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## **Laboratoires Sérobiologiques (LS) argan program in Morocco Sustainable developments: A pioneer CSR tripartite approach**

From the beginning, global specialty chemicals supplier Cognis and its active ingredients business Laboratoires Sérobiologiques (LS) went beyond most market standards with their LS Argan program in Morocco. Through this program, three cosmetic actives from the argan tree were developed following sustainability guidelines. Lipofructyl™ Argan is an extra virgin argan oil, certified organic and fairly traded (certified as 100% organic by Ecocert, and certified as Bio Equitable by Bio Partenaire), while Argatensyl™ (available in an organic Ecocert-certified version) and Arganyl™ (in conformity with Ecocert standards of Natural and Organic Cosmetics) are two innovative actives derived from parts of the argan tree that were previously not used in such cosmetic applications. The original cosmetic properties, discovered by a scientific partnership involving LS and Moroccan scientists, allow the potential revenues of the LS argan supply chain to be diversified and perpetuated.

LS sources its raw materials directly through an approved network of cooperatives, mainly run by women. These women are offered literacy and educational programs, thereby improving their integration into society and their social status. LS' payment policy follows fair trade guidelines. The extra revenues are encouraging members of the cooperative network to maintain and expand argan forests, following environmental best practices.

However, even though these steps went beyond the market standards, LS was committed to making the supply chain for its Argan products even more sustainable and equitable, exceeding the requirements of some organic certifications and fair trade labels. In this process, we realized that we had to make sure that our achievements coincided with the expectations, cultural

specificities and priorities of our Moroccan partners. More importantly, since there is no clear local structuring of the sector, the long-term effectiveness of our actions could not be guaranteed throughout our supply chain.

Therefore we decided to re-evaluate the next steps of our contribution, in order to maximize our impact and relevance in terms of long-term sustainability.

As part of our commitment to strengthening the sustainability and equitability of the supply chain for our argan products, especially verifying its appropriateness to our local partners, we decided to implement a comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program.

In collaboration with L'Oréal, we established an innovative tripartite approach creating a partnership with Yamana, an NGO which already implemented CSR programs in the textile industry ("Fibre Citoyenne" program). Yamana was chosen as a partner because of its unique position compared to most certifying bodies. Not only does it focus on long-term strategy, it also strives to consider and understand the impact on the local community, and this community's perception of the steps taken during the project. Interviews were conducted locally with various stakeholders, at all levels of the supply chain, in order to gain a holistic understanding of local opinion.

We are proud of the results of this 18-month program that was initiated in June 2008, to name a few: specific and relevant improvements to local practices that increase the cooperatives' autonomy and sense of social responsibility, while empowering local stakeholders towards self-management step by step.

The measures implemented include:

- a policies and procedures manual for the cooperatives that sets clear rules for members, similar to a CSR code of conduct, translated in Arabic;
- Quality, safety and hygiene guidelines to improve product quality and working conditions in the cooperatives;
- a traceability guide, translated in Arabic;
- and a pilot social fund for medical and cultural programs.



As a responsible company we are concerned with sustainability at the global level, including the sharing of benefits and respectful collaboration with local communities. Materials should be sourced in an environmentally responsible manner that is compatible with socio-economic considerations. In order to reinforce our CSR efforts and to make sure our partners' expectations have been taken into consideration, we have taken a tripartite, long-term approach working together with one of our main customers and an NGO with local presence. This project has been of great value ensuring a sustainable approach.

**More information: [www.cognis.com](http://www.cognis.com)**

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