



GROWING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: ADVANCING AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE UAE

Hydrofarms, Plant-based Meat & Blueberries grown in the Desert



Ali Tahir Sen
Paralegal

T: +971 7 233 8927
F: +971 7 233 0044
E: office@slglaw.cc
www.slglaw.cc

The National Food Security Strategy 2051 of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was launched in November 2018 by the Emirates Council for Food Security (ECFS) to promote domestic food security. It aims to increase national self-sufficiency and efficiency of food production in order to reduce dependence on imports and ensure a national supply of safe and nutritious food, with sufficient access regardless of individual economic status.

Within this framework, a number of initiatives, partnerships, and grants have been launched, including:

- trade facilitation for the agricultural industry, for example, a single agricultural license with a 60% cost reduction, the acceleration of building permits, and the possibility of 100% ownership,
- promotion of technology-enabled food production,
- support of national food production, for example by directing government agencies such as the armed forces and hospital authorities to buy locally grown produce,
- initiatives to reduce food loss and waste, ensure food and nutrition security, reduce food risks, and establish effective crisis management.

As a result, in 2022, the UAE ranked 23rd in the Global Food Security Index out of a total of 113 countries considered, 7th in terms of food availability and 16th in terms of quality and safety. One of the goals of the National Strategy is to achieve 1st place in the Global Food Security Index by 2051.

The first successes of the National Food Security Strategy 2051, which are regularly presented, discussed, and evaluated at the National Dialogue for Food Security, can already be seen. For example, Abu Dhabi's first state-of-the-art production facility for meat alternatives was recently inaugurated and started production on 1 May 2023. According to the food-tech start-up behind it, the aim is to offer a healthy alternative to conventional meat products that will promote food security, sustainability, and climate protection without compromising on taste. However, "real" meat and fish production in the UAE is also becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly, as well as more productive, for example through real-time monitoring of the health and nutritional intake of dairy cows. One other widespread innovation is land-based salmon farming, which uses huge tanks to replicate the life cycle of fish in the wild.



STROHAL LEGAL GROUP

Success has also been achieved in the field of production and export of agricultural products through the use of efficient irrigation systems or cultivation methods, despite the challenges posed by the hot climate and limited water resources. Although the UAE sources about 90 percent of its agricultural products from abroad, domestic production is picking up speed thanks to hydrofarms, high-tech greenhouses, and vertical farms. Currently, more than 38,000 farms produce over 350,000 tons of vegetables and fruits. This includes, for example, the national production of blueberries and their export to countries like Japan, Thailand, India, and Cambodia, some of which have strict requirements for certification and quality standards. The increasing production of animal feeds such as barley, maize, or wheat also reduces the economic impact of the agricultural economy and underline the innovative and sustainable agricultural economy of the UAE.

The market for sustainable agricultural practices, technologies, and goods is developing rapidly and dynamically, particularly due to government support, while long-term policy stability provides a basis for investment due to the National Food Security Strategy 2051. At the same time, the UAE's strict food safety laws ensure that public health and consumers are protected, and regulate import and trade, protecting the market from misleading practices. Without prior approval and registration of products, any commercial, industrial, or professional activity is prohibited, including initial production facilities and importation of goods.

The Ministry of Environment and Water, in cooperation with the competent authorities and concerned agencies, takes measures to protect the health of consumers along the entire food chain. Scientific principles and findings based on risk analyses are used and implemented in a transparent, objective and independent manner. Secondary to scientific findings, international standards, guidelines, and recommendations are used. No distinction is made between local and imported goods. The UAE provides a stable foundation for investment in sustainable agricultural practices, technologies, and commodities, thanks to government support and the National Food Security Strategy 2051, which is supported and regulated by food safety laws.



Strohal Legal Group is an international business law firm focusing on the Gulf region (GCC) and Southeast Asia (ASEAN) advising clients on local and cross-border M&A transactions and corporate, business, and labour law matters, company establishments, energy & climate law as well as tax law matters. Through our country desks and partner firms in Austria, the Ukraine, and Russia, the firm is also well connected in Europe.

Disclaimer

Any information in this communication is not intended or written by us to be used, and cannot be used, for the purpose of (i) avoiding penalties that may be imposed by any governmental taxing authority or agency, or (ii) promoting, marketing or recommending to another party any matters addressed herein.

The opinions and analyses expressed herein are subject to change at any time. Any suggestions contained herein are general, and do not take into account an individual's or entity's specific circumstances. Any third party information contained herein is from sources believed to be reliable, but which we have not independently verified. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

No warranty or representation, express or implied, is made by Strohal Legal Consultants, nor do we accept any liability with respect to the information and data set forth herein. Distribution hereof does not constitute legal, tax, accounting, investment or other professional advice. Recipients should consult their professional advisors prior to acting on the information set forth herein.