



Innovative Agriculture and Eco/Agritourism



Hearing – Feeling – Sharing *KKL-JNF Moving Forward Together*



קרן קימת לישראל
KKL - JNF

Welcome!

Our trip will focus on agriculture and eco/agritourism in the Arava as an example of the amazing work KKL-JNF has done and continues to do in peripheral areas in Israel.

We will visit a variety of KKL-JNF change-making projects that improve quality of life for those people. You will have the opportunity to meet the people who live in the area, see their faces, hear their stories, take pictures and interview them – get to know the people behind the produce and learn about the various aspects of agriculture and tourism in the desert. Thanks to you, those people enjoy a better economy and a higher standard of living. Your continued help and support make a difference!

Some of the projects we visit are still open for donation and it will be our challenge to match them with suitable donors.

Use this opportunity to collect resources for creating exciting, stimulating, inspiring marketing materials that will arouse interest and motivate donors to become partners in KKL-JNF's significant work.

Other materials are available on your "credit card" disk on key and on the Partnership site:
<http://hanof.kkl.org.il/partnership>

Bon Voyage!



1. Ne'ot HaKikar
2. Central Arava R&D
2. Hatseva
3. Sapir Regional Center
4. Tsukim

Innovative Agriculture and Eco/ Agritourism

Group no.2



Ne'ot HaKikar
and En Tamar –
Desert Eco Park

KKL-JNF together with
the Tamar Regional Council, the Israel Nature
and Parks Authority, Mekorot-Israel National
Water Company, and the Ministry of
Agriculture, is planning an ecological park at
the entrance to Ne'ot HaKikar and En Tamar

that will serve as a regional tourism attraction. The park will be developed
using local materials that integrate in the desert surroundings and landscaping
will be carried out with local tree and plant species. Park elements include an
ecological pool that will simulate the wetlands that once covered the area.



Central and Northern Arava R&D – Yair
Agricultural Station

The Central and Northern Arava R&D Station
operates the Yair Experimental Station at
Hatseva in the central Arava, which forms
part of the network of agricultural R&D
stations developed and supported by KKL-JNF
throughout the country. The Yair Station

focuses on seven major topics: vegetables, ornamentals, plant-protection,
orchards, organic agriculture, ornamental fishery, and produce quality.
Research at the station emphasizes developing new vegetable strains and
healthy foods, such as spinach. JNF Canada, Australia and United States have
partnered to establish new laboratories and research facilities for organic
agriculture, as well as contributing new laboratory equipment for the Central &
Northern Arava Research and Development Station at Hatseva that has
significantly improved the facility. The equipment has upgraded ongoing R&D
activities to support and advance agriculture in the region, one of Israel's main
farming areas.



Hatseva – The Vidor Center – A Window to Agriculture in the Arava

The Vidor Visitor Center is located at the Yair Agricultural R&D Station. The center offers an interactive experience that introduces visitors to Israel's out-of-the-box agricultural innovations including heart-shaped cucumbers, giant gourds, new breeds of cherry tomatoes and colored potatoes and carrots. Visitors can view photos, watch films and enjoy special exhibits, all relating to the Arava. The center was established with the support of KKL-JNF's Friends in Australia, Israeli government ministries, the Israel Government Tourist Corporation and other partners.



Sapir Regional Center – AICAT

The Arava International Center for Agriculture Training (AICAT) offers training in sophisticated arid land agriculture to students from developing countries. The training Center is well known internationally for its popular course on agriculture and has accepted many trainees from various places around the world. Some 1000 students from eight Asian countries study at the Sapir Regional Center campus. AICAT provides an invaluable contribution to developing countries and their students who attend it, as well as additional employment opportunities for local residents and extra working hands for the local agricultural industry. JNF USA is participating in a project to build new dormitories for students.



Tsukim – Tourism Development

Tsukim was established in 2004 as a tourism-based community settlement in the central Arava. Sixty-seven families now make their home in Tsukim and operate 50 desert guest accommodations and the community is planned to reach 155 units. A number of houses were built using local natural materials and many inhabitants use solar energy, home water recycling and composting. In order to support this vital sector KKL-JNF, together with the Israel Government Tourist Corporation participated in the development of two tourism zones in Tsukim, where a variety of environmental activities are offered for families and an artist's village is now being developed. JNF USA and KKL Sweden supported the development of tourist infrastructure when Tsukim was established.

Notes

Notes

Notes



Innovative Agriculture and Eco/ Agritourism

General background

Group no.2



Introduction

Israel is an amazingly diverse country, with a tremendous variety of landscapes and a rich and varied flora and fauna. It has both natural and cultural assets that attract hundreds of thousands of tourists yearly. Israel's deserts are particularly fascinating and include many unique natural wonders, such as the Dead Sea, a section of the Great Rift Valley and distinctive desert "craters" just to mention a few.

In addition to its natural wonders, Israel's agriculture is renowned the world over. It is characterized by intensive production, resulting from the need to overcome a scarcity of natural resources, particularly water. Our agriculture is famous for its high standards, efficiency and productivity, in a country where more than half of the land is classified as desert. Over 80% of Israel's agriculture is based on cooperative communities (the kibbutz and the moshav). There are also non-cooperative farms in Israel, e.g. the moshava and the farms in Arab villages. The overall number of rural farming communities in Israel rose from 769 in 1961 to 952 in 2010.

Modern agriculture is largely dependent on advanced research and development (R&D), which remains a cornerstone of Israeli agriculture. Obligated to live with limited arable land and water resources, Israel has developed a range of state-of-the-art agriculture, irrigation and water management technologies in order to optimize its limited resources. Israel has become a world leader in agricultural innovation, sharing its expertise with some of the poorest regions on earth to create sustainable self-sufficiency in food and water supplies.

Agricultural R&D stations exploit the natural potential of peripheral regions: climate, soil, varieties of water sources and labor quality and work together with academic institutes to develop new agro-technical methods and crops. Israel's agricultural R&D is famous worldwide, particularly the work done in

farming the desert and preventing desertification. Ongoing applied research aims at sustaining arid and semi-arid land ecological systems for the benefit of the people in these ecosystems. These stations play a significant role in allowing more and more people to settle the Negev successfully and keep Israel at the forefront of world farming.

Israel can't help but be proud of its agricultural achievements, considering its small dimensions, minimal water resources and other challenges. The numbers speak for themselves: in the 1950s, one Israeli farmer fed 17 people; a little over 50 years later, that number is up to 95! Israel is constantly researching new products and technologies, which have allowed it to successfully cultivate 20 percent of Israel's 21,000 square kilometers.

Agritourism

Farmers in Israel, and the world over, are seeking to diversify their sources of income beyond "classical agriculture" and expand into the field of agritourism, a broad field, which, as its name implies combines agriculture and tourism. Agritourism is becoming increasingly popular, and farmers in different areas develop branches specifically tailored to what the region has to offer. It can include anything from visiting farms to buy produce, picking fruit and vegetables, watching birds in fields, navigating a corn maze or just spending some time at a B&B on a farm.

Israelis like to think that the first "agri-tourists" were the biblical Joshua and Caleb who lugged a huge bunch of grapes to show the children of Israel the amazing fruits of this land. The variety of its produce means that farmers from around the world find a common language with counterparts somewhere in Israel, whether it's the well-watered north, the subtropics around the Sea of Galilee, the arid lands in the Negev and the Arava, the coast, or fish-breeders (even that is done in the desert).

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting natural areas – in the remote wilderness or rural environments. According to the definition and principles of ecotourism established by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1990, ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

Tourism is now the world's largest industry, with nature tourism the fastest growing segment. People want to experience the nature and the world and ecotourism encourages them to do so in a way that doesn't impact the natural environment, promotes conservation and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples.



The Central Arava Regional Council

The Central Arava Regional Council extends over 1500 square kilometers, 6% of Israel's land, just west of the border with Jordan. The closest urban community is 130 km away, making the Central Arava one of the most peripheral regions in the country. The regional council includes seven communities, five moshavim and two community settlements, inhabited by some 3500 people (about 800 families). Most of the residents make their living growing vegetables and flowers for export, despite the harsh climate in the region. Thanks to research, creativity, faith and daring the Arava farmers have succeeded despite the difficult conditions. The region prides itself in its modern, environmentally friendly agriculture, which provides a major proportion of Israel's vegetables and fruit for export. The Central Arava Regional Council is very sensitive to its environment, particularly as most of the residents are farmers, and agriculture is known to have a number of negative environmental impacts. There are several initiatives to implement environmentally-friendly pest control methods, to deal with agricultural trash and to preserve the unique desert flora and fauna, as well to develop eco/agritourism ventures. This knowledge is shared with other parts of the world via projects such as AICAT – a system of courses for students from developing countries focusing on the transition from traditional to modern agriculture.

Moshav Hatseva was founded in 1965 and now has a population of 485 (about 150 families). Most of the residents make a living from agriculture and tourism. The area has good farming potential, particularly for the production of winter crops, but extensive preparatory work is needed in order to realize this potential.

En Yahav, the first moshav in the Arava, was founded in 1965 and now numbers 683 residents (about 200 families) who work in agriculture and tourism.

The Sapir Regional Center was founded in 1978 as a community settlement intended to provide as a service center for the agricultural communities in the Central Arava and a home for non-agricultural residents of the region. The flourishing community now has 1000 families and is home to the Central Arava Regional Council, Shitim – the regional comprehensive school and various small business ventures. Residents include teachers and other school staff, doctors, agriculture extension service workers and other people who are seeking a peaceful healthy environment for themselves and their families.

The Tamar Regional Council

The Tamar Regional Council extends along the western coast of the Dead Sea, the lowest spot in the world. This enchanted area is inhabited by people who have left standard civilization behind to cross new frontiers and create successful communities that enjoy quality of life, good education and a high standard of living thanks to the intensive efforts they have invested in the land. The local economy is based on innovative agriculture, modern industry and tourism that makes the most of the wonderful features of the region. All this is taking place while the people of the region live in one of the most extreme regions in the world and face challenges such as the changes in the Dead Sea, formation of sinkholes and winter floods. One of the challenges is working with the Dead Sea Works a major polluting factor in the region in an effort to create cooperation and find the right balance between the works, the local communities and the environment.

Ne'ot HaKikar is a moshav (cooperative farming community) at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which belongs to the Tamar Regional Council. There are 402 residents in Ne'ot HaKikar.

En Tamar is a moshav (cooperative farming community) at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which belongs to the Tamar Regional Council. There are about 35 families making their home in En Tamar.

Neve Zohar is a community settlement at the southern end of the Dead Sea and is famous for being the lowest community in the world – 376 meters below sea level. It belongs to the Tamar Regional Council and has 76 inhabitants. Neve Zohar was originally planned to house workers at the Dead Sea Works nearby. The community is now expanding and will add 140 housing units.



KKL-JNF with the People of the Southern Dead Sea and the Central Arava

KKL-JNF has been involved with the Southern Dead Sea and the Central Arava communities from its earliest stages helping with land preparation for agriculture and housing, agricultural roads, infrastructure for agriculture and tourism, playgrounds, landscaping and water reservoirs. We also organize events and tours for the public. We continue to be active partners in the development of the Central Arava communities to this day – developing infrastructure for new expansions of existing communities, to allow them to absorb new families. We have also diversified our involvement to include tourist projects to boost the local economy.

One of our most important projects is supporting regional Research and Development (R&D) stations in agricultural regions throughout Israel.

These stations aim to develop new crops and improve farming techniques for existing ones. This helps farmers in peripheral parts of the country compete successfully in the global produce market. These stations exploit the natural potential of peripheral regions: climate, soil, varieties of water sources and worker quality and employ field advisors and noted researchers who work in cooperation with national academic institutes. The Northern and Central Arava R&D Station focuses on the challenges facing farmers in the extreme climate of the Arava and on how to improve pesticide-free agriculture, as well as on broadening the farming opportunities in desert areas: fish farming, cultivating algae and more.

KKL-JNF Looks into the Future

KKL-JNF has been supporting farming activity in the Arava since the communities in the region were founded and reclaims thousands of acres of land every year in the region to allow farmers to successfully cultivate their crops. It attaches importance to ensuring that modern, profitable farming sectors continue to play an important role in the blend of economic and employment opportunities in the area. As the fields of agriculture and tourism develop, KKL-JNF continues to play a major role in existing ventures and encourage and sustain new ground-breaking enterprises, such as the ecological park being developed in the southern Dead Sea area that will contribute to the conservation of the Sodom salt marshes.

Selected Projects for Donation throughout Israel:

12231 – Ne'ot HaKikar and En Tamar – Desert Eco Park

KKL-JNF is a partner in stage B of this unique ecotourism initiative that will provide visitors with an opportunity to see and learn about the original ecosystem in the Sodom salt marshes.

8401 – Tsukim – Tourism in Tsukim

KKL-JNF's Tourism in Tsukim project developed two tourism zones in the new community village of Tsukim in the central Arava. The project is partially available for donation.

12289 – En Yahav – Preparing Land for Agriculture – 2014

KKL-JNF is reclaiming land for agriculture at Moshav En Yahav in the central Arava for the expansion of hothouse crops. This will allow the moshav to absorb 6 new young families.

12291 – Hatseva – Preparing Land for Agriculture – 2014

KKL-JNF is reclaiming the land for agriculture, enabling Hatseva to absorb four new young families into its community.

10008 – Nahal Oz – Agricultural Visitor Center – Landscape Development

KKL-JNF is responsible for landscaping the Visitor Center that Kibbutz Nahal Oz is planning to establish. The agritourism project is an important initiative in strengthening this Gaza border community.

7604 Hula Valley – Feed the Cranes

The Hula Valley with its tens of thousands of migrating winter birds is a major eco/agritourism site. The huge flocks of cranes feed on the area's field crops creating conflicts with local farmers. KKL-JNF helped find a solution for both farmers and birds through a controlled feeding project.

7014 – Besor R&d Station – Research

The Besor R&D Station is one of four in southern Israel supported by KKL-JNF for the benefit of farmers in the Negev.

7926 – Northern Research and Development Station

The Northern R&D Station is one of the eight in Israel supported by KKL-JNF for the benefit of farmers throughout the country.

For more information and materials:

[Visit the Partnership Site/Project Pool](#)



Keren Kayemeth LelIsrael-Jewish National Fund
KKL Resources, Development & Public Affairs Division
Projects & Marketing Department
Jerusalem 2015
Photos: KKL Photo Archive, Jerusalem
www.kkl.org.il

