

GUtech to hold presentation on 'Oases of Oman'

MUSCAT The Sultanate has hundreds of plain, foothill and mountain oases that are increasingly transformed by socio-economic developments.

"Several millennia ago, oasis agriculture was introduced in Oman from the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean area with crop species such as wheat, barley, date palm, chickpea and lentil," said Dr Andreas Burkert, head of the department of organic plant production

and agroecosystems research, at the University of Kassel.

Burkert along with Dr Eva Schlecht, will hold a public presentation on 'Oases of Oman - Livelihood systems at the crossroads' on Monday at 7.30pm at the German University of Technology.

The Sultanate's strategic position at the crossroads of important trading routes, provided a particular setting to host plants from many parts of the

world which were then developed by early agropastoral societies in oases often isolated by steep mountains.

Unfortunately, nowadays many of these varieties are at the fringe of extinction due to the disappearance of traditional livelihood systems on the Arabian Peninsula.

"The often unique crop germplasm, which has a cultivation history of thousands of years in Oman, requires collection and

conservation to limit the loss of genetic resources, a valuable heritage to mankind," said Bürkert, who will launch together with Schlecht a new book entitled *Oases in Oman* this month.

Schlecht emphasises that such conservation efforts would require oasis agriculture be fostered to survive as a livelihood system rather than merely as an assembly of preserved physical infrastructure.

Oman Tribune