

Seeds from the Heart of the UAE Reach the Arctic:

UAE-Based ICBA Becomes the First Research Center from the Arabian Peninsula to Deposit Seeds in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

- *A Historic Milestone in Preserving UAE's Agricultural Legacy and Global Crop Resilience*

Dubai, UAE – 08 March, 2025 – In an unprecedented journey across continents and time, Emirati seeds, collected and extensively studied at the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), have reached the Arctic, where they are now securely preserved in the world's most protected agricultural time capsule—the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

This historic deposit, the first of its kind from the Gulf region, marks a pivotal step in safeguarding the future of agriculture and ensuring the long-term preservation of climate-resilient crops for generations to come.

For the first time, seeds from the UAE's pioneering agricultural research have been enshrined in the permafrost of Norway's Svalbard archipelago. This deposit includes 315 accessions belonging to 110 plant species, including Ghaf tree, the national tree of UAE, selected for their exceptional tolerance to drought, heat, and salinity—traits essential for agriculture in extreme environments. These seeds of 24 genera and 61 species, the result of ICBA's extensive research and conservation efforts, now stand alongside the world's most vital plant genetic resources.

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA, emphasized the far-reaching significance of this deposit, stating: "From the heart of the UAE to the Arctic permafrost, ICBA's seeds from UAE have embarked on a journey through time, ensuring future generations can access the genetic resources needed to sustain food production in a changing world. These seeds represent decades of research in plant breeding, biotechnology, and environmental adaptation. Many of these accessions have been carefully selected for their ability to thrive in extreme conditions, making them invaluable for global food security. By preserving them in the Svalbard Global Seed



Vault, we are securing a vital agricultural legacy that will support innovation and resilience for years to come."

A Journey Through Time: UAE Seeds in the World's Agricultural Time Capsule

Nicknamed the "Doomsday Vault", the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is the ultimate safeguard for agricultural biodiversity. Located 1,300 kilometers from the North Pole, this facility is designed to protect seeds from conflict, natural disasters, climate change, and unforeseen global crises. With over 1.3 million seed samples from 6,200 plant species, it serves as the world's last-resort backup for crop diversity.

ICBA's deposit carries the agricultural DNA of the UAE and beyond—a genetic blueprint for future food security. From the sands of the Arabian Peninsula to the icy chambers of Svalbard, these seeds symbolize resilience, adaptation, and survival, encapsulating the UAE's vision for a sustainable, food-secure future.

For over two decades, ICBA has been a global leader in agricultural innovation, focusing on crops that flourish in arid and saline environments. The ICBA Genebank, home to over 17,000 accessions from 325 plant species, is among the world's most extensive collections of drought-, heat-, and salt-tolerant crops.

Preserving the Future: A Global Effort Rooted in the UAE's Vision

As global food systems face growing threats from climate change, desertification, and water scarcity, ICBA's contribution to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault reinforces the UAE's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and international collaboration. This deposit ensures that future scientists, farmers, and policymakers will have access to the seeds that hold the key to agricultural resilience.

From the UAE's arid landscapes to the frozen vaults of Svalbard, ICBA's seeds have been sealed away—not just as a safeguard for today, but as a promise for the future.

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