

Blooming Morocco: One Argan Seed at a Time





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Deciphering effective mechanisms for long-term growth is a journey that most certainly involves a variety of factors. Factors such as sustainable growth, women empowerment, clean drinking water, and planting trees are all integral in order to ensure brighter futures for Moroccan communities.

Planting trees is a unique factor that promises a greener, more vibrant, and interconnected future for Morocco. Morocco is gifted with an abundance of tree varieties, from pine forests to poplars to jujube trees. The most notable one, however, is the famed [argan tree](#), better known as “[The Tree of Life](#).”

Prevalent in the southwest region of Morocco, the argan tree is renowned for its plethora of health and environmental benefits as well as women empowerment. The preservation of argan trees in Morocco is a vital development strategy that ensures positive developmental growth for coming generations.

Health benefits of argan trees





The overarching use of argan trees for Moroccans is argan oil which involves an age-old extraction method. Argan oil has a valuable fatty acid profile, as it contains 13% palmitic acid and more than 80% monosaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids including 48-59% oleic acid and 30-50% of linoleic acid.

Argan oil contains large amounts of vitamin E and can reduce cholesterol levels and triglycerides. Interestingly, an old tradition in one of the benefits of using argan oil is that its residue can be collected and mixed with honey which makes a paste similar to that of peanut butter; hence providing another food source. Argan oil proves to be especially useful in cooking food, including a variety of salads and couscous, complimenting a healthy diet.

Moreover, argan oil is abundant in dermatological benefits as well as for hair and skin products, used for growing stronger hair, treating stretch marks, chickenpox pustules, and acne. Additionally, the wood from [argan](#) trees serves multiple purposes, from construction to firewood, though uniquely argan tree wood is generally [resistant to insects](#). Ensuring that local communities are able to construct stable houses that have cleaner, non-infested environments.

Environmental benefits of argan trees and Morocco

One of the most famous images of argan trees are the goats that climb up them. The goats can comfortably climb up to 30 ft above the ground. The goats are attracted to

the argan trees to munch on the fruits and leaves. After, the nuts are recovered from their excretions.

These nuts are used to make argan oil. Thus, not only do these goats serve the farmers, which are notably mostly women, a source of income by retrieving the seeds to make argan oil, but it also serves as a popular tourist attraction which can also provide a source of income through tips from tourists.

Additionally, not only are argan trees hotspots for goats, but it is also a food source for other livestock, including but not limited to sheep, camels, and cattle.

As with the beauty of trees, the argan tree also serves as a source of shade and rest for travelers as well as windbreakers in times of extreme weather.

Furthermore, argan trees play a significant role to combat desertification and erosion in Morocco. Their large and dense crown protects the soil and pasture from sun damage and its deep root system binds the soil and helps water infiltration, which replenishes groundwater.

The plethora of argan trees also prevents southern Morocco from deforestation which negatively impacts various spheres of life, including agricultural impacts, the livelihood of livestock, and drastic changes in normal temperatures. In other words, the diminishing of argan trees contributes to the negative impacts of climate change.



Women empowerment and development strategies at HAF

As mentioned, women primarily harvest the nuts from the argan trees and goats providing a source of income, and put simply, give opportunities for women's involvement in managing household finances.

Important to note, the extraction process to finally retrieve the argan seeds is generally very time-consuming. According to National Geographic, the process usually consists of two parts: First, separating animal feed, and secondly, cracking open the argan nuts by hand to obtain the oil-rich kernels with the seeds, used to make very expensive cosmetics or food.

Nonetheless, it is a profitable opportunity that many farmers in Morocco partake in due to the countless benefits of argan trees.

