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UAE unveils Silalâ??s Innovation Oasis (iO) facility to establish agricultural R&D technology potentials

28 April 2025 | News

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Aligning with the key objectives of Silal's National Food Security Strategy 2051, the UAE has launched "Silal's Innovation Oasis (iO)" facility specialising in agricultural R&D technologies as a national effort to advance sustainable farming practices and strengthen UAE food security.

His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Rulerâ??s Representative in Al Ain Region, witnessed the inauguration of Silalâ??s Innovation Oasis (iO).

Spanning over 300,000 square metres, iO is a dynamic ecosystem designed to foster collaboration among researchers, industry leaders, startups and academics. The facility is an incubator for agritech innovations, focusing on climate-resilient farming, optimised controlled environment agriculture, and resource-efficient food production.

Equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories, growth chambers, and phenotyping and experimental facilities, including greenhouses, net-houses, and open-field research plots, iO will provide an advanced platform for developing and testing various agritech solutions.

Key focus areas include climate-resilient farming techniques to address the extreme temperatures of the UAE, water-food-energy solutions integrating solar thermal desalination, IoT-enabled precision agriculture, and saltwater-resistant crops.

Additionally, AI-driven food systems will also be explored at the facility, leveraging machine learning, robotics and data analytics to enhance farm management and post-harvest technologies, improving supply chain efficiency and minimising food waste.

Launch of the Advance AgriTech Academy

An "Advance AgriTech Academy" was also inaugurated to establish the UAEâ??s next generation of AgriTech leaders and offer specialised programmes in career guidance and practical training, in collaboration with global research institutions, to equip Emirati talent with the skills and capabilities required to drive innovation in food and agriculture.

A cooperation agreement between Silal and the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) was signed at the event in order to strengthen collaboration in agricultural research and innovation. In addition, five scholarships were offered in support of academic excellence and national talent for students from the UAEU College of Agriculture in the field of agricultural sustainability and food security.

His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan affirmed that investing in agritech research is a national strategic priority aimed at advancing sustainable local production, harnessing advanced technologies, supporting innovation and building a knowledge-driven economy. He stressed the importance of strengthening food supply chains and tackling regional and global food security challenges in the future.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan; His Excellency Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh, Cultural Adviser to the UAE President and Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU); His Excellency Professor Ahmed Ali Al Raeesi, Acting Vice Chancellor of the UAEU; Salmeen Obaid Al Ameri, CEO of Silal; Dr Mohammed Abdulmuhsen Salem Al Yafei, Acting Dean of UAEUâ??s College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine; Humaid Al Rumaithi, CEO of Food Security at Silal; and Dr Shamal Mohammed, CEO of Silalâ??s Innovation Oasis.

Salmeen Obaid Alameri, CEO of Silal, said: â??Innovation Oasis (iO) is redefining the future of agri-food in the UAE. By harnessing advanced technologies and fostering strategic partnerships, we strengthen the resilience and sustainability of our food system. With a strong focus on research, innovation, and knowledge transfer, we are driving progress and also positioning the UAE at the forefront of global agritech solutions. Additionally, the launch of the iO Advance AgriTech Academy further reinforces our commitment to developing local talent, ensuring that the UAE remains a global leader in agricultural innovation.â?•â?•