

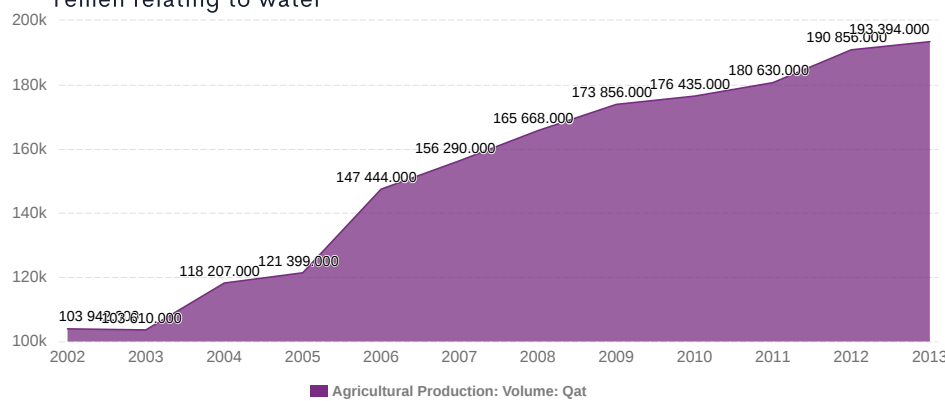
THE YEMENI COMMUNITY TACKLING WATER SHORTAGES ONE COFFE BEAN AT A TIME



Credit: Theguardian.com

PROBLEM

- Yemen has the highest rate of water exhaustion in the middle east, a problem compounded by a disastrous civil war and a nationwide addiction to the plant Khat
- 80% of the male Yemeni population chew Khat, with the production of the plant using over 90% of the underground water reserves in the country
- The deteriorating water resources are leading to increased militancy and inter-communal violence over access, with 70-80% of all rural conflicts in Yemen relating to water



SOURCE: WWW.CEICDATA.COM | Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation

Khat is the most produced crop in Yemen, and has taken a sharp rise in recent years

Credit: Ceicdata.com

IMPACT

- In and around Haraz it is estimated that some 2 million Khat trees have been uprooted in favour of coffee bean plants
- The increase in supply of available of ground water is leading to fewer confrontations over access to the resource in the region
- Many local men have stopped or considerably reduced their consumption of Khat
- The shift in habits will give long term benefits to an area that only experiences around 120mm of rainfall per year, thus relies heavily on the supply and presence of ground water
- The change in crop production coincides well with an international increase in demand for a premium product, something that Yemeni coffee is considered



Chewing Khat is seen very much as a social habit in Yemen, done by mainly men

Credit: Jennifermidberry.com

AT A GLANCE

- Excessive Khat production in Yemen is driving an exponential water crisis and thus greater local conflict in the war torn state
- The changing of Khat plants to coffee bean plants in a rural Yemini village is leading the way in solving the crisis
- The move has seen great success, and with the support of communications to help educate farmers, issues have been few and far between

SOLUTION

- In Haraz, an area located in Yemen's highlands, farmers in local communities have come together and stopped the growing of Khat in favour of growing the countries world famous coffee beans
- The switch has a logical background as a coffee plant takes up just 25% of the water that a Khat plant of the same size does

COMMUNICATIONS

- So far, the transition from Khat to coffee has been localised to Haraz, therefore the benefits have remained local too. With success of the change being evident, a push needs to be made to communicate the benefits to other farmers in adjacent regions and perhaps nationally as well in order to spread the substitution of crops
- Further emphasis and education could be placed on the importance of crop rotation so that the reliance on Khat doesn't just turn into a reliance on growing coffee beans
- The initial transfer of crops is a difficult one for farmers. There are lower initial yields, and as such lower profits when first making the transition. Farmers need to be supported through this difficult transition period financially, and to be made aware that these are short term downsides that they can be supported through until they reach the long term benefits