

Problems of marketing dates in Hilla district / Babylon province

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Abstract

The research aims to identify the most important problems of date marketing facing date palm growers in Hilla District / Babylon province. The marketing problems of dates facing palm farmers have been limited. The results showed that the most influential marketing problem is the axis of storage and manufacturing problems, as it ranked first with a weighted average of (3.311), and the axis of the problem of harvesting came in the last rank with a weighted average of (2.901).and based on the results of analyzing the most important marketing problems for dates, it is necessary to encourage the establishment of private factories for packing and processing dates, producing date molasses and jam, and introducing them as raw materials in the manufacture of biscuits, cake and vinegar, and educating the consumer on the use of dates as food and work to establish cooperative societies specialized in marketing dates so that they help producers in marketing their crops at reasonable prices. Paying attention to holding agricultural exhibitions and encouraging investment in palm cultivation and date production and processing and activating the role of agricultural extension in the field of palm groves in terms of services, activities and training programs, especially in the field of marketing dates.

Keywords: marketing dates, problems of marketing dates, Iraq

Introduction and research problem:

Dates play a major role in the economies of some of the producing countries, where they constitute one of the sources of national income, where dates are considered one of the important agricultural commodities produced by Iraq, along with cement and petroleum [3] , In addition to the role of palm trees in preserving the environment and combating desertification. Therefore, Iraq has been known since time immemorial as one of the oldest habitats for palm cultivation and the production and marketing of dates in the world. where its cultivation spread in the Mesopotamia Valley more than four thousand years BC, as it had a very important role in economic life. Social and religious, where it is one of the most important sources of income for thousands of farming families, as well as thousands of others in various economic sectors that benefit from the process of producing and marketing dates and their

product while performing the functions of these operations [2]. Marketing is a function of the movement and development of society and one of the important issues that occupied a distinguished position on the map of economic priorities to achieve development programs in many countries of the world [5]. The research problem begins, which is that although Iraq is at the forefront of the world's production of dates, dates in Iraq are exposed to marketing and export problems that affected the reality of date production in Iraq. However, in reality, he indicates that the country's revenues from exporting date palm fruits are not commensurate with the volume of its exports, due to the low selling prices of Iraqi date palm fruits abroad due to its low marketing efficiency, as well as its exposure to unfair competition at times. Hence the research problem came, so it was necessary to study the possibility of raising the production of dates,

especially the important and high-priced commercial varieties that are internationally required, and to increase their competitiveness. Given the importance of identifying these marketing problems, this study came to try to answer the following question:

What are the problems of marketing the date crop in Hilla District / Babylon province?

Research importance :

The importance of the research comes from the importance of palm trees being one of the important agricultural sectors and what palm trees represent as a national wealth that contributes to supporting the national economy as well as representing a symbol and a historical identity for Iraq.

***study aim:**

- 1- Identifying the most important paragraphs of marketing problems in each of the axes of marketing problems for dates in Hilla District / Babylon province.
- 2- Descending order of the axes of dates marketing problems in Hilla District / Babylon province.

Research methods:

* Research methodology: The descriptive approach was used to reach the objectives of the research, were this approach is compatible with the nature of the study, which includes identifying the problems of Marketing in the district of Hilla / Babylon province [1]

* Research area: Hilla district / Babylon province, which includes the center of Hilla, Abi Gharq district, and Al-Kifl district, was chosen as a region to conduct the study.

* The research community and its sample: The research community included all the owners of palm groves in the district of Hilla, whose number is (2952) farmers, distributed in three regions: (Al-Kifl district (1549 farmers), and Abi Ghark district (774 farmers) and the Hilla

Center (629 farmers), (according to the statistics of the Directorate of Agriculture of Babylon for the year 2021). A random proportional sample of (10%) was drawn, with a size of (295) respondents.

Research tool:

For the purpose of obtaining the data necessary to achieve the objectives of the research, a questionnaire was prepared consisting of three parts. The first part included data related to the personal characteristics of the owners of palm groves, namely:(Age, level of education, contribution of the crop to the annual income, agricultural experience, participation in agricultural and marketing training activities in the field of date palms and dates, type of possession of orchard land, exposure to information sources).The second part included (36) problems distributed over (5) axes in the field of marketing dates, which are; (harvesting: 6 problems), (sorting and packing: 11 problems), (storage and manufacturing: 8 problems), (transportation: 4 problems) and (selling: 7 problems), which was obtained through the researcher's review of the literature and previous studies that are related to the subject of the study and conducting personal interviews with specialists in the fields of horticulture and economics, as well as obtaining the opinions of specialists in agricultural extension, and through a personal interview with the owners of palm groves, and after completing the arrangement of problems.Five alternatives were set to answer each problem representing the degree of its impact, which is (very large, large, medium, few, no problem) and the following numerical values (4,3,2,1,0) were determined for them, respectively.For the purpose of verifying the validity of the questionnaire and its ability to measure the subject of the research, an exploratory sample of (30) respondents was selected from the owners of the orchards in the Hilla district / Babylon province from outside

the study sample, and the data of the exploratory sample were collected for the period (1-5/8/2022), This is to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire paragraphs and their understanding by the respondents, and to find the reliability and validity coefficient for the test paragraph, and to ensure that the owners of the orchards have information about the fields and themes included in the study. The stability coefficient was measured using the split-half method by dividing the paragraphs into odd and even pairs and finding the correlation between them according to (Pearson's) equation. Its value was (0.80), which represents stability for half of the test, and to find the stability coefficient for the entire test, the correction equation (Spearman-Brown) was used, and its value was (0.89), and to obtain the test validity coefficient, the test coefficient was rooted and its result was (0.94) and the stability coefficient is acceptable if its value reaches (0.70) or more, and it is more acceptable if it approaches the correct one [4] and after applying the conditions of stability and validity to the test paragraph, the questionnaire form is ready for data collection.

* Data collection: The research data was collected by answering the questionnaire paragraphs by means of a personal interview with the owners of palm groves

The data collection process took place for the period from (10/8/2022 - 10/10/2022), and after completing the data collection, unpacking and tabulation, it was analyzed using the statistical analysis program (SPSS) for social sciences.

Results and discussion:

The results were discussed according to the research objectives and through the following:

1- Identifying the most important paragraphs of marketing problems in each of the axes of

marketing problems for dates in Hilla District / Babylon province.

The first axis: (genie problems)

The results showed that the weighted average for paragraph related to harvesting problems ranged between (2.806-3.169), and the paragraph (high wages for workers trained in the process of harvesting dates) came with the highest weighted average of (3.169). This may be due to the lack of trained workers in the harvesting process and their scarcity in crop harvest season, which caused an increase in wages, While the paragraph (Some palm growers harvest late harvesting and the crop was damaged) came with the lowest weighted average of (2.806). The reason for this is when the crop is delayed without harvesting until the tenth or eleventh month. Causes damage to dates in mites. As shown in Table (1).

The second axis: (sorting and packing problems)

The results showed that the weighted average for paragraph of sorting and packing problems ranged between (2.745-3.467), and the paragraphs (absence of special stations for packing crops in date crop areas) came with the highest weighted average of (3.467).The reason for this may be due to the high costs of establishing filling stations and the fact that they do not have sufficient funds for that in the absence of government support for dates, while the paragraph (high percentage of losses and wastes of dates when packing in packages prepared for that) came with the lowest weighted average of (2.745).The reason for this may be due to farmers' poor awareness of the importance of packaging as a marketing process, which caused them to give the lowest estimate compared to the rest of the marketing problems, as shown in Table (2).

Table (1): Descending order of the paragraphs of harvesting problems according to the weighted average for each paragraph

rank	weighted average	Nothing	few	Medium	big	Very big	Paragraphs	No. rank	NO. form
1	3.169	0	0	58	129	108	High wages for trained workers in the process of harvesting dates.	1	1
2	2.925	0	6	74	151	64	Scarcity of employment in general at the time of harvesting dates.	2	2
3	2.881	0	12	65	164	54	The lack of interest of some palm farmers in harvesting and selling dates.	3	3
4	2.816	0	10	68	183	34	Lack of interest of palm farmers in cleaning their crops in accordance with the required specifications.	4	5
5	2.813	0	7	78	173	37	The high rate of loss, damage and waste during the date harvesting process.	5	6
6	2.806	0	12	73	170	40	Late harvesting by some date palm farmers, and the crop was damaged.	6	4

Table (2): Descending order of the paragraphs of the sorting and filling problems according to the weighted average for each paragraph

rank	weighted average	Nothing	few	Medium	big	Very big	paragraphs	No. rank	NO. form
1	3.467	0	0	38	81	176	The absence of special stations for packing the crop in the date crop areas.	1	6
2	3.088	0	2	55	153	85	Lack of trained workers in the process of sorting and packing dates.	2	1
3	3.027	0	4	46	183	62	Using	3	2

							primitive methods in the process of sorting and packing dates.		
4	2.915	0	13	74	133	75	Lack of interest in the quality of the crop and holding the defaulters accountable.	4	11
5	2.861	0	6	86	146	57	Absence of quality control of packaging factories.	5	10
6	2.854	0	4	92	142	57	The use of 25 kg packages for the purpose of export affects the quality of dates as a result of the loading and transportation operations.	6	8
7	2.827	0	15	103	95	82	Little or no use of electronic optical sorting machines that depend on size and color.	7	3
8	2.796	0	12	116	87	80	The inaccuracy of the laboratory testing and the fact that some traders and exporters carry out this process themselves.	8	5
9	2.789	0	16	90	129	60	The inaccuracy of the laboratory examination and the fact that some	9	4

							traders and exporters carry out this process themselves.		
10	2.762	0	11	103	126	55	Existence of packages that do not suit the tastes of the consumer and are not compatible with modern printing arts.	10	9
11	2.745	0	13	88	155	39	Delaying the process of sending or exporting dates may lead to spoilage and low quality.	11	7

The third axis: (storage and manufacturing problems)

The results showed that the weighted average for the paragraph of storage and manufacturing problems ranged between (2.783-3.522), and the paragraphs (weak investments in industries dependent on dates) came with the highest weighted average of (3.522). The reason for this may be due to the large number of imported dates from outside Iraq and the negative impact on their prices, while the paragraph (high percentage of dates lost through the manufacturing process) came with the lowest weighted average of (2.783). The reason for this may be the lack of use of modern machines in manufacturing processes in the absence of awareness of farmers about the importance of this process. As shown in Table (3).

The fourth axis: (transportation problems)

The results showed that the weighted average of the paragraph of transport problems ranged between (2.823-3.291), and the paragraphs (high prices of transporting the crop from its production places to its place of sale) came with the highest weighted average of (3.291). The reason for this may be due to either the high fuel prices or the remoteness of the places where dates are produced from the places where they are sold, while the paragraph (heavy loading of the crop in means of transport exposes the crop to damage) came with the lowest weighted average of (2.823). The reason for this is due to the crop being stacked in heaps on top of each other, and thus may lead to damage to the lower part of the crop, as shown in Table (4).

Table (3): Descending order of the paragraph of storage and manufacturing problems, according to the weighted average for each paragraphs

rank	weighted average	Nothing	few	Medium	Big	Very big	Paragraphs	No. rank	NO. form
1	3.522	0	1	20	98	176	Weak investment in date-based industries.	1	8
2	3.515	0	3	17	100	175	Lack of industries to absorb the surplus from the annual production of dates.	2	6
3	3.444	0	0	32	100	163	Failure to follow modern storage methods in date production areas.	3	3
4	3.301	0	0	39	128	128	Lack or lack of places to store dates with good specifications	4	1
5	3.138	0	0	47	160	88	High rental prices for storage places.	5	2
6	2.972	0	6	61	163	65	Lack of trained technical manpower for dates manufacturing factories.	6	7
7	2.816	0	2	121	101	71	Little or no use of the fumigation process with phosphine in storage to protect the crop from spoilage	7	4
8	2.783	0	16	77	157	45	High percentage of dates lost through the manufacturing process.	8	5

Table (4): Descending order of the paragraph of transportation problems according to the weighted average for each paragraphs.

rank	weighted average	Nothing	few	Medium	big	Very big	paragraphs	No. rank	NO. form
1	3.291	0	2	52	99	142	High prices for transporting the crop from the places of production to the place of sale.	1	1
2	3.244	0	2	23	171	99	Lack of availability of refrigerated and equipped containers for transporting dates to neighboring countries.	2	3
3	3.088	0	7	67	114	107	Lack of availability of means of transportation at the appropriate times.	3	2
4	2.823	0	4	77	181	33	Heavy loading of the crop in the means of transport exposes the crop to damage.	4	4

The fifth axis: (sale problems)

The results showed that the weighted average of the paragraph of selling problems ranged between (3.474-3.647), and the paragraphs (lack of an effective system for marketing dates by the state) came with the highest weighted average of (3.647).The reason for this is due to the state's lack of interest in the marketing process, and therefore it will

negatively affect farmers, while the paragraph (many fruits compete with dates at the time of production of dates and thus a decrease in local demand for dates) came with the lowest weighted average of (3.474).The reason for this is due to the farmers' belief that these crops will affect the prices of the date crop and the decrease in demand for it, as shown in Table (5).

Table (5): Descending order of paragraph about selling problems according to the weighted average for each paragraph

Rank	weighted average	Nothing	few	Medium	big	Very big	paragraphs	No. rank	NO. form
1	3.647	0	0	6	92	197	The absence of an effective system for marketing dates by the state.	1	1
2	3.603	0	0	19	79	197	Lack of interest in establishing agricultural associations to market dates.	2	3

3	3.420	0	0	40	91	164	Lack of marketing coordination between farmers to sell the crop in the same village or the same area.	3	2
4	2.993	0	1	56	182	56	Crop prices fluctuate during the production period.	4	4
5	2.938	0	4	72	157	62	The large number of intermediaries in the process of selling the crop and exploiting the farmer during periods of low prices.	5	5
6	2.779	0	4	113	122	56	Not organizing agricultural exhibitions for dates.	6	6
7	3.474	0	2	37	75	181	The competition of many crops for dates at the time of date production, and thus the decrease in the local demand for dates.	7	7

2- Descending order of the axes of dates marketing problems in Hilla District / Babylon province.

The results showed that in the field of marketing problems for dates, the axis (problems of storage and processing) ranked first in the field with a weighted average of (3.311).The reason for this may be that the farmers know the importance of this problem

in the high prices of the crop and thus benefit them. As for the last rank, the axis (harvesting problems) came within the field with a weighted average of (2.901). This may be due to the farmers' lack of knowledge of the importance of this problem and its impact on crop prices.The general weighted average for the field of marketing problems for dates is (3.101). As shown below:

Table (6): Descending order of the axes of dates marketing problems in Hilla District / Babylon province .

arrangement in the field	The weighted average of field	Problem axes	Overall weighted average	field/problems
1	3.311	Storage and manufacturing problems	3.101	Marketing problems for dates
2	3.265	Selling problems		
3	3.111	transportation problems		
4	2.921	Sorting and packing problems		
5	2.901	Harvest problems		

Conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions:

1- Through the results of the research, it was found that the axis of storage and manufacturing problems came in the first place with a weighted average of (3.311), and that the paragraph (weak investment in industries dependent on dates) came in the first place within this axis with a weighted average of (3.522), We conclude from this the lack of investment in industries that depend on dates and the lack of existing factories, and thus the demand for the product will decrease and its price in the local markets will decrease.

2- The selling problems axis came in the second rank with a weighted average of (3.265), and the paragraph (lack of an effective system for marketing dates by the state) came in the first rank within this axis with a weighted average of (3.647), We conclude from this the weakness or absence of the state's role in creating an effective system for marketing dates and assisting farmers in marketing their products, and thus will affect the price of the crop.

3- The axis of transportation problems came in the third rank with a weighted average of (3.111), and the paragraph (high prices of transporting the crop from its production places to the place of sale) came in the first rank within this axis with a weighted average of (3.291), and we conclude from that to the great impact resulting from High transportation prices and thus its impact on the economic return of farmers.

4- The axis of sorting and packaging problems came in the fourth rank with a weighted average of (2.921), and the paragraph (the absence of special stations for packing the crop in the areas of crop cultivation or date production) came in the first rank within this axis with a weighted average of (3.476), and we conclude from this is the great impact of the lack of stations for filling the crop and its proximity to the production areas, and thus its

negative impact on farmers in terms of economic return.

5- The axis of harvesting problems came in the fifth rank with a weighted average of (2.901), and the paragraph (high wages for workers trained in the process of harvesting dates) came in the first rank within this axis with a weighted average of (3.169), and we conclude from that the extent of the impact of the increase in workers' wages on the income The result, and thus the high cost of work, makes farmers embarrassed to take care of the crop.

Recommendations:

1- Encouraging the establishment of private factories for packing and processing dates and producing date molasses and jam.

2- Work to establish cooperative societies specialized in marketing dates so that they help producers in marketing their crops at remunerative prices.

3- Paying attention to holding agricultural exhibitions and encouraging investment in palm cultivation and date production and processing.

4- Activating the role of agricultural extension in the field of palm groves in terms of services, activities and training programs, especially in the field of marketing dates.

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