

## Case Study - Argan program

**Charlotte d'Ecreville**

### **1/ Cognis Sustainability and CSR approach**

Laboratoires Sérobiologiques is a division of Cognis France, and as such, it shares Cognis' sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) philosophy.

A company operates sustainably when its actions do not impair the planet's ability to provide the necessary resources in both the present and the future and when it integrates, on a voluntary basis, social and environmental concerns in their business operations and their interactions with their stakeholders. At Cognis, we are committed to find a healthy balance between financial, environmental and social imperatives, without compromising the development opportunities of future generations. We aim to succeed as a business by developing innovative products and environmentally friendly manufacturing processes, and by continuously improving the skills and knowledge of our employees and partners around the world. Together with our exemplary social commitment, this approach is the key to our philosophy of sustainable development.

### **2 / The use of natural resources**

The use of natural resources at Cognis is based on the strict principles of sustainability:

- To conserve biological diversity through sustainable use of natural resources
- To work in partnership with local communities which produce or deliver natural-source raw materials
- To foster the development of the region and to ensure that the benefits are shared with the local population.

With globalization, the cosmetic industry has access to exotic materials and ancestral uses from different regions. This diversified sourcing has to be integrated into a social and environmental responsibility process: promoting the fair sharing of profits with sustainable and respectful exchanges with communities' holders of ancestral knowledge and the protection of the biodiversity.

The Moroccan collaboration Targanine IEG / Cognis is a concrete example of such CSR approach for the supply of products derived from the Argan tree.

### **3 / The Argan program in Morocco**

The Argan tree (*Argania spinosa* (L.) Skeels) is a tree indigenous to southern Morocco, and is largely found in the south-east of Essaouira on the Souss plain, bordering the Sahara desert. The Argan forest, which extends over approximately 800,000 hectares and contains more than 20 million trees, acts as a natural barrier against the advance of the desert. Its fruit contains a very hard kernel which holds between one and three seeds, from which a valuable oil can be extracted.

The Argan forest is socio-economically extremely important as it supports over three million people. Unfortunately, it is in decline, as a result of changes of the rural lifestyles. Over-exploitation, soil erosion and desertification have all played a part, and as a result, Unesco classified the Argan forest as a Biosphere Reserve (RBA) in 1998. This designation is given to selected inland and coastal ecosystems where modern development can be reconciled with the conservation of biodiversity in practical ways.

#### **Targanine Network**

In this context, the Targanine network was founded in 1996 by Professor Zoubida Charrouf with the support of Mohamed V University in Rabat and the association Ibn Al Baytar with the aim to protect the Argan forest:

- educating users of the Argan forest to protect their ecological patrimony
- enhancing economic valorization of Argan fruits
- improvement of the social status of women: increase their incomes and access to literacy programs
- participation in the reforestation: each participant is involved in reforestation processes

Today, 15 cooperatives (involving more than 2000 women) produce organic Argan oil used in food and cosmetics. The EIG Targanine (Economic Interest Group), was established in 2003 in Agadir with the goal to assist cooperatives in marketing, promotion and valorization at the national and international levels.

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### **IEG Targanine \ Cognis Partnership**

For nearly 6 years, Cognis and the Targanine network of cooperatives, under the initiative and with the close collaboration of Professor Zoubida Charrouf, have developed a partnership in order to identify new sources of cosmetic active ingredients with the condition that the new developments must support and encourage the protection and add value to the Moroccan Argania forest.

This partnership was focused on three main elements:

- Identification of specific parts of the Argan tree (leaves and oil cake) that could be valorized in cosmetic application and which will provide additional incomes for the Targanine members.
- Perform a study to evaluate the effects of harvesting leaves on Argan growth and to define the most appropriate specifications.
- Involvement of local populations in the protection of the Argania forest, (eg: tree nursery).

The research program conducted jointly by Professor Zoubida Charrouf and Cognis has allowed the phytochemical investigation of extracts from the Argan leaves and the extraction of high molecular weight protein from oil-cakes (residues of oil production).

Moreover, the impact study proposed by Professor Zoubida Charrouf, and supported by Cognis, led to the identification of the impact of our activity and the development of different protocols to support the preservation of the Argan forest:

- Harvest Argan leaves
- Germination of Argan seeds,
- Replant of Argan trees.

Since 2004, Cognis orders oil and products derived from Argan tree to Targanine network following good commercial practices (fair price, prepayment and direct trade) allowing additional incomes for the network's members and ensuring a sustainable activity.

This exchange between two partners which share the same values integrates a CSR approach for the supplying of natural products derived from the Argan tree.