

How A Search Engine Helped A Moroccan Region Recover From Earthquake

Jamie Hailstone Contributor 

Jamie Hailstone is a U.K.-based reporter, who covers sustainability.

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TOPSHOT - A resident sits in the shade of an umbrella near a mosque and buildings damaged by the ... [\[+\]](#) AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

When an earthquake struck Morocco in September 2023, it had a devastating impact for many, including those who live in the High Atlas region, who saw their farms and livelihoods destroyed.

The search engine Ecosia has played a key role in helping the region recover, by pledging all profits from Ecosia searches on one day last year would go to the High Atlas Foundation, in order to restore infrastructure and plant 200,000 trees as soon as the situation allowed.

And now a year on, the work Ecosia and HAF are doing in local villages has meant 80,000 trees have been planted, numerous irrigation systems ⓘ BETA been repaired and 60 solar panels have been installed.

Foundation president Yossef Ben-Meir of total of 50,000 families living in the region were impacted by the earthquake in an interview.

Ben-Meir added some lost their homes, and many families are still without shelter now.

“A village of 300 people lost half its people,” he told me. “Many villages were completely devastated, but in other areas the damage was centred around a very small space.”

Ecosia's chief tree planting officer, Pieter van Midwoud, said the idea of dedicating a day's profits from the search engine to help the region was a “no brainer”.

“We are involved with close to 6,000 farmers in Morocco and many of the people we know live in those villages,” he added.

It's a moment where you put everything aside and say ‘we have to do this’.”

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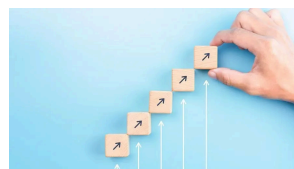
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He said Ecosia has been working with the High Atlas Foundation and farmers in the region for eight years.

Van Midwoud said the work in the past has included setting up eight new nurseries, which are supplying the seedlings for all these farmers and

cooperatives.

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Trees are a crucial aspect of the agricultural practices of farmers in the High Atlas region.

And carob trees, olive trees and various nuts also help make the region more resilient against erosion and climate change.

He said Ecosia also holds a large database of tree planting locations and what species being planted.

“When the earthquake happened, it impacted many of the villages we have been working with.

“We decided to work with some of the most affected villages to see how we could help them to restore their infrastructure, from terracing to solar panels.”

Ben-Meir said it was important to restore water infrastructure systems to help communities get back on their feet.

“We're a community development organization,” he explained. “Many of these communities want to plant trees as they transition from barley and corn.

He added there has also been a six-year drought in this part of Morocco, which has also impacted the communities living there and rewilding efforts.

“Our work is about how we can create more self-generating revenue sources to feed back into other projects,” added Ben-Meir.

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“We’ve had good discussions with Ecosia on some of these ideas like tree planting, which enable communities to have an income, and invest in human development more broadly.”

And Van Midwoud said the nurseries in the High Atlas mountains being backed by Ecosia are producing seeds that farmers really want.

“They are not big nurseries, but they can stand on their own feet, because farmers pay for the trees that they get from them.,

“We have basically created tree planting machines in the High Atlas mountain region, which is a great legacy to leave.”

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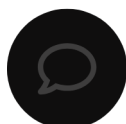
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