

# **Obstacles to Agricultural Marketing of Dates Crop in Date Production Companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

## **(An Applied Study on the Production Companies of Dates in Al-Kharj Governorate)**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at identifying the obstacles to agricultural marketing of dates crop in date production companies in Al-Kharj Governorate in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study used the descriptive analysis approach to achieve its aims and test its hypotheses by designing a questionnaire for this purpose and distributed to the selected sample of employees in these companies. The study determined that there are a set of obstacles related to the environment, costs, agricultural policies and poor productivity. In addition, there are obstacles related to the marketing services themselves. The study provided a set of recommendations, the most important of which is the need to work to encourage agricultural promotion and promote the reality of the marketing processes and activities of the dates crop. As well as introducing modern methods and policies in the marketing of agricultural products in general and dates in particular, using modern technologies to communicate with the public, especially social networks and organizing the participation in date exhibitions and festivals internally and externally.

### **Keywords:**

Agricultural Marketing, Dates Crop, Production Companies, Obstacles, Al-Kharj governorate.

### **1. Introduction**

Agricultural marketing involves services related to the transportation of an agricultural product from farm to customers, including planning, regulation, orientation and handling of agricultural products in such a manner that satisfies farmers, intermediaries and consumers. Many interconnected activities are involved in performing this, such as; production planning, planting and harvesting, packaging, transportation, warehousing, agricultural and food processing, providing market information, and distribution effectively the term includes an overall extent of supply chain processes for agricultural products whether conducted through customized sales or through a more integrated chain such as a chain involving contractual agriculture that may be noticed for agricultural marketing from several viewpoints. For the farmer, it is a means of introducing his products and transporting them into theoretical tangible income, through which he can cover production costs and obtain sufficient income resource necessary to obtain his basic needs and survival. For the society, agricultural marketing is a system, which provides the community with its needs related with the food and industrial aspects, as well as its role in providing many job opportunities, as agricultural marketing aims at:

- Concentration and collecting agricultural productions in domestic markets, and then in centralized markets, with the aim of carrying out the marketing functions necessary to transport goods to consumption centers.
- Balancing between supply and demand to control the supply so that it matches the demand in terms of time, quantity and type. Avoiding dumping the markets with certain products or their disappearance, and

avoiding the large fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products, as a marketing stage in which the importance of storage and its various means in achieving the required balance is highlighted.

- Distribution of production after it reaches the central markets. The raw materials find their way to the manufacturers, while the consumer foodstuff is distributed through retailers to reach the consumer.

Nevertheless, there are a set of problems and obstacles facing the agricultural marketing, as the analysis of agricultural marketing problems is one of the most complex tasks facing agricultural economists. In addition, it requires familiarity with great knowledge in the field of agricultural economics, mathematics, statistics and others. Among the most important agricultural marketing problems is the study of consumers' desires for foodstuff, the study of prices in terms of the consumer's purchasing power, and the product's obtaining of attractive prices, which will increase income, by applying methods to reduce marketing costs to a minimum.

## 2.1 Study problem

The study problem is represented in the following questions:

- 1- Do dates producing companies in Al-Kharj in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have clear visions and plans for agricultural marketing of the date crop?
- 2- Are these companies aware of the obstacles and limitations to the marketing activities and operations of the dates crop in Al-Kharj Governorate?

## 2.3 Study objectives

The study objectives are as follows:

1. Determining the obstacles of agricultural marketing, which affect dates producing companies in Al-Kharj Governorate.
2. Providing a set of recommendations and solutions, which help to overcome and deal with the obstacles to agricultural marketing of dates in Al-Kharj Governorate.

## 2.3 The study hypothesis

This study seeks to test the following hypothesis:

Workers in dates producing companies in Al-Kharj have clear information about the obstacles and limitations, which impede planning, operating and implementing plans, programs and marketing activities for the dates crop.

## 2.4 Study methodology

This study relied on the descriptive and analytical approach in order to achieve its objectives. Secondary data was collected from books, previous studies, research and websites. The primary data was collected through the design of a questionnaire designed for the purpose of the study and distributed to the study sample.

## 2.4 Study tool

A questionnaire form was designed based on the study (Rajab, 2019), as its formulation was taken into consideration to determine the appropriate phrases to measure its variables according to the study objectives, and the five-point Likert scale was also used in the questionnaire and the order is graded as follows:

Phrase	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Value	1	2	3	4	5

With an arithmetic mean (3) to measure the respondents' answers.

The questions were distributed to the study axes related to the obstacles of the agricultural marketing of the date crop as follows:

**Table 1**

Distribution of the questionnaire questions on the obstacles of agricultural marketing of dates crop.

No.	Obstacles of agricultural marketing of dates crop.	Number Of Questions
1	Poor Marketing Services	5
2	Rising Marketing Costs	5

3	Environmental Considerations	5
4	Instability Of Agricultural Policies	5
5	Low Productivity	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>

To test the internal consistency of the questionnaire, it was presented to a number of specialists at King Saud University, King Faisal University, King Khalid University and Ibb University. In order to test the stability of the paragraphs of the form, the Alpha correlation coefficient (Alpha Kronicbach coefficient) was used and reached all resolution axes (0.879).

**Table 2**  
Stability coefficient, Alpha Cronbach of the study

No.	The axes	Number Of Questions	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
1	Poor Marketing Services	5	0.914
2	Rising Marketing Costs	5	0.832
3	Environmental Considerations	5	0.843
4	Instability Of Agricultural Policies	5	0.924
5	Low Productivity	5	0.850
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>0.879</b>

### 2.5 Study sample and population

The study sample was represented by dates producing companies in Al-Kharj governorate. The study sample reached (10) companies and was randomly selected from workers in these companies, as the sample size reached 50 individuals. The questionnaire form was distributed to them and all the forms were received.

### 2.6 Study model

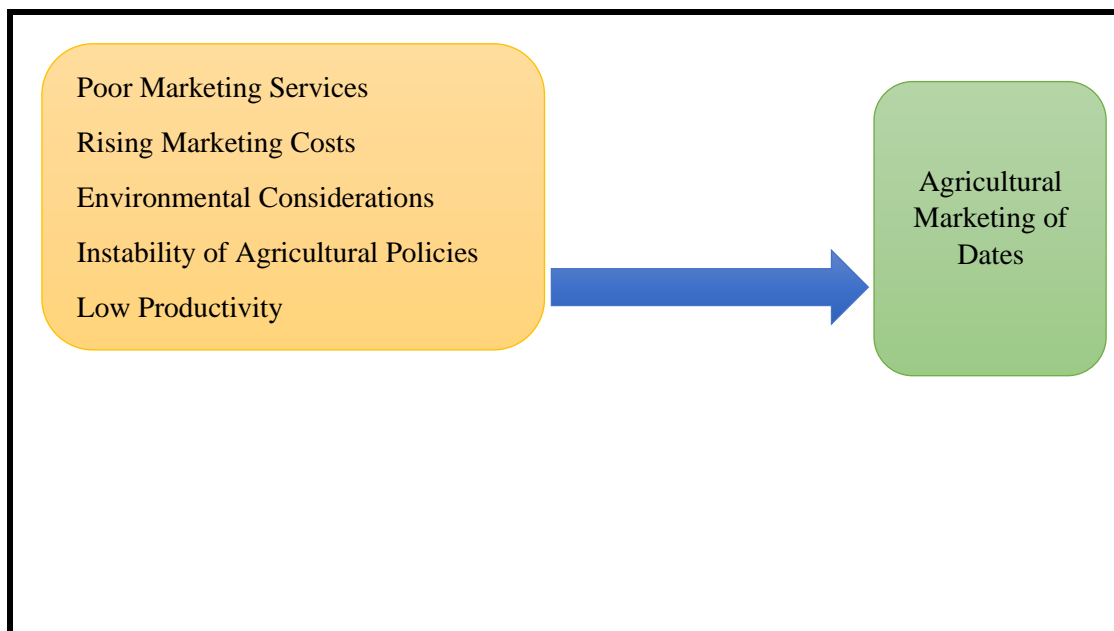


Figure (1) Study model

### 3. Literature Review

There are few studies, which dealt with the study subject, out of these studies; the study (Rajab, 2019) aimed at measuring the obstacles of agricultural marketing of grain crops in Iraq. The study concluded with a set of obstacles related to productivity and policies for agriculture and related to marketing services, and recommended the activation of agricultural marketing through the activation of its tools of agricultural guidance, media and agricultural promotion. The study (Hamed, 2017) aimed at determining the horizons and reality of applying agricultural marketing for the date crop in Algeria. The study recommended working

on using modern methods and techniques in agricultural marketing for the date crop and activating the role of promoting this crop. Study (Massoudi, 2019) has recommended searching for markets in other countries to export local agricultural products, especially dates, and activating relations and increasing commercial interchangeability. In addition to the need to pay attention to the labor force in the markets and to have experience in the field of marketing. The study (Qusay, 2018) dealt with tomato production, agricultural crop pricing policy, and marketing functions. The study concluded that there is a weakness in marketing services related to storage and transportation. The study (Abu Naas, 2018) dealt with the legal framework for how to organize, framing and controlling wholesale markets for vegetables and fruits and the geographical characteristics that distinguish the areas on which, these markets are built and identify the human and economic qualifications to manage those markets. The study (Saleh, 2017) focused on the most prominent obstacles of the production and marketing of vegetables and fruits. The study showed the weakness of marketing services, and the weakness of the employing capacity of the factories of industries, especially in some seasons. It also showed that marketing obstacles reduce the opportunities of competition in global markets and expose products to inappropriate conditions. The study (Zughayer, 2019) dealt with the agricultural activity and marketing of agricultural products in terms of the agricultural product, its characteristics, the supply and demand for agricultural products, the reality of dates marketing systems in Iraq, the marketing policies for dates, as well as the future development strategy for dates in Iraq.

We find through reviewing the previous studies, that they were conducted in areas different from this study area and dealt with different topics. Therefore, this study differs from the previous studies in terms of subject and place. In addition, it dealt with obstacles of the agricultural marketing of dates crop in Kharj in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and was conducted in a different period 2020.

### 3. Study analytical framework

This aspect deals with presenting the data shown by the respondents' answers in order to identify their opinions about the obstacles facing the agricultural marketing operations in the date production companies in Al Kharj.

#### 1- Obstacles related to poor marketing services

**Table 3**  
Obstacles related to the dimension of poor marketing services.

No.	The Scale	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Percentage 100%	Ranking
1	The company provides all the mechanisms of lifting, handling and unloading products in terms of supporting producers and farmers	3.496	0.942	70	2
2	The company supports farmers by providing sorting and grading services for their products	3.237	0.658	65	3
3	The agricultural products are graded at the company's headquarters, specifying the quality and price of each one	3.754	0.820	75	1
4	The company's management provides various publications and publications that contribute to providing both workers and farmers with information on how to deal with agricultural products, delivery, receiving and marketing mechanisms.	2.324	1.257	47	5
5	The company provides farmers and agricultural producers with sufficient information on how to market their products in the specified markets	2.498	1.218	50	4
<b>General Average</b>		<b>3.146</b>	<b>0.709</b>		

\* Prepared by the researcher N= 40

From the previous table, we find that paragraph (3) was ranked in the first place with a arithmetic mean (3.754) and this average is highest than the study hypothetical mean (3) with standard deviation (0.820), which means that agricultural products are graded at the company's headquarters with the quality and price of each of them. Paragraph (4) was ranked in the last place, with an arithmetic mean (2.324). This mean is less than the study's hypothetical mean (3), with a standard deviation (1.257), which means that the management of agricultural companies does not provide publications and various publications that contribute to provide both workers and farmers with information on how to deal with agricultural products and the mechanisms of delivery, receipt and marketing. The overall arithmetic mean of the axis of obstacles related to the distance of the weakness of marketing services reached (3.146) with a standard deviation of (0.709).

## 2. Obstacles related to high marketing costs

**Table 4**

Obstacles related to the dimension of high marketing costs.

No.	The Scale	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Percentage 100%	Ranking
1	The company provides means to facilitate the process of transporting agricultural products from their production or cultivation to the company's website free.	2.637	1.269	53	3
2	The company's management is committed to the specific timings for the accomplishment of marketing dealings with the relevant parties.	3.589	0.752	72	2
3	The management of the company is ready to pay the cost of shipping, packaging and handling of agricultural products	2.347	1.256	47	4
4	The process of delivery and receipt of the product is smooth and simple	3.628	0.794	73	1
5	The company's management charges dealing fees during the delivery of agricultural products	2.010	1.350	40	5
<b>General Average</b>		<b>3.096</b>	<b>0.698</b>		

\* Prepared by the researcher N= 40

We find from the previous table, that paragraph 4 was ranked the first place with an arithmetic mean (3.628) and this mean is higher than the study hypothetical mean (3) with standard deviation (0.794), which means that the completion of the processes of delivery and receipt of the product is smooth and simple. Paragraph 5 was ranked in the last place, with an arithmetic mean (2.010). This is below the study hypothetical mean (3), with a standard deviation (1.350), which means that the management of agricultural companies does not charge fees for dealings during the delivery of agricultural products. The overall arithmetic mean of the axis of obstacles related to the dimension of high marketing costs (3.096) and a standard deviation of (0.698).

## 4. Environment related obstacles

**Table 5**

The dimension of the environment related obstacles for date marketing.

No.	The Scale	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Percentage 100%	Ranking
1	The company supports farmers with educational programs on how to deal with pollutants and how to reduce their effects on their products.	2.013	1.401	40	3
2	The company has educational programs on how to deal with natural resources	1.853	1.748	37	5
3	The company allocates sufficient funds to organize promotional campaigns on the environment and how to preserve it.	1.968	1.594	39	4

4	The company cares about presenting a positive image of its role in marketing healthy products free of pollutants harmful to public health.	2.479	1.249	50	1
5	The company provides farmers with educational leaflets on the causes of pollution and their treatment methods	2.331	1.208	47	2
<b>General Average</b>		<b>2.011</b>	<b>1.437</b>		

\* Prepared by the researcher N= 40

From the previous table we find that, paragraph 4 was ranked in the first place with an arithmetic mean (2.479) and this mean is lower than the study hypothetical mean (3) with a standard deviation (1.249). This means that the agricultural dates producing companies are not interested in presenting a positive image of their role in the marketing of healthy products free harmful pollutants to public health. Paragraph (2) was ranked in the last place, with an arithmetic mean (2.010) this mean is lower than the study hypothetical mean (3), with a standard deviation (1.748). This means that the management of agricultural companies does not have educational programs on how to deal with natural resources, and the general arithmetic mean of one axis after the obstacles of environmental considerations for date marketing (2.011). This is lower than the study hypothetical mean (3) with a standard deviation of (1.437).

#### 4. Obstacles related to agricultural policies

**Table 6**  
Constraints related to the dimension of agricultural policies.

No.	The Scale	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Percentage 100%	Ranking
1	The company's management organizes promotional campaigns to introduce its services to its customers.	3.786	0.889	76	2
2	The company's management seeks to attract development investments to market date products to benefit from internal and external experiences.	3.949	0.918	79	1
3	Farmers are charged an administrative cost related to marketing their products	2.421	1.231	48	5
4	The company offers incentives for remarkable workers in the agricultural sector in terms of production and marketing.	3.001	0.412	60	4
5	The incentives given by the company to its employees in the agricultural marketing activities are appropriate with their duties and duties.	3.219	0.611	64	3
<b>General Average</b>		<b>3.395</b>	<b>0.487</b>		

\* Prepared by the researcher N= 40

We find from the previous table that, paragraph (2) was ranked in the first place with an arithmetic mean of (3.949), and this average is higher than the study hypothetical mean (3) and standard deviation (0.918). This means that the management of date producing companies seeks to attract development investments to market date products in order to benefit from internal and external experiences. Paragraph (3) was ranked the last, with an arithmetic mean (2.421), which is lower than the study hypothetical mean (3) with a standard deviation (1.231). This means that farmers are not charged an administrative cost related to marketing their products. The overall arithmetic mean of the axis of obstacles related to the dimension of agricultural policy stability (3.395) with a standard deviation of (0.487).



## 5. Obstacles related to poor productivity

**Table 7**  
Obstacles related to the dimension of poor productivity.

N.	The Scale	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Percentage 100%	Ranking
1	The company has programs in guidance and prevention of factors that negatively affect the production of dates, which can be reflected negatively in its marketing	4.129	0.983	83	1
2	The company care about the field of scientific research to develop marketing activities	2.229	1.223	45	5
3	The administration urges all workers in dates cultivation to adopt the modern mechanization to facilitate the production processes and thus enhancing its marketing	3.935	0.895	79	2
4	The company's management provides all the necessary requirements to conduct training programs specialized in agricultural marketing	3.850	0.794	77	3
5	The company adopts a flexible organizational structure that facilitates the accomplishment of marketing activities and operations	3.214	0.635	64	4
<b>General Average</b>		<b>3.648</b>	<b>0.642</b>		

\* Prepared by the researcher N= 40

From the previous table we find that, paragraph (1) was ranked the first place with an arithmetic mean (4.129), and this mean is higher than the study hypothetical mean (3) with a standard deviation (0.983). This means that date producing companies have programs in guidance and prevention of factors that negatively affect the production of dates, which consequently can be reflected negatively in its marketing. Paragraph (2) was ranked the last place, with an arithmetic mean (2.229) and this average is lower than the study hypothetical mean (3), with a standard deviation (1.223). This means that date producing companies are not interested in scientific research to develop marketing activities. The overall arithmetic mean for the axis of obstacles related to the stability of agricultural policies (3.648) with a standard deviation (0.642).

Based on the results of the statistical analysis of agricultural marketing obstacles, we believe that the dimensions indicated for it were in accordance with Table (8).

**Table 8**  
Dimensions of Obstacles of agricultural marketing of dates.

No.	Obstacles To Agricultural Marketing Of Dates	General Mean	Ranking
1	Poor Marketing Services	3.146	3
2	Rising Marketing Costs	3.096	2
3	Environmental Considerations	2.011	1
4	Agricultural Policies	3.395	4
5	Poor Productivity	3.648	5

We find from the previous table that, the dimension of environmental obstacles" was ranked the first in terms of the obstacles most affected on the agricultural marketing of date crop in the date production companies in Al-Kharj. The results showed the obvious weakness of companies in the process of expanding environmental awareness of the causes of environmental pollution to workers and farmers, as well as the lack of sufficient funds for companies to organize promotional campaigns about the environment, and how to preserve it.

Companies do not care about presenting a positive image of their role in marketing healthy products free of harmful pollutants to public health. The indicators of the overall mean "high marketing costs" was ranked the second in terms of impact as one of the obstacles that limits the active role of agricultural marketing of the crop of dates in Al-Kharj. Furthermore, the clear weakness of the role of the research companies in providing support and attribution in promotion and physical distribution is clearly noticed. In addition to the lack of services accompanying the administrative processes, which can provoke all parties related to agricultural marketing to provide the best and most favorable to the overall objectives of the research companies and their customers. The overall mean indicators show poor marketing services. It was ranked in the third place for being one of the effecting obstacles on agricultural marketing of dates in Al-kharj as the activity of the companies is limited to traditional marketing process of dates crop and did not think or start using modern methods in the processes of gathering, sorting, packaging, transportation and storage. As well as using modern policies and strategies in the promotion, advertising and addition of value to date products. "Agricultural policy obstacles". Fourthly, in terms of ranking in the general environment, the company offers incentives for remarkable workers in the agricultural sector in terms of production and marketing, but the distribution of these incentives is not characterized as fair or is subjected to clear policies causing lack of productivity among some workers. From the results of table (8), we find that "the dimension of low productivity" was ranked the fifth place among the specific obstacles of the agricultural marketing of dates. Therefore, date producing companies do not prioritize the importance of research and studies related to the process of developing date marketing. This effect on not introducing modern techniques, methods and strategies in the marketing of date products and therefore competition with this crop internally and externally. Based on the above results, we find that the employees of date production companies in al-Kharj governorate have a sense of awareness and diagnosis of the obstacles of agricultural marketing of dates crop, and thus prove the validity of the study hypothesis, which stated that "the employees of date production companies in Al-Kharj governorate have a clear awareness of the obstacles that can adversely affect the performance of date crop activities and marketing processes".

## Conclusions

From the analysis and study objectives and hypotheses, we find that environmental considerations that date production companies did not consider paying sufficient attention in terms of identifying the environmental standards, their considerations, causes of pollution in them, prevention of these pollutants, the treatments needed to reduce the negative impacts on agricultural products associated with marketing activities, as well as poor marketing services and high costs and marketing margins, and not adopting clear policies in granting incentives to employees of these companies. Consequently, it is necessary to stimulate agricultural promotion, promote the reality of the processes and marketing activities of date crop and work to introduce modern methods and policies in the marketing of agricultural products in general and dates in particular. And taking care in conducting research and marketing studies, which aim at developing the reality of agricultural marketing of the crop of dates, as well as working to stimulate investment in the agricultural sector and enhance it, and the preparation of training programs aiming at all concerned parties with the production of dates to introduce them to the agricultural marketing of this crop and its importance. As well as working to create and promote the added value to this product through the use of modern technologies to communicate with the public, especially social networks and organize and participate in date exhibitions and festivals internally and externally.



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