Food Briefs National

- Researchers at Harvard and Tufts Universities have laid out concrete steps by linking food prices to health effects. Reducing prices of fruit and vegetables while raising prices for sodas and other sugary drinks could save millions of lives, according to a recent study released at the American Heart Association's epidemiology and lifestyle meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.
- The Pakistan Poultry Association was fined by the Competition Commission of Pakistan recently for 'influencing pricing, production and sales of poultry products' and engaging in anti-competitive business activity.
- In spite of dire need for a 'National Sanitary and Phytosanitary Authority Act' to drive exports of agricultural products it is moving at a slow pace. The proposed SPS authority will work to ensure food safety and protect animal and plant health.
- The Sindh government in partnership with a private company is setting up a state of the art dehydration plant for sorting, grading and washing of the fruit in Khairpur. The facility includes a cold storage as well.
- Pakistan's food and agro-products exports touched $500m last year compared to $362.4m in 2012. Rice remains the leading food export item to the UAE and its sales jumped 11-fold to $207.8m compared to the last two years. Meat and processed frozen food exports crossed the $100m mark over the last three years. As for fruits and vegetables exports have almost doubled in three years.
- In order to have an improved management of shark fisheries experts at a workshop emphasized that data on shark landing needs to be collected. The workshop was organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) in collaboration with the ministry of climate change.
- Maize is the third most important cereal crop of Pakistan covering more than 1.2m hectares annually and the national average yield is about four tonnes per hectare. Maize productivity has increased by 75% from its levels in the early 1990s. This can be accredited to the adoption and expansion of hybrid maize varieties particularly in the spring season.
- Pakistan's import of fresh fruits from Afghanistan via Torkham and Kuram Agency has substantially increased during the 8MFY16 amounting to 245,000 tons. Duties and taxes on the import of fresh fruit have also jumped from PKR 643 Mn to PKR 1.8Bn during the current fiscal year, reflecting an increase of 182% over the last year. Whereas, the export of fresh fruit from Pakistan to Afghanistan via Torkham has increased from 73,000 tons to 196,000 tons in the period under review.
- The federal govt. has granted permission to multinational companies for commercialization of genetically modified (GM) corn seeds in Pakistan. In this regard, the Ministry of Climate Change has awarded licenses to different companies including Monsanto and DuPont/Pioneer. However, two federal ministers Khurram Dastgir and Sikandar Hayat Khan categorically defined that the govt. had given license to any multinational company for commercial trial of GM corn seeds in the country. ◆

Food Briefs International

- A new study indicates that Austrian consumers spent an average of 140 per household per month on fresh produce during 2015, the study also shows that sales were up 1.3 % per year. While fruit and vegetable purchases saw an increase in sales last year, meat and dairy products saw a drop in purchase patterns. "This is certainly due to the extremely long and hot summer," said AMA market researcher Micaela Schantl.
- China's retail market is creating new opportunities for marketers of fresh berries driven by rising growth in its urban, middle class population, expansion. This trend was noted at Global Berry Congress by David Smith of importer SVA Fruits. Giving an overview of the Chinese berry market, Smith predicted further growth in demand and good opportunities particularly for Canada, which recently signed a protocol to send blueberries from British Columbia to China.
- A pilot project for growing on-site herbs and vegetables is launched by Germany's Metro Cash & Carry at one of its wholesale stores in Berlin. A high-tech kitchen garden developed by start-up company Infarm has been installed at the shop in the district of Friedrichshain, in which products such as basil are grown hydroponically in a space-saving vertical greenhouse.
- SwarmFarm Robotics an Australian technology start-up has launched its robot technology for use in cropping, which will improve productivity, lower costs and reduce environmental impacts.
- A company 'Nemo's Garden" in Italy is trialing underwater salad production and is looking for partners interested in growing in a double pressure environment. It is based off the coast of Italy and has been growing salad and herbs underwater for the past four years. It is run by Italian-American group Ocean Reef Group, which has specialist expertise in scuba diving equipment and an interest in innovative growing.
- Syrian producers are seizing the opportunity to export fruits and vegetables to Russia. According to Aslan Panesh, managing director of Russian importer Adyg-Yurak, told newspaper Kommersant that 3,000 tonnes of Syrian-grown citrus, tomatoes and cabbage were shipped to the Russian port of Novorossiysk last week.
- The EU and Georgia are working together to grow trade relations and realize this goal. According to the European Commissioner for Trade Issues Cecilia Maelstrom, Georgia has real potential to increase the amount of Georgia-made products to the EU market and its 500 million consumers. Eighteen months ago Georgia's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement came into force and since then Georgia and the EU have both benefitted greatly from the deal. ◆