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# Replenishing the argan forests, together

by Jude Jacob August 30, 2022



Our One Set, One Tree Program means that for every skincare set or bottle of argan oil you buy, FRÉ plants an argan "Tree of Life", to help replenish the endangered argan forests and support women who harvest argan oil in Morocco. Thanks to you, our amazing community, we have planted a total of 63,000 argan trees in Morocco since FRÉ was born 6 years ago.

To plant trees in Morocco, we partner with the High Atlas Foundation (HAF), an NGO that works hard to preserve the natural heritage of Morocco. The organization sets strategies and projects for the purpose

of promoting tree planting, especially the argan tree, due to its importance and status among Moroccans.

### **Reforestation of the Safi region**

Together with our partners at HAF, we are now working on a new project to reforest the Safi region of Morocco. We will be planting argan and caper trees across 40 hectares of land this coming October. These two trees are native to Northern Morocco. Planting these trees will benefit the local ecosystem and socially and economically empower the Tularuz women's cooperative that will harvest the argan oil and capers.

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### **The magic of argan**

Argan is the heart and soul of all FRÉ's products. It's a uniquely nourishing ingredient harvested from resilient trees that weather the most extreme climates. Scientifically known as *Argania Spinosa*, it is the only type of argan tree around the world; it's a tree endemic to Morocco that has great biological, nutritional, socioeconomic, and ecological value.

In Morocco, argan grows mainly in the Essouiera region, close to the coast. We are now working to restore areas of argan forest that have been damaged by deforestation. In addition, we are planting argan trees in communities. One of the challenges in Morocco is that communities have large tracts of land, but don't have the irrigation infrastructure and investment ability to plant thousands of trees.

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**Irrigation to transform the region**



### **Irrigation to transform the region**

Currently, FRÉ is investing in 40 hectares of communal land in the Safi region of Morocco. Young trees will be planted in the area and need to be irrigated until they reach maturity. The key is bringing water to the area. First, HAF assesses where to build a well together with the Provisional Office of Hydrology. At this stage, the participation of the local community is essential, proving their interest in the project. Once the plan is established and a well is dug, the next step is to install a solar water pump system and build a basin to contain the water. Finally, the young trees are moved from the HAF nurseries to their new home on the communal land and a pipe pressure drip system is set up to irrigate them.

The wonderful thing about argan is that you only need to irrigate the trees for the first few years. When they are around 5 years old, they become self-sustaining and can live 250 years in the arid Moroccan climate. The idea of this project is to place the well and the basin in a location where the water can be redirected to another large plot of land, around 40 hectares, once the trees in the first area have been irrigated. This project will plant and irrigate 8,000 argan trees together with medicinal plants to provide additional revenue for the Tularuz community. In turn, these plants will inject nutrients into the soil and regenerate the biodiversity of the region.

## **This project will plant and irrigate 8,000 argan trees.**

### **Empowering women**

Traditionally in Morocco, the harvesting of argan oil is done by women and the agriculture is done by men. However, in this irrigation project, all aspects will be done by women, which will require providing the women with skills training. A new women's cooperative will be built and launched in Tularuz and up to 25 women will be trained and empowered with an INSPIRE workshop. The workshop deep dives into confidence and self-belief, relationship to self, body image, relationship to money and more. The goal is to concretely establish a new cooperative to manage the trees that will be planted as well as to give the women the tools to plan for the cooperative's future growth and development.

Unlike providing trees to individual villagers, planting trees and creating cooperatives provides

..... benefits to the local community. It is ..... with participation in education, it ..... ..

enormous benefits to the local community. It increases girls' participation in education, it means more food security and it means women are more involved in community decision making. In addition, once the argan is ready to harvest, FRÉ will purchase the oil directly from the cooperative, creating an ongoing source of income.

The development of the argan forests in Morocco provides nutritional, socioeconomic, and ecological benefits to the local communities. Young argan trees need consistent irrigation for 5 years until they reach self-sustaining maturity. Irrigation infrastructure, which is expensive and technical, is the basis for the trees' growth and profound change in the local communities' development. Insufficient funds often limit communities' abilities to build irrigation infrastructures, but thanks to FRÉ and to you, our wonderful community, the Tularuz irrigation project is underway.

