



## Desert Joy

*These tomatoes from a very special cultivation site in Tunisia are real Fair Trade tomatoes. They are bursting with flavour and are cultivated responsibly, keeping the respectful treatment of every employee in mind. The employees are enthusiastic, ambitious, and hard-working. They work towards creating a better life and to cultivate the finest, most delicious tomatoes.*



## Fairtrade Premium

We would like to say a HUGE thank you to the people who order, sell, buy, and eat Fairtrade tomatoes!

Fairtrade was an unknown phenomenon for the employees of Desert Joy. At first, they even felt slightly distrustful as they were not entirely sure what would happen. However, we were able to drum up their support and enthusiasm through discussion and training. A Fairtrade Premium Committee was set up to manage projects; a workers committee to represent and act on behalf of all employees. Yet there was still nothing tangible about what Fairtrade could actually mean for them.

Last season was the first full season that Fairtrade tomatoes could be sold (we were certified in May 2015). Initially, there was no real rush on Fairtrade sales. Nevertheless, there were people who made a concerted effort and who are still committed to getting Fairtrade tomatoes out there on supermarket shelves – in the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, and, next year, in the UK. This is fantastic!

In February of this year, our Fairtrade Premium Committee drew up a list of the precise needs of the employees, their families, and their community. Which project could now be implemented? Project proposals were then drawn up and the projects presented in brief. These included a visit to a dentist, nutritious meals, a nursery, and a project to keep sheep. The committee members even created a short film in which they talked about the projects to show to all the employees in the canteen. This would enable the employees to make an informed choice. A democratic decision was made to make nutritious meals available to employees during working hours. A lot of work is being done to implement our first project... More on this to follow!



## New plants

The new plants have been planted! The last crop of tomatoes was picked in July when the weather in Tunisia was extremely hot and it was also the time of Ramadan. So, at a more relaxed pace, all the old plants were removed, the greenhouse was cleaned, and preparations were made for the new season. This year, the tomatoes planted early did not produce the hoped-for crop due to the hot weather, so the new tomato plants were planted in September. The first tomatoes are expected to be harvested in week 46.

A new five-hectare greenhouse has also been built – bringing the total to fifteen hectares – so that even more delicious tomatoes can be grown. It houses the Angelle and Axiany varieties, as well as orange, yellow, and brown cherry tomatoes. As last year's crop of yellow tomato was not as tasty as expected, this year we have planted Summer Sun, an exceptionally sweet cherry tomato. Once again this year, we will all be rolling up our sleeves and buckling down to work!





## **Mabrouk (blessed) el Eid!**

It's time for a party, with the biggest Islamic celebration of the year - Eid al-Adha also known as the Festival of Sacrifice. You can tell that the festival is just around the corner as sheep are being dragged all over the place, even being transported on mopeds. It's a bit like us westerners buying a Christmas tree. You want one that looks nice, that you can look at, that children can play with, and that families can gather around. The only difference is the price. The prices for sheep hit the roof during this period. If you really are poor, you're not expected to buy a sheep and your considerate neighbours will share theirs with you. But who wants to be poor? Who wants to miss out on all those memorable moments associated with the sheep? Well, every year we receive a warm invitation from families wishing to share this tradition with us.

This festival reminds people of the request made to Ibrahim (Abraham) to offer his son Ishmael to Allah as a test of his faith and loyalty. Just as Ibrahim was about to kill his son with a knife, an angel appeared to tell him that a sheep could take the place of Ishmael instead. To many, it's a well-known story which also features in the Bible. Wanting to be like Ibrahim is an important part of celebrating the Festival of Sacrifice.

When the big day arrives on which the souls of millions of sheep will take their last breath, we set off after the long morning prayer (which can be heard through the speakers of the mosque) to drive through Gabès. This normally busy city with its high levels of traffic, noise, honking sounds, dust, and people is deserted. Total peace and quiet! Here and there you can hear the bleating of a sheep and the only activity you see is a group of people chasing a sheep that has managed to escape. They can see their month's salary going up in smoke.

Once we arrive, the family get ready and I prepare my children. Luckily, sheep seem to meekly accept their fate so there is no real struggle. The sheep sniffs briefly at the mini barbecue on which herbs and fish extract are smoking, then the man of the house murmurs a few words and cuts the sheep's throat right through. Tunisian children watch without batting an eyelid and some young boys even try to help hold onto the sheep. Once the sheep is dead, a cut is made near to its hind leg. Air is blown into the sheep either by mouth or using a bicycle pump until the animal appears to lift up into the air. This makes it easier to remove the skin. The sheep is then hung up and its entrails removed. It's then the turn of the women to take action. There's a lot of work to be done! I see a girl walk by who then blows into the windpipe to see how far the sheep's lungs expand. Someone tells me that this is beneficial to the development of a girl's lungs. This must date back to the time when there were no balloons yet, I think to myself.

A lot of work goes into cleaning a sheep. Plastic tubs, buckets of water, several metres of intestines, bowls filled with other entrails, the sheep's head, blood, and body. My son holds on to his cuddly toy while he stands and watches. Pieces of liver and testicles are thrown onto the barbecue to be roasted straightaway. I go into the kitchen to help with some less squeamish tasks, such as grating carrots and finely chopping parsley. After a couple of hours, the traditional dish of osban and couscous is placed on the table. We sit down at the long tables to share the meal. Osban is stuffed sheep's stomach with rice, herbs, and finely chopped entrails. It makes a change from your usual celebratory dinner.

**Do you have any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding our news update?**

Then please send an e-mail to [info@desertjoy.tn](mailto:info@desertjoy.tn) or call us on +216 92 591 730