

#### 4. General description of the activities, achievements and merits justifying the nomination

##### **SEKEM-Sustainable development has been our goal for more than 30 years**

“Development can only be sustainable, when it is thought of and realized holistically. In Sekem, biodynamic cultivation, environmentally friendly economic activity and fair chances of development, where co-workers and suppliers go hand in hand, reinforce each other.”

*Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, founder of the organic pioneer SEKEM*

The development initiative SEKEM broke new ground, being convinced that Egypt's complex and interdependent problems require a holistic approach. Poverty is conditioned by a lack of education, which in turn aggravates poverty. The increased occurrence of diseases is caused by poverty and malnutrition as well as ignorance (order: lack of education) and environmental damage, and particularly by handling chemical fertilizers in agriculture. Unfortunately unemployment and unfair conditions in global trade make it hard for the individual to break through this vicious cycle.

SEKEM stands out for its tripartite connection of economical success that backs up social projects and supports a manifold and intensive cultural work. In doing so since 1977, SEKEM has successfully cultivated desert land through bio-dynamic agriculture in Egypt according to Demeter standards and could also establish the largest market for organic products outside of the western world.

Significant success was also accomplished in the social and cultural fields: SEKEM maintains its own school with kindergarten and therapeutic pedagogy, a vocational training center, a medical center that serves more than 30,000 people in the surrounding area, and an academy for sustainable development in applied research.

Through all these different areas, SEKEM seeks to encourage a holistic human development.

### Companies/ Brands

1. **ATOS PHARMA** produces and markets phyto-pharmaceuticals and nutritional supplements
2. **ISIS** produces a varied choice of organically grown, processed foodstuffs and also sorts, packs and sells fresh fruit and vegetables
3. **NATURETEX** develops and manufactures cloth and textiles made of organic cotton
4. **LOTUS** processes herbs and spices, grains and oilseeds mainly for exports
5. **EI-MIZAN** provides seedlings, that are especially robust due to grafting
6. **LIBRA** organizes the cultivation of Sekem's bio-dynamic herbs, cotton, fruit and vegetables through cooperating with organic farmers all over Egypt, it also manages the compost sites, keeps cattle, chicken and sheep for the production of animal products including dairy
7. **SEKEM for Land Reclamation** treats new desert lands and grows bio-dynamic herbs, grains and oilseeds on them so far

In recent years SEKEM grew outstandingly and became the market leader for organic foodstuffs and phyto-pharmaceuticals in Egypt. Approximately 55 per cent of the total turnover is generated on the local market – a relevant factor that contributes to the sustainability of the whole business. Beside this, long term cooperation and exporting lead to reliable business relations to customers in the export markets in Europe and the USA. About 200 farmers between Aswan and Alexandria apply the international standards of bio-dynamic farming. On about 2500 hectare desert land SEKEM creates new bio-dynamical acreage and with that a base for life and new jobs for disadvantaged groups. The turnover of the SEKEM Group totaled to around 196 million Egyptian Pound in 2008 and will, despite the global recession, continue to rise in the year 2009.

SEKEM invests in its companies to ensure a continuous growth in sales as well as employees, machines, technology and land reclamation, but also in new and prospective activities such as the field of renewable energies. In 2008, the total investment amounted to 77 million Egyptian Pounds, half of which was used for land reclamation, the other half for the extension of the existing companies.

All the companies of the SEKEM Group are certified according to ISO 9001, ISO 22000, to EU organic regulations, international Demeter Standards and fair-trade standards (certified by the Fairtrade Labelling Organization). Furthermore the environmental management system of the Group is certified according to ISO 14001 and its industrial safety according to OHSAS 18001.

**Cultural Development (SEKEM Development Foundation)**

1. The **SEKEM Kindergarten** offers children from 3 to 6 years full-time day-care. Training of senses, handcrafts, painting, free play and fairy tales lay the foundation for further healthy development.
2. **SEKEM School** teaches about 260 pupils in 12 classes according to the Egyptian curriculum completed by creative and technical subjects and a holistic pedagogic training of the teachers. The SEKEM school leads to the secondary school degree as well as to general university qualification.
3. At the **School for special Education** about 30 mentally and physically handicapped children and pupils are educated according to their special needs to prepare them for an active life in their community.
4. The **Chamomile Children** of the **Community School** includes about 80 children between 10 and 14 years who were born into underprivileged families. This project is part of SEKEM's approach to offer an alternative to child labor. Next to easy seasonal activities (e.g. picking chamomile), the children attend school, receive medical assistance, food, clothing and remuneration with the goal of catching up their primary school degree.
5. **SEKEM Vocational Training** offers about 200 teenagers the possibility to accomplish vocational training in metal working, carpentry, textile processing, electrical engineering, or computer maintenance.
6. The **MAHAD** offers continuing education for all SEKEM employees: subjects-specific and general courses, alphabetization courses as well as arts and crafts.
7. **SEKEM Medical Center** offers medical attendance for more than 30,000 people from the surrounding villages, health and hygiene related education as well as mother-child-programs.
8. The **HELIOPOLIS Academy** for sustainable development conducts applied research in the fields of sustainable agriculture, medicine, phyto-pharmacy, renewable energies, holistic culture, social science and arts. It also offers training, consultancy and other capacity building programs in the fields of innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship.
9. The **HELIOPOLIS University** is in the state of establishment. Teaching and research activities in the fields of engineering, economics, organic agriculture, pharmacy, medicine, arts and pedagogy are to be conducted according to the requirements of Egyptian society.

## Sustainability

In the **sustainability report** SEKEM annually rates and communicates the consequences of its activities to all stakeholders of the group. SEKEM's sustainability strategy focuses on the three aspects of economy, culture, social matters – embedded in a sustainable intercourse with the environment as well as founded in the compliance with ethical principles. Culture scores high at SEKEM, as is shown in the manifold activities of the SEKEM Development Foundation. It is part of SEKEM's conviction, that culture and art are indispensable components of living and working together sustainably, as they form human beings as well as societies.

In every dimension SEKEM has committed to sustainability goals, that conform with the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative as well as the UN Global Compact. The implementation of these goals is measured by means of quantitative data and qualitative information.

In the field of environment, for instance, one goal is the extension of renewable energies – with a great focus on finding renewable solutions that are suitable for Egypt's climatic conditions and technical environment–in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the country.

Through producing compost following a TÜV certified composting process, 60,000 tons of carbon dioxide could be reduced in each of the years 2007 and 2008.

Transparent communication within SEKEM as well as with the public is one of SEKEM's basic principles. The sustainability report is published annually and regular information is distributed via the SEKEM *Insight* bulletin. Both are available on [www.sekem.com](http://www.sekem.com).