



The global french fry map is rapidly being redrawn, and the Middle East is emerging as a critical new center of gravity. Long reliant on massive imports—staggering figures that hit 500,000 tons annually in Saudi Arabia alone—the region is now witnessing a strategic shift towards localization.

In this exclusive interview, we sit down with [Abdulmohsin Aljarallah](#), General Manager at [Al-Jouf](#), a state-of-the-art french fry manufacturer in Saudi Arabia. Abdulmohsin shares his remarkable journey, detailing how a simple idea evolved into a high-speed, multi-million dollar operation backed by the Saudi Vision 2030.

Discover:

- The double-digit market growth driving this regional boom.
- The surprising reality of three potato growing seasons in Saudi Arabia and the push for agricultural self-sufficiency.
- How agility, strategic partnerships, and a sharp focus on quality are helping Al Jouf compete with global giants like McCain and Lamb Weston.
- The role of advanced technology and AI in minimizing waste and maximizing efficiency in the desert.

If you're tracking global food trends, supply chain shifts, or the immense untapped potential of the Middle Eastern agricultural sector, this is a story you can't afford to miss. Join us to learn how Al Jouf is building *"The French Fries of the Middle East."*

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## Market Dynamics & Potato Potential In The Middle East With Abdulmohsin Aljarallah

Welcome to the show. I am pleased to be joined by [Abdulmohsin Aljarallah](#). He is the general manager at [Al-Jouf](#), which is a French fry manufacturer based in Saudi Arabia. Abdul, welcome to the show.

Mike, and thank you for having me.

**I was looking forward to this. We connected on LinkedIn a while ago, and it has been really interesting to learn about these new emerging parts of the world that are part of the French fry industry and have manufacturing in them. I am excited to dig into that a bit more. Before we do that, I always like to ask people, "What happened in your background that led you to the French fry industry?" A lot of people do not think about it. A lot of people do not intentionally go into it. Let us back up a few years and tell us a bit about your background.**

### Personal Journey Into The French Fry Industry

To be honest with you, if I am going to go back, I am going to go a little bit long because both my parents were studying in the US as PhDs in Northern Colorado. I grew up in the States. Once you grow up in the States, you get introduced to fast food, McDonald's, and Burger King. As a child, I fell in love with French fries. This is the first interaction, to be honest with you. Fast forward, going back to Saudi Arabia, I first started my professional career starting in the food manufacturing industry in pasta.

It is a similar industry, food. However, it was pasta. There was a love of manufacturing, especially in the food industry. What led me to French fries is, I do not know, I will say by luck. I wanted to start with something from my own, so I started digging, doing my own research, searching for what kind of products I can import and manufacture in Saudi Arabia, which has a lot of imports. While I was researching that, I came up with really interesting figures. For example, give me a guess, Mr. Mike, what do you think our imports of French fries are in terms of volume or value?

**Tweet:** What led me to French fries? I honestly don't know. I just wanted to start something of my own.

**In Saudi Arabia?**

Yes, in 2025.

**In 2025, imports of 100,000 tons?**

## Securing Investment & Launching The Al-Jouf Factory

It is 500,000 tons in Saudi Arabia alone. With the GCC, it is almost 600, or 650. These numbers are staggering. If we say in value, it is 2.5 billion Saudi Riyals, almost \$600 million. Seeing these numbers, it got my curiosity a bit, and digging a bit more. How many factories do we have? When I saw it was only one factory, and it is not to that professional factory that can compete with the McCain and the Poston.

Here, where it started, I did my research, I did my presentation, I tried to pitch my investment opportunity to investors, and nobody believed these numbers because they were very high. The most common question asked, "Why did it not occur to other investors? Why is there only one factory?" To be honest with you, because I think and I believe it is capital-intensive. Starting a factory, especially for French fries, it needs a lot of assets and a lot of investment as well.

“Abdulmohsin Aljarallah demonstrates remarkable agility and vision in establishing Al-Jouf as a state-of-the-art french fry manufacturer, quickly recognizing the market opportunity in Saudi Arabia and leveraging the support of Vision 2030 to achieve rapid expansion.”



You need to also expand to agriculture as well. We have to look at these two things. I took my idea to Al-Jouf Agriculture Company, and here it accelerated really fast, and we had an agreement to start this factory. They said, "This is your project, you started from the beginning, you should take the lead in it." To be honest with you, in late 2022, we got the approval from the board, and then it was all history. We started in late 2023 at trials and the commercial beginning of 2024.

From 2024, we worked at full capacity. The market was really hungry for local Saudi French fries, because people are attached to Saudi-made products. This has to be linked to be honest with you as well to our Saudi Vision 2030, because it started with our Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman with his Vision 2030 in 2015, and he wanted to localise certain industries. These industries with these numbers, the French fries pop up. When we went to banks and funds, they gave us grants, and they gave us incentives.

We started working. Now, as we speak, this is the first time we are trying to compete with McCain and Lamb Weston, and we want to start a state-of-the-art factory. We contracted [Kiremko](#), a machine

manufacturer. In less than a year, we got our expansion as well. We built our design in a smart design where we can expand 50% in a very short time. We started in 2024, and in late 2024, we expanded our operation as well. This is, in a nutshell, how it started.

**It is incredible. I want to dig into this a little bit more. You were not in the French fry industry at all. You had this idea. What were you doing at the time when you started thinking through this opportunity to localise French fry manufacturing? What were you doing in your life at that time?**

I was working as the head of the Industrial Development Centre and the Royal Commission. I worked at the university as a lecturer. I had a lot of time to research. Here came the idea. I had a little bit of experience in the food industry, work experience, and academics. I joined these forces together and came up with this idea.

**You must have been very compelling. By the time you went to Al-Jouf with the proposal, the business idea and the business plan, you were able to convince them to recognise the opportunity and agree to help you get this idea launched. I guess it speaks to two things. Your passion for the industry must have come through loud and clear to be able to convince or influence those investors to take a chance.**

**The timing of the opportunity was very good. With the support of the Vision 2030 plan, you have presumably strong demand growth in your area as well. It is very interesting. You were able to move very fast. You established a French fry processing operation, and what I would say is record time. That is extremely important. I am curious, standing up a French fry business, not just a new factory, but a French fry business, is an extremely challenging endeavour.**

**There is a lot to learn about the industry because it is complex. The supply chain goes all the way from the agronomy in the field to the operation of the facility to the cold chain distributing the product. How is it that you were able to learn and execute all those different domains within the industry so quickly?**

What you said makes complete sense, and also, going back, convincing Al-Jouf. The numbers make sense for them. They saw that there is a huge demand, as well as talking about the supply chain. Al-Jouf is an agricultural company. They have a huge amount of land, and they already grow potatoes. Potatoes are not something new for them.

They just want to add a little bit of tweak and put the adding value where processing comes in. Profits show in our business model. They should sell processed French fries rather than raw potatoes. They have agriculture. Once they have the added value and there is a huge demand, all the links come together. We have the agriculture, then you put in the middle the processing facility. There is a huge demand.

**The beginning part, the agronomy, the growing potatoes. I cannot count the number of times that I have spoken with somebody in the United States or Canada who is surprised to learn that potatoes are grown in Saudi Arabia, Egypt or other parts of the Middle East. You just told me that you also have three potato growing seasons. Is that true?**

Yes. Starting this factory, most of the companies or most of the established companies, they usually are growers, and then they have the knowledge of the potato and growing potato and then they become industrialised. For me, I was in the industry and now know, understand, and understanding and learning about the agronomy. It is an interesting domain. I never thought I was going to go and learn about potatoes and how to grow them and what the varieties are.

There are chips, and there are fries, and there are table potatoes, and there are certain varieties that work in Saudi Arabia that do not work in Egypt and do not work in Europe. It is interesting to understand as well. Going back to the seasons, yes, we have three seasons. This is something important for the French fries industry because the fresher the crop enters the factory, the higher the yield that you have. The fewer stored potatoes, the less waste you have.

**Tweet: The fresher the crop enters the factory, the higher the yield you'll have.**

We have two crops in the northern part of Al-Jouf. They have two seasons. Let us say the cultivation starts from June, July, or August. This is the first crop. November, December. In the southern region, we have the cultivation starting from January, February, March, and April. We have the supply almost all year round. However, in October and September, there is no fresh crop. For us, you can build a store in two months. It is no big deal.

**Is potato growing at that scale? Is it mechanised in your region with large cultivation equipment?**

This is a really smart question because, as I told you, I started from the factory, not from agriculture. The industry in agriculture is not that modernised, and it is not that advanced, and it is not that knowledgeable. There are only a few agricultural companies and even fewer farmers who understand professional growing of potatoes. The growth in agriculture is growing very fast and very big. There is a huge opportunity in the agriculture and potato industry as well. It is much bigger than the processing.

**Are you required to import potatoes to meet the French fry processing demand in Saudi Arabia?**

Let us say we call it our bigger sister, Egypt, because they have a factory over there, and they are one of the largest Farm Frites, and they are one of the largest exporters of potatoes in the world. We import from them. To be honest with you, with the supply chain and logistics, it was not a pleasant experience. What we're trying to do is to minimise the risk. We try to make a strategic partnership with some of the potato growers. We want to share the risk with them within your country.

## Rapid Execution & Expansion Strategy

**I suppose that further supports the Saudi Vision 2030 as well, to localise. That is very interesting. From the field, it goes to the factory, and you were able to establish a factory very quickly. You mentioned Kiremko. You have Kiremko equipment in your factory, and I believe Kiremko has published that it was one of the fastest executions in their company history. What specific strategies did you have in place to enable everyone on that team, Kiremko, yourselves, to move so quickly and start up so quickly and then go back and invest in expansion so quickly?**

This is a great question, Mike. Two reasons. First, when I wanted to start this factory, I did not have enough experience. I did not want to reinvent the wheel from the beginning. Our bigger sister, Farm Frites, is in Egypt. I went there, searched through LinkedIn, and I found that they have finalised a project in 2018 or 2019, and they have a project manager over there. I contacted him directly, and he said, "I am done with the project."

I said, "We're interested in having you again with us to build the new factory." I relied and I stepped back on the experience from the region. He was an Egyptian guy. His name is Ziyad. He is very knowledgeable, and he just built the factory, and we got the lesson learned as well. With his support, we have one of the leaders in the industry consultant from the Netherlands.

He was in our team. All of the management support, technical support, and we have a consultant. It is like we have a plan, and we had a master plan. I was explaining earlier that we made it in a smart design. We are going to start with this capacity. If things go right, we can easily expand 50%. We put it in our master plan. I did not think it would be that fast in one year, less than one year.

I want to say a shout-out to Kiremko. They were our strategic partner in terms of the delivery of the equipment, the reliability of the equipment, as well as the support that we got. All of these variables came into place, and we had a strategic goal and a timeline. It made it easier for us. We have a goal, and we have a timeline. Let us execute it. I hope that makes sense.

**It makes perfect sense. Since starting the facility and expanding it, you've continued to seek out and invest in other technology to support your operations. There were recent announcements of your partnership with PolySense, for instance. That may be one example of some of the technology opportunities that you're investigating and implementing. How much do you see technology and perhaps AI influencing your French fry manufacturing business in the next few years?**

## Focusing On Quality, Waste Minimization, & Technology

This is a great question, Mike. Before talking about AI, this industry is about waste management. The less waste you have, the higher the yield, and the more profit you can gain. More product and then more profit. We invested in our expansion and ADR. We want to make less waste in our operation to increase our yield. AI is a big thing. We want to understand how AI help us in terms of the quality. AI help us in managing the waste in terms of whether our potatoes from the store or from the field are coming in the right sizes?

How long does it need to be? What are the varieties that work for us? How is AI improving our quality in terms of the product itself, because we want to compete with the McCain and Lamb Weston? If our quality was going to be bad, even if you are Saudi-made, it is not going to go through the consumer. AI is new to us. We do not know a lot of it, but we do not want to miss it as well. We're learning as we go with it. PolySense is the right partner at the moment.

**Tweet: We can't compete with the Western market if our quality is poor. Even if it's Saudi-made, consumers won't accept it.**

**They are doing some interesting work and appearing to have meaningful results at numerous facilities, not only in French fries but across different industries. It is technology like that. I agree with you. What you can do to minimise waste and enhance quality is really where the focus needs to be in the industry. Not just volume, not just kgs per hour. That is a difficult game to play. You really have to focus on efficiency.**

Especially if you're competing with McCain and Lamb Weston.

**They have tremendous volumes, and that can actually cover up a lot of sin, so to speak. It is difficult to compete unless you're really focused on efficiency, waste management and quality. It seems like you've definitely got the right philosophy there. How do you ensure that your workforce is adequately trained and understands how the French fry manufacturing industry works, because it is a living, breathing raw material that changes on almost a seasonal basis, for sure, but it can change almost truckload to truckload in some regions?**

**You still need to generate high-quality, consistent products and meet specifications and budgets. How do you engage teams to educate, train, and mentor these factory floor workers and**

## **management teams to ensure that the factory is operating to the highest possible efficiency and quality?**

There are two parts to answering this question. The first one is that the French fries industry in Saudi Arabia is new. We're learning. No matter what seminars, no matter what lectures that we say, unless you face the problem, you're not going to learn. We're learning a lot from our mistakes in the field, in the store, and also in the facility itself. It is a learning process for us.

As management, we're allowing these people to have this learning curve. We're not very harsh on them. We're learning, you're learning, so this is a new industry for us. We've only been here for two years, so it is okay. The most important thing is that once we make a mistake, we do not need to do it again. We learn from it.

What we try to do is, I would say, we're relying also on our big brother Egypt. They have more than 35 years of experience in the French fries industry. We have a lot of employees from there. We're taking key people from there, and they are starting with us, and we're learning from them as well. Two parts. Something is self-learning, and something we bring expertise from the industry near us.

## **Where do you see Al-Jouf as a French fry manufacturer going in the future? What is the plan?**

### **Vision For The Future & Market Dynamics**

The plan is we want to be the French fries factory in the Middle East. Once they say fries in the Middle East, they will relate to Al-Jouf. This is our vision. The French fries of the Middle East.

**Tweet:** The plan is to become the french fries factory in the Middle East. When people say "fries" in the Middle East, they should immediately think of Al-Jouf. That's our vision — to be the French fries of the Middle East.

## **I meant to ask you earlier, maybe we can touch on it now. I'm curious. Who are you selling French fries to, and where is the market demand? What is the approximate mix of retail versus food service or institutional demand in your market?**

When we first started, we went to Target Wholesale because we wanted to generate volume and make the process go on. Afterwards, we entered the retail market and to the end user and to the retailer. Now people are relating, "We have a local manufacturer. This is excellent." As I said earlier, people in Saudi Arabia are really eager for the Saudi-made. Even if it is a higher price, they will take it. Our product is lower than that of McCain and Lamb Weston, and of a higher quality. For example, we're producing AAA quality for the retailer.

We want to maintain a very high quality in retail. QSRs we have, let us say, the last fifteen years in Saudi Arabia, a lot of local QSRs that produce burgers and fries. There is McDonald's, which is the top of the industry, but there are a lot of Saudi chains that are well known in Saudi Arabia. We entered a little bit of QSR, but QSR wants certain qualities. We want to make sure that we can produce it, which we do, but we do not want to expand it, and to be very fast and quick QSR. Mostly it is wholesale and then retail. We're moving a little bit, baby steps in the QSRs.

## **What is the growth rate of the French fry market?**

Double digits.

**That is significant. In places like North America, it is 3% to 4% is what is forecast. It is basically very slow.**

It makes sense because in Saudi Arabia, there is a young generation. Most of the population is between 30 and 35 or 25 and 35. This young generation is used to the fast food industry, and also with the Vision 2030, a lot of women are working, so they do not have time to cook at home, and mostly eat outside. French fries are something you can put in a burger, mixed grill, falafel and shawarma and everything. It is everywhere.

**I always say everybody loves French fries, right? It is an interesting global phenomenon. It is gaining so much traction globally. We touched on this before hitting record. The market dynamics of where fries are made and where fries are sold are changing a lot because of manufacturing growth in India, China, and parts of the Middle East, like you.**

**It is displacing the export from other regions into those markets that are now not only meeting their domestic demand, but are also exporting French fries to other regions. That is causing a major shift in the whole global dynamic of French fries. Everybody loves them, and global growth is still quite strong. There is a tremendous amount of opportunity left in the French fry world, I believe.**

Seventy-five percent of our imports come from the Netherlands and Belgium. Now in Europe, I believe they're losing their competitive advantage in terms of the potato itself. In Saudi Arabia, we have seed multiplication. We had the tissue tube and the mini tube. I do not need to import seeds from Europe. I can make my product low-priced and high-quality as well. The same with the European, from Belgium and the Netherlands. I completely agree with you. The French fries industry is expanding in the emerging markets in India, China, maybe India is the biggest, and the Middle East. There is more expansion in these areas other than the US, North America and Europe.

**I attended Potato Expo in Dallas, Texas, last month, and I saw a graphic that showed in the last six years in China and India, French fry manufacturing has grown 600 to 1000% in the last six years.**

This is a huge number.

**It is incredibly huge. That amount of product on the market, this is a high 20% to 30% growth rate in demand in those markets and in addition to starting to export to other regions. There is just tremendous demand out there. I truly believe that quality and efficiency are the differentiators for long-term success, at least in the next 5 to 10 years, which is going to be the focus. There is going to be some time here while the global flow of French fries reshuffles and stabilises, but focus on quality and performance is key.**

**It is a very interesting story. It is a tremendous success story. I am sure it is enlightening to people in this part of the world, where we do not even think about potatoes or French fries being made in the Middle East. I look forward to visiting you in Saudi Arabia someday and touring your operations and your fields. I look forward to that very much.**

You're welcome with open arms. Whenever you're here, you just knock on the door, and you'll be welcome.

**Gulfood 2026 was last week. I did not attend. I did not get to attend this year, but I'll definitely have to make a point to get over there and attend that show and meet some other food people.**

You're going to be in Al-Jouf. I am sure.

**It is right there. Abdul, is there anything else that you'd like to touch on today that maybe we did not cover?**

Especially for us in this part of the world, a lot of investors think manufacturing French fries is easy. It is just peeling, cutting, and that is it. After going through this journey, the last ten years have been completely hard and extremely expensive. If you want to operate a facility that gives you high returns, it is capital-intensive, and it is very difficult.

**Tweet:** A lot of investors think manufacturing french fries is easy — just peeling, cutting, and that's it. But after going through this journey over the last 10 years, I can say it's extremely challenging and very expensive.

**I agree. It is not getting any less expensive. Prices go up every year, or every few months, actually, it seems. Which makes it even more important to have the insight to engage people who have experience, are willing to take risks, and move with speed. You have to be very agile in this industry before conditions change or equipment gets more expensive. Agility is extremely important, and expertise is extremely important. You're up and running at top efficiency as quickly as possible. You've definitely written that playbook, it seems. You've done what appears to be a tremendous job in that domain. Congratulations. It is very exciting to watch.**

Thank you. To be honest with you, it is an exciting journey. I never thought I was going to be going through this. Especially, as I told you, touching the part about the agriculture and the potato itself. Now I am digging deep into the agriculture part.

**That is going to be a huge learning curve for you. Some people dedicate their entire careers to that. I am sure that'll be an interesting journey for you. It has been great having you on the show, Abdul. If there is nothing else, I say thank you, sir, for joining the show, and I look forward to meeting again someday soon.**

Thank you, Mike. Appreciate it. Thank you for having me. Still, I am waiting for your visit.

**Very good. Bye-bye.**

Bye-bye.

## Important Links

- [Abdalmohsin Aljarallah on LinkedIn](#)
- [Al-Jouf](#)
- [Kiremko](#)

## About Abdalmohsin Aljarallah



Abdalmohsin Aljarallah is a seasoned executive and strategist with over 20 years of experience spanning the industrial, academic, and agricultural sectors. He holds an MBA in Organizational Leadership from Johnson & Wales University and a PMP certification from Bryant University.

His career is defined by a unique blend of academic theory and practical business execution. Before leading Al-Jouf, he served as a University Lecturer at Jubail Industrial College and spent over a decade as the Head of the Industrial Development Centre for the Royal Commission for Jubail

and Yanbu. This diverse background allows him to bridge the gap between high-level strategic planning and large-scale industrial operations.