



## 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.*



## Tomatoes

We are currently working at full production in all of our greenhouses. Working with four different tomatoes varieties can be challenging now and then, as we have to factor in the different needs of the different plants. The good news is that spring is just around the corner in Tunisia, and our plants will be able to soak plenty of the bright North African sun. The large amount of sugars our plants can make from all that sunlight ensures their high quality and wonderfully sweet taste, which is just as sweet as Dutch strawberries!

However, this light from the sun is a forewarning of an inevitably hot summer. This is why we are currently busy preparing the plants for the warmer period, so that the same quality is guaranteed later in the season. By giving the plants more fresh water and better shelter, we make sure that they'll sprout even more leaves. The plants will soon make good use of these leaves to evaporate extra water. This evaporation helps to cool themselves and the greenhouse, to such an extent that the summer temperature in the greenhouse can be up to ten degrees cooler than outside. The cool temperature is a necessity given that outside temperatures can rise to around 40 °C during the Tunisian summer!

In summary: while we are enjoying the beautiful tomatoes we are harvesting every day, we are also busy preparing ourselves for the warm North African summer.

## Award for Dali

Mohamed Ali, nicknamed Dali, studied Plant Production at university in Tunisia and now works for Desert Joy. During his time as a student, Dali came up with an idea that he was very enthusiastic about. The idea involved making high-quality compost from organic waste by using worms in order to add value to unused organic waste and reduce environmental pollution.

Composting involves making a mix (in this case offal and wood), which is then digested by microorganisms under certain temperature, moisture, and oxygen conditions. The redworms (*Eisenia fetida*) added to the compost ensure a balance between the amount of food, the available space, and their own numbers. The compost's high quality is down to the worms' excreta.

Dali (pictured here in the green jumper) came second place in the Tunisian National Innovation Competition with his idea!



## Organic tomatoes and sugar snap peas

This year, we initiated a trial to grow organic tomatoes at Desert Joy. Of course, this involved a lot of preparation, achieving certification according to the guidelines of ECOCERT, selecting suitable varieties, gathering information on how to produce organic compost, and constructing four tunnels (each measuring 500 m<sup>2</sup>) on a lot next to the current greenhouses in which to plant the tomatoes and sugar snap peas. Liquid fertiliser is applied from 'tea bag' filled with organic material. In addition to this, garlic is used to stave off insects and infestations by spraying garlic extract on or around the openings and hanging up bundles of freshly chopped garlic. Our employee Nahed Ferchichi is responsible for the organic cultivation and treats the plants as if they were her children. It looks very well maintained and the plants are growing steadily and healthily. It would be super to be able to say we grow tomatoes and sugar snap peas that are both Fairtrade and organic. To be continued!



## A snapshot of the company

Hanen Benkhoud is pictured above. Hanen is a mother of two children and has been working as a financial administrator at Desert Joy since her first day here. As being a working mother is not commonplace in El Hamma, where we are based, we asked her about her experience as a working mother, what her friends and family thought about this, and why she works.

'It was a tough time in my life when I began working. I had to make lots of considerations: I was a woman with two children, both of whom with health problems, and my husband worked far away and was only home at weekends. However, Desert Joy was a place where I could forget my problems; it has had a positive impact on my life. I felt I could be productive, which is what I always wanted to be when I was a student. I didn't just want to be a mother who would wash and cook. When my children fell ill very often, I was scared that I would be fired, but that didn't happen, fortunately. My mother did a lot for me and I was able to work on part-time basis for 36 hours a week. Even though more and more women in the south of the country are beginning to work, it's still problematic. People shower you with questions and you have to defend your decision. Everyone has an opinion on the matter – there's a lot of pressure from society. However, I'm one of the lucky ones! I have a great husband, a great mother, and I work in a great company with a fantastic team. There's no Tunisian company quite like Desert Joy in that respect.'

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