

United Arab Emirates Fruits and Vegetables Market - Growth, Trends, Covid-19 Impact, and Forecasts (2023 - 2028)

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Report description:

?The UAE fruits and vegetables market is projected to register a CAGR of 9.9% during the forecast period (2022-2027).

In addition to the serious implications on people's health and healthcare services, coronavirus (COVID-19) seemed to have a significant impact on the UAE fruits and vegetables market as well. Due to supply chain disruptions, border closures, and movement restrictions, the United Arab Emirates, as a net importer of fresh produce, experienced a moderate impact of the pandemic. Since the demand from the hospitality, restaurant, and catering (HORECA) sector represents a significant share of fruit and vegetable consumption, the negative impact was observed from the demand side due to confinement measures.

The UAE economy is diverse, with high standards of living among the consumers. The country's consumer base is characterized by the large expatriate and immigrant population, which accounted for about 88% of the country's overall population in 2018. Although the diverse preferences of the consumers pose challenges to the UAE fresh produce market, they provide numerous opportunities for the growth of the market. The growth within fruits and vegetables is likely to be driven by the introduction of new products (like multi-vitamin juice) and improvements in packaging, which gives rise to extended product life cycles. The demand for local produce is gaining traction among UAE consumers. Consumers perceive local produce to be of better quality, and they are aware of the low carbon footprint of local products compared to imported products. This is driving the production of fresh fruits and vegetables in the country. The country majorly depends on imports to cater to its local demand for fruits and vegetables due to low domestic production. Despite the environmental challenges in the production of local fresh produce, the country has made tremendous efforts over the last decade by adopting sustainable and smart agriculture techniques, such as hydroponics, smart irrigation, and aquaponics, that improved the optimum utilization of arable land and the quality of local fresh produce.? Hydroponics is gaining popularity among farmers in the United Arab Emirates, especially for growing local fruits and vegetables with minimal water resources. According to the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, the number of

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hydroponic farms increased from 50 in 2009 to 1,000 in 2021. Furthermore, the ministry is employing significant efforts to rationalize water consumption and adopt various methods to increase the efficiency of agricultural water use. In 2019, the Farmers Services Centre in Abu Dhabi announced the implementation of smart irrigation management information systems for farmers. The smart technologies utilize agricultural meteorological systems through the installation of two agricultural meteorological stations in Rimah, Al Ain, and Seeh Al Khair, Al Dhafra. Hence, with the rising health awareness among consumers and the adoption of new technologies to boost production, the market is expected to show steady growth during the forecast period.

UAE Fruits & Vegetables Market Trends

Increase in the Adoption of High Technology Practices

The United Arab Emirates is situated in an arid zone. Its climate is characterized by low rainfall and high temperature. Despite these challenges, the country has made tremendous efforts over the last decade by adopting sustainable and smart agricultural techniques, such as hydroponics, smart irrigation, and aquaponics, that improved the optimum utilization of arable land and the quality of local fresh produce. Hydroponics, or agriculture without soil, is gaining popularity among farmers in the United Arab Emirates, especially in growing local fruits and vegetables with minimal water resources. Vertical farming requires less space for fruits or vegetables to grow. This is one of the most suitable farming solutions to counter the challenges presented by the country's limited arable land and water. According to the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, the number of hydroponic farms increased from 50 in 2009 to 1,000 in 2016. The UAE Ministry is employing significant efforts to rationalize water consumption and increase the efficiency of agricultural water use. It is adopting various methods to achieve this. In 2019, the Farmers Services Centre in Abu Dhabi announced the implementation of smart irrigation management information systems for farmers. The smart technologies utilize agricultural meteorological systems through the installation of two agricultural meteorological stations in Rimah, Al Ain, and Seeh Al Khair, Al Dhafra. In 2020, the Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO) announced plans to invest USD 100 million (AED 367 million) in four agri-tech companies, including Aero Farms, Madar Farms, RNZ, and Responsive Drip Irrigation, that will build R&D and production facilities in Abu Dhabi to develop next-generation farming tech. Hence, the rapid use of modern farming techniques, such as hydroponics and smart irrigation methods, across the farms in the United Arab Emirates is enabling the production of fruits and vegetables all year round. This factor is driving the growth of the fruits and vegetables market in the country.

Cucumber Dominates the Vegetables Market

Cucumber dominates the vegetables market with respect to production. Hydroponic farming is an excellent solution as it is a sustainable method of growing vegetables. Hydroponics can save up to 60 to 70% of water, attesting that the United Arab Emirates, despite being an arid region, is well-suited to this method. Cucumber is one of the most suited vegetables for the same and is widely grown using indoor techniques. Soilless production systems, as a technique associated with greenhouses, would further increase the water and land productivity of vegetable crops. In the United Arab Emirates, ICARDA's research for development activities showed that cucumber yield had increased at least two-fold after the adoption of soilless production systems at farmers' fields compared to conventional soil-based production systems under greenhouses. Further, a study conducted to analyze the production of cucumber crops in cooled and net houses at 18 farms in three different regions showed that net house production in winter is as high as in cooled greenhouses. Vegetable crops grown in open fields and at greenhouses constituted 2.6% of the total plant holdings area. Cucumber accounted for 20.7% of the total area of vegetable crops in 2016, as per a report by Abu Dhabi's Statistics Centre. The soilless production system in the United Arab Emirates would increase the grower's income for cucumber production by twofold compared to the traditional soil-based growing system under greenhouses. Therefore, the adoption of modern farming techniques for achieving self-sufficiency and the production of cucumbers are expected to grow consistently over the forecast period in the United Arab Emirates.

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