



Moroccan oasis in the agricultural World Heritage

IN 2002, FAO HAS UNDERTAKEN THE GIAHS INITIATIVE (GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS), WHICH IS INTENDED TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORLD AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SITES AND TO ENSURE THEIR RECOGNITION AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. RECOGNIZED FOR ITS EXCEPTIONAL BIODIVERSITY, THE IMILCHIL-AMELLAGO SITE HAS BEEN CLASSIFIED AS AN INGENIOUS SYSTEM OF THE WORLD AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE IN 2011. AT THE SAME TIME, MOROCCO CONSTITUTES THE SECOND MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRY FOR THE WEALTH OF ITS BIODIVERSITY AND HAS A LOT OF ENDEMIC SPECIES. SIGNATORY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIODIVERSITY, THE COUNTRY DEVELOPS A PROTECTED AREAS POLICY THAT INCLUDES NATURE PARKS AND RESERVES OF THE BIOSPHERE (THE ARGAN TREE, SOUTHERN MOROCCAN OASES).



THE IMILCHIL-AMELLAGO SITE, WORLD AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

THE GIAHS INITIATIVE

PROTECTING THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF OASIAN SYSTEMS, PROTECTING TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

All over the world, generations of farmers and breeders have created systems and specific agricultural landscapes, shaped and maintained them. These systems that enhance the local natural resources and their management are based on practices that are adapted to the local context. Based on the experience and local knowledge, these resourceful agricultural systems reflect the evolution of the human race, its deep relationship with nature and the diversity of its knowledge. These systems have contributed to the development of an important agricultural biodiversity on a global scale and, above all, they provided in a sustainable way the multiple goods and services to the whole of society and ensured for local food security, livelihoods and quality of life.

The historical oases of Morocco

In the mountains of the Eastern High Atlas of Morocco, the Imilchil-Amellago site is recognized as an Ingenious System of Global Agricultural Heritage. Indeed, the agricultural system of the Amazighs, present since the Neolithic era, knew to face an extreme climate and transform this region into a flourishing green island.

However, this precious biodiversity, and more particularly that present in the Atlas mountains and in the oasis systems, is constantly abused. It is estimated that 25% of plant species and nearly 600 endangered animal species have reached the non-renewal threshold and are recorded as endangered. This decline in natural productivity has a negative impact on the quality and sustainability of the livelihoods of traditional communities in Morocco. Hence, the FAO Representation in Morocco, in consultation with the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA), the Agency for Agricultural Development (ADA), the National Agency for the Development of the Oasian Areas and the Argan (ANDZOA) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries (MAPM), the Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Provinces of the South of the Kingdom (APDESPS), the High Commissioner for Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification (HCEFLCD), local actors and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), identified four other potential sites : Ait Mansour, Akka, Assa and Figuig.

Moroccan oasis areas receive fairly consistent financial and technical support. Funded to more than US \$ 12 million, two national projects and one subregional project with Mauritania and Tunisia, in support of the Green Morocco Plan, aim to improve soil conservation and biodiversity in oasis ecosystems, sensitize populations, generating income, promoting the cultural and environmental heritage of the sites, developing local products and ecotourism, and conducting national community development plans, such as watershed management.

At COP 22 held in Marrakech in November 2016, FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries in launching the Sustainable Oasis Initiative and expressed its willingness to support its implementation. ■



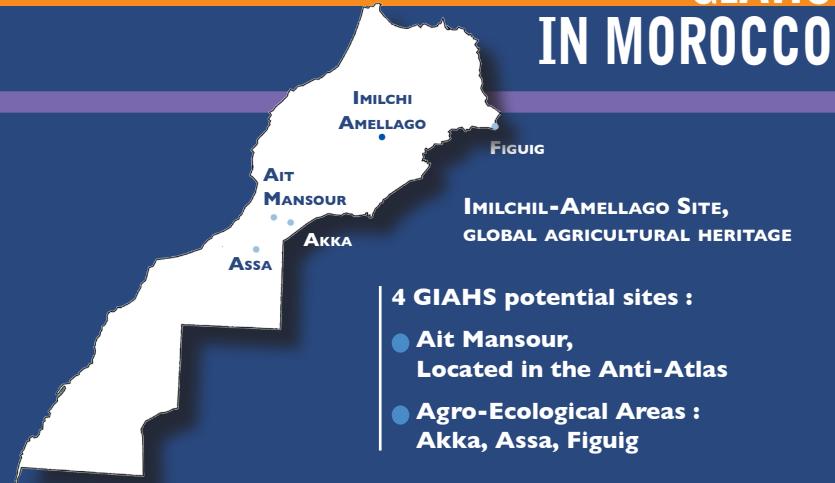
THE MOROCCAN OASIS IN NUMBERS

GIAHS IN MOROCCO

4 large hydraulic basins.

**107 324 Km² of area, or
15% of the national surface.**

**1.6 million inhabitants, or nearly
5.3% of the country's population.**



| 4 GIAHS potential sites :

- Ait Mansour,
Located in the Anti-Atlas
 - Agro-Ecological Areas :
Akka, Assa, Figuig

The revitalization of oasis agro-ecosystems in the Drâa-Tafilalet region

FAO and the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with the National Agency for the Development of the Oasian Areas and the Argan Tree (ANDZOA), have formulated a project with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) aiming at the “Revitalization of oasis agro-ecosystems through a sustainable, integrated landscape approach in the Draâ-Tafilalet Region” (OASIL Project). This project, amounting to USD 8.6 million, is implemented during the period 2017-2021.

AN ECO-SYSTEMIC APPROACH FOR OASES

The oasis heritage plays an important ecological role in maintaining biodiversity. Unfortunately, this heritage is severely deteriorated by several factors, including the irrational exploitation of water resources, desertification and climate change. The degradation of oasis areas involves the abandonment of many phoeniculatural orchards and the exodus of the population to urban centers, which further accelerates the deterioration of oasis ecosystems.

In order to preserve and revitalize the fragile ecosystems of oases, the project proposes a participatory eco-systemic approach to sustainable natural resource management, capacity building and sustainable productivity intensification.

Through its components, OASIL supports the dissemination of knowledge on oases, strengthens political dialogue and facilitates the adoption of strategies and plans for sustainable oasis management at both national and regional levels. It also encourages the use of an integrated landscape approach and the involvement of all stakeholders in the development of management and investment plans for oases. In addition, OASIL foresees the pilot implementation of ■■■

■ ■ ■ investment as well as sustainable and integrated management plans for oasis agro-systems. ■

The unique system of the argan tree : agricultural heritage of Morocco

A partnership agreement between the FAO Representation in Morocco and the National Agency for the Development of the Oasian Areas and the Argan Tree (ANDZOA), was signed in December 2015 to promote the unique system of the Argan tree as an agricultural heritage for the benefit of the people and the territory.

The agreement aims to contribute to the establishment and encouragement of federative initiatives of all the public and private actors involved in the sustainable development of the argan tree by giving their interventions and their efforts more coherence, convergence, complementarity and synergy. Promotion actions are also planned to make them more visible to national, regional and international bodies concerned with sustainable development.

Through this partnership, two studies are planned. Namely :

- the design of a Geographical Information System of the arganeraie and its natural, landscape and agricultural heritage ;
 - and conservation and management of the arganeraie as a Global Ingenious Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS).

These two proposals will make it possible to refine the knowledge of the resources of the arganeraie and to draw up orientations in order better to value it. ■

FAO IN FIGURES

140 NATIONAL PROJECTS

AND 65 REGIONAL PROJECTS CARRIED OUT

1982 OPENING OF FAO'S REPRESENTATION IN RABAT.

MORE THAN 60 years THAT FAO SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOROCCO IN THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SECTOR.

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