

# The High Atlas Foundation's zero-waste initiative

Africa circular economy

📅 April 3, 2025 | By **Lisa Matata**



The global textile industry is at a critical crossroads, with mounting waste and pollution posing severe environmental and social challenges. As the world grapples with these issues, innovative solutions are emerging to transform waste management and promote sustainability. One such initiative is led by the [High Atlas Foundation \(HAF\)](#), a Moroccan-based nonprofit dedicated to sustainable development. Through its groundbreaking Tree Sacks Project, HAF is addressing plastic waste in agriculture while empowering local communities, particularly women-led cooperatives.

Each year, approximately 92 million tonnes of textile waste are generated globally—equivalent to one truckload per second. This waste, often discarded in landfills or incinerated, significantly contributes to carbon emissions and pollution. The fashion industry alone is responsible for 10 percent of global carbon emissions, with projections indicating a 60 percent rise in textile manufacturing emissions by 2030. Additionally, textile dyeing and finishing processes account for nearly 20 percent of global clean water pollution, as untreated wastewater is discharged into rivers and streams, making the industry the second-largest contributor to water contamination.

Beyond environmental concerns, textile waste also presents an economic challenge. The current linear model—produce, use, discard—is unsustainable. The need for a circular economy, where materials are reused, recycled, and repurposed, has never been more urgent.

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Recognizing the need for sustainable solutions, the High Atlas Foundation launched its Tree Sacks Project to reduce plastic waste in agriculture. This initiative introduces biodegradable tree sacks, replacing conventional plastic sacks used in nurseries. By shifting to locally produced, sustainable alternatives, HAF is actively reducing pollution while fostering economic opportunities for Moroccan women.

Since its inception, HAF has registered three official cooperatives in Al Haouz province and provided them with 50 sewing machines and essential resources. These cooperatives play a crucial role in producing biodegradable tree sacks, with over 14,500 distributed to nurseries across Morocco within just two months of the project's trial phase. HAF's ambitious goal is to manufacture 1.4 million biodegradable sacks over the next three years, significantly cutting down plastic waste in tree planting efforts.

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HAF's Tree Sacks Project is a prime example of how circular economy principles can be applied to address industry-specific sustainability challenges. By replacing plastic materials with biodegradable alternatives, the initiative not only reduces environmental harm but also creates economic and social value. This aligns with global sustainability goals, particularly those aimed at reducing waste, promoting responsible consumption, and advancing gender equality.

A circular approach to fashion and textiles requires action at multiple levels—governments, businesses, and individuals must commit to reducing waste, investing in innovative solutions, and making more sustainable choices. The High Atlas Foundation's work serves as a model for how





national zero-waste initiatives, advocate for responsible production practices, and embrace the shift toward sustainability. By supporting and expanding projects like HAF's, we can work toward a more sustainable future—one stitch at a time.

