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## MOROCCO: First phase of Toubkal sustainable arboriculture project completed

By **Boris Ngounou** - Published on April 14 2020 / Modified on April 14 2020



The sustainable arboriculture project in Toubkal, southern Morocco, is progressing well. The first phase has recently been finalised and a total of 8,000 fruit trees have been planted. The initiative aims to provide the inhabitants of the commune of Toubkal with a sustainable source of income. It also helps to regenerate the vegetation cover and combat soil erosion.

The plant cover of the commune of Toubkal, located on the southern side of the High Atlas Mountains in southern Morocco, has now been increased by 8,000 fruit trees (almond and walnut trees). It is the culmination of the first phase of the Toubkal sustainable arboriculture project, launched on February 12, 2019, by the High Atlas Foundation (FHA).

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This project consists of supporting small farmers in the organic cultivation of high value-added fruit trees, from planting to product development. This process provides the inhabitants of the villages concerned with a sustainable source of income while helping to regenerate the plant cover and combat soil erosion.

## Product certification is also in sight

As part of the Toubkal tree cultivation project, the High Atlas Foundation (FHA) is supported by the Global Environment Facility's microfinance programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Crédit Agricole du Maroc (CAM) Group, through its Foundation for Sustainable Development. The latter is responsible for the acquisition and planting of organic fruit tree seedlings for small farmers, training farmers in grafting these trees, the specifics of organic maintenance, harvesting the fruit and handling it organically until it is marketed.

The *Crédit Agricole du Maroc* Foundation also undertakes to finance the organic certification of these micro orchards by means of group certification, as well as the production of educational material (a documentary film) that will enable the replication of organic mountain arboriculture initiatives in other regions of Morocco.

Over time, the farmers benefiting from the operation will be identified on a digital mapping of agricultural terraces through the development of a geographic information system. The villages targeted by the project are the same villages that in 2016 had obtained Ecocert certification. An award that guarantees and promotes the best social and environmental practices.

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