Awareness on SMS-Parking Service

Tree Varieties to be Studied for their Use in Daggers

Focus on Research in the Indian Ocean: SQU to Host Conference in February

Pregestational Diet to Outsmart Risks
Relative to jobs, what should higher education offer to graduates? Graduates need employment berths that offer decent wages, that enhance their skills, and that allow them to build the kinds of lives they want to lead. Educators need to prepare a generation of students to be the kinds of professionals who work in ways that drive society forward. To achieve this goal, there are components that we need to ensure in higher education.

The initial years at the university should be broad and inquisitive. Students should be given opportunities to ask big questions about human history, the role of work, and the lives they want to lead. Small classes, faculty mentorship, and engaged learning environments are important for the evolution of the student.

By their second year, students should be involved in the career exploration process. It should start with a wide perspective and provide plentiful opportunities for students to interact with a range of people and hear stories about how they built careers and lives. Since the universities occupy only 60 to 70 percent of the time of students every year, one should think about utilizing the rest of the time productively. For example, the times between semesters can be utilized for professionally oriented activities like financially supported internships, and activities focused on professional skills. Parents and alumni can provide mentorship and expertise. Alumni care deeply about their alma mater, and parents often are very engaged.

Building a career is a process that often has stumbling blocks. Career support should be given to students during the initial years of post-graduation, as they seek to refine their goals and navigate the on-ramps into the professions. A good career exploration program is the one that focuses on exposing students to a wide range of good mentors and role models who offer advice, networks, experiences and skills development. A college is a community, and education happens as students interact with, learn and benefit from peers, faculty, staff, local community members, parents and alumni. If we get the relationships right, everything else will follow. A great professional practice allows us to pursue personal and civic passions through work, not outside of it. A great college experience helps students decide the kind of life they want to lead, how work facilitates that life, and gives them the attributes, networks and experiences to get there.
World Bank Team Holds Talks with SQU Officials

HE Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University received in his office, a delegation from the World Bank Group (Education) headed by Dr. Harry A. Patrinos, Manager in the Education Global Practice at the World Bank. The two sides had a detailed discussion on the possibilities of cooperation between the SQU and the World Bank in different fields of higher education including teaching and research. Dr. Patrinos said that as part of World Bank Education Sector strategy which revolves around the theme “learning for all”, they are concerned about quality of teaching, employability of graduates and international recognition of academic programs. The World Bank team invited Sultan Qaboos University to participate in various international activities organized by the organization.

“We are here to talk about SQU’s plans and efforts to measure the effectiveness of the university’s graduates and how it impacts the economy of the and overall development of the country. World Bank has active programs in education and training for education institutions in the region which is implemented in cooperation with the governments concerned. We hope to make SQU a partner in our activities which includes information exchange and other specific programs for higher educational institutions in the region. We do a lot of research on education as well. We hope to see SQU benefitting from our activities and services for the region” Dr. Patrinos said. Dr. Al Bimani, briefed the World Bank team about the quality of academic programs at SQU and academic accreditation of different programs, the research profile of the university and internationalization the institution. HH Sayyidah Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, SQU Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation also attended the discussion and briefed the World Bank officials about internationalization of the university and its performance with various university ranking systems. The World Bank team expressed satisfaction over the overall performance of the university and the strong presence of female students enrolled at different colleges of the university. The World Bank team consisted of Francisco Marmolejo, Tertiary Education Coordinator and Lead Tertiary Education Specialist, and Hussein Abdul Hamid, Senior Education Specialist.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) signed an agreement with the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) recently, to provide scientific consultations in order to study and measure the mechanical and physical properties of Omani woods to use them in producing traditional daggers. The agreement was signed by HE Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of SQU, and HE Dr. Essam bin Ali Al Rawas, Deputy Chairman of PACI.

The agreement foresees a study of 20 varieties of local trees such as brown olive tree, neem, alder buckhorn, European olive, hackberries, walnuts, etc. to assess their physical properties and suitability to use in manufacturing traditional Omami daggers. The duration of the project will be six months. This will be followed by a supplementary phase during which manufacturing of traditional daggers will be carried out along with preparation of standard specifications for wood and classification according to the results and taxonomic significance.

A committee had been formed to follow up this initiative, which is headed by the Vice President of the PACI. The committee will have representatives from SQU, the Royal Parks, the Ministry of Environment & Climate and PACI. The committee is responsible for the implementation of the scientific study and follow-up of its results and adaption of the recommendations.

IEEE GCC Conference Concludes

The 8th biennial succession of the IEEE GCC Conference and Exhibition hosted by Sultan Qaboos University, concluded recently. H.E. Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Futaisi, Minister of Transport & Communications, chaired the opening ceremony of conference and exhibition. This event was jointly organized by Sultan Qaboos University and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) – Oman chapter. This conference series is the most prominent and premiere gathering of Electrical, Electronics and Computer Engineering professionals in the GCC region. Delivering the speech on behalf of the Conference Steering Committee, Dr. Amer Al Hinai, said that in this in this IEEE-GCC conference, the organizers have further encouraged industry participation by having more invited industrial speakers. “We have also welcomed special contributions from the industry on technology applications. Special opportunities have also been offered to industry to provide technological tutorials for students, academics and industry staff. These tutorials introduce cutting-edge electrical engineering tools and techniques for modern digital analysis”, Dr. Al Hinai said.

Addressing the conference participants, H.E. Mohammed Al-Mahrouqi, Chairman of Public Authority for Electricity and Water, and the honorary chair of the conference, said that energy in all its forms and sources occupies a prominent position and it is the main engine to the wheel of development in the whole world. “Therefore it is necessary to decision-makers and specialists to consult, discuss and provide creative ideas in order to reach the best ways to raise efficiency of energy and the find smart and sustainable sources. The IEEE conference aims to achieve several goals such as exchange of experiences and modern scientific experiments and follow-up of new research in the field of telecommunications and energy. We hope that the participants in this conference will be able to find the recommendations that would contribute to control the quality of the electrical devices”, he said.

Dr. Saad Al Barrak, Kuwaiti entrepreneur and former CEO of the Zain Group, gave the keynote address on the topic “Leading Change”. He said that change is the very essence of the business leader’s job.
Mobile technology has evolved quite rapidly over the past few years. Many experts argue that the future computer technology may widely rests on mobile or wireless computing. As the number of mobile phone users is increasing worldwide, different organizations are offering their services using these mobile devices. The emerging mobile technology is impacting and becoming the main element that moves Oman forward and helps in its national development process. As part of a research, Syed Jafar Naqvi, Hafedh AlShihi, and Saqib Ali, academicians from the Department of Information Systems at the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, investigated the current m-government initiatives in Oman and collected the feedback of the users on the SMS-Parking Service, introduced by a joint venture of the Muscat Municipality and the Oman Tel.

In their research, the CEPS academic reviewed the problems associated with traditional parking services in the Central Business District (CBD) area in Muscat. The parking in Muscat especially in CBD is extremely difficult. The Muscat Municipality has designated parking areas for car parking services with sign boards’ instructions. The car parking is allowed with the payment of the parking fee only through the payment booths. The users can park the car in a designated area and look for the municipality parking payment booth. A user can pay the parking fee through coins for the time required and get a receipt. At present the charges are 50 Baisa for half an hour parking. The users can enter the coin either through 50 or 25 Baisa coins for the time required and get receipts in duplicate. One part of this receipt has to be displayed behind the wind shield of the car and the second one the user can keep with him for his/her record. The parking ticket is valid for the specified date and time as mentioned on the ticket. If the user wishes to extend the period, he/she must go back to the booth and get another ticket and replace the old ticket with the new one and keep an eye on the expiry time as well which is inconvenient and time consuming. The penalty, for nonpayment of parking fee on the expiry of the parking time, is 100 times more than the fee for half an hour parking.

SMS-Parking Service

The Muscat municipality and Oman mobile have introduced a new service for paying the parking fee in Muscat business district and its surrounding areas. The service is simple to use, the users should have a mobile phone with either a pre or post paid option and the fee will be deducted or sent through a monthly mobile phone bill. A user can park the car and send an SMS to “90091” with the details of the car plate number and the minutes for which the parking is needed. The user will get a confirmation message for a successful transaction. The user will then get a reminder message five minutes before the allocated time expires either to move the vehicle or renew the parking time. This flow of information from the user goes to the Oman mobile and passes to the Muscat Municipality data bank. The inspector receives the information on his PDAs and then uses this information while inspecting the parking areas in Muscat. The inspector receives the information from the user and gets a confirmation message for a successful transaction. The user will then get a reminder message five minutes before the allocated time expires either to move the vehicle or renew the parking time. This flow of information from the user goes to the Oman mobile and passes to the Muscast Municipality data bank. The inspector receives the information on his PDAs and then uses this information while inspecting the parking areas in Muscat.

The benefits of SMS Parking service are many. Users are able to pay parking fee by sending an SMS even just before or after parking the car, which itself a very simple procedure. The service is available all the time. The user gets a reminder on the expiry of the parking time for the user either to move the car or pay for additional parking time by sending another SMS from any mobile network accessible location.

Slow Adoption of the SMS Parking Service

There has been a lack of research to investigate the barriers inhibiting the quick adoption of SMS Parking Service in Oman. To collect information on the issue of SMS parking service initiatives in Oman and to understand the success and failure factors informal interviews were conducted and the following observations were made:

Reliable mobile infrastructure: The SMS-Parking Service as described above, the municipality inspectors use PDAs connected to the GPRS network to check if vehicles are legally parked. Obviously if the mobile network is temporarily down, the SMS-parking system will be affected too. Moreover, such incident may cause faulty ticketing to legally parked vehicles, which could negatively influence users trust and satisfaction, and degrade the system image. The study indicates a reliable and efficient mobile infrastructure is a must for the success of any M-service initiative such as the SMS-parking service.

Creating more awareness: The lack of awareness and unfamiliarity with the procedure for using the service or technological difficulties such as un-availability of network or slow responses from the service provider may also reduce the users’ enthusiasm to try this new service. For greater success, the municipality of Muscat should invest in marketing, educating and creating more awareness on the availability of the service to consumers and what it offers and how it can be beneficial to them. This could be done by distributing brochures, publicizing through print and electronic media which describe to the users of the SMS-Parking Service what it offers and how it can be beneficial to them.

Since there is always room for improvement to offer better services to clients, the service provider needs to explore the opportunities. The researchers believe that the results from this preliminary study provides a background for further study on this issue and pave way for new studies in other M-services offered in Oman.
Headed by the Chair of the Organizing Committee, Dr. Hussein Al Masroori, Marine Sciences & Fisheries faculty and technicians with the aid of students from the Marine Science Society broke into various committees: Scientific, Logistic and Registration committees. To date, MSF has received 118 oral and poster abstracts from more than 170 participants from 44 different countries. The Scientific Committee had a hard time screening abstracts but eventually approved, 88 abstracts from 24 different countries of which 63 of them are oral and 25 are poster presentations.

MSF went further by soliciting sponsorship from both private and governmental institutes within Oman. With the generous support of The Research Council, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Oman Liquefied Natural Gas MSF is sponsoring 11 international students to the conference. Moreover, nine keynote speakers who are also being sponsored have accepted our invitation to the conference. The proceedings from the conference in terms of peer-reviewed articles and short communications will be published in SQU’s in-house journal “Journal of Agricultural and Marine Sciences”. “The conference, not only demonstrates MSF commitment to quality marine research but is an opportunity for foreign delegates to experience Omani hospitality and the beauty of a country that ranges from the mountains, to the deserts and off course, to the Indian Ocean”, the organizers said. Further conference activity details can be found at the conference website www.fishconference.om

The Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean covers 20% of the Earth’s surface and is the third largest oceanic division. It provides about 40% of the world’s hydrocarbons mainly from offshore drilling. To its North is Asia, Africa is found to its West, Australia to the East and South of its 292,131,000 km³ volume lies the cold waters of the Southern Ocean. The waters of the Indian Ocean are warm supporting a high marine biodiversity from ancient coral communities to magnificent mammals like the whales. Throughout its distribution the Indian Ocean not only supports a multitude of subsistence and artisanal fishers but industrial boats as well; coming from various foreign fleets, primarily targeting tuna. The Indian Ocean is also home to islands, which attract tourists to outdoor activities like SCUBA diving, hiking, recreational fishing and to bathe and surf in its warm waters.

But the Indian Ocean also has a harsh side. It is prone to outbreaks of harmful algal blooms that kill fish not only in her waters but on aquaculture farms that are fed by its waters. To the north of the equator the Indian Ocean drives seasonal monsoons that wreak havoc on people’s lives, their homes and businesses. Sadly this occurs on a regular basis.

Oman’s long coastline and its 300,333 km² of fishing waters, both inshore and offshore, provides Oman with a significant and diverse marine life. As a result, the fisheries sector in Oman is playing a major role in the country’s socio-economic development program. This is reflected in the overall goals of the country’s modernization process which began in the early 1970s which aims toward increasing the supply of fresh and processed fish for local consumption, for export earnings, to provide employment and to increase fishers’ income. More than a quarter of Oman’s people rely directly or indirectly on fishing for their livelihood. Relative to other natural resources, fisheries represent the second most important sector in the national economy after oil and gas.
British Universities Seek Ties

A delegation from British Council Oman, led by Paul Hilder, the Country Director, visited Sultan Qaboos University recently, as part of the Creative Arts Roadshow-Oman organized by the Council. Creative Roadshow is a program of the British Council to explore opportunities for collaboration between UK universities and higher educational institutions in Oman in disciplines such as music, theatre and arts.

The delegation was received by Salahaddin Al Saadi, Acting Director for Training and Community Services, College of Arts & Social Sciences, and other officials. Thereafter, the delegation had roundtable discussions with academics from various teaching departments at the College of Arts & Social Sciences to explore collaboration in humanities and arts.

The team led by British Council consisted of Zainab Al Barwani, Projects Manager; Emma Meredith, International Director- Edinburgh College; Nancy Cooke, Head of International Marketing and Advancement-Bath Spa University; Bashir Aswat, Programme Leader: Fashion, University of Salford, Steve Spencer, Senior Lecturer in Music & Popular Music- Spa University; Bashir Aswat, Programme Leader: Fashion, University of Salford, Steve Spencer, Senior Lecturer in Music & Popular Music; Nancy Cooke, Head of International Marketing and Advancement-Bath Spa University; and Hilal Al Mashani- Regional Director (Middle East).

SQU Inks Pact With Injaz

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and Injaz Oman marked their third partnership with Injaz Oman’s Sharikati programme during an agreement signing officiated by H.E. Dr. Ali Al Bimani, Vice Chancellor of SQU and Khalid Al Zubair, Chairman of Injaz Oman. Shabib Al Maamari, Executive Director of Injaz Oman, said, “We have received the largest participation from a single university in the Sharikati programme and competition since it began, with 35 teams of students taking part from SQU. This is the third year in a row that we sign with SQU and our collaboration with the institute is not as just another university; it is a grounded partnership.”

The partnership between SQU and Injaz Oman aims to fulfill the goal of cultivating a culture of entrepreneurship between university and college students through the Sharikati programme. The students will create their own student companies and learn about teamwork, leadership, planning, research, negotiating, problem solving and critical thinking. The teams will construct their business, market it, and develop products and financial plans. This year’s Sharikati programme sees the participation of over 700 students from 65 teams across 18 different colleges in all regions of the Sultanate, a first of its kind for the programme.

Thai University Delegation

A delegation from the Prince of Songkla University visited Sultan Qaboos University recently, HH. Sayyidah Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, SQU Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation, received the Thai university delegation headed by Dr. Chusak Lim sakul, President of the university. During the visit, the delegation discussed means of enhancing cooperation between the two universities and touched on fields of exchange of visits and students exchange for education and training, as well as enhancing cooperation in areas of research exchange and conducting researches in the Thai university.

The delegation also discussed means of enhancing cooperation in various fields, such as nursing, teaching methods, besides sending some of the faculty members of Islamic and Arabic studies for teaching and conducting researches.

IEEE Delegation Meets Electrical & Computer

A delegation from the Management Council of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), which has its headquarter office in the United States, had a meeting with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering of SQU on Tuesday the 27th of January 2015. The Department representatives Dr. Nasser Hosseinzadeh, Head of the Department, Prof. Hadj Bourdoucen, Director of the Communication & Information Research Centre, and Dr. Ashraf Saleem, Chair of the SQU IEEE Student Branch reported, the latest status of the upcoming IEEE/GCCC Conference in Oman in February 2015.

A number of issues related to the IEEE regional and technical activities were debated and the different ways to strengthen IEEE technical activities in the region and mainly in Oman were discussed. Then, the future directions and technologies were overviewed: mainly those related to Smart Grids, Smart Cities, Big data, Cloud computing, Transpiration and Electrification, Life Sciences, Supercomputing, Green ICT and Internet of Things. A suggestion was made to plan for a major IEEE conference in Oman related to these emerging research areas. In the meeting, representatives from Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Mrs. Sheikha Al Mugheity - Business Development Manager, International, and Mr. Tariq Sultan, Business Development Executive) were also present.

The IEEE delegation was consisted of Ms. Mary Ward-Callan, Manager Director, Technical Activities, IEEE, Ms. Susan Root, Director, Conference Business Services & Strategic Programs IEEE Meetings, and Dr. William W. Moses, Senior Staff Scientist, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, CA, USA.
“Eat Junk, Celebrate with Junk and Repeat Junk food” is the new generation mantra of food. It was with the entry into the 21st century that the word “Junk Food” went viral among the people and now we see it everywhere be it a grocery store, bakery or restaurants. Junk food are usually referred to food stuffs that add on calories with a low satiation value and less nutritional value. They are broadly classified into “Snack Food” or Fast food”. Most popular snack foods are those that are commercially available like the chips, puffs, candies, cakes, cookies and the fast foods are like the burgers, noodles, pizzas etc. Junk foods are the most appealing food items for innumerable reasons like easy availability, affordable price, tempting appearances and taste. Regular consumption of junk food poses a threat to the health leading to variety of complications like obesity, chronic illness, low self-esteem and sometimes depression too.

Health Risks – at the doorstep
Today’s world is so advanced that whatever is needed reaches at the doorstep. The media plays a major role in promoting the consumption of junk by their appealing and mouthwatering advertisements and the prey to it usually are children and sometimes adults too. The service is too easy, just a click on the mouse for an online order or a phone call, within minutes the doorbell rings and yes the food is on the table. While engrossed in the delicacy of the food enjoying every bite of it, most of the people are unaware about the hidden health risks they are prone to.

Today’s girls are tomorrow’s mothers
The foundation to be a healthy mother or a healthy woman should begin from childhood. The time period approaching puberty is a highly sensitive period that requires constant observation and guidance which includes the dietary pattern and nutrition. A cross sectional survey done among 853 students in their adolescence concluded that 75% of young Indian girls experience problems like menstrual irregularities, dysmenorrhea and premenstrual symptoms. The study correlated the dietary pattern and concluded 60% of participants were overweight and reported to be having high consumption of junk food. Polycystic Ovarian cysts were also common among the girls. Similar studies are done in different parts of the world and came out with the conclusion that the junk foods had an impact on young girls.

Lifestyle Habits among Omani Adolescents
A research study conducted among 802 Omani adolescents (442 females and 360 males) aimed to investigate the lifestyle habits like physical activity, eating habits and sleep duration and also examined these in the aspects of gender. Focusing on the eating habits, there were few differences in the gender. The study concluded stating that high prevalence of sedentary behaviours and a low level of physical activity was among adolescent girls in addition to the high consumption of junk foods. (Hashem Kilani et al, 2013, SQUMJ)

Pre-gestation Diet and Preterm Labour
A woman’s diet before pregnancy definitely determines the health status of the baby to be born. Poor nutrition as well as the conception of high calorie diets like junk foods have a direct impact on the course of pregnancy. A recently published Australian research report in the July Journal of Nutrition states that consumption of high calorie diet like lots of sugars, fats and fried foods are linked to preterm delivery. New findings from another research study of the same type conducted among Norwegian pregnant women also concluded that a low preterm birth rate was found among women who consumed a normal balanced diet with more vegetables and fats than processed foods.

Seed for obesity In Utero
According to WHO, around 1.6 billion humans are classified as overweight and over 20 million children who are under five are overweight. Childhood obesity is a matter of concern in today’s world where the kids are like couch potatoes eating junk and glued to the television or the video games. But it is shocking to know research reports that state children born to mothers who had a craving for junk foods resulted in giving birth to children who have less sensitivity to opioids as well as tend to over eat more sugar and fat to achieve the same good feeling they had in utero. The impact of maternal junk food consumption does not limit to pregnancy alone but also while breastfeeding babies. The junk contents passes through the breast milk and reaches the babies sometimes making them sick with vomiting or diarrhea. Thus breast milk that’s is supposed to be

By: Ms. Frincy Francis, Lecturer, MCH Department, College of Nursing

Pregestational Diet to Outsmart
Tammo Bult, PhD, is the Director of the Institute for Marine Resources and Ecosystem Studies (IMARES) at Wageningen University & Research Centre (Wageningen UR), the Netherlands. He has been working at IMARES since 2000 and from 2007 to 2013, he served as the Head of Fisheries. Previously, Dr. Bult held various positions in Norway and Canada. He studied Fish Culture and Fisheries at Wageningen University, part of Wageningen UR, and received his PhD in biology in 1997 from the Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada. Dr. Bult led a team of scientists from IMARES to SQU recently to explore ties in aquaculture and marine ecosystem research.

**Dr. Tammo Bult**

Horizon: Could you please give a short outline of the research and other major activities of IMARES?

**Tammo Bult:** IMARES is an independent, leading scientific research institute, part of Wageningen University & Research Centre. IMARES is established to provide the scientific support that is essential for developing policies and innovation in respect of the marine environment, fishery activities, aquaculture and the maritime sector. The IMARES mission is “to conduct research with the aim of acquiring knowledge and offering advice on the sustainable management and use of marine and coastal areas.”

We carry out scientific support to policies (50%), strategic RTD programmes (30%) and contract research for private, public and NGO partners (20%). Our key focal research areas cover ecology, environmental conservation and protection, fisheries, aquaculture, ecosystem-based economy, coastal zone management and marine governance. Besides we provide tailor made training in a number of areas. Being part of Wageningen UR we have close ties with the University, their fundamental research programmes (PhD and post-doc) and their regular MSc program in fisheries and aquaculture.

IMARES primarily focuses on the North Sea, the Wadden Sea and the Dutch Delta region, but more recently we have implemented a number of projects outside Europe, for example in the polar regions, Africa, Asia and the Middle-East, both in marine and fresh water environments. More information can be found at: www.imares.nl

Horizon: How would you comment on the outcome of the mini-symposium on aquaculture held at SQU? Have you identified any major areas of research and academic partnership between CAMS SQU and IMARES, Wageningen UR?

**Tammo Bult:** The mini-symposium was very interesting for us to learn about the Omani research in fishery and aquaculture. The Netherlands and Oman share the ambition to improve on their fishery and aquaculture by research and in this context we face similar challenges, regardless of the obvious differences there are between our countries. There are many subjects that are interesting to both Wageningen UR and SQU, and in the discussions following the symposium SQU, Wageningen UR and the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries Wealth (A&FW) have identified three major subject areas that are of particular interest to explore for potential cooperation: (1) selective breeding in aquaculture; (2) Seaweed cultivation; and (3) Shell fish aquaculture.

Horizon: Could you comment on the outcome of your talks with various researchers and administrators at SQU? What type of collaboration are you looking for with SQU?

**Tammo Bult:** We have agreed that early 2015 a delegation from Oman will visit The Netherlands, IMARES and Wageningen UR, including staff of SQU and representatives of the Ministry of A&FW. During this visit we aim to further explore the possibilities for cooperation, develop project proposals on the three subject areas above and submit these to the Agriculture and Fisheries Research Fund of Oman. IMARES/Wageningen UR is seeking a long term relationship with Oman and we hope that these research proposal will be instrumental to developing such a relationship.

Horizon: Could you please say why IMARES is interested in strong and long-lasting cooperation with SQU?

**Tammo Bult:** IMARES would like to be more active internationally – even more so than we do right now -, including the Middle East. In this, we aim for long term relationships that are interesting and beneficial to both countries and all parties involved. To us, Oman is a very interesting country, because of shared research interests, because of the presence of a well-known knowledge institute/university such as SQU, because of the very pleasant and open communications with the Ministry of A&FW and SQU, and because we experience Oman as a very friendly and welcoming nation.

Horizon: What are the future activities in store with regards to cementing the relations between the two institutions?

**Tammo Bult:** We hope that the joint research that we are setting up will open the way to other areas for cooperation, such as in the field of fisheries management or marine ecology, but also on education (student exchange, MSc and PhD). Through these projects we will be able to spend more time with our partners in Oman and build and strengthen our cooperation and relations.