

Valorization of the Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP) in the GDA Borj Essougui: New potential income-generating activities for rural women

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Location: GDA Borj Essougui, Mornag, Tunisia

Context:

In Tunisia, approximately 830 737 hectares of forestlands and 4 706 029 hectares of rangelands are suitable to produce spontaneous growth of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP) (Ghoudi, 2002). The majority of wild and cultivated plant production is in rainfed settings and highly dependent on environmental conditions; this is especially true for AMPs. AMP production in Tunisia have many advantages comparatively to other countries such as low labor costs overall, low harvesting costs and processing in mobile, low-cost distillation units, favorable climatic conditions for AMP production, extensive coverage of spontaneous AMP varieties, especially rosemary, and tradition of herbicide and chemical free production (Govindasamy et al. 2014). The AMP sector provides income opportunities to rural communities and disadvantaged people, especially women. However, the sector faces several challenges such as low knowledge and poor processing conditions.

Objective:

The main objective of the pilot project is to generate income for rural women by the exploitation of the AMP products for different users. The specific objectives are:

- To monitor the quality of AMP oils extracted by controlling the distillation techniques and the optimal conservation conditions of the product.
- To offer training addressed to GDA members to valorise and exploit forest products, multiplication of the plants and creation AMP projects.
- To disseminate information to a wide audience to encourage plants conservation.



Figure 1. (a) and (b) Rosemary; (c) and (d) Myrtle; (e) and (f) Plants distillation and raw material sorting.

The Agricultural Development Group (Groupement de Développement Agricole - GDA) Borj Essougui was founded in 2015 in Morneg, Ben Arous, and has 15 artisans certified in distillation. GDA Borj Essougui manufactures essential oils, floral waters and dried herbs from 6 varieties of AMPs: lentiscus, rosemary, thyme, myrtle, lavender and Juniper. This GDA also produces natural Jams; Hrisa, etc.



Figure 2. Example of some articles produced in the GDA Borj Essougui.

Expected Results:

With this Innovation Action we expect to improve the processing techniques of the GDA working with AMP, and thus contribute to generation of income, social inclusion and rural development in Tunisia. In particular, we expect:

- To improve the quality of extracted AMP oils through the control of distillation techniques and the optimal conditions for the conservation of the product.
- To increase oil production by improving the distillation equipment and internal organisation.
- To organise the actors in the supply chain to better respond to the increase in market demand.

References:

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