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ASIA EDITION

Rise of Middle East as a Biotech Hub

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The Middle East region now clearly recognises the necessity for more locally developed and produced medical treatments and products due to an ageing and expanding population as well as the adoption of a more western lifestyle. It is not unexpected that the Middle East's biotechnology sector is gradually attracting more attention and investment given its potential for economic growth and the possibility of improving healthcare outcomes.



The Middle East has identified the biotech industry as a promising venture for well over a decade. With an ageing and growing population, and the adoption of a more western lifestyle, the need for more locally created and manufactured medical treatments and products has become apparent in countries such as Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As such, the biotech industry is rapidly growing and establishing a profound presence in the Middle East.

For instance, it was only a few years ago that KSA's Hevolution Foundation announced a $1 billion per year investment into ageing and longevity, with the aim to find ways to extend the number of years people live in good health. KSA is also home to the King Fahad Medical City (KFMC). Being one of the largest and fastest growing medical complexes in the Middle East, the KFMC has a capacity of 1,200 beds and is estimated to see 500,000 outpatients per year. Additionally, KSA is also home to the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). Both the KFMC and KAUST play an important role in coordinating with biotech companies looking to establish business and create new technologies within the Middle East region.

Qatar is emerging as a prominent player in the burgeoning biotechnology sector and can currently conduct Phase 1, 2, and 3 clinical trials. In addition, the recent creation of state-of-the-art scientific academic facilities has also led to a boom in local talent and research in the region. As a result, well established biotech industry companies are already starting to establish headquarters in the region and are attracting even more small companies and startups. The Qatar Foundation (QF) is a not-for-profit organisation focused on education, research and innovation, and community development. The QF includes the likes of the Qatar Science and Technology Park and the Qatar Biomedical Research Institute, both important players in funding and collaborating with the biotech industry. The goal is to improve the likelihood of success for the Qatar National Vision 2030, a

plan designed to modernise and expand and improve the quality of life in the country.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also emerged as a hotspot for biotech collaboration. In 2023, the UAE launched The National Genome Strategy to map the DNA of every Emirati to provide personalised medical care for every citizen. Additionally, the government of the UAE has allocated substantial investments towards the enhancement of infrastructure, research centres, and universities with the primary objective of fostering innovation within the sector. Within the life sciences ecosystem, a collaborative synergy exists between public and private entities, dedicated to propelling advancements in innovation, research and development, as well as the production of therapeutic solutions.

Given its potential for economic expansion and the prospect of enhancing healthcare outcomes, it is unsurprising that the biotechnology industry in the Middle East is progressively garnering heightened attention and investment.

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