The Sultanate earned 100 marks in the availability of food security network program index and 100 marks in the public expenditure on agricultural research and development index. This showcases the Sultanate’s interest in the growth and development of this sector.

The sector also plays an important role in creating fresh job opportunities for job seekers. It is also a place for carrying out experiments to produce high quality products that can contribute to the sustainable development of these projects. The private sector has expressed its desire and interest to contribute to the development of this sector. Still, the government needs to develop the conducive and investor-friendly legal framework that can attract more investments to the sector. This conducive environment will sure help the Sultanate address the social security challenges.

Editor-in-Chief
H.M the Sultan Issues a

OCGI is a Public Interest Organization

A general assembly meeting may be legal

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said yesterday issued Royal Decree No.45/2017 promulgating the Bylaw of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Article (1) states that the Bylaw (system) attached to this decree shall be enforced to Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Article (2) instructs the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry to issue the Executive Regulation, as well as financial, administrative and other regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the attached Bylaw provided that the Executive Regulation is published in the Official Gazette.

Till such a time that these decisions and regulations are issued, the current decisions and regulations shall continue to be enforced, but without prejudice to the provisions of the attached Bylaw.

Article (3) cancels all that contradicts the Bylaw or contravenes with its provisions.

Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publishing.

The first chapter of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCGI) bylaw is about general definitions and provisions.

The first article states that in the application of the provisions of this Bylaw and unless otherwise specified, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning annexed to them:

The Minister
The Minister of Commerce and Industry

OCGI
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Board
The Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Branch
The branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the governorate.

The Standing Committees
The Executive Committee, the Audit Committee and the Investment Committee.

The Registered Member
The member registered with OCCI which is paying the annual fee for membership of the Chamber

The Bylaw
The Executive Bylaw of this system.

Article 2: The Chamber is an institution of public interest, which aims to regulate the commercial and industrial interests of its members and to develop, defend and represent them in various fields. OCCI is under the supervision of the Minister.

Article 3: The Chamber shall enjoy legal personality and financial and administrative independence. It shall have the right to own, manage, invest
Royal Decree on OCCI Bylaw

only if attended by not less than 200 registered members

and dispose of fixed and movable property, and to carry out all acts necessary to achieve its objectives.

Article 4 The headquarters of the Chamber shall be in the Governorate of Muscat and shall have a branch in each of the governorates of the Sultanate. The Board may establish offices and service windows inside or outside the Sultanate after coordination with the concerned authorities.

Article 5: OCCI may communicate directly with the units of the administrative apparatus of the State to get the required data and information related to its businesses and under its prerogatives.

Article 6: The Chamber is prohibited from engaging in politics, religious matters, speculations or acts harmful to markets.

Article (7) OCCI Bylaw shall determine the following

1- The mechanism for preparing the agenda of the General Assembly, the proposals of the members, the topics to be considered by the Assembly, the mechanism for invitation to the meetings and preparing minutes of such meetings.

2- The provisions of the meetings of OCCI board and OCCI branches Boards of Directors, the powers and function of OCCI Chairman, his deputies, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the branch and his deputy, and everything related to the affairs of the branch.

3- The roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committees and their working system.

4- The provisions concerning the elections of the Chairman and members of the Board, the chairman and members of the board of directors of the branch, and everything related to the conduct of elections, the submission of appeals and settling them.

7 Members to be elected by secret ballot

5- The value of the OCCI membership and renewal fees and the fine for the delay in payment of such fees, fees related to elections, and any other fees for services provided by the Chamber and cases of exemption from them.

The second chapter dealt with OCCI's specialties.

Article 8 stipulates that the Chamber shall

- Proposing the general strategy governing the commercial and industrial sector
- Developing the necessary plans for implementing it within the framework of the general policy of the State
- Raising the proposals related to the commercial and industrial sector to the concerned authorities and propose possible solutions to address them,
- Registering licensees to engage in commercial and industrial activities, classifying them into categories and promoting their businesses
- Authenticating commercial and industrial certificates for the different goods
- Defining the commercial and industrial and give opinion on it
- settlement of trade disputes between members of the Chamber amicably
- Participating in representing the private sector in local and international forums related to commercial activities
- Participating in committees and Boards at which OCCI has an interest

- Organizing lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences inside and outside the Sultanate, or participate in the organization, and the establishment and organization of exhibitions related to its activities
- Entering into agreements or memoranda of understanding relevant to the functions of OCCI after getting the approval of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Article (9) states that the branch shall, within the scope of its jurisdiction, exercise the powers provided for in Article (8) of this Bylaw, in coordination with the Board.

The third chapter is about the membership of OCCI.

Article (10) stipulates that each one doing business, whether Omani or foreign, a natural or legal person, should be OCCI member and should be registered at OCCI's head office, or at the branch at which the member’s head office is. Persons who carry out small works or simple profession such as traveling vendor are exempted from such fees, those exempted by the Commercial Registration Law or the Commercial Companies Law or any other law are also exempted from OCCI registration fees. Government units, public bodies, institutions and private enterprises shall not accept commercial transactions submitted to them by any of the persons referred to in item (1) unless they ensure that he/she is a registered member.

Article (11) the persons other than those mentioned in Article 10 of this Law who are engaged in trade-related activities, or whose businesses are predominantly commercial, may be registered with OCCI. 

Article (12) The application for registration and renewal of membership
shall be submitted to the Chamber or the branch together with the supportive documents specified in the Regulations. The Executive Administration shall decide on the application within a period not exceeding five working days from the date of submission. If the application is denied, the rejection decision must be justified, and the applicant shall be notified in writing within seven (7) days from the date of issue. The applicant may, within ten (10) days from the date of notifying him of the decision, appeal to the Executive Committee, which shall decide the grievance within thirty (30) days, provided that its decision is justified and final.

**Article (13)** A member shall lose his membership in the Chamber in the following cases: loss of the status that he has given to membership of the Chamber, and when he is declared bankrupt by the court.

**Article (14)** Based on a justified recommendation of the Executive Administration, the member shall cease to be a member for the period specified by the regulations. The membership shall be returned upon expiry of the reasons for their suspension.

The fourth chapter covers the bodies of OCCI.

**Article (15):** The Chamber shall consist of the General Assembly, the Board of Directors and the Boards of Directors of the Branches, the Standing Committees and the Executive Administration.

**Article (16)** The General Assembly of the Chamber shall be composed of the registered members. The member registered in the meetings of the General Assembly shall be represented as the owner or the sole authorized partner or the director who is the sole authorized signatory, depending on the data with the Commercial Register.

**Article (17).** No proxy is allowed in attending or voting in OCCI General Assembly shall be authorized. Each registered member shall have one vote.

**Article (18)** The General Assembly of the Chamber shall meet at the invitation of Chairman or his assignee. It may convene when the needed arises subject to an invitation by the Board or a written request by at least one per cent of the registered members or at the request of the Minister.

**Article 19** The General Assembly shall be invited to a regular meeting at least once a year and shall be competent to: discuss the annual report on the work of the Chamber and the report of the auditor for the financial year ended and to consider the proposals of the members of the General Assembly of the Chamber. fifteen days at least, and the appointment of the auditor.

**Article (20)** The General Assembly may be invited to an extraordinary meeting, to consider the following:

- violations by one or more members of the Board or boards of directors
- approve the proposed amendments to this Bylaw and system,
- dissolve the Board with the approval of three quarters of the votes present
- suspend or cancel the membership of the OCCI Board Chairman or the Board of Directors of the Branch or any member of the Board or the Board of Directors of the Branch, based upon a justified request submitted to it by the Board and after getting the approval of two thirds of the votes present.

**Article (21)** The ordinary meeting of the General Assembly shall not be valid unless attended by at least 200 registered members. If this quorum is not completed, the Assembly shall convene at a second meeting within fifteen (15) days from the date set for the first meeting. The second meeting is valid regardless of the number of attendees, in addition to the presence of the Chairman or one of his deputies, the head of the Audit and Investment Committees, the representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Controller and the Chief Executive. The date of the second meeting shall be determined in the invitation to hold the first meeting.

The meeting of the General Assembly at its extraordinary meeting shall not be valid unless attended by at least 5 per cent of the registered members. If this quorum is not completed, the Assembly shall convene at a second meeting within seven working days of the date set for the first meeting, the second meeting shall be valid if attended by at least 1,000 registered members and the date of the second meeting shall be determined in the invitation to hold the first meeting.

Resolutions of the General Assembly at its ordinary and extraordinary meetings shall be issued by a majority of the votes of the members present.

**Article (22)** The Board shall consist of five members from the Governorate of Muscat who shall be elected by secret ballot from the registered members of Muscat Governorate and the heads of the Board of Directors of the Chamber’s branches in the other governorates. The term of the OCCI Board shall be four calendar years starting from the date of its first meeting. Those whose memberships have expired may re nominate for OCCI Board membership.

**Article (23)** Members of the Board shall convene within 7 days from the date of the announcement of the final results of the elections. The first meeting shall be held at the headquarters of the Chamber and headed by the oldest member. The members shall elect by secret ballot the chairman two deputies and two other members to form the Executive Management. The Board shall also elect the members of the Audit and Investment Committees, from other than members of the Executive Committee.

**Article (24)** OCCI Board shall have all the necessary powers to supervise and follow up the Chamber’s practice of its powers and achieve its objectives. In particular, it shall have the following:

- Develop the general policy of the Chamber and follow up on its implementation
- Adopt OCCI strategic plan and approve its organizational structure
- Approve OCCI’s financial and administrative regulations and other regulations
- Adopt the draft budget for the financial year of the Chamber and its final audited account
- Approve the financial loans and facilities of the Chamber
- Form ad hoc committees from among
the members of the chamber, and members of economic associations, and the heads and members of the former OCCI's Board of Directors and define their work.

- Appoint OCCI's Chief Executive Officer and determine his entitlements
- Carry out any other works necessary to achieve OCCI aims

OCCI Board may delegate its powers to OCCI Chairman or the Executive Committee or the CEO.

**Article (25):** The branch shall be managed by a board of directors consisting of seven members who shall be elected by secret ballot from the members registered in the branch. The term of the board of directors of branch 4 shall be four calendar years starting from the date of its first meeting. Those whose memberships have expired may re nominate for the membership of the Board of Directors of the Branch.

**Article (26):** Members of the Board of Directors of the Branch shall convene within seven (7) days from the date of the announcement of the final results of the elections for the first meeting at the branch headquarters. They shall be elected by secret ballot as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Branch.

**Article (27):** The Board of Directors of the Branch shall have all the necessary powers to supervise, supervise and follow up on the work of the Branch and to achieve the objectives of the Chamber. In particular, it shall have the following powers:

- Develop the strategic plan of the Branch and submit it to the Board for approval
- Propose the establishment of offices or service windows in the Governorate in accordance with the approved budget plan
- Form an advisory boards and temporary committees from among the registered members of the branch or from others and determine their powers and work systems.

**Article (28):** OCCI Chairman shall represent the Chamber before the Judiciary and its relations with third parties and supervise all its work. In case of his absence or the presence of a barrier preventing the exercise of his powers, he shall be replaced by one of his deputies as determined by the Regulation.

**Article (29):** The work of the members of the Board shall be voluntary and shall not be paid for their services, except for the travel allowance and meeting fees, as determined by the Regulation.

**Article (30):** The Chairman of the Board, its members, the Chairman of the Boards of the branches and its members shall be accountable to the General Assembly for any violation of the Law and the misuse of the Chamber's funds. The claim of liability shall not be waived unless five (5) years have elapsed from the expiry date of their memberships.

**Article (31):** The Chairman of the Board and its members, if they have a direct or indirect interest in the contracts or agreements concluded by the Chamber, shall notify the Board of such interest and shall not consider the subject presented for that contract or agreement or vote on it. The provisions of the preceding paragraph shall apply if the member, his wife or any of his relatives up to the third degree owns a share in the company contracted by the chamber or is a member of its board of directors. Violation of the provisions of this article shall result in the nullity of such contract or agreement. The provision of this article applies on the Chairman of the Board of Directors and OCCI Branch Board members.

**Article (32):** The Board may be dissolved by reasoned decision of the Minister after the approval of the Council of Ministers in the following cases

- OCCI Board did not meet for more than 3 (three) months.
- OCCI general assembly meeting is not held for more than three (3) months from the date of its invitation to the meeting.
- If the Board has committed a serious violation of this system or the regulations issued thereunder or
violate public order or morals.

- The call for the election of a new Board shall be made within three (3) months from the date of the dissolution and until the formation of the new Board, OCCI businesses will be carried out by a Committee formed by a decision from the Minister.

Article (33): The Chamber shall have executive management headed by the Chief Executive Officer. It will be concerned with the executive work of the Chamber, as determined by the Chamber’s regulations.

The fifth chapter covers OCCI election.

Article (34): Elections of the Board and the Board of Directors of the Branch shall be held under the supervision of a committee called the Chamber Election Committee. The election shall be considered as a personal right of the Registered Member and may not be delegated or carried out in proxy. The decisions may be appealed before a committee called the Appeals Committee within (7) days from the date of the announcement of the result of the election. A decision shall be issued by the Minister to form the Election and Appeals Committees and any other committees required for the elections. The decision shall specify the powers of each committee and its working procedures.

Article (35): Candidates for membership of OCCI Board or the Boards of Directors of the branches must: Be an Omani national who have at least the general diploma certificate, and have been a member of the Chamber for at least (5) years, (30) years of age, enjoy good conduct and reputation. He/she should not be an employee at any of the units of the administrative apparatus of the State or a paid worker in the private sector.

Article (36): If the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Branch is elected as Chairman of OCCI Board, his Deputy shall exercise all his powers prescribed by law at the Branch.

Article (37): If the place of a member of the Board or the Board of Directors of the Branch has become vacant before the end of its term, its place shall be filled by one of the candidates in their order in accordance with the results of the elections of the Board or the Board of Directors of the Branch for the same period within (60) days from the date of notifying the Board of the vacancy.

The term of the new member shall be the period for the period of the predecessor’s term. If this place cannot be filled and the Board shall remain vacant for at least six months, election may be made to fill this vacant position.

Article (38): The membership of the Board or the Board of Directors of the Branch shall be lost in the following cases:

Loss of membership of the Chamber in accordance with the provisions of Article (13) of this Law, resignation, death, any of the conditions stipulated in Article (35), inability to carry out membership duties due to health reasons as per a decision from the competent health authority, failure to attend 3 consecutive meetings of the Board or four separate meetings at a single year without an acceptable excuse by the Board.

Chapter (6) covers the “Chamber Finance”.

Article (39) stipulates that the Chamber shall have an independent budget. The financial year of the Chamber shall begin on the first day of January and end on the 31st of December of each year.

Article (40): The Chamber’s resources shall consist of the following:

1- Fees charged by the Chamber in return for the services it performs.
2- Revenues generated by real estate owned by the Chamber and the returns on its investments.
3- Revenues from organizing conferences, workshops, seminars and conference or at which OCCI take part in its organization.
4- Revenues of OCCI publications.
5- Grants and donates that are accepted by OCCI Board, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force.
6- Any other resources that are approved by the Board.

Article (41): The Board shall deposit OCCI funds at one or more of the local banks licensed in the Sultanate. The Financial Regulations shall determine the rules and procedures for disbursement of such funds.

Article (42): The Chamber shall have at least one auditor from among the licensees to practice the profession of accounting and auditing. It shall be appointed annually and may not provide any technical, administrative or advisory services to the Chamber. The same auditor may not be renewed for more than (4) four consecutive years.
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Supreme Commander, presided over the military parade, which was staged at the military parade ground of the Police Special Force headquarters (PSF HQ) in Seeb in the Governorate of Muscat, on Saturday. The special parade was organised by Royal Oman Police (ROP) on the occasion of the 47th National Day.

Upon the arrival of His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander, to the gate of PSF HQ accompanied by a group of motorbikes, the guard of honour gave a military salute to His Majesty the Sultan. The Royal motorcade then headed to the military parade ground surrounded by a number of ROP horsemen.

His Majesty the Sultan was received by Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu’amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs and Lt Gen Hassan bin Mohsen al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs.

Upon His Majesty’s ascension to the Royal Dais, the parade columns gave a military salute; the Royal Anthem was played by the joint military parade band while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan.

The columns of Protocols Guard chanted the ROP song Homat al Haq, then the call of loyalty and allegiance.

Afterwards, the joint military bands staged a music performance while passing before the main dais until they stood at their places behind the columns of the protocols guard.

Afterwards, the columns of the Protocols Guard staged a military performance in regular columns to the rhythms of musical pieces.

The columns of Protocols Guard chanted the ROP song Homat al Haq, then the call of loyalty and allegiance and then proclaimed thrice, ‘Long live His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Supreme Commander.’
The Royal Anthem was played and the columns of the Protocols Guard gave the military salute to His Majesty the Sultan signalling the conclusion of the parade.

At the conclusion of the parade ceremony His Majesty the Sultan received a special commemorative gift from Royal Oman Police, which was presented by Lt Gen Shraiqi.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the parade by their highnesses, the chairmen of the State Council and Majlis A’Shura, their excellencies the ministers, advisers, Dr Abdulatif bin Rashid al Zayani, Secretary General of the GCC, commanders of SAF, ROP and the military and security apparatuses.

The parade was also attended by honourable members of the State Council and members of Majlis A’Shura, the undersecretaries, the governors, judges from Muscat governorate, heads of diplomatic missions, military attaches, walis of the Governorate of Muscat, senior state officials, senior officers, non-commissioned officers, SAF, RGO, ROP and security personnel and dignitaries from the Governorate of Muscat.
• **2447 people took part at the military parade**
• **1047 people took part at the column of protocols**
• **47 horse riders accompany the royal convoy from the gate to the military parade field**

2447 military personnel of different ranks took part at the military parade. 1047 people took part at the column of protocols. 447 music band personnel took part. 47 horse riders accompany the royal convoy from the gate to the military parade field. 47 bike riders drove behind the vehicle carrying H.M the Sultan.

37 Sultan of Oman Artillery also took part in addition to 137 people from column protocol. 173 administrative staff also took part at the parade. 236 people also took part at the supportive formations.
HE Dr. Fouad Bin Jaafar Al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, affirmed in an interview with Al-Ghorfa magazine that the Ministry is striving to enhance the production capacities of the agricultural sectors in both its vegetative, animal and fishery sectors. This comes in a bid to supply as much food possible through the local production.

He noted that the Ministry also seeks to develop agricultural and food policies and encourage investment in production, processing, storage and marketing of food commodities. He pointed out that the Sultanate has taken a number of policies to enhance food security, the most important of which is to build the basic food storage system and complete the infrastructure. It also established of an early warning information system, liberalized food imports and exempted food imports from customs duties. It has also created areas for food investment, encouraged national and foreign investments and pursued investment plans outside the Sultanate in safe countries and environment.

The aim behind these initiatives is to enhance its contribution to total food consumption, which currently accounts for about 34% of the Sultanate’s needs.

1 - There are demands to implement agricultural production map in the Sultanate. What are the plans of the Ministry in this aspect and how do you see the contributions of the agricultural private sector in it?

In addition to the efforts exerted by the government to expand the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of productive and investment projects that contribute to agricultural and fisheries development in the Sultanate, a team headed by the Ministry’s undersecretaries and senior officials in the agriculture and fisheries sectors has been established to identify investment opportunities in the establishments run by the Ministry. Engineering designs were developed to establish agricultural ports, quarries and laboratories and to identify agricultural lands that can be invested. Some of them have been offered for investment by the private sector.

Oman Food Investments Holding was established in 2012 as an investment arm of the government in the management of the food security system. The company is concerned with the establishment and management of agricultural and food investments inside and outside the Sultanate according to the pre-set priorities. The Ministry is currently cooperating with the company in the implementation of the most important of which are the dates and their products, processing plants, marketing and processing of Omani dates and manufacturing products derived from industrial dates such as alcohol and vinegar. It has also played a role in the development of the marketing system for vegetable and fruit crops, the production and processing of milk in Dhofar Governorate, the production of dry green fodder and the production of feed grains such as maize, maize, etc.

The milk project in the north of the Sultanate produces more than 200,000 tons per annum. The capacity of the meat production plan in Tanzania is about 35,000 to 50,000 tons per annum. The production capacity of poultry projects is 60,000 tons per annum. The mother chickens project meets the needs of the Sultanate with a production capacity of 200,000 tons per annum. The capacity of the poultry projects is 60,000 tons per annum. The mother chickens project meets the needs of the Sultanate with a production capacity of 200,000 tons per annum.

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2. In the context of what was raised earlier about the presence of some pollutants in national agricultural products and your announcement in a timely manner to take a number of procedures in cooperation with other bodies related to the agricultural sector ... What are the developments in this regard?

Regarding the issue of pesticide residues on agricultural products, the Ministry has established, since late May 2017, controls and requirements on vegetables and fruits imported from abroad. The importers are required to attach an analysis certificate for pesticides residues for each crop and for each imported shipment according to international standards in this regard. Pesticides are subject to the internationally permitted limits set by the Codex of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations FAO or those specified by the European Union EU. In addition, random samples of imported shipments are collected to analyze the percentages of pesticide residues in accredited laboratories in the Sultanate. Based on the results of the analysis, the appropriate decision on these shipments shall be taken in accordance with the legislation governing this.

As for local products, random samples are also taken from the farms to analyze pesticide residues. In case the limits exceed the internationally allowed rates, appropriate measures shall be taken in accordance with the regulated legislation of the pesticide law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 64/2006 and its executive regulation No. 41/2012. For
In each crop and shipment, the laboratory produces a certificate of analysis of pesticide residues in accordance with the internationally permissible limits. In the case of detection of residues exceeding the limits allowed internationally, this certificate is not issued and crops may not be exported.

A joint team was established in cooperation with the Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, to collect samples of agricultural products on the market and analyze pesticide residues at the Food and Water Laboratories Center of the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources.

3 - Food security is an important issue for all the world and the Sultanate is not an exception. What has been achieved in this area in the Sultanate? What challenges do you face to achieve full food security for the Sultanate? Food security depends on some main pillars, which provide food commodities on a permanent basis and at an affordable price while adhering to the quality of food commodities.

The Ministry Attaches Food Security great attention and has exerted great efforts to implement agricultural development projects to ensure food production and optimal exploitation of natural resources in the Sultanate. The Ministry has played a great role in the introduction and dissemination of protected agriculture techniques, development of field irrigation to conserve water resources through the introduction of modern irrigation systems, as well as the implementation of several development and extension programs and projects aimed at increasing the areas of wheat grown.

It also played a remarkable role in the distribution and introduction of modern agricultural mechanization methods, the expansion of production of date palm seedlings and improved fruit seedlings of high quality and productivity varieties, as well as the implementation of several extension programs for the development and dissemination of honey bee hives, it has also facilitated the transfer of modern knowledge to farmers through the model fields that are implemented annually with farmers.

The above mentioned projects and other development programs carried out by the Ministry have contributed to increasing the volume of agricultural production in the Sultanate. For example, statistical data indicate that the volume of plant production of the Sultanate increased from 177,300 tons in 2015 to 1,844,000 tons in 2016, an average annual growth of 49 per cent during this period.

The self-sufficiency ratios for the year 2016 show that the Sultanate achieved self-sufficiency ratios from a number of food groups. The data indicate that the self-sufficiency rate of the fish was about 176%, for dates 100%, for vegetables 69% and for fruits without dates 32%, red meat 60%, poultry meat 46%, table eggs 74% and fresh milk 53%.

The establishment of the Committee on Food Security is one of the most important measures taken by the Sultanate to enhance and address the issues of food security. The committee is concerned with defining the list of basic foodstuffs, maintaining cooperation and coordination among the government agencies and the concerned private sector companies. It is also in charge of providing market information and early warning systems to reduce price volatility. The Committee follows up the development of strategic stocks and reserves of food commodities by the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve.

The Sultanate faces many challenges to achieve food security, the most important of which is the scarcity of arable land and potable water. The arable land accounted for only 7.07% of the Sultanate’s total area (31.4 million hectares). About 83% of water resources is consumed in the agricultural sector. The Sultanate is considered a semi-dry area due to lack of rainfall, so water scarcity is one of the key challenges facing the Sultanate in achieving total food security.

4. The contributions of the artisanal and traditional agriculture sector have
grown in the national economy during the past period, in light of the Government’s plans and its declared programs to achieve economic diversification. To what extent are you satisfied with the performance of the sectors and their contribution to GNP? What are the results achieved in this regard?

The Ministry's efforts resulted in achieving good indicators by the end of 2016. The value of gross domestic product of both agricultural and animal sectors increased from RO 435.2 million in 2015 to RO 506 million in 2016, 16.3%, which is the highest growth rate achieved for more than three five-year plans, and is the highest growth rate among the economic sectors in 2016. In addition, the agriculture and fisheries sectors contribute about 35% Oman's food needs.

While the agricultural grew by 14.6%, the fish sector grew by 18.4% compared to the year 2015. These growth rates are high and reassuring according to the international rates. The importance of the contribution of the GDP of the agricultural sector to the fisheries sector reached about 56% 44% respectively during 2016.

The contribution of the agriculture and fisheries sectors to GDP increased from about 1.6% in 2015 to about 2.0% at the end of 2016, while this contribution in the gross domestic product of non-oil products reached 2.8% during the same period.

The artisanal fisheries contributed 99.1% of the total catch in the Sultanate. The value of production in the artisanal fishing sector reached RO 200 million in 2016 compared to RO 169 million in 2015. The contribution of the fish sector to the GDP stood at 0.8% in 2016 compared to 0.61% in 2015. This continuous increase in the contribution of the fisheries sector to GDP is one of the objectives set for the Ninth Five-Year Plan. The achievement is the result of concerted efforts between fishermen and the Ministry by providing support to fishermen and providing ports and landing sites in all Sultanate of Oman.

The Ministry has also rehabilitated fish markets and established new markets. It also developed strict controls for determining fishing seasons for important species. The Ministry also seeks to provide the best environments for fishermen to increase production and achieve the desired economic diversification.

The Ministry has also made a strong effort to develop the fish farming sector, the most important of which was the development of the 2011-2040 aquaculture sector development strategy. The Strategy aims to produce about 200,000 tons of fish farming by 2040, provide about 10,000 jobs, attract foreign investments. The Ministry plays the key and pivotal role in specifying the fish farming sites, the promulgation of aquaculture quality control of regulations. It has also established a special department for the development of fish farming and a one window station for aquaculture. It also introduced the closed aquaculture system using fresh water in the farms. The initiative has resulted in the establishment of productive and profitable fish farms in several governorates of the Sultanate.

The indicators mentioned above are evidences of the success of the efforts made by the Ministry to achieve rapid growth rates in all sectors under its supervision. However, we strive to achieve more successes and achievements in the future despite the challenges facing us.

5 - What are the controls and requirements of agricultural investment and foreign fish in the Sultanate? Why is such investment rare and limited?

As for the scarcity of these investments and their limitations, the Ministry strives to provide all facilities to promote agricultural and livestock investment through evaluating the feasibility studies for agricultural and animal projects, granting initial approvals, as well as providing agricultural and animal guidance services in all its forms. The Ministry also maintains coordination with the competent authorities to provide the land and permits required for the establishment of these projects.

It should be noted that the Sultanate provides investors with a healthy investment climate to invest in the agricultural and fish sectors. One of the most important advantages that any nascent economy has to provide is the modern infrastructure, the effective regulatory framework for investment and the establishment of legal facilities.
Second: Controls: The citizen is granted the right to use the agricultural land for a period of ten years renewable and to invest during this period according to the following: Agree on the composition of the crop that meets the needs of food security and the commitment to the water quotas specified according to the relevant authority’s instructions.

6- The Fish Industries Complex in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm is one of the most prominent pioneering projects announced by the Sultanate ... To what stage has the achievement reached in this important project? How can such a project pave the way for advanced agricultural and food industries in the Sultanate?

As for the Fish Industries Complex in Duqm, it is still in the consultancy studies stage. A committee was formed between SEZAD and the Ministry to supervise the project. The fishing port in Duqm is considered one of the most important projects which this Ministry attaches great importance as it serves a large number of fishermen. As for the total cost of the project, the Ministry will contribute about 30% of the total cost, provided that a third party finance 70% of the cost.

7. To what extent do the agricultural and private fisheries sectors contribute to the provision of employment and training opportunities to the national workforce? How many Omanis work in these sectors?

In the agricultural sector, there are about 256,000 workers. The permanent workers of the families of holders of title deeds constitute 92.8% of the total permanent agricultural workers. The Omani agricultural workers who are not the families of the holders constitute 7.2%, according to the Census 2012/2013. The increase in the percentage of workers in this sector during the period between the Census of Agriculture until 2016 is due to the availability of more jobs which is the direct result of the rapid growth of public and private investments.

The fisheries sector is one of the most important sectors in terms of providing job opportunities for the national workforce. There are 47,470 fishermen engaged in fishing. Fishing sector also provides job opportunities for occupations related to fish, for example, there are 4115 who work in transporting fish. There is also a considerable number of for doing business.

Within the efforts made to keep pace with the global developments and enhance competitiveness both domestically and internationally, the Ministry has issued regulations and requirements for agricultural and fisheries investment in the Sultanate. Companies operating in this field may have 30% capital by Omanis and 70% of the capital by foreigners. Exceptions are provided for certain projects that contribute to the development of the Omani economy. The citizens of the GCC countries and the company’s wholly owned by them enjoy the same privileges and treatment provided for Omani companies.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in cooperation with the Ministry of Housing has allocated certain sites for agricultural investment depending after ensuring smooth accessibility and proximity to the required facilities, points of transport and ease of connection with electricity and water facilities.

The applicant for a license to practice fish farming is entitled to a suitable use of one of these sites up to 20 years’ renewable. As for the regulatory requirements of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for aquaculture projects, the investor is required to respect the law of marine fishing and the protection of living aquatic resources and its regulations. He needs to observe the quality control and regulations governing the storage, transportation and marketing of water resources. He is also required to get a quality control certificate that allows them to sell or export fish and fish products and use transport vehicles for fish transport.

The Ministry has set the general conditions and controls for the investment of land for agricultural and animal projects. First: General conditions: The allocation of land for agricultural use and associated activities only and is not allowed to be changed for other uses, the commitment to the crop structure that promotes food security in the Sultanate, use of modern technologies such as green houses, agricultural mechanization, etc. They are also required to provide all or part of production for local markets, especially during periods of decline of domestic production in some seasons where the price of some of the products are high.

- Plant production in the Sultanate grows by 4% per annum

Interview
The Ministry also follows up eighteen major agricultural sector projects, that are under construction and implementation. These projects include poultry and poultry production, table eggs, milk, red meat, vegetables, fruits and dates. The production is expected to increase animal and plant production. There are also projects by companies, associations and small producers, these projects will provide additional employment opportunities for Omani youth in these two developing sectors.

8. The Omani agricultural and fishery products suffer from the problem of local and foreign marketing. What are the current and future plans of the government in this field?

The Ministry makes continuous efforts to promote and upgrade the fish marketing and investment system in the Sultanate by following the fish markets (wholesale and retail), encouraging investment to open marketing outlets (fish shops) and establishing various fish factories.

The Ministry also plays an important role in the establishment and rehabilitation of many fish markets, the promotion of investment opportunities, the development of fish industries in the Sultanate and support the development of the central wholesale market for fish. The market aims to collect the supply and demand of fish in the Sultanate in one place and thus ensure fair and transparent competition among sellers and buyers.

The electronic fish trading program has been implemented for the first time in the Sultanate. The total number of fish sold in the market in 2016 hit more than 4534 tons. The quantity of fish sales exceeded 3432 tons, worth of about RO 3.7 million.

The Ministry also organized a joint program with the private sector (represented by fish processing and marketing companies and investors from fish carriers) to distribute fish in the local markets. 76 shops involved in selling fish were included in the marketing program to provide fish for consumers. The Ministry has also developed the infrastructure and services for the fish market by rehabilitating and maintaining the fish market. A tender has been floated to maintain and rehabilitate 17 fish markets.

Work is underway to establish 3 new markets and 11 markets are already under study. The Ministry also encourages and supports the establishment of agricultural and animal societies which play an important role in promoting the quality of Omani products. The Ministry is also part of “Bayan” custom system, which ensures processing of transactions in a very short time. This makes the export of animal products very easy.

It also adopts agricultural exhibitions and markets such as the Omani Dates Festival, held once a year and the Omani Honey Festival, held twice a year. It also participates at the important Festivals such as Muscat Festival and Salalah Tourism Festival. It involves farmers and manufacturers and producers in these festivities to market their products.

The Ministry also encourages farmers to adopt a contractual farming system that allows producers to enter into contractual agreements with the business sectors such as wholesale, retail, catering and other sectors.

This system provides for the marketing of crops even before planting, according to the type, quantity and quality agreed upon. The Ministry seeks to develop strategic plans to eliminate difficulties facing farmers and animal breeders and help them market their project. In this connection, it signed MoUs with many peer organizations round the world for enhancing agricultural and technical cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experiences with these countries.

The Ministry also maintains effective cooperation with the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development in the field of involving agriculture and fish sectors at the different events organized by the Authority. It also takes part at the foreign specialized fairs and business meetings with exporters and importers at the targeted countries.

The Ministry is currently considering the establishment of an agricultural marketing company whose mission is to purchase the products of farmers and market them inside and outside the Sultanate. This company will contribute to maximizing the financial return of the farmer as it will have direct link with the producers, without passing intermediaries. In the Sultanate, the Ministry has also developed plans to integrate the markets of agricultural products through the provision of information on prices in various markets, so that the production can be sent to the markets that will ensure highest returns.

9. What are the achievements of the Ministry in increasing the added value of agricultural and fishery products in the Sultanate to raise their contributions to the national income?

During its five-year plans, the Ministry adopted a package of development projects and programs aimed at maximizing the economic return from the agricultural sector and increasing productivity in terms of quality and quantity. The Ministry seeks to benefit from surplus production of some of the crops in the food industries through small and medium enterprises in a bid to ensure added value to these crops and to enhance economic activities. The Ministry has started to encourage some groups, especially rural women, to be involved in the manufacture of dairy products, dates and others. The initiative has been successful and spread in the different governorates.

The Ministry encourages farmers, livestock breeders and fishermen to adopt modern technologies to increase production and diversification of products and to add value to raw material produced. Four studies have been completed for development projects of dates and their products. These projects include marketing and manufacturing Omani dates, manufacturing derivatives such as medical alcohol and vinegar, manufacturing of animal feed from date palm products, wood processing as well as animal wealth projects which include dairy, meat, poultry and others.

The Ministry also strives to attract investors to fish projects by facilitating the investment climate, particularly in the Duqm area. It also seeks to increase the number of existing fish factories, which now stands at 418. The establishment of fishing ports, completion of fish markets and encouraging Omani youth to engage in fishing, the application of laws and encouraging companies to ex-

The allocation of 50 plots of land 10 acres per piece for SMEs
The Ministry's investment arm of the government in the management of the food security system.

The Ministry strives to develop the agricultural land it owns in order to transform it into land that can be used by small and medium enterprises. It has provided a model for integrated agricultural projects for small and medium enterprises. The Ministry is mainly based on the principle of partnership between the public and private sectors.

The Ministry also seeks to create the required infrastructure, such as roads, electricity and water networks. It also promotes the introduction of modern technologies, irrigation systems, greenhouses and fish farming units. These projects are financed through the Ministry's subsidy programs. The Ministry is also providing consultancy studies, training and technical support to farmers. It also maintains coordination with the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (PASMED) to implement these projects with the support of private sector companies and support youth initiatives to carry out small and medium aquaculture activities.

This does not reflect any lack of confidence in the private sector or ability to invest in this vital sector. It reflects the cooperation between the government and the private sector, especially when this company succeeds in its projects. It will be an incentive for the private sector to become involved in fish farming. It should be noted that the increase in fish production through aquaculture will open outlets and shops for the sale and marketing of fish.

The Ministry has initiated the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Fisheries Sector in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations FAO. The strategy seeks to create a general framework that includes an advanced vision for having a sustainable agricultural sector that contributes to the development of balanced economic and social development and achieves food security in the Sultanate.

The strategy focuses on the following main objectives: optimal utilization of agricultural natural resources, development of agricultural and food systems, enhancement of food security, improving standards of living, creating fresh jobs and increasing income.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries pointed out that according to the National Program for the Economic Diversification "Tanfeedh", Fisheries Laboratories were completed during the period from 17/9/2017 until 26/10/2017. The labs came out with 91 initiatives and projects. The main indicators for the three sectors targeted in this vital sector were set up until 2023. The sectors are the fishing sector, fish farming and value added sector (export and manufacturing). Task force teams were formed to take the necessary action to implement these projects with the support of the follow-up and implementation unit.
Second year in a row....
Oman ranked the second in the Arab world and 28th in the world in Global Food Security

In a report issued by the British magazine The Economist, noting that for the second year in a row, Oman ranked the second in the Arab world in the 2017 Global Food Security Index, and ranked 28th in the world.

The Sultanate was also given 100 degrees in the availability of food safety net programs index, 100 degrees in the public expenditure on agricultural research and development index, 83.5 degrees in the agricultural tariffs index and 75 degrees in farmers funding opportunities index.

Reported by: Ibrahim bin Said Al Julandani

According to the report published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the figures indicate that the contribution of the local production value of the agricultural and fishery products in the coverage for the consumption of foodstuffs during the year 2016 was 35.3% i.e. about one third of the consumption value. This ratio is good compared to the steady increase in the population and the increase in the number of tourists in the Sultanate.

The figures and statistics show us the importance of food security in all aspects of life, both economically and socially. Therefore, countries have special considerations for the issue of food security. Some countries consider food security one of the most important priorities of economic and social policy as it is directly linked to national security and the independence of political and economic decision.

In this questionnaire, we have gathered the views of a group of specialists in the fields of food security on many issues related to the subject, both according to its specialization and orientations.

A One-Stop Shop Investment for Food Projects

Saleh bin Mohammed Al Shanfari, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Foods Investment Holding Co, Chairman of the Committee on Food Security in the Chamber says: “In order to succeed in implementing food security projects, we should remove the obstacles that may delay the implementation of the targeted projects. It is important in the next phase to have a one-stop shop investment for food projects so that investors can quickly start the implementation of projects and shorten the time required to obtain the necessary approvals for the establishment. No doubt, this will contribute to the existence of an attractive investment environment in the sectors concerned with food security, which contribute to the substitution of imports and create job opportunities for citizens and the development of provinces and community stability and economic diversification required”.

He adds that the Sultanate has many elements of success that qualify it to be a source of food production. The Sultanate enjoys different climates and environments that encourage its
The existence of a one-stop shop investment for food projects enables investors to start the implementation of their projects.

Eng. Saleh Al Shanfari

The main concern for decision-makers

Eng. Salem bin Saif Al-Abdali, Business Development Manager, Oman Food Investment Holding Co, says: “The issue of food security and food supply for the increasing population has become the concern of most countries in the world, including the Sultanate”.

He adds that the interest in food security has increased during the last few years, especially after the establishment of a government body in the field of investment in food security projects, the Omani Food Investment Holding Company. Despite it was established four years ago, the company has so far established a number of projects in the field of meat, dairy and poultry. These projects are expected to start production by the end of next year or the beginning of 2019. The increase in self-sufficiency rates will contribute to enhancing the food security of the Sultanate.

The Need to Invest in Food Security Projects

Dr. Tariq bin Musa Al Zadjali, former Director General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, pointed out that investment in food security is an urgent national necessity that has been a matter for the Sultanate’s officials since the beginning of the blessed renaissance era because of its importance as being an integral part of our national security. In this regard, we have achieved many goals at level of food availability through domestic production or through imports, and at the level of food accessibility and price stability through support for key food and food reserve stocks. These achievements have been achieved through the implementation of successive five-year development plans in the Sultanate.

He adds that it is important to continue investing in food security projects locally and overseas. Local investments should be made in projects where we have comparative advantages and which are sustainable and not constituting an environmental burden on natural resources. Such investments to be in fish farming and non-traditional fishing, as well as dairy and meat projects. These projects are currently under implementation or study at different stages. It is clear that these projects focus mainly on the provision of animal protein as well as on the importation of feed from abroad.

Principles for Investment

We need the feed and its components

Dr. Tareq Al-Zadjali

The importance of developing agricultural and fisheries research systems to match the requirements of developing these projects and finding solutions to the obstacles facing them.
for our local livestock projects. As these goods are not produced in the Sultanate due to some conditions, the solution is to import these goods or produce them abroad through investment in agricultural projects. Therefore, investment in food security projects locally and overseas should be in accordance with responsible principles for investment.

**Challenges and Difficulties**

The investment in food security projects related to the availability of food from local agricultural resources faces the challenges of limited water resources, inadequate climatic conditions, difficult access to suitable land, poor private sector attention to directing investments towards the agriculture, fisheries and food processing sectors. In addition, it faces the need to speed up getting approvals required through a one-stop shop. It is also important to develop the agricultural and fishery research systems to match the requirements of developing these projects and finding solutions to the constraints encountered.

**When Can We Invest in Food Security Projects Overseas?**

Dr. Tareq says that investment in food security projects within the Sultanate would be of greater value when adequate water, land, climate and technical knowledge were available. Thus, under the lack for such conditions, we cannot produce our major food (cereals, sugar, oils, etc.) and feed.

Dr. Khairy:

Research and reports contribute to the identification of policies and tools that help reduce the food gap and achieve higher rates of self-sufficiency.
Therefore, the option of investing abroad to produce these commodities is only justified upon analyzing all elements that affect the investment decision in terms of political, economic, social, technical, legislative, environmental and related risk assessment, as well as study the strengths and weaknesses of the project and the external factors that affect it from opportunities and threats.

Investing abroad in food security projects faces major challenges that vary from one country to another, especially when it comes to the acquisition of large tracts of agricultural land, so it should be studied in some detail, scientifically and logically.

“I believe that the laws, regulations and specifications issued by the various bodies related to food security are effective and appropriate, but I hope to see the Committee on Food Security in the Sultanate dealing with all matters of food security, including "food safety", which is a very important focus of food security," Dr. Tareq says.

**Inadequate Investment Stimulating Policies**

Talking about the role of research and reports of educational institutions on the development of the food security sector in Oman, Dr. Khairy Hassan, the economic expert at Dhofar Feed Company, says: The researcher analyzes data to determine the food security gap, and thus finds policies and tools that help reducing the food gap and achieve higher level of self-sufficiency while ensuring optimal use of available resources.

On the challenges faced by private sector companies and institutions investing in food security, Dr. Khairy says: There are challenges in the lack of natural resources and the need for economic use of them. In addition, the investment-stimulating policies are inadequate. Investment laws need to be reviewed and updated. Stores, roads and services are not available.

We hope that the educational institutions adapt their outputs to the requirements of food security projects and create qualified human cadres able to analyze data and draw policies, as well as directing and refining them with technical capabilities qualified to work in agricultural companies.

The ability of these cadres to optimize the use of resources from soil, water and animal and fish wealth is an advantage and a good addition.

**Biological Agriculture in Dhofar Governorate**

Prof. Mohammed Al-Imam, Vice President of Dhofar University, says: “Although investment opportunities are available the existing projects are good and successful but do not cover all areas of food security.”

On the challenges facing investment in this sector, he says: One of the challenges facing this sector is the development of infrastructure and human resources. These challenges can be overcome by encouraging university graduates specialized in the field to do research and establish their private projects, provided that the country provide them with suitable funding.

The desalination of solar water in water-scarce areas helps to encourage investors and provide them with the required water. In addition, we should invest in young people in terms of qualification and funding for projects that specialize in food security, and support them, particularly in biological agriculture in Dhofar Governorate.

The Government and the private sector should develop appropriate strategies to encourage investment in food security projects and address the challenges faced by these projects.
We aim to grow crops that exist in small quantities in the market.

**Laws and Regulations Meet the Changes**

Dr. Ghaleb bin Saeed Al Saidi, General Manager of Al-Bashayer Meat Company, says: The image of food investment has become clear through the creation of mega projects in this field, which will create many opportunities for small and medium-sized companies. These companies are considered as a base to be an investment model to find other large companies, and this will improve the Sultanate’s position in food security.

On the challenges facing investment in food projects, Dr. Ghalib says: There are challenges known to everyone and may be similar to the challenges in the surrounding countries. However, the Sultanate may have advantages that other countries lack in terms of strategic location and management by the competent authorities to overcome the challenges. We have to deal with the issue of water challenges as it water is the base for this kind of investment.

On the importance of using technology, Dr. Ghalib says: With the development of accelerated technology, it has become necessary to use these technologies to increase the efficiency of production and reduce its cost.

He points out that laws and legislations should be developed to meet the needs of the time and the challenges in investing in food security. The biggest challenge is how to develop these laws and legislations at the appropriate speed.

**The Role of Sultan Qaboos University in Preparing Qualified Omani Cadres**

The Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University, Dr. Rashid bin Abdullah, mentions the role of Sultan Qaboos University in promoting food security projects: The University prepares national competencies in various food security sectors, does scientific research in the same field, trains staff in the food security sectors, workshops and conferences in this field.

On the Omani human resources and their ability to work in the food security sector, Dr. Rashid says: Omani cadres are qualified to work in this sector. There are experiences for young people who have been involved in personal projects related to food security projects. Our role at Sultan Qaboos University is to provide the appropriate specialties, the scientific curriculum and hands-on training for Omani youth and to qualify students for their role in entrepreneurship.

**Utilization of Wastewater**

Dr Musallam Ahmad Tabuk, Director of Agricultural Affairs, Dhofar Governorate, says: The Sultanate enjoys a unique geographic location, open to Asia and Africa, which facilitates...
investors’ access to and transit to and from their countries through these foreign markets. Oman has an investment advantage in terms of facilitating procedures and protecting the investor regardless of nationality, in accordance with internationally agreed standards to protect food safety. Oman also has potential land and marine resources that can be utilized in a variety of industries. The investment environment in Oman is ready for foreign and local businessmen.

Small and medium enterprises have received a lot of encouragement and have begun to appear impressively in the market. However, in order to grow and continue attractively, the support should continue in funding and providing specifications and conditions. Moreover, the support should be also in awareness raising, encouragement and involvement in seminars and visits to foreign markets.

Water problems in arid regions are natural challenges that require significant costs, particularly in investment projects and agricultural and livestock production. Therefore, rain-making is one of these solutions, but it requires careful geographical and environmental studies to determine the location of rain-making.

The Sultanate’s experience is good in this area and in combating desertification, which is spreading rapidly. It is a global phenomenon that threatens green pastures and increase the extent of desertification. This undoubtedly requires great efforts by the government, international organizations and research centers. The issue of the protection of green pastures in Dhofar still requires a clear policy, particularly livestock and rangeland management projects.

We are in a need to legislations and laws aim at increasing the range of pastures and the development of livestock. We are in a need to the enactment of laws binding the protection of pastoral lands, the identification and expansion of afforestation and the provision of irrigation sources.

**Water Scarcity Challenges**

Ghosn Al-Rashidi, Secretary of the Omani Agricultural Society, says: The Omani Agricultural Society encourages farm owners to invest in food security especially in the field of dates, legumes and potatoes. The members of the Agricultural Association target agricultural crops that exist in small quantities in the market to cover the needs for them.

On water scarcity challenges, he says: There is a challenge in water scarcity, but by using modern irrigation means we can reduce the depletion of groundwater, as well as the use of crops and reserves that need less water.

Therefore, there are research and studies carried out by the government and the private sector for the development of food security projects through governmental companies and through research conducted by the Scientific Research Authority, Sultan Qaboos University and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.
Fertilizer production capacity in the Arabian Gulf region has reached 42.3 million tons per annum in 2017, rising by 12 per cent over the previous year, a new report by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), the go-to source for industry data, has found.

According to the report entitled ’2016 GCC Fertilizer Industry Indicators’, the industry expanded at the highest growth rate year on year since 2011, and further outpaced overall annual growth of 8 per cent per annum over the past decade. Capacity additions in 2017 are mainly driven by Saudi Arabia, the largest fertilizer producer in the region, with projects like Waad Al Shamal, a USD 7 billion joint venture between Ma’aden, SABIC and Mosaic, coming onstream.

In 2016 the GCC fertilizer industry generated USD 5.2 billion in sales revenue, with plans to invest USD 8 billion in new projects over the coming years. By 2025, regional capacity is expected to reach 49.8 million tons, growing at a steady rate of 2% per annum. Of the additional 7.4 million tons of fertilizer capacity to be added between now and 2025, 95% will come from Saudi Arabia, growing the country’s share in regional fertilizer production to 58%, up from 51% currently.

GCC fertilizer exports have also been growing at 7.3 per cent per annum over the last decade. These exports account for about a third of the chemicals export volume, with 90 per cent sold in international markets.

Growth in fertilizer exports has a significant multiplier effect throughout the local economy generating an estimated USD 6.7 billion in supporting indirect economic activity in the region, including supporting services, packaging, warehousing and distribution.

The GCC fertilizer industry has also contributed to growth in non-oil exports, expanding sales in international markets. Economic growth in emerging economies has been one important driver of this expansion. In 2016, GCC retained its position as the world’s largest urea exporter with a global market share of 32 per cent and the second largest exporter of diammonium phosphate (DAP) with a share of 14 per cent.

Dr. Abdulwahab Al-Sadoun, Secretary General, GPCA, commented, “Much like any other fertilizer producing region globally, the GCC fertilizer industry’s sales revenue has been affected by an overall decline in commodity markets, dropping by an estimated 21% from the year before. Nonetheless, the industry has remained resilient despite volatility in global markets, continuing to expand with a commitment to long-term projects, growing export volumes and significant investment in niche, high-value and environmentally friendly fertilizer products. Furthermore, the contribution of the fertilizer industry to regional progress goes much beyond financial growth, playing an important role in supporting food security and job creation.”

Employing around 54,900 people directly and indirectly, national citizens account for 54 per cent of the industry’s workforce. Over the past decade, direct job creation grew by CAGR of 8.7 per cent per annum, while the chemical industry grew at an overall average rate of 6 per cent per annum.

The ’2016 GCC Fertilizer Industry Indicators’ report will be released at the 8th edition of the GPCA Fertilizer Convention, taking place between 26 and 28 September at the Ritz Carlton, Bahrain.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held a ceremony on Tuesday, December 19, 2017 at Grand Millennium Hotel, to honor the current Board of Directors and the effective institutions that support the chamber’s 2014-2018 initiatives.

The event, sponsored by Minister of Manpower Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Bakri, aimed to honor the entities and individuals supporting the activities, initiatives and contributions of the chamber, as well as its vision of boosting the economic and human resources.

While delivering the welcome speech, OCCI Chairman Saeed Al-Kiyumi, said this event coincides with the issuance of the Royal Decree No. 45/2017 that fulfilled the needs of the private sector to further participate in the economic and investment decision, as well as boosting the sector’s contributions to the sustainable development process.

Al-Kiyumi expressed his appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos for his great sponsorship of the local private sector and helping it perform its developmental and social roles. He also thanked the Minister of Commerce and Industry for his great efforts in creating a suitable climate that enables the chamber and the private sector to develop their performance and contributions.

Al-Kiyumi stressed that the current Board of Director attached great importance to the Chamber Law, as it took several procedures to boost its contributions to the chamber’s different systems and the private sector.

The Chairman also thanked the directors of OCCI and its branches as well as the heads and members of the specialized committees, in addition to businessmen and members of the committee in charge of studying the Law.

“OCCI Board of Directors - in its current term of 2014-2018 is keen on improving the mental image of the chamber and the private sector with the private sector itself, the government and the society, as part of a four-year plan,” Al-Kiyumi said.

He added that the Board of Directors provides programs addressing all societal classes such as small business delegations, other big specialized delegations, innovation awards, social responsibility and chair for economic studies at Sultan Qaboos University.

The Chairman pointed out that the Board of Directors paid more attention to the electronic transformation until the chamber submitted an integrated file to the competent authorities. “We hope that the chamber will launch the e-services over the coming period.”

He added that the Board of Directors managed to boost the chamber’s financial position and recorded the biggest revenue in its history. In addition, it achieved financial stability and cash surplus from the beginning of 2014, thanks to the spending rationalization policy. However, the estimated budget of 2014 reflected a deficit of almost OMR 1.5 million, which increased to around OMR 6.5 million in 2016.

OCCI is expected to record cash surplus in 2017, equal to its real revenues before 2014, despite the increase in expenses and the allocations made to complete the building of OCCI branches in the governorates which were opened last November. Moreover, the chamber financed some qualitative initiatives which the Board of Direc-
tors sees that they are important to the Omani human resources and local economy.

“It is a good opportunity to assure OCCI’s staff and followers that the chamber is ready to provide its financial statements and audited final accounts for whoever likes to review. A general meeting will be held to review these financials and discharge the directors from liability,” Al-Kiyumi said.

He added that the Board of Directors’ vision was clear, as it renewed its confidence in the executive staff, and embraced a rejuvenation strategy that allowed job rotation and utilization of the Omani young cadres. In addition, OCCI updated its regulations and sought to qualify its cadres through dispatching 19 employees to study abroad. Most employees also participate in overseas events in order to perfectly perform their roles over the coming period.

“The Board of Director has the vision of making the chamber an economic reference for the public and private sectors, as it keen on providing the necessary tools that allow contribution to the economic process with insights based on rigorous economic studies and research. The chamber’s contributions to this field had a positive impact on the national decision,” the chairman said said.

He indicated that OCCI has supported all parties in the economic and investment relationship and development work, in the public and private sectors or at the level of civil society institutions as well as various media, thus enhancing the chamber’s ability to keep pace with developments in the field of economic and investment work. In addition, it enabled the national partners to complete several important steps during the current term of 2014-2018.

Al-Kiyumi thanked all supporting actors and the Ministry of Manpower for its support for businessmen, stressing the continuation of this positive relationship and support for the Ministry’s program to serve the national interest.

“In light of the Sultanate’s economic transformation and the government’s strategy of achieving economic diversification to support the national economy and provide suitable job opportunities, we look forward to developing the performance and contributions of the chamber and the private sector towards the development and economic process.” He added that the government plans to give the private sector the priority in several economic programs and plans over the coming period.

Al-Kiyumi also stressed that the chamber seeks to upgrade its roles and contributions to the comprehensive development process in various fields over the coming period.

A photo gallery, named “Photo from the
Memory of the Chamber™, was opened, and it included 20 photos from different periods of the chamber’s history. Some photos were taken during the meeting of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with the Chamber’s directors, as well as members of the branches’ committees and members of specialized committees. In addition, they included the meeting with the delegations of gulf chambers and Chamber Chairman, as well as the inauguration of the head office in 1984, and the speech of H.H Sayyid Fahad Al-Said on occasion of the opening of the building. In addition, the gallery included photos for the chamber’s events and activities since its inception.

**Official representative**

OCCI strives to develop Oman’s private sector and make it a key partner in the sustainable economic development, given that it is the official representative of the Omani private sector domestically and internationally and its effective tool to participate in making all of the sector’s decisions. In addition, the chamber supports and develops the private sector through the available tools and programs to promote the economic development process in the Sultanate.

**Room staff**

The chamber has witnessed a significant increase in the numbers of its employees and business records, which is a good indicator of a greater business activity that the chamber favors and calls for.

The number of active companies in the chamber reached 166,453, of which 207,137 are owned by men and 22,840 are owned by women.

**Honoring of members and institutions**

During the ceremony, the chamber honored the directors and heads of specialized committees as well as members of the Human Resources Development and Labor Market Committee, the Investment Promotion Committee, the Education Committee, the Businesswomen Committee, the Food Security Committee, the Real Estate Development Committee and the Research and Studies Committee. Moreover, OCCI honored members of the Financial Services Committee, Banking and Insurance Committee, the Real Estate Development Committee, the Services Committee, the Transport and Logistics Committee, the Tourism Commission, the Mining and Breakers Committee, the Industry Committee and the Najah Program Committee.
Impact of Legislations and Legal Procedures on Investment in the Sultanate of Oman (2-2)

Chapter Three: Legislations and Laws Regulating Investment and their Effect on Investment Climate in the Sultanate

Section One: Overview on Model of Conventions to Encourage Investments in the Sultanate

The model of current bilateral conventions to encourage and protect investment includes more than 22 articles that explain and clarify the main bases and provisions that should be stated in bilateral agreement contracts with any country, with the purpose of encouraging and protecting investments. Below is a summary of what is included in such model:

- After the overview, and at the start of the agreement in Article (2), an introduction is given to the concept of investment, which is beneficial as it covers shortcomings that exist in international conventions in which countries differ as regard a clear definition of such a concept. The Article expressly states that the concept of investment is meant to be any type of funds, rights and benefits of whatever nature. It also defines the type of such investments, which is a trend followed by the Sultanate in formulating the Law of Industrial Property Rights and the Intellectual Property Law for the Year 2008.
- Article no. (3) was allocated to provide an explanation for the method of accepting and encouraging investments, through the efforts of both parties to provide favorable conditions for investment, and that each party shall accept the investments of the other one and according to laws thereof.
- This convention is also distinguished with allocating two separate articles no. (4 and 5) to set the bases and conditions for the principle of minimum treatment, and the principle of national treatment. It was common in several bilateral agreements (Bahrain/Singapore) (Algeria/Kuwait) (Algeria/Denmark) to encourage investments in merging articles 3, 4 and 5 in a single article, which would create some ambiguity in interpreting the clauses of the convention or may cause less resilience that the convention gives to the contracting parties in this regard.
- In this aspect, for example, Article (4) defined, in details, all what is related to the principle of minimum treatment, either in terms of stating expressly in a separate clause the provision of “equitable treatment” and the provision of “full protection and personal safety”, or in terms of the condition related to prohibiting unfair or discriminating procedures, which is absent in conventions of the countries referred to above.
- Using the same evident style, articles (5) and (6) in this Convention defined in details the principle of national treatment, through which the concept of national treatment. For comparison here, it is worth noting that, for example in bilateral agreements between the Kingdom of Bahrain and Singapore, the principle of national treatment was not included in the agreement; furthermore, the arrangement of the current agreement is more in harmony with the subsequent clauses in the agreements referred to earlier.
- With regard to Article no. (7) Expropriation of Ownership, and Article No. (8) related to compensation for damages resulting from expropriation of ownership, it can be said that the allocated clauses have addressed all points that may not be available in prior agreements, whether in terms of expropriation of ownership and exceptions thereof, or as regards the bases and provisions for compensation for losses and damages, which goes in line with several international agreements referred to above.
- Although that some agreements allocated an article for clarifying the provisions related to exchange rate through which transfer is carried out, these agreements clarified this in second paragraph of Article (9) Transfers. Otherwise, clauses in Article (9) included all points acknowledged in bilateral agreements, especially those related to default, payment of liabilities, or guarantee for compliance with orders and provisions of legal proceedings.
- Articles (11), (12) and (13) agreed with terms, provisions and rules of the World Trade Organization in one aspect, but gave more resilience to the two countries in terms of exceptions as well as preventive and protective procedures than what is stated in the organization rules. For example, clause (A) in Article (11) allowed for an exception for high security bodies in the state, and clause (3) of the same article provided a solution to the double taxation issue.
- To guarantee investments for both contracted parties, Article (14) of this current agreement addressed in detail the solutions for the payment of due installments to any investor in both parties.
- Article (15) expressly stated that some other provisions related to the more preferential treatment in case of the presence of a liability for one of the parties, a per other agreements or international laws shall be affected. This clause represents a new addition that provides this agreement with a privilege in this aspect, which is not present in other agreements.
- The Agreement did not disregard the settlement of disputes between the contracting parties, as it stipulated in Article (16) that settlement should be carried out through diplomatic channels, while clarifying the conditions related to the time period and bearing the costs of dispute settlement. Meanwhile, Article (17) indicated the settlement of disputes between a contracted party and an investor from the contracting party, as it stipulated that settlement should be carried out amicably; otherwise the dispute should be referred to arbitration by International Center for the Settlement of Disputes after the elapse of six months, or to the Arab Investment Court or GCC Commercial Arbitration Court.
- In respect of Articles (18) Consultations, Article (19) Deprivation of Privileges, and Article (20) Amendments, we are of the opinion that the inclusion of these articles would be a material addition to the clauses of this agreement, in terms of giving contracted parties more flexibility in dealings with each other, as it paves the way for consultations and to the possibility of making required amendments, particularly in urgent conditions, which would bring about optimal benefit from this Agreement.

The bilateral agreements model for encouragement of investment, applicable in the Sultanate, concluded with Article (21) Effectiveness and Article (22) Duration and Completion.

Section Two: The Main Legislative Obstacles Affecting the Investment Laws in the Sultanate

There are several legislative obstacles that may affect the investment decision in any country, including the
The investor takes into consideration basic factors when desiring to take an investment decision in a country other than his own, including the economic factor that is represented in the availability of solid investment opportunities, as he expects such opportunity to generate lucrative yields for him, which exceeds what may be generated by alternative opportunities in other countries. This is the factor that particularly drives the capital out of their countries for better profitability. This depends to some extent on another factor, namely the availability of favorable investment climate, which means the overall legal, economic, political and social conditions that form the climate in which investments are carried out, including non-commercial risks that the investments may encounter in the hosting country. If the investor willing to bear the commercial risks that he may encounter while utilizing his money abroad, he will be, in all cases, unwilling to bear the burden of losses resulting from non-commercial risks represented in the procedures that the hosting countries take from time to time, especially when they are taken at close intervals and are connected to political, economic and security conditions; such procedures goes in its nature beyond the will of the investor who cannot in normal circumstances avoid their impact and consequences on his project.

There is no doubt that these procedures are sufficient to trigger a lot of concerns for the foreign investor, as capital is “coward” by nature. Therefore, there should be legal methods to end investor’s concerns and safeguard his project, which would lure him to come to the developing countries and assume an important role in developing its economy.

To avoid this, we recommend that the idea of guaranteeing investments in the Sultanate against non-commercial risks that investment may encounter should be adopted. This is what several countries have sought to adopt and issue legislations that indicate the rules and standards of dealing with the investor and guaranteeing non-expropriation of ownership in the project except for public interest in return of fair compensation, and define the methods of settling related disputes. Most countries exporting capital adopted the idea of guaranteeing investments of its nationals in hosting countries against non-commercial risks they may encounter. (Foundations of Banking Insurance, 2016)

The thing that investors are concerned with most is the expropriation of their project, and this represents a real threat for them. Accordingly, we recommend that the Sultanate work on finding a number of methods to assure investors and guarantee to them acknowledgement of their rights in ownership of the projects they establish inside its territory. It should also provide investors with several privileges and facilities, including what most laws of countries contains, including texts that state respect for private ownership, no matter the nationality of such investor would be, in addition to not touching such private ownership except by virtue of a law, with the presence of a public interest and a fair compensation.

The lack of unified investment contracts, given that the investment contract is one of the most important methods for protecting investments, including its conditions and guarantees that protect the investor, whether in in the framework of national investment law or outside it. The violation of the contracting country for such conditions and guarantees represents a violation for the right of the investor. Such violation is controlled by the rules of the country’s breach of its obligations stated in contracts with foreign individuals. These rules obligate such a country to compensate the investor for damages that he is inflicted with due to such a breach, and enable the country of such investor to intervene to protect him. (Foundations of Banking Insurance, 2016)

Section Three: National Investment Legislations

The phenomenon of the practice of foreigners for economic activity in the territory of the state has gained increasing importance over the past few decades, given the growing gap between available domestic resources and financing and technical requirements for development and the need to fill this gap with additional resources from abroad. (Supreme Planning Council, Investment Promotion Agreements)

We therefore recommend that the investment laws include a set of privileges and guarantees aimed at reconciling between conflicting considerations, namely keenness on attracting capital on the one hand, and achieving the economic development followed by the state, on the other.

First Sub-Section: Privileges and guarantees that should be stated in investment laws

Second Sub-Section: International legal value of national investment laws

First Sub-Section: Privileges and guarantees that should be stated in investment laws

The regulation of investment, which requires the presence of an advanced legal system in the country, will lay the foundations ensuring the flow of investments in a manner that takes into consideration its national interest in achieving clear steps on the road to economic and social growth. Encouraging foreign investors to invest in this country requires promoting the opportunities and advantages of investment in it and to informing them of the legal situation to ensure that there is no non-commercial risk.

The purpose for this is to achieve two goals at the same time, namely encouraging investments by means of laying down specific rules for their dealings and providing certain privileges and incentives for them, in addition to protecting these investments from non-commercial risks and the like. Therefore, investment legislations should include financial and administrative facilities, and should overcome all obstacles hindering the flow of capital into the state. Thus, some laws go in favor of investments through tax exemption for profits, as well as exemption from some fees, and the freedom in transfers abroad. These advantages are divided into three groups as follows (investment incentives law):

I. Financial Facilities:

Among the main obstacles the foreign investor may face in some countries is his inability to transfer his capital and profits to abroad; therefore, such a right should be reinforced in the national legislation.
2- Tax Facilities:

Taxation has a direct effect on the expected return on capital utilization. If such return is subject to a high tax burden that can not be moved to others, this will lead to a reduction in the percentage of profits, which would discourage the transfer of capital and vice versa. The most important tax facilities we recommend include the following:

A. Exemption of projects from tax on commercial and industrial profits, or imposition of competitive tax at lower rates than other countries; in addition, exemption of profits that such projects distribute from tax, and such exemptions may be limited by a reasonable duration according to type of activity and return on the country’s economy.

B. Exemption from tax and fees levied on import of all requirements of the project, including machines, equipment and instruments.

3- Administrative Facilities:

The national investment legislations include a number of administrative facilities provided by competent authorities, with the aim of reducing difficulties that may be confronted by investment projects, as well as helping accomplish the procedures required for setting up the project and ensuring proper course of action and stability.

Accordingly, most investment laws included a provision for establishing a competent authority tasked with removing obstacles that investors may face during stages of the project lifetime. Such an authority shall study the planned project, issue licenses required for its establishment, and provide investors with the required information about the national investment law, so as to be well informed. It shall also issue resolutions needed for residence of businessmen, experts and workers coming from abroad to work in the investment project. There is no doubt that the presence of such an authority is most beneficial in confining the dealings of investors with it, without the need for them to deal with the various ministries, a matter that would lead to avoiding complications of work.

This is what we recommend to be taken in the Sultanate, as the presence of several authorities concerned with investment and the multitude of their specifications poses the biggest obstacle for completing procedures of issuing investment licenses.

Section Four: Guarantees Recommended to be Included

The legal system that encourages investment is not represented simply in increasing the advantages it gives to investors, but also it reduces the risk potentials, provides security and confidence in investment relationships and stability of legislations. If the private capital is by nature targeting profit, it shall work to achieve it in a safe and secure environment. This is because no matter how much exemptions or privileges the hosting country provides foreign investment with, This shall be of no avail as long as there is no real guarantee for sudden and return on the country’s economy.

It is evident that legal protection is not only represented primarily in the extent to which the laws provide substantive guarantees for the protection of foreign investments, but also the extent to which the implementation of such laws is effective in the event of disputes and the ability of the foreign investor to refer to the judicial authorities in case such a dispute arises between him and the national party. The real problem faced by the foreign investor is the fear of non-commercial risks, that is, the problem of defining his rights and obligations or their scope, but rather the problem of seeking an independent, impartial and effective means he can resort to resolve such investment disputes that may arise between him and the hosting country or any of its nationals. Therefore, many national investment legislations, together with objective guarantees, included procedural guarantees aimed at facilitating the foreign investor’s obtaining of his right in the event of an investment dispute. In this regard, we recommend stating that investment disputes relating to the implementation of the provisions of this law may be settled in the manner agreed upon with the investor. It may also be agreed between the concerned parties to settle such disputes within the framework of the agreements in force between the Sultanate and the investor’s state, or within the framework of the agreement for settlement of disputes arising from investments between the Sultanate and the investor’s state, with the terms and conditions and under the circumstances in which such agreements are in force, or by means of arbitration in accordance with the provisions of the arbitration law with which the parties are satisfied.

There is no doubt that stating arbitration as a method for settling investment disputes includes several advantages, including: Speed in deciding on disputes and non-confinement to the regular procedures for litigation, which prolong the duration of the dispute; in addition, arbitration enables settlement of disputes according to rules that agree with the special or technical nature of the subject matter of the dispute, without obligation to what may be in contradiction with such nature in texts of laws.

Section Five: National Systems to Guarantee Investments Abroad

Among the most effective procedures on investment legislations is that the international law acknowledges that the state has internal principles that provides for the state’s sole ability and will to issue a certain legislation, amend or revoke it in accordance with the economic, political and social conditions that are prevailing in it. Therefore, hosting states can amend or cancel the exemptions, privileges and guarantees it approves for foreign investors in their legislations without involving any international liability. This is because the internal legislation does not represent in normal circumstances an international commitment the state is obligated not to amend. The general rule is that the state is able, with its sole will, to amend or cancel its internal legislations without any international liability on it, as long as it does not violate the provisions of the international law (Sultanate Decree No. 101/96).

Is it possible to rely on the acquired rights theory to arrange the liability of the state in case of (Saad, 2016) violating the privileges and guarantees as provided in the national investment law? If we apply this to the investment laws, this will mean that, through the issuance of the investment law that includes privileges, exemptions and guarantees, the state has created confidence for foreign investors and, therefore, it shall be obligated as per this theory not to revoke such privileges and guarantees and amend them in a manner contradictory to the content of the investment law issued by it. In other words, when the foreign investor took his decision to utilize his funds in a province other than his country, he was surely motivated by the confidence from the law of the host country and the suitable investment climate. However, if such a country shook such confidence or failed to observe its pledges to him it would have to indemnify such an investor for all incurred damages.

The acquired rights are defined as the in-kind, personal rights (Saad, 2016) that became established and fixed and are acquired in a valid manner pursuant to the national law of a certain country, and which has a monetary value that can be calculated. Most jurists confirm that respecting the acquired rights of foreigners is one of the international laws related to treatment of foreigners. Foreigners have been internationally recognized as having acquired rights in the country in which he is residing. Such recognition includes acknowledging that such a foreigner has the right to enjoy his rights acquired in the country according to provisions of its laws, as long as such acquisition is pursued in a lawful manner.

It is thus understood that, in order for the international law to protect the acquired rights of a foreign investor, such rights should have been acquired in a proper and legal manner according to the national law of the hosting country. Since the foreign investor has acquired in a legitimate manner certain rights in light of the investment law currently in effect, such rights - based on the principle of respecting the acquired rights - should not violated by a subsequent legislation.

We have previously said that foreign private investment - if used properly - shall be of great benefit to the importing country, since it is the hosting country with the necessary financial resources to develop its economy. Furthermore, this interest is not limited to these countries only, but extends to the countries that export the capital as well as, as the latter guarantee through the investments of its nationals a continued flow of primary resources necessary for its industry and would help to open new markets for them to market their products, prompting governments exporting foreign private investments to encourage their nationals to invest abroad.

However, this required protecting these
investments from the multiple risks threatening them. The exporting countries found that the best means of protection and encouragement they can offer to their nationals to motivate them to invest outside their territory is the establishment of a national public authority whose main task would be to insure their investments against all or some non-commercial risks they may face abroad. The main purpose of the foreign investment guarantee system is to transfer the financial burden of these risks directly to a specialized national body.

We here recommend the establishment of an authority similar to Exports Guarantee Agency or referral of this jurisdiction to the same agency, so that the proposed National Authority for Investment Guarantee shall operate on the basis of a guarantee contract between the authority and the investor for insuring his investments abroad against political and economic risks to which they may be exposed. The contractual obligations between the authority and the investor shall be determined based on such contract and the authority shall be obligated to pay the appropriate compensation if the investment in the hosting country is subjected to a loss resulting from the realization of one of the risks that have been insured against, in return for the obligation of the investor to pay a reasonable insurance premium or premiums as agreed on in the insurance contracts. The insurance contract shall enable the Authority to replace the investor in face of public authorities in the hosting country to claim his rights in face of these authorities and after the compensation has been paid to the investor in accordance with the conditions agreed upon in the guarantee contract.

The main objective of the authority is to encourage investors, whether national or legal persons, to increase the size of their investments at home and abroad without hesitation or fear of the risks that these investments may face.

As for the scope of the substantive guarantee (Saat, 2016), the majority of guarantee authorities insure on three types of risks, namely: The risks of confiscation, wars, and other insurable risks.

An investment guarantee agreement is required between the country guaranteeing the investment and the hosting country as regards the application of the political and economic conditions prevailing in that country, but also on the legal systems governing the investment process because they define the activities and projects allowed for foreigners to undertake, secpify the general conditions of the investment and the special conditions in each area, and clarify the rights, guarantees, advantages and incentives enjoyed by the investor, as well as the obligations and duties that should be adhered to and the legal forms allowed to regulate investment instruments. No matter what the national legal tool that provide security and grant advantages and incentives to the investor can be, they are ineffective for him because they are subject to modification and cancellation by the will of the government without the obligation to compensate the foreign investor if he incurred losses as a result of such, and that the authorities of the hosting country would be the opponent and the judge at the same time.

As for the guarantees provided by the capital-exporting state, which are represented in the establishment of national authorities to guarantee investments, there is no doubt that these systems provide security for the investor because they insure the risks that he may encounter in the hosting country and thus he shall be free from the fear that the hosting state would take actions that would take over his investment. In case any of risks covered by the guarantee takes place, the investor will receive compensation from the guarantee authority that will in turn refer to the hosting country causing the damage.

We can illustrate the effectiveness of these systems through the volume of investments they cover annually. For example, the total investments guaranteed by the US Overseas Private Investment Organization (OPIC) in 1990 were more than $1.6 billion. Moreover, the total investments guaranteed by Compagnie Française d’Assurance pour le Commerce Extérieur (COPACE) in 1992 were more than 4.6 billion francs (Wikipedia).

Chapter Four: Key Findings & Recommendations

The main objective of this study has been to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of legislations and laws on investment.

in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the impact of such legislations on economic growth and development indicators. The steadiness of the tax policy and investment laws as considered significant attraction factors for the inflow of investments. In this regard, we recommend that the State take rapid and strict resolutions for such an objective, namely:

1. Finalizing the Investment Law and its Executive Regulations, as per a vision that is in line with global developments and the objectives of the Sultanate, to boost investment and growth, without prejudice to the right of the society in terms of equity in development for all society members.

2. Setting a multi-privilege system for economic zones, so that each zone shall have its economic privileges that differ from other ones, in order that the Sultanate shall have various opportunities to offer investors.

Such a system has already proved successful in other countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, etc. For example, if an investor wishes to enter the market to establish an intensive or labor-moderate plant in Sohar, he shall be granted privileges that differ from those given to an investor in Sur; for instance, so that the latter shall be exempted from tax, service fees and trade licenses. This system shall be for the purpose of nationalizing investment across all governorates to achieve equitable development for the whole society, in addition to nationalizing national force and provide multiple privileges for investors in the Sultanate.

3. Upon making preparations for and finalizing the above stated, a specialized authority should be established, which shall contact global corporations and mutual funds to showcase the various opportunities and multiple laws aimed at luring investments. Such an authority shall have members who shall be assigned the explanation of investment incentives in the Sultanate, political stability in the country, social homogeneity, which is a key element in taking investment decisions, especially with large-scale funds.

4. Among the positive recommendations we make is the investment law:

- The investor shall have the opportunity to obtain loans from abroad, provided that this shall be recorded at a licensed bank in the Sultanate.
- The investor shall have the right to open an account in foreign currency, which shall be endorsed by local banks.
- The investor shall have the right to make the following transfers to his overseas accounts:
  (a) Investment profits
  (b) Interest payable on foreign loans
  (c) Yields on sale or liquidation of projects
  (d) Yields on share conversions
  (e) Any investment whose ownership shall not be expropriated except for public interest only, and pursuant to the requirements of law, provided that suitable compensation shall be disbursed in advance and prior to the expropriation of ownership, based on market price. The investor shall be entitled to return such an amount to outside the country in foreign currency.

We also recommend that a future vision should be present for the food safety, mining and tourism sectors. The decision maker should realize the rapid local and global updates in that respect and make amendments to what is planned. Furthermore, the Sultanate’s relationships with the several countries should be capitalized on, particularly with African and Asian countries, in addition to developing ties based on cultural interest, especially with neighboring countries, while taking into consideration that the success of all of the abovementioned is contingent on the speed, method and means of implementation in the ground, professionally and according to executable plans.
The purpose of the laws should be to achieve growth in the private sector, not taxes.

The number of job seekers will not be that big if the private sector is supported.

"The private sector has been growing steadily over the last 47 years, but not as prospective," said the Omani businessman Hussain bin Ali bin Hamad Al Kalbani, chairman of the International Marble Company LLC.

As for the role the private sector played in the development process, he said that the private sector is a key partner with the government and a real source for diversifying sources of income and maintaining the financial balance of the state.

The 27th edition of Al Ghorfa magazine had this interview with Sheikh Ali Al Kalbani. During the interview, he spoke about the impact of legislation, laws and regulations on investment in the Sultanate. He also spoke about the challenges and obstacles caused by these laws and regulations. He highlighted the efforts made by the private sector in other areas related to business and investment, especially its social responsibility and support of national manpower and small and medium enterprises.

What are your expectations for private sector growth in the coming years? Is the private sector concerned with growing number of job seekers?

In order for the private sector to grow, it must be provided with the appropriate environment that enhances its growth. If such legislations and regulations are carefully studied, they will contribute to the growth of the private sector but if the aim behind them is to collect taxes, growth will be weak.

For job seekers, the figure will not be that big if the sector is supported. If the number of private companies and factories grows, the number of job opportunities available for the Omani manpower will also grow.

What solutions should the private sector take for sustainability in the current financial crisis?

The private sector should cut the unnecessary expenses and use of modern technology. It should also seek to open new markets and outlets for their products and services.

What is your definition of CSR? What are the achievements made by International Marble Co LLC till date?

The existence of companies in society is itself a contribution to it, since the taxes imposed on it go in the state budget. The tax revenues are used in the general development of societies and also the presence of companies creates jobs for members of the community. As for the CSR from the perspective of the government, it is the amount dedicated by the companies from its profits to serve to meet the needs of the local communities. Our company has created a number of jobs for Omani and has provided the required support for SMEs. Our contribution to the society helps in increasing loyalty for our products and increasing our customer data base. Giving back to society is considered indirect promotion for the services and products by the company.

What is the role of large private companies and institutions in supporting small and medium enterprises in the current situation?

As for International Marble Company LLC, it has a big role in supporting small and medium enterprises. We have been and will continue awarding many businesses...
Community participation of companies leads to the creation of loyalty and respect for them in society.

to these institutions especially those who make feasible and competitive offers.

Do you think that the laws, regulations and legislations in force attract investment to the Sultanate?
The laws, regulations and legislations in force are insufficient to attract investment, especially the absence of one entity concerned with investment, as well as delaying transactions for investors in various government agencies.

How does the Omani and foreign investors view the Omanisation law? What is your personal opinion in this law?
There should be Omanization of jobs, but not in the current concept - imposing a mandatory Omanization level on companies. The private sector is productive and profitable rather than educational. Educational outputs must be suitably qualified to take over the job opportunities at the labor market.

From your perspective, how do you see interest in research and development? is there a real partnership between the public and private sectors in the development of economic research and studies that attract investment?
The real partnership between the public and private sectors in research and development and economic studies leads to the development of the business environment and improvement of production. This in turn will lead to the development of the private sector and improve the investment environment for local and foreign investors.

What about the judicial procedures followed? Does it have a role in encouraging or delaying investment in the Sultanate?
The implementation of judgments varies from one execution judge to another. For example, some judgments are carried out against the members of the board of directors of some judge's implement judgments on managers only.

What is your advice to the Omani youth wishing to establish their own business ventures and those preparing to join the labor market?
I advise them to manage their projects themselves as this will help them to develop their projects and ensure its growth. They should realize that the market is full of opportunities and that there are many gaps which they can fill.

I also advise them to select the majors needed by the labor market and to be hard workers as this will help to take over senior positions.
Written by: Rabiaa bin Said Al Harthi

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is keen on encouraging innovation and spreading culture in the Sultanate. It also encourages distinguished researchers and innovators to show their creative activities in different fields locally and overseas.

OCCI has signed a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) with The Research Council (TRC) to establish and manage OCCI Innovation Award. The competition is held once each two years to support innovation and stimulate national capacities. The first edition was launched in April 2017.

The idea of Innovation Award was generated by TRC and adopted by OCCI. It encourages innovation, refreshes economic life, calls for coping with development and accelerates growth through this innovation.

The closing ceremony was held at Sundus Rotana Hotel, on Wednesday, November 15, 2017 to announce the winners of the Innovation Award. The event was sponsored by Fahd bin Al-Julanda Al-Said, assistant secretary-general for innovation development at TRC. It was attended by some prominent figures, the sponsor company of the award, as well as some officials from the public, private and academic institutions, in addition to the evaluation committees, the innovators qualified for the final and the invitees.

The Winners

The first position was taken by Badr bin Mohammed Al-Maamari for his project “the Use of Ash of Omani Trees in Ceramic Paints.” Meanwhile, both of Heba Al-Ghafriyah and Faizah Al-Khatriyah ranked second for their project “Extraction of Ointment from the Roots of Cherimoya Tree and Its Effect on Hair Growth.” As for the third position, it was secured by Saleh Al-Mataani and Salma Al-Alawaih for their project “First Aid Jacket.”

As for the winners of managing the 2017 Innovation Award, Salalah College of Technology took the first position, followed by Al Musanna College of Technology.

Al-Julanda said, “We appreciate the innovative efforts and ideas of the Omani young people, whether in the technical, scientific or applications aspects. We see creative minds that think and apply their ideas. They insist on completing their difficult job.”

“We also praise the role of the chamber and the private sector in supporting the award at all levels. Without this initiative from the chamber and its encouragement to the private sector, we would not see the innovations and winners today. We thank the chamber and the companies supporting these innovations,” Al-Julanda said.

He hopes to see innovation as part of entrepreneurship in the Sultanate.
and see a lot of projects fulfilling youth’s hopes and aspirations. “We also thank the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Manpower represented in the colleges of technology for their great efforts in this field.”

Saeed Saleh Al-Kiyumi, OCCI chairman, said “In coincidence with the Sultanate’s celebration of the Great November, I would like to welcome you to the closing ceremony of OCCI Innovation Award in its first edition. At the beginning, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation in my name and on behalf of OCCI’s Board of Directors to the Council Chairman and Secretary-General for their efforts of implementing the initiative and supervising all of its stages.” He also highly appreciated Al-Julanda’s great sponsorship for this ceremony and his efforts to properly embody the constructive partnership and meaningful cooperation.

Al-Kiyumi pointed out that the chamber, during its current term of “2014-2018”, has adopted several initiatives to support small and medium-sized enterprises and sponsor new ideas and innovations among the Omani young people.

“The Innovation Award is among the best initiatives that directly target innovators, and it is one of the chamber’s efforts to highlight these innovations in the business community and support them to receive the suitable sponsorship that turns them into major economic projects with a great impact on the national economy,” the chairman said.

He added that Omani innovators face several challenges, and thus great efforts are exerted to overcome them. “This depends on boosting the partnership and cooperation between the innovator and the other relevant entities in the private and public sectors, according to some mechanisms and procedures especially as regards the moral and material support on which the innovator depends more.”

He calls for companies, institutions and entrepreneurs to support Omani innovators so that they can develop their country.

“We stress that OCCI’s initiatives will proceed over the coming years, as the chamber is keen on encouraging the young people and fulfilling their innovative ambitions that will add an economic value. Moreover, the chamber stimulates researchers to show their scientific and innovative activities. Thus, innovation and innovators will remain the most important elements of the chamber’s initiatives,” Al-Kiyumi said.

He added that OCCI will continue its cooperation with TRC to support innovators and achieve the sustainable partnership between the public and private sectors.

“The chamber congratulates the winners in advance, and we welcome all of you and thank you for attending this great ceremony that supports innovators and fulfills their hopes and ambitions. We hope that the spirit of innovation and competition...
will continue among future generations, and that innovative projects will succeed continuously,” the chairman concluded.

Hilal bin Ali Al-Hinai, TRC’s secretary-general, said: “The prize was on three stages that included the different governorates of the Sultanate in seven innovative positions. More than 460 innovators participated in the first stage, of which 35 qualified for the second one. After undergoing evaluation tests, 14 innovators reached the final stage, of whom three were announced as winners at the closing ceremony.”

He added that the award aims to boost cooperation between TRC and the private sector represented by OCCI, as the council has sought to form several partnerships with the different public, private and academic entities to achieve the scientific research goals and innovation. “The award which is a joint effort from OCCI and TRC aims to encourage great researchers and innovators to show their innovative and research activities in the different fields.”

Al-Hinai indicated that care for innovators does not only include honoring them, but also extend to offering them the necessary facilities to follow up their innovative achievements. Through the joint efforts of the public and private sectors, the support system included modeling centers, business incubators and risk capital funds that enable innovators to cross the valley of death.

The secretary-general indicated that honoring is not only for the participants in the ceremony, but also for all people who thought of and organized this great event, as well as those who played a prominent role in the award success in the different evaluation centers across the Sultanate.

The innovation exhibition

The event included the establishment of an exhibition for innovative models that qualified for the final stage.

In Al-Batinah North and Musandam governorates, the evaluation committee announced the project of “Innovative Software Tool for Individuals with Communication Disabilities’ as a finalist project. The project, innovated by Fatimah bint Abdullah Al-Mujuniyah and Ruqiyah bint Mohammed Al-Ghusainiyah, revolves around the idea of dynamic development of the use of smart applications, due to the need of Arab communities to such smart applications that support the children that have cognitive and sensory disabilities. The innovation includes a smart bag that stimulates the educational process for the disabled children. The application supports the educational process in a smooth and easy way, and provides modern interactive technologies. In addition, it facilitates communication with other people in the community.

Another innovative project titled “Design and Development of Painting Machine with Scraper Attachment” by Dr. Vishnupriyan Sethumadhavan qualified for the final.

In Dhofar governorate, two innovative projects qualified for the third stage; the first is “Electronic Automatic Aquaculture”. This solar-powered project, innovated by the student Ali Salem Al-Kathiri and Mr. Waleed Mohammed, targets all societal classes. It is a national sustainable and environment-friendly project that provides solutions for four problems in the Sultanate (energy, pollution, unsafe food as well as water and unemployment) through a solar system, electronic control circuits and self-controlled security alarms. The project provides safe food, saves the traditional energy and 90% of water. In addition, it
provides real job opportunities.

The second project, titled the “Tourist Destination Reader Application”, was designed by Ahlam bint Ahmed Al-Yafaiyah and Fatimah bint Abdullah Al-Gharibiyah. The innovation is represented in a reader of the Omani tourist areas, as the local economy partially depends on tourism and the attraction of tourists to Salah, Muscat and Nizwa. The project highlights the history of Oman and its historical attractions targeted by tourists.

In Al-Batinah South Governorate, two projects qualified for the final; the first one, titled the “Extraction of Ointment from the Roots of Cherimoya Tree and Its Effect on Hair Growth”, was innovated by Heba Al-Ghafriah, Faizah Al-Khatiriyah and Sharifah Al-Qattiyah. The project aims to extra ointment from the roots of cherimoya tree to boost hair growth. The second project, named the “Plant Paper Industry”, was innovated by Mai bin Mubarak Al-Saadiyah. It addresses the problem of increase in carbon dioxide emitting from various sources and causing global warming.

As for Ash Sharqiyyah South and Ash Sharqiyyah North Governorates, two projects qualified for the final; the first one, titled “First Aid Jacket”, was designed by Saleh Al-Mataani and Salma Al-Alawiah. It is a first aid jacket including important tools, and it is also a jacket that can be used in fixing the neck and the backbone while carrying the injured person at the time of accident. The team consists of Khalid Al-Hashimi, Bashair Al-Dawudiyah and Arwa Al-Maamariyah. The second project – “Automatic Water and Electricity Billing System” – was innovated by Mazin bin Muslim Al-Himli and Yassir bin Said Al-Rahbi.

Innovators from Ad Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta Governorate presented two projects; the first one is the “Smart Storage Unit” by Ibrahim bin Yaqoub Al-Naabi. It transforms the SD Card into a controller capable of sending data wirelessly without the need for inserting cards into computers or phones. The second project – “Alarm and Controller of Gas Cylinder” – was designed by Maged bin Said Al-Busaidi. It gives an alarm when there is gas leak or low weight of the cylinder, and controls the remote opening and closing of the cylinder.

From Muscat, Badr bin Mohammed Al-Maamari participated with the project of “the Use of Ash of Omani trees in Ceramic Paint.” The project aims to produce paints for ceramic industry, through using the ash of Omani trees, due to the high cost of ceramic paints, especially in the Sultanate. The research came out with successful results for ceramic paints from more than 27 types of Omani trees. The ceramic products are heated in special ovens at 1000 Celsius, given that it is the suitable temperature for heating the Omani ceramics. The second project – an electronic innovation named “the Ancient Oman” – was designed by Laila bint Abdullah Al-Hadramiyah.

As for Ad Dhahirah and Al Buraimi Governorates, the innovator Magdi bin Qassim Al-Azri designed the project of “Smart Chair for Disabled People”. Meanwhile, Thuraya bint Muslim Al-Alawajyah invented “Anti-Cancer Shirt” that protects man from ultraviolet rays which raise the possibility of cancerous tumors and burns. The inventor used light materials that prevent the rays from penetrating the body.
Challenges ‘golden opportunities’

Al-Nafei Challenges teach entrepreneurs how to cope with technological revolution

Written by Ibrahim Al-Jilandai
Photographed by Abdullah Al-Wahaibi

“Omani Innovations 5 Exhibition”, held on November 21-25, 2017 at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, aimed to promote and market the services and products of Omani entrepreneurs. This was one of the most prominent annual exhibitions that aimed to develop the capabilities and skills of Omani entrepreneurs to showcase, market their products.

In addition, the event offered businessmen the opportunity to showcase and sell their products as well as finding new marketing outlets and exchanging expertise with peers. The exhibition was also a good opportunity to showcase the company’s products in the local market, encourage productive families, boost corporate sales, and create new job opportunities.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) met with some participant entrepreneurs to identify the challenges facing them and their impression about the exhibition.

Digital Solutions

Mahmoud Al-Nafei, chief information officer at Invospark, said his company was established in 2015, and it has a staff of creative Omani young people. The company is specialized in offering a full range of digital solutions, such as the designing of websites, applications of smart phones and technical support, in addition to the programming of content management systems and user management. Invospark has carried out different projects for the public and private institutions.

“We seek to develop technological products serving the Internet of Things and robots,” Al-Nafei said.
to develop services – entrepreneurs

Al-Darwishi

Dedication required for proper management of projects

He added that such exhibitions provide a suitable environment for marketing corporate services and products as well as identifying peoples’ opinions about these services. Moreover, these events allow direct communication with the targeted people to fulfill their needs through providing them with technological solutions.

Commenting on obstacles and challenges, Al-Nafei said, “They are not just challenges as much as they are motives, as we have faced many of them and learned how to build a real institution capable of adapting to market changes and keeping pace with the technological revolution to provide modern and renewable technical solutions.”

“Among the challenges we faced at the beginning of founding our company was the lack of quality, and thus the institutions lost confidence in us, but thankfully after implementing several projects, we regained this confidence and won several projects.”

Handicrafts

Hussein Al-Darwishi, an owner of a project for the manufacturing of fronds, said, “We provide handicrafts based on materials extracted from Omani environment. We use attractive methods in the manufacturing of products to offer quality products and fulfill customer needs.”

He added that his company faces some obstacles and challenges, such as marketing and presenting the company’s products to customers in the local market.

Al-Darwishi noted that Omani Innovations 5 Exhibition is one of the events that helps promote and market the company’s products and services.

“Dedication plays a significant role...”
Exhibition allows building relations with firefighting entrepreneurs

Al-Hosni

in the successful management of projects, through which the projects can compete locally, regionally and globally,” Al-Darwishi said.

He added, “I hope to find the necessary support through joining one of the institutes, colleges, or universities that are specialized in the frond industry to improve my products. I also hope to take a course in English and designing of the different kinds of fronds.”

Welding wires

Abdullah Al-Baloushi, one of the staff of Bait Al-Bari for Welding Wires, said: “Bait Al-Bari is a small and medium-sized enterprise that is managed by my father. I work with him as a marketer and director. We have several goals, as we seek to activate the industrial activities in the country, as well as employing the local cadres and finding real productive industries.”

He added that his company faced some challenges, such as marketing the product in the country especially for major companies. “There are several imported products that compete in the market, but we are distinguished by high quality, as our product was certified to Lloyd’s Register and Iso 90001: 2008.”

“We hope the government and major institutions operating in the local market to support us through dealing with our company and buying its products,” Al-Baloushi said.

Safety and Security

Ahmed Mohammed Al-Hosni, founder of Al-Masader for Contracting, said, “My company is specialized in offering the services of security, safety and fire risk prevention. I started in 2015, as people were interested in this field and used to follow up the new products of fire alarms and firefighting systems. However, I delayed the project to the beginning of 2016, due to my studies. The project was launched after having obtained the necessary licenses from the Public Authority for Civil Defense and Ambulance.”

He added that his company encountered some challenges, such as obtaining the license from PACDA, as there were prerequisites for employing technicians and mechanics having diploma certificates, and it was difficult to find people with these specializations, due to low salaries.

“As the company was in the process of foundation, we had to hire an experienced technician. After almost three months of research, we employed technicians, but we faced a difficulty in teaching them how to work. Thus, we had to give them a training course at another company. However, we managed to overcome such challenges and develop the project,” Al-Hosni said.

He added that his company is currently establishing a marketing network targeting those interested in this field. This network provides an opportunity for Omanis to sell and market the company’s products in return for money.

Al-Hosni said the exhibition allowed his company to know more businessmen and those interested in alarms and firefighting systems, as well as showcasing its products and services.

“The entrepreneurs should occupy themselves exclusively with their projects, and deal with them as independent jobs, as dedication is necessary to manage and develop business,” he concluded.
إشترك الآن على واتساب غرفة تجارة وصناعة عمان 90915551

أخبار الغرفة
أنشطة وفعاليات
فيديو وصور

للإشتراك قم بإضافة رقم الغرفة (1505099) إلى قائمة الأسماء في هاتفك وبعدها قم بإرسال كلمة اشتراك على الرقم عبر الواتساب
Out of its interest in entrepreneurship, the branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in Al-Dhahirah Governorate held an interview with an entrepreneur in the field of dates industry, who managed to achieve a remarkable success in the governorate.

Saleh bin Said Al-Jaafari, owner of Basatin Al-Shara for the Production and Packaging of Dates, said: “My project was launched in 2001 after I had received support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and my interest in the agriculture sector and palms encouraged me to innovate in the field of dates industry. We should not forget that dates are an essential element in the food chain of Omani man and the first crop in the Sultanate in terms of number and spread.”

Al-Jaafari added that the Sultanate has several types of dates, most prominent of which are Al-Fard, Al-Khalas, Al-Hilali, Al-Khasab, etc. “Out of my interest in the field of dates, I opened the shop near the Ibri Fort that is distinguished by its historical landmarks in Al-Dhahirah Governorate. I was also keen on applying some topnotch technologies to the field of producing dates and their derivatives, as well as adding a touch of beauty to the products in order to suit all people. I also sell all types of spices and nuts.”

Al-Jaafari said he participated in the sustainable development forum of the agricultural sector, which was held in Sayh al-Masarrat, the Wilayat of Ibri. At the same time, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued a Royal Decree to plant one million palm trees. This forum was a turning point for the production of dates, as it improved the quality of dates by evaporation, sorting and washing. “This helped me produce the different forms and designs that can be easily marketed locally and overseas. The drying and packaging of dates in suitable conditions are essential requirements for maintaining the quality of the product, and this helped me create a good mental picture for the clients of Basatin Al-Shara.”

He said, “I faced several challenges, most prominent of which are the rarity of equipment and machinery used in the production of dates in the local market, as well as the fierce competition of imported dates from neighboring countries.”

Al-Jaafari added that he provided equipment for the production of milled dates, and used to make dates-based sweats.

As for the future plans of Basatin Al-Shara, Al-Jaafari said: “We always seek to raise the level of the establishment, through paying attention to quantity and quality in the production of dates.
We also work currently on expanding shops, adding equipment to the shop, and benefiting from experiences locally and overseas.”

Commenting on his participation in events, Al-Jaafari said: “I have participated in Oman Dates Festival that was held in Nizwa, and Tourism Soil Forum that was organized by Al-Dhahirah branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce, as well as Food Safety Exhibition that was held in Dank. In addition, I participated in several conferences and forums.”

He added that Basatin Al-Shara is considered a tourist destination due to its distinguished location near Ibrai Fort, noting that some schools organize visits for students to acquaint them with the different types of Omani dates.

Finally, Al-Jaafari addressed all young people who wish to enter the field of entrepreneurship, saying: “We always seek to encourage young people to engage in the field of palm cultivation, and my advice to those wishing to enter the field of entrepreneurship that they must persevere and have courage to meet challenges and make decisions. We should not forget trust which is the key of success.”
Social Platforms are used to display content and ensure continuous interaction with the audience.

OCCI interacts with the business

- Networks play a key role in promoting OCCI activities
- More than 66,000 followers and over 2,950 tweets in Twitter

Prepared by: Rabiaa bint Said Al Harthi

The Department of Social Communication at Information and Publishing Division of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) seeks to reach out to the business community in order to document the relations between the OCCI and various private sector institutions, business owners and the Omani society. To this end it created a number of channels for social networking through the social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and Snapchat.

**OCCI accounts**

As per the statistics compiled on 12/12/2017, OCCI account on twitter chamber Oman" highlights OCCI roles and activities on Twitter. The number of account followers stood at more than 66,000 with a rate of 2970 twitter tweets. The number of visits to the account 235,000. The number of show up stood at 13,600,000. The first appearance of OCCI on Twitter was in 2014 in a bid to interact with the business community and cover all economic activities of interest to the business community. The move also aimed at highlighting the initiatives of the private sector and its significant role in the development of economic movement in the Sultanate. It was also used as a platform to discuss the challenges facing Omani private sector. OCCI is also very keen on providing its members with necessary facilities.

The number of OCCI Twitter account followers increased from 19493 on 1-1-2017 to 62711 followers as on 21-11-201 with an increase rate of 43218 followers.

Social Platforms are used to display content and ensure continuous interaction with the audience.
The number of followers of the page on Facebook increased from 2170 on 1-1-2017 to 2595 follow-up on 21-11-2017 of the 2,600 followers. The number of OCCI followers on Instagram increased from 1218 on 1/1/2017 to 1787 on 21/11/2017.

A number of video clips on Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s activities were also uploaded on OCCI YouTube channel, which was established in 2017. The channel includes 140 videos on OCCI activities. OCCI presence on the Snapchat has been also positive and increased the number of followers for its events.

OCCI WhatsApp service also includes about 2100 subscribers and is always very active.

The social networking platform were used in following local and international economic development and publishing updates released from OCCI or those of interest for the business community. They were also used in marketing a number of initiatives, awards, training courses and meetings by OCCI.

The social networking department has also sought to meet the needs of OCCI members and highlight the key investment opportunities, trade delegation and economic sectors. It also endeavored to market the promising investment opportunities at the various economic sectors at the international forums it takes part at or organize.

Follow up local and international economic issues

Showcasing investment opportunities, trade delegations and economic sectors
**FAO and its partners meet in the Sultanate to support food and nutrition patterns in the region**

Report by Rabiaa bint Said Al Harthi

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, IFPRI, WFP and the League of Arab States, organized the Regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Food and Improved Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa. The regional symposium was hosted by the Sultanate on Monday, 11 December 2017 at Holiday Inn Muscat Hotel under the patronage of HE Dr. Fouad Bin Jaafer Al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The symposium is part of a series of regional symposiums held in 2017 to provide policy makers, parliamentarians, planners, program managers, academics, researchers, students, the private sector and civil society organizations with the opportunity to share knowledge and explore opportunities and action.

Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health in the Sultanate and the regional and from Non-governmental organizations took part at the symposium.

**Ahmed says**

**There is a need to focus on an integrated approach to nutrition from production to consumption**

**Poverty eradication**

The Regional Symposium is one of five regional follow-up meetings following the Global Symposium held in Rome in December 2016. The Symposium addressed directly the second goal of sustainable development goals which is eliminating hunger. The goal contributes to the United Nations Decade for Action for Nutrition and providing an opportunity to review the status of food systems and present examples from the Near East and North Africa.

Participants also shared knowledge, experience and evidence on the need for transformational change in existing food systems. They also explored policy options and future road maps.

**Malnutrition Crisis**

The Near East and North Africa region suffers from various forms of malnutrition. Some countries face several problems at the same time, including undernourishment in children, anemia and obesity. These problems stem not only from lack of access to adequate, nutritious and safe food, but also from the inability to address malnutrition problems adequately and comprehensively from production to consumption.

On his part, Abdul Salam Ould Ahmed, Assistant Director-General of FAO and FAO Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa highlighted the worrying and continuous increase in undernourishment. He pointed out that the population shift coupled with lifestyle changes led to major changes in food patterns and habits which do not lead to a healthy life.

The transition from cereal, legume, vegetable and fruit-based diets to consuming larger amounts of meat, processed foods, sugar, salt and fat was associated with the emergence of a number of diseases. The problem was aggravated due to the lack of physical
activity which led to increase in the number of those suffering from obesity even in undernourished countries.

He noted that conflicts at some countries in the region led to disruption of agricultural production and food systems. They also led to the decrease in livestock production which in turn affected food availability level. This was accompanied by a shortage of safe drinking water and sanitation, which are very important factors for human nutrition, health and dignity.

He stressed the need to focus on an integrated approach to nutrition from production to consumption, taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable populations in conflict situations. He noted that United Nations organizations should continue to work side by side with the International Food Policy Research Institute to highlight nutrition challenge and exchange experiences and solutions.

**Status of Food Systems**

During the symposium, Eng. Munir bin Hussein bin Ali Al Lawati, Director General of Planning and Development at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, delivered a speech at which he pointed out that the symposium highlights the importance of food systems and their sustainability. 120 experts and specialists from 21 countries participated at the system with the aim of coming out with practical results that can improve the food systems the Near East and North Africa region.

The symposium also seeks to integrate with the international efforts made to enhance the relationship between sustainable food systems and good nutrition. On the sidelines of their participation at the World Food Conference, which was held in 2014, 164 countries agreed to adopt institutional structures to produce adequate, healthy and varied food items in their food components to ensure healthy food in a fast changing world.

The Conference adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition, where governments committed themselves to taking action to fight hunger and stop all kinds of food shortages. It was necessary to move from the framework of global and regional meetings to review and analyze the existing situation and to learn about the national experiences of the different food systems, the challenges they face,
Based on international standards for measuring food security, the Sultanate is second in the Arab countries and ranks 28th in the world level for the year 2017.

Al-Lawati pointed out that the production of sustainable healthy food is one of the main priorities for this sector. This interest was culminated with the approval of the Council of Ministers to establish a center for food safety and quality which is in charge of monitoring food health and safety in the Sultanate.

Recommendations of the Symposium
The participants stressed the importance of addressing the issues of governance and coordination at the national level. They also highlighted the need for building comprehensive platforms that gather NGOs, producer organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations under one roof. The participants also stressed the importance of adopting integrated approaches that promote sustainable agricultural production taking into account water scarcity and the effects of climate change and reduce the impact of reliance on international markets, especially on vulnerable groups. They also called for greater cooperation among all United Nations organizations that support nutrition issues.

A quick browsing of the performance of the agricultural and fisheries sectors indicates that the total food production increased from 1,694,000 tons in 2011 to 2,369,000 tons in 2016, an average growth rate of 7%. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries supervisors a large number of projects to increase the production of food within the framework of the concept of improving both production systems, food systems and nutrition. These projects are carried out in coordination with the investment arms of the government and with participation by the private sector. The number of projects stood at 30 new production projects in the agricultural sector, both vegetable and animal production, with an estimated capacity of 363,000 tons. The outputs of the fisheries sector laboratories within the National Program for Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh) stood at 91 projects and initiative at an investment cost of more than RO1 billion. The projects traditional and commercial fishing, fish farming and food processing. These projects are expected to contribute to raising the quantity of local production from 280,000 tons in 2016 to about 1.3 million tons in 2023. They are also expected to raise the value of the gross domestic product of the fisheries sector from RO225 million in 2016 to about RO 781 million by 2023.

Discussion sessions with more than 120 experts and specialists from 21 countries
Significant increase in OCCl’s authentication service of re-exports and national goods in recent months

During the recent months, Oman’s exports and re-exports and national goods activity from the Sultanate to the rest of the world has witnessed unprecedented double-digit growth.

The increase in the number of certificates of origin for foreign goods authenticated by OCCl during the last four months (April - July 2017) has witnessed a remarkable increase. This increase reached its peak in July with 8752 certificates, an increase of approximately 800% compared to only 973 certificates in June 2017, 481 and 927 in April and May respectively, as shown in diagram 1.

While the number of certificates of origin for national goods, which are preferred by some European countries and some other countries, increased in July to 808 certificates, a growth rate of 788% compared to 91 certificates in June, the number of certificates during May and April stood at 110 and 98 respectively, as shown in diagram 2.

As a result, the number of invoices that have been authenticated has increased markedly in recent months. The value of these invoices stood at RO 352 million, a significant increase of more than 800% in July compared to June 2017. (See Chart 3).

The number of invoices authenticated in July hit 21,705 bills, compared to 2,498 in April, 2,808 in May and 2,386 in June 2017. (As in figure 4).

This growth is due to the Sultanate benefiting from the effects of the boycott by some neighboring countries to the State of Qatar, especially with the intensive efforts exerted by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry to create the healthy atmosphere for Omani and Qatari businessmen to do business and benefit from the opportunities provided by the Sultanate either at the level of national goods and re-export goods or for facilities available in Omani ports.
Opportunities and challenges in the fisheries sector

Interviewed by: Ibrahim bin Said Al Julandani

Sheikh Hamed Ali Al Nahdi, a businessman and a member of the Board of Directors and CEO of Dhofar Fisheries and Food Industries Company SAOG said that large or small business ventures can materialize and achieve their goals only through hard work and patience. We have to bear in mind that each success is always preceded by several failure attempts. All investment projects, especially the industrial ones, face many difficulties and challenges such as those related to a legislation, laws and market competition.

In Al Ghorfa magazine issue No 228, Sheikh Hamed Al Nahdi, Director General of Dhofar Fisheries and Food Industries Company SAOG will give us an insight about the company’s performance and the challenges and difficulties facing the food security projects.

He will also highlight the economic importance of food security projects and the roles played by these institutions in achieving the government’s objectives related to ensuring food self-sufficiency.

What are the difficulties that face investment in the fish sector in the Sultanate in particular?

“We face several difficulties such as the availability of raw materials to manufacture and process fish. As you know, fish availability and abundance depends on the seasons that is why we sometimes need to import different types of fresh for manufacturing and canning. We are now looking to develop more modern fishing fleets that will help us catch more fish. We are also making efforts to modernize the existing fishing methods as the existing fishing fleet does not meet the needs and needs a lot of modernization.

What distinguishes the Sultanate in terms of investment in food security?

“The geographical location of the Sultanate is one of the leading and attractive features of investment in this area, The Sultanate is overlooking the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. This helps the companies and institutions investing in the Sultanate to deliver their products to all the markets of the Gulf countries and the Middle East countries (Africa, Europe,
There are plans to strengthen the role of fish industries and value added products, which hopefully will be completed by 2020.

Fish are available, but there may be problems related to distribution and marketing between producers and consumers.

When can we reach self-sufficiency in fish processing?

“There are plans by the state to strengthen the role of the fisheries and value-added products, which we hope will be completed by the end of 2020,” he said.

“The issue of food security is one of the top priorities,” he added. The government and the private sector must work towards achieving their objectives in order to serve food sustainability and achieve higher levels of self-sufficiency.

Can the Sultanate be a re-export hub for fishery products?

“Yes, the Sultanate has the capability to become a hub for fish processing. In addition to the geographical location of the Sultanate, it is currently working to improve transport and storage logistics, which contribute significantly to the enhancement of re-export trade. We hope that the Sultanate will become a major regional and international logistics hub for the re-export all products including food products — especially to the nearby markets.

Oman is one of the leading countries in fish production. What are the reasons for the high prices of fish? And why fish processing industry failed to make Oman a self-sufficient country in fish?

“There may be problems related to distribution and marketing among producers and consumers. As for self-sufficiency, we hope that more efforts will be made to achieve the goals of the 2020 plan.

What are the risks to investing in food security projects?

“The biggest risks facing fish food security are the climatic fluctuations that negatively affect the marine structure and the abundance of fish wealth. We have no other risk as the Sultanate’s government is very keen on eliminating all difficulties facing investors.

What about the volume of the company’s production?
Climate fluctuations negatively affect the marine structure and are considered risks that negatively affect the marine wealth, Sheikh Hamed Ali Al Nahdi says.

**In terms of canned tuna, sardines and fish oil?**

- Our production of canned tuna is 57 million boxes per year (1200000 cartons).
- Our production of canned sardine is 50 million boxes (1 million cartons).
- The production of fragmented fish is 1800 tons per year.
- Our production of fish oil is 90 tons per year.

We are also opening new lines for packing and packaging all kinds of fish, he added.

**How modern technologies can play a role in increasing fish production?**

No doubt that the introduction of modern fishing vessels and adopting advanced techniques in hunting, conservation and processing are the important reasons for increasing fish production. This serves the consumer directly and provides raw products sufficient to revive the fisheries industry.

**What is the message the factory wants to convey to the government to support investment projects in food security and support for youth projects?**

It is very important to enhance the cooperation between large companies and Omani fishermen with traditional fishing. We need also to establish fishing companies and ensure a mix of commercial and traditional fishing so that traditional fishermen become owners or shareholders of these new companies. The Omani fisherman can pay his share in the form of fish catch.

'The Omani entrepreneur should set goals and should not pay attention to people who discourage him. His steps should be calculated and carefully studied. He should not try to jump many steps at once. He should venture only in the field he has passion to, he concluded.'
OCCi participates in Arab-Tunisian Investment Forum for Tourism investment

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry represented by Eng. Redha bin Juma Al Saleh, Vice-chairman for administration and Finance participated in the Arab-Tunisian Investment Forum for Tourism investment during the period 19-20 October in capital city of Tunisia. This Forum is organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Traditional Industry in Tunisia in cooperation with the Arab Tourism Organization and Seerabeece for Exhibitions & International Festivals. The opening ceremony was also attended by a number of Omani businessmen. The Forum is a golden opportunity to understand the available investment opportunities in Tourism sector in Tunisia. Various investment companies made presentation on various investment projects. The Forum aimed at discussing the mechanism of cooperation and investment partnerships between the business communities in Oman and Tunisia. A number of contracts related to the growth and development of Tourism sector were signed.

OCCi discusses the extent of readiness of the private sector in implementing health insurance system in next year

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, chairman of OCCi held a meeting with the insurance companies, hospitals and clinics in privat sector on Tuesday 12/12/2017. Also present in the meeting was Eng. Redha Juma Al Saleh, vice chairman of the chamber of finance and administration and the chairman of insurance, banking and fiancé committee along with Rashid Al Maslahi, board member and chairman of services committee and Abdul Adheem Abbas Al Bahrani, CEO of the chamber.

The meeting discussed the readiness of private sector companies to implement the health insurance in addition to the challenges faced by these company and the ways of overcoming them in cooperation with the government sector.

Al Kiyumi explained that since the government considers the privatizing the health sector, it is the right time to think about tie-up with big international hospitals to invest in health sector. He also underlined the importance of setting up a committee to make suggestion related to the Health insurance policy. He suggested to setup a committee to settle disputes between the three parties in order to regularize the implementation of health insurance.

Philippines delegations reviews the investment opportunities

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry received a trade delegation from Philippines at OCCi headquarters. The Omani side was headed by Ayman Al Hasani, vice chairman of OCCi for economic and branches affaires while the Philippine side was headed by the Assistant director general of Marketing and Export Office in Philippines. At the beginning Ayman Al Hasani welcomed the delegation and explained the open economic policy of Oman through encouraging competition and assisting Private sector to contribute to the developmental process. He also explained the interest of Oman in building trade and investment joint ventures with Philippines. The delegation comprises numerous sector like vegetable oil, food stuff additives, pickles, macaroni, soya beans, biscuit manufacturing, dried fruits and cakes in addition to the jewelry making and cosmetics. Presentations were made to introduce investment opportunities from both sides.
Activating Oman-Denmark cooperation in Fish farming

Oman Chamber of commerce and Industry received yesterday at OCCI headquarters a trade delegation from Denmark. A meeting was held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in cooperation with the chamber to create wide opportunities for investment and bilateral cooperation in the field of fishing. The director of fish farming department at the ministry, Dawood Al Yahyaee explained that the visiting companies are specialized companies in various field sectors such as Aqua and Alga Culture and fish feed equipment in addition to the technical and economic studies in fish farming. This visit is a good chance for Omani investors to adopt Denmark technologies in Fishing sector of Oman. Bilateral meetings were held at the end of the meeting.

Workshop on investing in Securities market at Musandam

The Musandam branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in cooperation with Muscat Securities Market (MSM) organized a workshop on the investment in the Securities market. The workshop was presented by Raid bin hussain Al Hoothi, Director of DG’s Office and acting director of Information and awareness department at MSM. Also participated in the workshop by Mohammed bin Issa Al Balushi, head of information sectors at MSM and Mohammed bin Rashid Al Shahi, Director of OCCI Musandam.

The lecture explained the concepts related to the securities market including the emergence securities markets, the advantages of investment in the stock markets, types of investment instruments including stocks and bonds, advantages and risks of each instrument in addition to an introduction to the participants on how to invest wisely and how the investor starts trading in the stock market.

A huge number of audience was present in the lectures including OCCI members, traders, entrepreneurs and other interested persons in this field.