

Central Laboratory for Food and Feed (CLFF) in Egypt during 25 years



Dr. Akila S. Hamza

Introduction

CLFF was established in 1980 as an experiment. The idea was created by Dr. Akila S. Hamza and greatly supported by Professor, Dr. Youssef Wally, Minister for Agriculture.

The main goal was to enhance the quality, safety and availability of food and feed in Egypt.

CLFF is responsible for the quality control of manufactured

feed and imported feed ingredients and conducts the research plan for the development of food and nutrition.

The Danish Laboratory for Protein Chemistry (Proteinkemisk Institut) provided equipment and expertise during the start-up period, and IFU participated financially with share capital of DKK 2.1m. The partners and the managing director, Dr. Akila S. Hamza, were determined to achieve a commercial and financial self-supporting status for CLFF with the ability to build up funds for expansions.

From start to now

CLFF started activities with five staff members and today 400 people are employed. CLFF has moved to its own campus. During the first year, 2,000 samples were analysed, now the figure is 50,000. More than 100 students have made their thesis at CLFF – 38 wrote a Ph.D. and 68 an M.Sc.

Financially CLFF is operating almost independently, creating a profit every year and with a healthy cash-flow.

CLFF is widely recognised by foreign exporters of food and

feed items to Egypt, and in February 2004, CLFF obtained accreditation for meeting the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 in the field of chemical testing. CLFF is operating laboratory branches in the three largest import harbours in Egypt.

Management

From 1980 and until the spring of 2005, CLFF was managed and developed by Dr. Akila S. Hamza. She is an Agricultural Engineer and obtained her Ph.D. in Denmark. She developed the idea of establishing a laboratory in Egypt for improving the quality of food and feed by applying modern, high-quality analysing methods. The idea was supported by her Danish science colleagues.

Over the years a growing understanding emerged from the public and private sectors, and Dr. Akila S. Hamza's management style and step-by-step development efforts won acceptance and acknowledgement from customers, the higher education system and scientists.

CLFF is very much the fruits of Dr. Akila S. Hamza's work and dedication during more than 25 years. After having left the job as managing director due to an age limit, she is now acting as board member and special projects coordinator, and "I am even busier now than I was in the past!" says Dr. Akila S. Hamza.

Education is an essential keyword. The scientific staff is continuously upgraded in new methods and technologies in Egypt or abroad – for instance 27 staff members have received education and training at institutes in Denmark. Training and job enrichment is provided at all staff levels.

CLFF is also a popular place for studies and training for Egyptian students, and Dr. Akila S. Hamza emphasises CLFF's



efforts to support and improve the scientific environment within the quality aspects of food and feed – and in a wider perspective to secure and improve public health.

For the staff as for the management, dedication is a keyword.

Sustainability

CLFF's existence and development through 25 years are probably the best proof of its sustainability. Egypt, with limited arable land resources and an increasing population, is to a certain degree dependant on importing food and feed items – with the risk of foreign exporters simply luring the importers on quality/nutrition value compared to price.

A rough estimate shows net savings in foreign currency in the range of USD 15-20m in the last 10 years due to CLFF's control of nutritional value, contamination and microbiological activities.

Dr. Akila S. Hamza adds: "In the same period during which CLFF demonstrated "national sustainability", we succeeded in obtaining our own financial sustainability by moving from the support of others to becoming self-supporting in our core business".

Sustainability in the form of education, training and quality improvement cannot be quantified, but has no doubt been a positive contribution.

Many new ideas and projects are on the drawing board. The most challenging development is probably to expand CLFF into a regional centre for the food and feed sciences, offering education and training to Middle-Eastern, African and Asian students based on financing from donor countries and Egypt. In addition, Dr. Akila S. Hamza envisages CLFF in the role of

adviser to other developing countries wishing to establish similar laboratories.

Several countries have in different ways provided financial assistance and help to CLFF for activities outside its core business. The international cooperation is with Denmark (Danida), Germany (Göttingen University), USA (USAID; US Grain Council; American Soybean Association) and FAO.

Dr. Akila S. Hamza concludes: "This was my child from the beginning, but the growing-up and the present mature status would never have been possible without the dedicated and hard working staff members; I have seen my dream come true!"

Sven Riskær, Managing Director of IFU, adds: "IFU is proud of having co-financed CLFF during the start-up and expansion period and is very pleased with its further development since we left."

Facts about CLFF

Danish private partner	Proteinkemisk Institut
Country	Egypt
IFU entering the project	1982
Number of employees	400
IFU shares	DKK 2.1m
Total investment	DKK 3.0m