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SwitchMed Magazine

Algeria



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SwitchMed programme is
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We are SwitchMed

SwitchMed is an initiative that supports and connects stakeholders to scale up eco and social innovations.

SwitchMed is an initiative that supports and scale-ups eco and social innovations

The SwitchMed Programme was launched in 2013 by the European Union to speed up the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Southern Mediterranean, notably through the promotion of circular economy approaches. The Programme aims at achieving productive, circular and sharing economies in the Mediterranean by changing the way goods and services are consumed and produced so that human development is decoupled from environmental degradation.

Its activities benefit 8 countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Through policy development, demonstration activities and networking opportunities, SwitchMed supports and connects stakeholders to scale-ups eco and social and eco innovations The Programme supports policy makers, eco-innovative small and medium sized enterprises, industries, start-ups and entrepreneurs in the Southern Mediterranean countries, which have identified job creation and natural resource protection as priority issues that also contribute to their economic stability.

SwitchMed, which works with a wide range of stakeholders, is committed to catalyse the market of sustainable products and services in the Mediterranean via:

- Capacity building in industry service providers targeting small and medium sized enterprises for resource efficiency improvements;
- Trainings for start-ups and entrepreneurs to build skills in design, business plan, marketing and financing of sustainable products and services;
- Engagement with policy makers to establish a regulatory and policy framework to boost the market for sustainable products and services;
- Empowerment of citizens and civil society organisations to lead socially innovative solutions addressing environmental challenges;
- An Action Network of stakeholders to link with similar initiatives and networks, exchange information and to scale-up current activities.

SwitchMed is implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UN Environment/MAP), the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) and the UN Environment's Economy Division. Each of the implementing organisations brings its specialised experience and tools to partner with the eight countries on activities that span policy development, capacity building, business support services, demonstration activities and networking.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) supports the development of green industry and sustainable production in the southern Mediterranean. It does so through a comprehensive approach that both presents the business case of resource efficiency to industries, and helps service providers increase their capacity to deliver sustainable production services matching the industry needs. In addition, UNIDO is cooperating with a number of national institutions addressing policies on sustainable production.

At the start of the project, the UNIDO designed TEST methodology is delivered to the service providers and local professionals. In collaboration with the UNIDO TEST expert team, the service providers identify and select companies to take part in the TEST project, based on the companies potential for improvements and top management commitment. Crucially, the company staff also receive the TEST training, enabling them to implement the technical measures and management solutions identified by the service provider. Their active participation in the training and in the implementation of the project ensures the sustainability of all identified actions at company level.

The TEST implementation approach has to date successfully demonstrated the profitability and effectiveness of introducing best practices and integrated management systems in terms of cost reduction, productivity increase and environmental performance, extending the experience gained to other industries in the region. UNIDO, together with local partners, also promotes business partnerships between local businesses and EU Eco-Innovative companies, creating an area of shared prosperity on the principles of a sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development.

United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UN Environment/MAP) is a Regional Seas Programme under UNEPs umbrella that brings together the 21 Mediterranean neighbouring countries. MAP provides support to those countries in the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, the so-called Barcelona Convention.

The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) is one of the centres belonging to UN/MAP. It is appointed with the mandate from the Contracting Parties of the Convention to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean region. In order to accomplish that mission the center provides knowledge, training, advice and networking opportunities to businesses, entrepreneurs, financial agents, civil society organisations and governments that work to provide Mediterranean's society with innovative services and products that are good for the people and for the planet.

The center provides technical assistance to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to adopt SCP as integrated approach to decouple development from pollution and environmental and implements pilot projects in four countries: Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Likewise SCP/RAC supports green entrepreneurs and change makers driving eco and social innovations in the Mediterranean by providing training, technical and financial advice, jointly with a network of strategic local partners and local trainers. Moreover, SCP/RAC works closely with financial agents to establish mechanism that enable entrepreneurs and small companies that provide SCP solutions access to funding. SCP/RAC also hosts the Networking Facility that contributes to the visibility, effectiveness and scaling up of the SwitchMed activities.

UN Environment's Economy Division supports the development of SCP National Action Plans and provides advisory services and follows up closely the implementation of the demonstration pilot projects of four countries: Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Palestine.

UN Environment's Economy Division works closely with the National Focal Points (NFP), who are key actors in the SwitchMed and play a specific role in implementing the policy activities at national and disseminating the results in their respective countries. Focal points have been appointed by the national governments. In most countries a duo of Focal points – one from Ministry of Environment and one from Ministry of Industry.

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Algeria's facts and numbers

Population

- 41.6 millions of inhabitants.
- 91% live along the Mediterranean coast.
- 45% live in urban areas.
- 1.5 millions nomads live in Saharan area.
- Major languages: Arabic, French & Berber.
- Major religion: Islam.

Geography & Economy

- World's 10th largest country.
- Currency: Dinar.
- The Ahaggar National Park, world's largest. protected areas with 450.000 km².
- Hydrocarbons are 98% of total country exports. (11th and 10th exporter worldwide for oil and gas respectively).

- Industry (excluding hydrocarbons) produce less than 5% of GDP and 6% of jobs.
- The green sector could generate over 1.4 million jobs by 2025.
- Youth (15-24 years) and women's unemployment are 21.5% and 17% respectively (2011).

Sources: Economy and Demography in Algeria, Wikipedia, United Nations, The World Bank, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación & Atlasinfo.fr

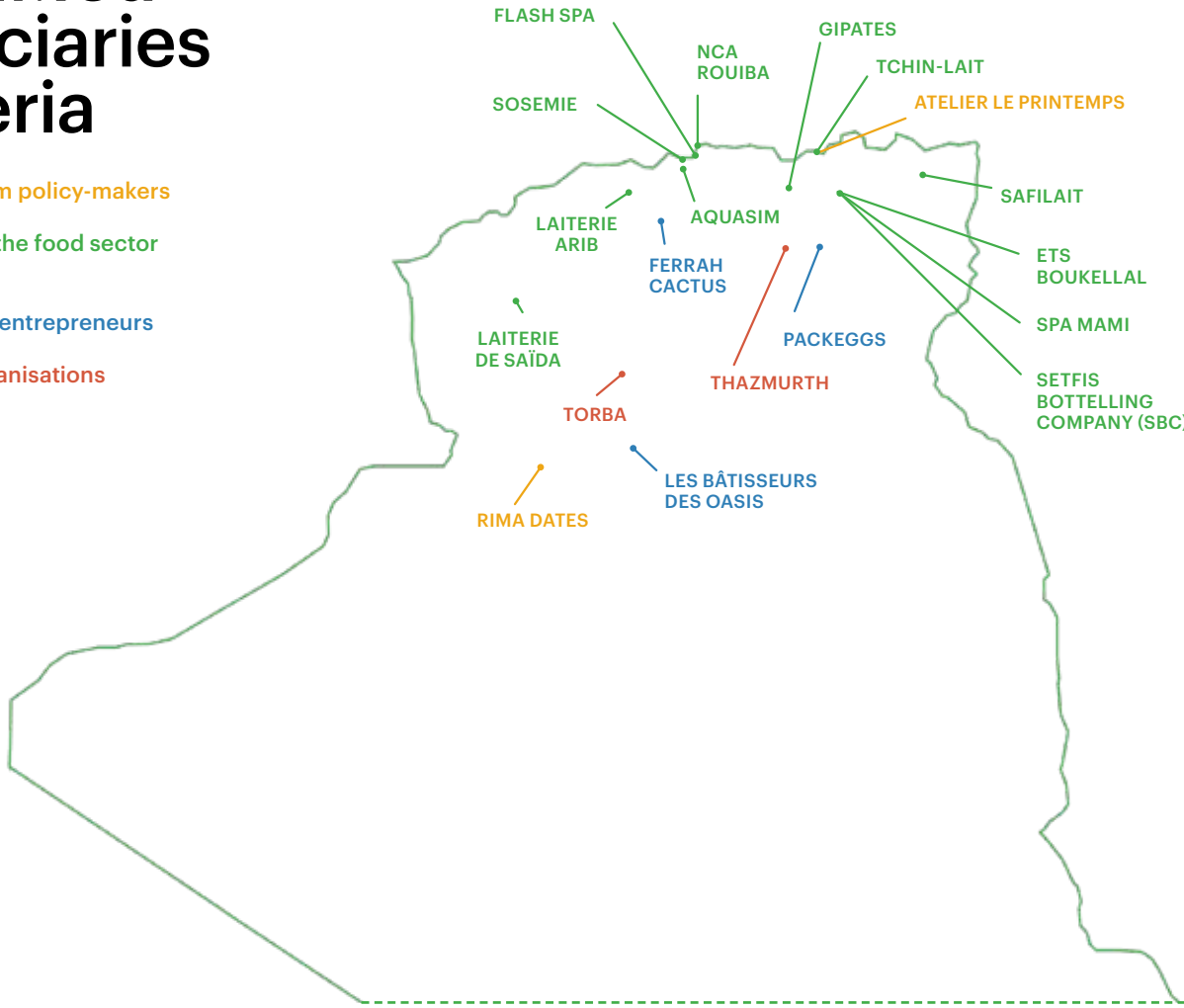
SwitchMed beneficiaries in Algeria

• 2 Pilot projects from policy-makers

• 12 Industries from the food sector joined MED TEST II

• 3 Incubated green entrepreneurs

• 2 Civil Society Organisations



The lines and arrows drawn might not point to the exact locations, at it is only an estimation.

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Engagement with policy makers to establish a regulatory and policy framework to boost the market for sustainable products and services.



Implementing circular economy measures in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean policy-makers developed within the SwitchMed programme a Regional Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan, including a Roadmap towards circular economy for its implementation in the Mediterranean as well as eight Sustainable Consumption and Production National Action Plans (SCP-NAPs).

The SCP Regional Action Plan was adopted in February 2016 by the 22 Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (known as Barcelona Convention), during their 19th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties. The SCP Regional Action Plan is a substantive contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a strategic document that gives clear guidelines on the actions that should be developed in the region to shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, long-term sustainability, circular economy and new paradigms in the use of resources. It is also responding constructively to the climate change challenges. The document is structured around 4 key areas which are essential for the socio-economic development and for the job market in the region but are at the same time highly contributing to the pollution loads and to the environmental degradation of the Mediterranean. Those 4 areas are: food, fisheries and agriculture sector, tourism, goods manufacturing and housing and construction sector.

At national level SwitchMed, under the coordination of UN Environment's Economy Division, provided advisory services to the governments of the eight programme countries in the Mediterranean on mainstreaming SCP into national development planning. Eight multi-stakeholder nationally owned and nationally driven policy processes were undertaken to best respond to the national priorities on SCP. Given the difficulty to implement the full range of SCP policies and instruments at once, project countries select a limited number of priority areas to be addressed in their SCP National Action Plans, which contribute to poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and the development of a green economy.

The SCP-NAP processes were tailored to the needs and specific country situations and allowed the synergies and integration with national development plans and national sustainable development strategies. During these national processes a total of over 40 national workshops, roundtables and nationally-tailored training sessions were organised to reinforce national capacity on SCP. The processes were inclusive and saw the participation of a large and diverse group of national stakeholders, representing different relevant government institutions, private sector, civil society, academia and media representatives. In total, 1,500 national stakeholders actively participated. As a result, eight SCP National Action Plans were developed, which are a first step in a country's response to the 2015 adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular Goal 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production.

Moreover, there are national demonstration pilot projects implemented on the ground to promote implementation of policies and actions, which effectively change patterns of consumption and production and implement circular economy measures in the priority sectors previously selected by the target countries. In total, 20 pilot projects were implemented by the end of 2018: 2 in Algeria, 2 in Egypt, 3 in Israel, 2 in Jordan, 1 in Lebanon, 3 in Morocco, 2 in Palestine and 4 in Tunisia.

Meet our focal points in Algeria

The National Focal Point (NFP) is a key SwitchMed initiative that plays a specific role in implementing policy activities at the national level and disseminating results within and across borders. A national coordination mechanism has been established at country level under NFP coordination and guidance, and focal points have been appointed by the national governments. A focal point duo – with one Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy representative and one Ministry of Industry and Mines representative – undertakes national leadership in the implementation of SwitchMed at the national level in Algeria.



Ministry of Industry and Mines (MoIM)

Is the body responsible for the regulation and implementation of policies applicable to domestic and foreign trade and of mine sector policies.



Ministère de l'Environnement et des Énergies Renouvelables

Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy

It addresses government concerns such as maintenance of environmental quality, nature preservation, sustainable use of natural resources and prevention of pollution and contamination.

42 actions to develop sustainable consumption and production modes in Algeria 2016-2030

As part of the SwitchMed programme, a participatory and inclusive process of all stakeholders allowed for the development and adoption in Algeria of a National Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (NAP-SCPM). Being a cross-sectoral and transversal issue, the NAP-SCPM is aimed at all organisations, companies, administrations, local communities, civil society associations, institutional, entrepreneurial, individual and collective initiatives, to promote and encourage, through concrete and innovative actions, new products and to use cleaner and more resource-efficient technologies and processes.

The Action Plan entitled “42 Actions To Develop Sustainable Consumption And Production Modes In Algeria 2016-2030” is a national tool that is part of the National Strategy for the Environment (NSE), and is a component of the National Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development by 2035 (NPE-SD). The plan is the result of the implementation of Algeria's accession to the 10-year framework for SCPM (10YFP) programming, enshrined in the resolutions of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20.2012). It is also part of Algeria's commitments to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the framework of the Paris Agreement (December 2015) and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, including Goal 12.

The NAP-SCPM has identified three priority areas:

- Axis 1: Integrating sustainable consumption and production patterns into national policies and plans;
- Axis 2: Ensure the energy transition by promoting energy efficiency and the development of renewable energies;
- Axis 3: The development of an economy with zero waste by 2030.

The NAP-SCPM is the result of intersectoral participatory work involving several institutional, associative and economic actors with the aim of highlighting the key priority actions necessary to launch a transversal approach of integrating the concepts of consumption patterns and sustainable production in all the strategic approaches to sustainable development initiated by each sector. It builds on an initial inventory of SCPMs in Algeria established in 2015. This inventory and the first national report were the subject of two workshops, one of which was devoted to the results of the state of play and the presentation and enrichment of the national report in September 2015 and the second concerned the actual validation of the NAP-SCPM by the stakeholders in March 2016.

The NAP-SCPM is a priority action plan, in this sense, it does not identify all the issues of sustainable consumption and production patterns in Algeria, but it includes 3 priority areas made up of 42 high impact actions on the together other axes and aspects. The identified priorities also presented cross-sectoral leverage in the context of the implementation of the SDG targets number 12.

The objective through this approach is to set up a process of continuous improvement and dissemination of good practices based on the first high leverage actions of the NAP-SCPM.

Issues and principles inherent in adopting sustainable consumption and production patterns:

Sustainable consumption and production patterns highlight the efforts of the sectors of production and consumption of goods and services, including businesses, public bodies, local communities and consumer practices in the direction of sustainable development and in particular on the following plans:

- Environmentally: (i) the efficient use of natural resources, (ii) the preservation of natural habitats, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, and watershed protection, (iii) pollution reduction and prevention, and (iv) climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Economically: (i) sustainable economic development in the long term, (ii) good business practices and (iii) respect for consumer rights and safety;
- On the social and human level: (i) the fight against poverty, particularly through employment, (ii) education, sensitisation, and training of resources, (iii) respect for human rights, including the right to access to basic services; and (iv) fair social relations.

The principles inherent in the adoption of sustainable consumption and production methods essentially concern: (i) the integration of environmental, economic and social issues into the sustainable development approach; (ii) the decoupling of the economic development approach from the pressure on the environment: this development must no longer be done to the detriment of the environment; (iii) the implementation of the life cycle analysis approach of products and services aims to integrate all the impacts of the product into the environment throughout its life cycle including after consumption, (iv) the stakeholder approach and (v) the prevention of rebound effect when upstream efforts, production efficiency, are counteracted by unsustainable practices downstream.

The strategic positioning of the NPC-MCPD Algeria:

The National Plan of Action on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns is complementary and in line with public policies committed to sustainable development. Its objective is to bring together a set of initiatives and projects under the Sustainable Consumption and Production Pillar (SDG12). This is therefore a cross-cutting and cross-sectoral plan, the implementation of which is It is the responsibility of the environmental sector, but involves all institutional sectors in a dynamic of complementarity and collaboration.

At the national level, NAP-MCPD is used as an instrument for implementing the National Plan for the Environment and Sustainable Development, and interacts with other national initiatives and programmes, for example:

- the National Climate Plan;
- the National Energy Efficiency and Energy Control Plan;
- the national renewable energy development plan;
- the national strategy for integrated waste management;
- provisions to support the competitiveness of the company;
- second generation Environmental Performance Contracts;



Photo credit: @pxhere

Nevertheless, the NAP-MCPD is not only an institutional action plan, but also includes civil initiatives of the economic sector and consumers. In this sense, it is a multi-stakeholder process. In particular, it provides businesses and consumers with a roadmap on the priority actions to be taken in terms of sustainable consumption and production patterns without jeopardizing other actions that could be undertaken in addition to this plan.

The priority axes of the NAP-MCPD:

The study of the state of the scene of sustainable consumption and production modes in Algeria made it possible to identify 3 priority axes selected according to their impact and their transversal character on all the stakes of the durable development. The priority axes are:

Governance of sustainable consumption and production patterns:

The choice of the priority axis of governance of sustainable consumption and production patterns stems from the observation of the state of play relating to the fact that many efforts and programmes have been undertaken by the Algerian public authorities in the context of sustainable consumption and production modes, with differentiated levels of results and efficiency. The governance aspect makes it possible to improve the effectiveness of new and ongoing actions. Specifically, the governance dimension of sustainable consumption and production patterns will help (i) create the framework for steering sustainable consumption and production patterns in Algeria; (ii) ensure a multi-stakeholder approach; (iii) ensure the loop planning, implementation, evaluation, improvement; (iv) integrate the communication and awareness dimensions; (v) define the framework for the revision and adjustment of sustainable consumption and production practices and (vi) define the framework for reporting and assessing sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Transition and energy efficiency: This priority axis is selected because of the vital importance of the energy challenge in Algeria, particularly because of the country's dependence on its hydrocarbon resources and the need to preserve them and also the need for

economic diversification and thus the creation of levers of diversification including renewable energies and because of the environmental benefits of a more rational use of fossil fuels.

Not insignificant are also the impacts on other economic sectors (agricultural development and the guarantee of food security for generations, the preservation of land by the extension of irrigated areas, the preservation and rationalisation of water resources through a better mobilisation of these resources thanks to renewable energies, industrial development linked to renewable energies and a new sustainable approach to building)

Wastewater and solid waste management and with a zero waste perspective: This priority axis for developing sustainable consumption and production patterns is important for the direct environmental aspects evident on agricultural land and soil, groundwater, the atmosphere, the coastline and the sea as well as the health of the population. Not insignificant is also the economic aspect contributing to the development of the green economy and the circular economy through the development of recycling activities, the development of composting, the development of services related to waste management and the development of services to industry in eco design and life cycle analysis.

The implementation of the NAP-MCPD in Algeria: A programme to support the implementation of the NAP-SCPM in Algeria has been adopted with the support of the United Nations Environment programme and aims to enhance and evaluate the ongoing actions, ensure visibility to the best identified initiatives, improve cross-sectoral dialogue and with civil society for the implementation of the plan and support the organisation of a first national conference on sustainable consumption and production patterns post adoption of the NAP-SCPM.

Paving the way for an innovative circular economy model in the value chain of the Algerian common date

If you are travelling around the deserts of southern Algeria, you will see date palm groves everywhere you go. The trees wave gently in the breeze, providing shade and a popular, delicious fruit. Date farming in this Mediterranean country is serious business, with 18 million palm trees producing 500,000 tonnes per year. In fact, Algeria is the seventh largest date producer in the world, with Deglet Nour its number one variety in terms of date exports. But even though there are over 300 varieties of this sweet fruit, those that people want accounts for just 40% of total date production, the other 60% remain unprocessed as they do not meet the current quality standards and frequently end up as cattle feed.

Hammou Boussada, an Algerian plant biotechnological expert from the University of Sciences and Technology in Algiers who specialises in the date industry, saw that certain varieties were going to waste and decided to invest in the unwanted fruits, at the same time as providing an income to farmers. In fact, he is paving the way for a circular economy productive model in the date value chain. Boussada, whose first playground was his grandfather's date palm farm, grew up in Ghardaïa, a Saharan region in northern-central Algeria and a major date producer. "Date palms are my first love. I am very passionate about them, so I worked hard to find out as much as I could about each variety. Each one has a different taste, shape and colour. It's a fascinating fruit", enthused Boussada. As soon as he had graduated, he returned home to launch his first business, a nursery that grew a wide variety of plants and trees. "Within that business, I was working closely with farmers' associations, so I realised that there were huge quantities of dates that weren't being used. The date varieties people wanted only accounted for 40% of total production and most of the remaining 60% ended up as cattle feed". Boussada decided to take unused and low-quality dates and turn them into new products. This is when he decided, together with his younger sister Rima, to found a new enterprise called Rima Dates.

Rima Dates, which began operating in 2014, is in the business of transformation. The enterprise has stuffed its dates with almonds and smothered them with high-quality chocolate but, unlike other confectioners, the founders opted to use luxury Belgian chocolate. "We increased the value of the dates and gave them a different look. This is a product that can compete with traditional chocolate bars. It's the first time that Algerian date products have incorporated chocolate", highlighted Boussada, adding, "we are very pleased, as the products have been very well received by the public".

Boussada now aims to complete his business loop and, to that end, he is also planning to start extracting oil from his date pits and using it to make organic cosmetics. The remaining dry residues will be processed to produce fuel for local usage. Nothing is wasted, everything is transformed! Besides turning dates into highly sought-after, high-quality products, his business also gives local farmers a hand. Dates sold for cattle feed command a very low price but Rima Dates are now buying those same dates at a higher price, thereby providing a better income to those families.

Even though it is growing, Rima Dates is still family funded and operates out of a small artisan factory, exporting 100 to 300 kg of dates per month. They received financial aid from the government in the form of tax breaks for buying machinery and reduced taxes for the first few years of operation. Now, Rima Dates is exploring ways to expand and increase its funding. "In Algeria, there are limited funding options through banks, which are better for big enterprises rather than small entrepreneurs", Boussada explained. "Finding out about external funding sources like grants, awards and crowdfunding campaigns, and access to finance are some things I need to learn in order to scale-up my business. This is why I was delighted to learn that Rima Dates was selected as a pilot project by SwitchMed, in conjunction with the Algerian Ministry of Water Resources and the Environment and the EU delegation in Algeria". Policy expert at the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production, Magali Outters, said, "this pilot project is a good fit with one of the three core axes in the newly developed Algeria Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Action Plan: sustainable agriculture and waste management. This certainly helps to engage with policy-makers to establish a regulatory

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Rima Dates



and policy framework to boost the market for sustainable products and services".

A total budget of 90,000 euros was injected into the pilot. As a result of the three training workshops on artisanal vinegar and chocolate production organised by SwitchMed plus continuous mentoring, Boussada and his team have significantly improved the techniques they use for producing vinegar and syrup from dates, as well as those related to manufacturing handmade chocolate directly from cocoa beans. "For instance, one of the main lessons learnt during the sponsored training session we attended in Vienna was that one kilogram of dates is able to supply more than four litres of vinegar and that vinegar can be produced in two weeks, in comparison to the four to seven months we originally needed. There represents a massive opportunity to upgrade our production without needing to invest more in facilities and machinery, just by controlling different parameters. That was something we didn't know", explained Boussada. Frings, a company that operates worldwide as a supplier of machinery, equipment and apparatus for process technology in food and biotechnology, and Gegenbauer, a chemical and environmental technology company, helped Rima Dates master the art of making vinegar. Plantawalle gave a seminar on date pit oil extraction techniques and tested seed oil extraction in the lab to show the founder of Rima Dates there is a business case for date seed oil in the organic cosmetic sector. In total, 200 grams of oil can be extracted from four kilograms of date seeds. "These training sessions led directly to the creation of four new by-products, opening up the niche market of date by-products which compete with traditional chocolate bars in Algeria", Boussada proudly explained, "we are now able to valorise 14 tons of low grade dates into by-products, which represents a 100% increase from our initial seven tonnes".

These products are now available to buy through the Algerian supermarket chain, Ardis. In order to build a marketing strategy to reach a wider public and thus increase sales, a marketing expert was on hand to advise Rima Dates on an ongoing basis. As part of this consultancy service, a marketing study was

Photo credit: @SwitchMed

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developed, including a chapter on e-business and recommendations on the labelling of the date by-products. A market test was also carried out in the town of Ghardaïa. The intensive training and coaching sessions on green marketing allowed Boussada to implement significant changes into the product lifecycle of Rima Dates. "I am very happy with the progress that Rima Dates has made following the support received from SwitchMed over the past 18 months, which included capacity building and increasing our technical expertise". Marketing business consultant, Theo Baert, says, "Rima Dates is paving the way for an innovative circular economy model in Algeria, a country that is very reluctant to import foreign goods".

Rima Dates is very keen to ensure the equitable distribution of profits along the production chain and, notably, amongst the farmers and women involved in the process, which has great potential for benefitting farmers and women in this region. In fact, since the pilot scheme started, Rima Dates has been able to take on a further two female employees, bringing its total workforce up to seven permanent and three part-time members of staff.

Adding value to low grade Algerian common dates by turning them into other valuable products, such as confectionery syrup, vinegar and paste, while providing an income to farmers represents an excellent model for others to follow. What an inspiring case study for Morocco!

Main achievements benefitting Rima Dates in 2018

14 Tonnes of low grade dates valorised into by-products (represents a 100% increase on their initial seven tonnes)

4 New date by-products developed (with sub-product varieties) as a result of comprehensive training on artisanal vinegar and chocolate production. Specifically, a niche market of date by-products has been created to compete with traditional chocolate bars

2 Female employees hired, bringing total workforce up to seven permanent employees and three part-time employees, as well as eight people (mainly students) involved in market testing activities

100kg Reduction in cellophane use per year

200g Oil that can be extracted from 4 kg of date seed: lab test on date seed oil demonstrates a business case for use of date seed oil in cosmetics

400% Increase of vinegar production (from 3,000 litres to 15,000 litres per year) thanks to new methods acquired during the training provided

50% Reduction of electricity consumption within their overall production cycle (removal of a high energy consuming oven for cellophane packaging)

40% Time saving achieved in terms of their packaging cycle

How has textile shop Atelier Le Printemps managed to increase its business revenue by 30% in just six months?

Bejaia is famous for its beautiful Mediterranean coastal landscapes and colourful rugs that hang on the Medina walls and trees. Recently, it is becoming even more famous thanks to a married couple of green entrepreneurs who transform old shirts and jeans into customised cushions and unique handbags and quilts. Textile shop Atelier Le Printemps is where Anis Ouazene and Nardjes Mokhtari are successfully giving a second life to used fabric scraps, and developing natural fabric dyes in order to create a more circular and inclusive business.

Nardjes Mokhtari and Anis Ouazene form the perfect partnership. They are a couple in real life and business partners too. Despite meeting on an aviation course, her passion for sewing and the quilt family business workshop he took over, combined with a shared green entrepreneurial mindset, could only have one outcome: Atelier Le Printemps. Nardjes seized on the idea of reusing fabric offcuts to make quilts, bedding and clothing, as well as other products, such as storage bags, dolls, customised boxes, hampers, prams and chair seats. Her imagination truly knows no bounds, bringing a massive amount of creativity to each unique piece. “I’ve always loved sewing. It has been my passion since I was a child and now I finally have the chance to make a living out of it”, she said.

In a country where local textile production only covers 4% of the demand in Algeria, and where textile waste is either shredded and used as wadding or thrown into public landfills, enterprises like Atelier Le Printemps represent crucial bridges to reconciling fabric recycling at the same time as reviving Algerian heritage. With Atelier Le Printemps, Anis and Nardjes work to upcycle second-hand duvets, blankets and other pieces of old clothing to make decorative items for homes with fully customised fabric patterns while preserving the environment. They use discarded fabrics, initially destined for landfill sites in the linear economic model governing the textile industry and reintroduce them into the production cycle.

“In Algeria, the big challenge is sourcing high-quality fabrics. There aren’t many patterns available on the Algerian market, as the national textile industry isn’t what it used to be. The majority of fabric comes from China now”, says Anis Ouazene, Atelier Le Printemps co-founder.

According to Anis, a few importers have a monopoly in the market and they are not particularly concerned with quality or aesthetics. As a result, these green entrepreneurs are keen to master the art of producing natural dyes to reduce their chemical footprint and start using non-toxic natural colourants, which are readily available locally.

The offcuts they recover are processed in an eco-friendly manner to produce fabrics with unique prints, using Berber motifs that appeal to the core identity of their customers. This fosters a space of co-creation with the customers, who select the fabrics and designs they wish to use for their pieces. This type of interaction generates a positive impact by raising awareness of sustainability practices within the community and among their customers in particular.

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Thanks to SwitchMed’s support, the two founders have had the opportunity to attend key training sessions, helping them to strengthen their business model based on circular economy principles. Workshops providing training on eco-friendly dyeing techniques using natural pigments, eco-design principles and silkscreen printing have also helped them to eliminate chemical waste derived from dyes, value raw material adaptability and adjust their products to market trends. The couple has received further support in the form of developing a raw materials supply system to further improve their waste management by not only collecting scraps and other materials from their own workshop but also from other textile workshops, households and industrialists.

This comprehensive series of training sessions has enabled Atelier Le Printemps to increase their textile waste recycling and upcycling operations by 70% in the space of just one year. In other words, they now recycle 205 kg of textiles instead of the 77.5 kg of waste they were able to process in 2017. Nardjes proudly explained, “we have developed a collection of 16 new products using recycled waste and new sustainable design techniques (ecological dyeing, upcycling), with a focus on increased water and energy efficiency. We have improved the quality of the raw materials we use, having



Photo credit: @Atelier Printemps

removed four types of unsustainable textile fabrics (plastics, synthetic fabrics such as lycra, lurex, clothing labels) from our production process, with greater emphasis on the use of natural cotton, gunny (coarse sacking material) and linen”, adding that, as a result, they have been able to take on two female employees who have also received training on circular economy practices.

In only six months, Atelier Le Printemps has increased its business revenue by 30%. “It is very promising”, said Nardjes, “we are building a great regional network”. In addition, in an attempt to increase awareness and knowledge with regard to circular economy concepts for the textile sector, they have carried out nine workshops for local children. Their next target is to direct future training sessions towards SMEs and other key actors in the area. “It’s very important to create synergies with different socio-economic actors in Bejaia, so we are delighted to see our start-up becoming a model and a driving force for a circular economy within the textile sector”.

The media have taken an interest in the couple’s business enterprise and their story has been covered on national and local radio, as well as on television. The Ministry of the Environment also invited them to present their project at the very first International Exhibition for the Environment and Renewable Energies (SIERRA) in Algiers. The event, where the strategy for the development of ‘off grid’ renewable energies and the national strategy and action plan for integrated waste valorisation and management by 2035 was presented, provided the perfect link with policy-makers. In fact, Atelier Le Printemps serves as an excellent case study to demonstrate how SwitchMed supports the implementation of circular economy measures on the ground, in line with the national priorities set out in the Algerian Sustainable

Main achievements benefitting Atelier Le Printemps in 2018

67% Increase in the amount of textile waste recycled and upcycled from 2017 to April 2018 (77.5 kg to 130 kg)

30% Increase in business revenue/turnover from June 2017 to February 2018

16 New products created using recycled waste and new sustainable design techniques (ecological dyeing, upcycling), with a focus on increased water and energy efficiency

4 Improved quality of raw materials used, with unsustainable textile fabrics (plastics, synthetic fabrics such as lycra, lurex, clothing labels) now excluded from the production process and a greater emphasis on the use of natural cotton, gunny (coarse sacking material) and linen

2 Green jobs created for women

2 Intensive training workshops on eco-design, upcycling, recycling, silkscreen printing, ecological dyeing and circular economy for textile products in order to foster staff members’ knowledge and expertise

1 Preliminary assessment

1 Video on upcycling, ecological dyeing and silkscreen printing distributed

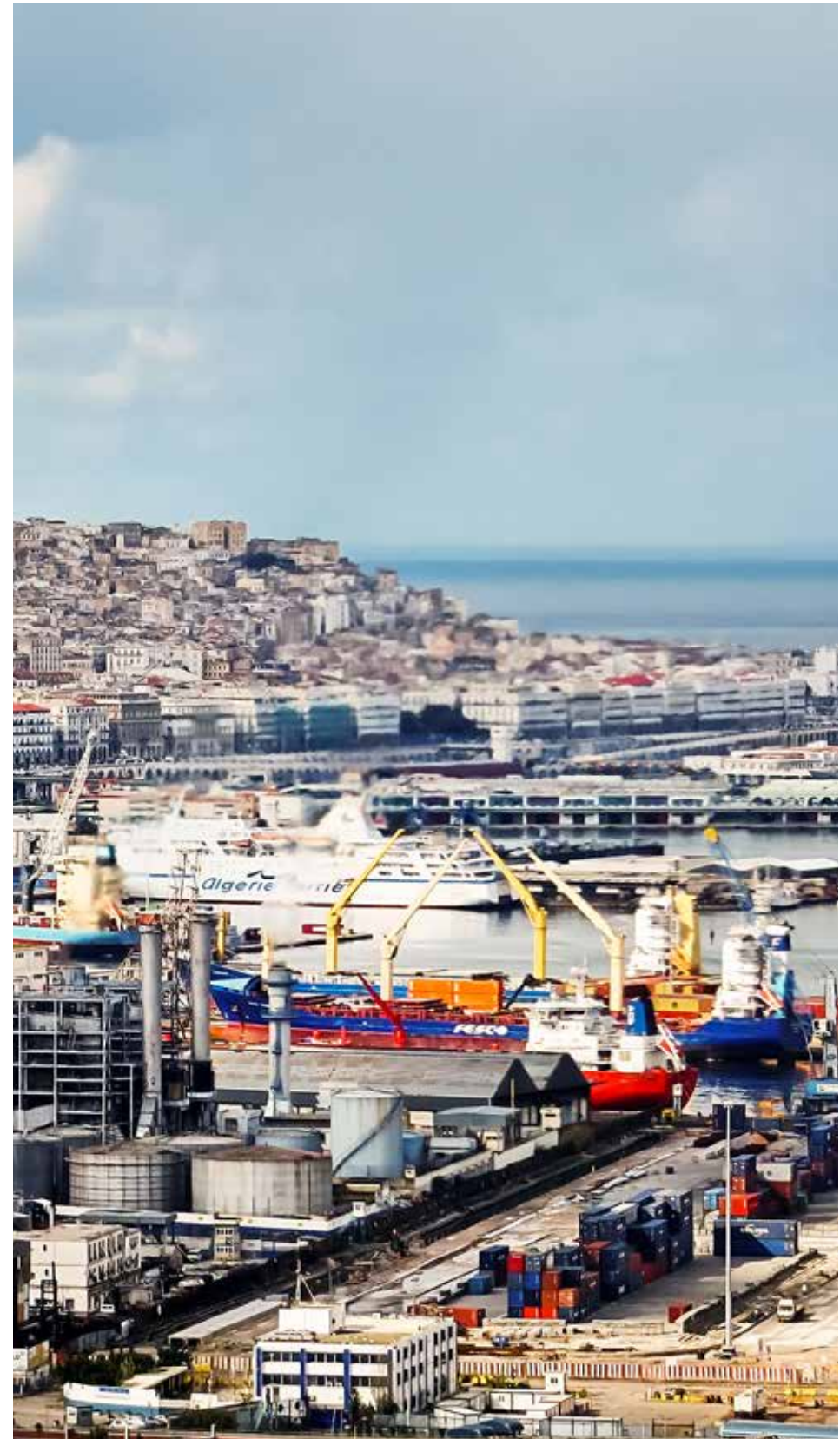
Bejaia An enabling network is being established in the region to raise awareness and provide training on circular economy concepts for textile products (nine children’s workshops organised, other SMEs and actors to be targeted for future awareness training)

and Consumption National Action Plan. “We were offered a booth to showcase our products, promote our company and raise awareness on the benefits of recovery and waste management. Our participation helped us to explore new possibilities for funding to further develop our green business and advocate for a collection network to recycle the offcuts generated by other artisans and textile companies”, explained Nardjes. The Minister of Environment and Renewable Energies, who visited Nardjes and Anis’s stand at the SIERRA noted that “we are delighted to have this kind of green project in Algeria and we sincerely hope to replicate this type of business model that respects the environment and is profitable at the same time”. For the young couple, future prospects are not only about building a profitable business: “we are contributing to building a community and creating a network between all the people who turn waste into a resource, so that we can exchange our knowledge and ideas, ensuring that the circular economy is gradually integrated into the Algerian economic landscape”.

2

Demonstrating the business case of a Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) in Algeria's food industry.

Photo credit: @Habib Kaki



Working towards a resource efficient and greener production

At SwitchMed we support the adoption of sustainable production in the southern Mediterranean that enables industries to increase their ability to produce with lower cost, while reducing their environmental footprint. We do so through the MED TEST II project, a comprehensive approach that demonstrates the business case of a resource efficient production in 125 industries in 5 key production sectors of the southern Mediterranean, by using capacities of local service providers. This approach promotes the business case of a resource efficient production to industries in the southern Mediterranean, while advancing the supply of national capacities on sustainable production services.

Transforming industries to meet the needs of changing market conditions and a rising resource scarcity calls for a change in knowledge, attitudes and practices that can lead to a production that requires less resources and reduces pollution. The MED TEST II project, presided by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), applies the methodology named the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies (TEST), a concept that addresses the challenges and barriers industries are facing in becoming more resource saving, energy efficient, and less-polluting.

The TEST concept approaches all management levels of a business, involving people with different professional backgrounds and operational responsibilities, in order to enhance and sustain the efficient use of production inputs and environmental performance. Connecting the resource efficient and cleaner production (RECP) assessments with present-day standards in environmental and energy management systems, helps building cross-cutting understanding and capacities within various management areas of a company and enables a holistic understanding and support for RECP within the business. This encourages a business culture where eco-innovative business solutions can thrive and a systematic assessment of the production can be set-up to monitor resource use and support a continuous improvement on the business performance. Furthermore, this approach encourages the production of goods that are responsibly managed throughout their life cycle, and increases the ability of companies to access international markets with good quality products and to reach compliance with environmental standards.

The MED TEST II project has displayed that the potential for improvements in resource savings within the production of the southern Mediterranean industry is significant. In the eight SwitchMed countries, the MED TEST II project identified 1,830 improvement measures within the 125 demonstration companies. The identified measures have stimulated a total investment of 87.6 million euros out of which 43% of the measures had a payback period below 6 months. A short payback period combined with an annual saving potential worth 41.7 million euros, has contributed to a high implementation rate of the identified measures (75 %), showing that investments in RECP is a feasible and a profitable business decision. Through the identified RECP measure in the MED TEST II project, industries in the Southern Mediterranean region now can annually save 3,512,660 m³ of water, 707 GWh of energy, reducing the solid waste generation with 19,602 tons and CO₂ emissions with 197,525 tons per year. In addition, 682 professionals from industries, service providers, government institutions and academia received training on the TEST methodology during the demonstration phase of MED TEST II in the SwitchMed target countries.

Resource efficiency is key in switching towards circular economy models. The MED TEST II project has revealed how additional economic and environmental benefits can be gained from the RECP approach using an integrated methodology of TEST that gives businesses an opportunity to invest in their future while reducing their environmental footprint.

Partners for green growth in industries

Strengthening national capacities and competencies related to resource-efficient and cleaner production (RECP) is not only a main objective of the MED TEST II project, but also an effective way to ensure a sustainable impact that goes beyond the duration of the project. For this reason, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) collaborates closely with government institutions, industry and civil society stakeholders to raise awareness of RECP among policy makers and in knowledge networks.

Under the patronage of the Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy and the Ministry of Industry and Mines in Algeria, the MED TEST II project has been implemented with the local support of the National Center for Cleaner Production Technologies (CNTPP) and in cooperation with the National Agency for the Promotion and Rationalisation of Energy Use (APRUE).

Training, combined with on-site technical assistance, was provided by local service providers with the support of international sectoral/thematic experts. The idea behind this approach was to demonstrate a business application of RECP in one of the largest industrial sectors of Algeria, and to establish reference cases for national service providers willing to introduce the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology (TEST) concept to interested industries throughout Algeria. Through capacity building activities and industry demonstrations with Algerian partners, UNIDO demonstrated more sustainable manufacturing techniques and new green business models to 12 companies in the food sector, thus stimulating more resource-efficient demand and supply and transforming Algerian industry.



The National Centre for Cleaner Production Technologies (CNTPP)
Is a public institution that was founded in 2002 is affiliated with the Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy. The main objectives of the CNTPP are as follows:

- Facilitate the transfer and exchange of know-how, technical information and experience in cleaner production.
- Support the development of an environmentally friendly industrial sector that favours less polluting manufacturing processes and resource-efficient production.
- Improve the productivity and competitiveness of Algerian companies within the framework of current environmental requirements.

An investment in resource efficiency is an investment in the future competitiveness of Algeria's industry

With a growing population, Algeria faces the difficult challenge of creating a sustained economic growth and employment, while also finding an all-inclusive distribution of valuable resources such as energy and water within the economy. Industries play a key role in this development, but they need to change fundamentally in their production practices, especially in the consumption of resources. As a key driver of economic growth, industries should continue to produce, albeit in a sustainable way to decouple economic growth and revenue from excessive and increasing resource use and pollution. Algeria's industries and SMEs contribute considerably to a much needed job creation, a continued economic growth, and consequently to the socio-economic development of the country. Moreover, the private industry sector is also an important contributor to the diversification of the economy, a development that requires a responsible management of resources in all its value chains. This transition will, however, require tools and investments that can help the industry to become more resource and energy efficient, non-polluting, and safe – and to develop into a key driver for growth.

As one of the major energy exporters, Algeria had until recently subsidized its industry with low energy prices. But, the volatile situation in the world market price for oil and gas has forced the government to reduce their energy subsidies and increase energy taxes for industries. Rising costs in energy, raw materials, and water, do not only threaten the competitiveness of Algerian SMEs and industries, but also create shortages of these essential resources elsewhere in the society. Therefore, finding ways that could reduce the consumption of resources for these businesses would not only improve the economic situation of the businesses, but also help in ensuring the availability of resources, such as water and energy, to other parts of the society.

Turning challenges into opportunities is at core to the UNIDO TEST methodology as it supports industries with a toolset to address rising energy and raw material costs, by integrating saving measures into current business operations. The TEST concept was introduced in Algeria in the MED TEST II project, a unique and innovative part of the SwitchMed programme that addressed the challenges and obstacles Algerian industries are facing in order to become more resource and energy efficient, non-polluting. The MED TEST II project, implemented in Algeria from 2015 to 2018, enabled 12 Algerian companies to identify measures that will reduce the water, energy and raw material consumption, requiring investments with an average payback period of 1.2 years and accumulating annual savings worth 2.6 million euros. This clearly shows the huge potential and profitability for the RECP concept in Algeria and if other businesses decide to take on the approach of a resource efficient production the industry of Algeria could become a core determinant of economic competitiveness and sustainable growth. This will also help the businesses to generate responsibly managed products, throughout their life cycle, while also increasing productivity and maintaining access to international markets with good quality products that meet international standards.

Still, if Algeria's industry is about to change and tap the potential of RECP to its full extent, it is fundamental that other businesses and sectors pick up and follow the business case of RECP. During the demonstration of RECP in the MED TEST II project, UNIDO, together with stakeholders from the civil society, government and the industry, have developed a scaling-up roadmap on how to expand the RECP concept throughout the industry in Algeria, supported by an action plan that will support the facilitation and reinforcement of national competencies around the topic of RECP and green growth.

Click [here](#) to access the case studies from MED TEST II in Algeria

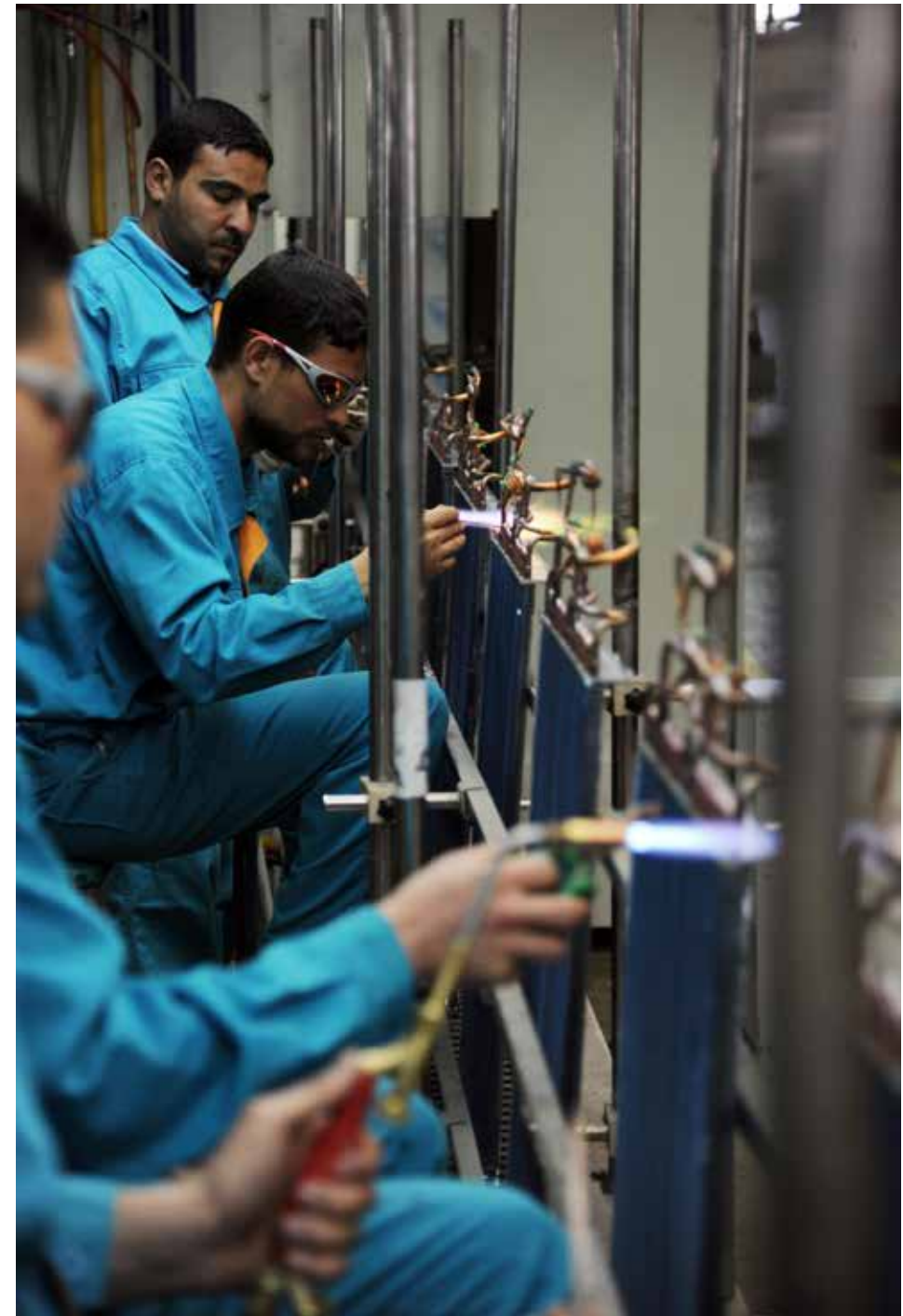
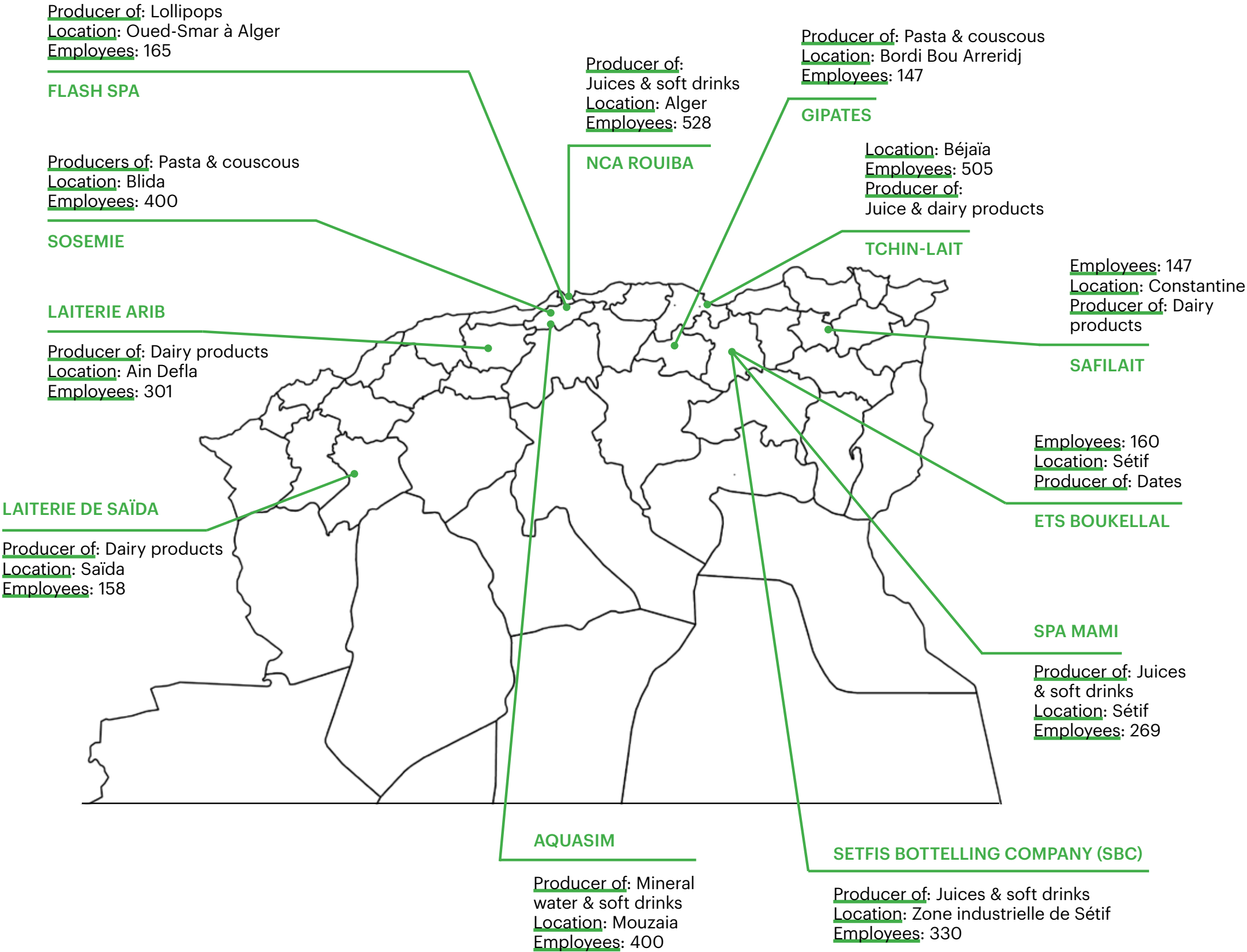


Photo credit: @UN

Partners for a green growth

In Algeria 12 industries from the food sector joined the MED TEST II project:

The MED TEST II project in Algeria was implemented under the patronage of the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energies (MEER) and the Ministry of Industry and Mines (MIM). UNIDO implementation partners for the MED TEST II project in Algeria was the National Center for Cleaner Production Technologies (CNTPP) and in cooperation with the National Agency for the Promotion and Rationalization of the Use of Energy (APRUE)



Greening the industry is an opportunity for Algeria's economy

Hassiba Sayah's profile:

Hassiba Sayah, the Country Representative of UNIDO to Algeria, holds a post-graduation diploma in Agro-economy and Rural Development. She accumulated 17 years' experience prior to this appointment, as an expert and a Director of a consulting company in programs dedicated to supporting the private sector development and institutional consolidation in various fields such as sustainable development, socio-economic integration of women and youth, entrepreneurship and employment and territorial attractiveness.

Hassiba Sayah is a building voice in discussions about industrial innovation and resource efficiency in Algeria. As the Country Representative of UNIDO to Algeria Hassiba gives her thoughts and ideas on the concept of RECP and what it could bring Algerian businesses, the environment and economy.

As the representative for UNIDO in Algeria you have a unique insight in the current situation for the national industry: where do you see the biggest challenges for industries in Algeria, and conversely, the major opportunities?

With a growing population and economy, the industry is fundamental for Algeria's future development. However, inefficiencies in the production generate unnecessary consumption of energy, water and raw materials. This creates futile costs for the businesses and takes away valuable resources that are much needed elsewhere in the society. Embracing resource efficient production practices in Algeria, is not only important to offset rising energy costs, but it is also an opportunity for industries to increase their productivity with a better profit for the business, the environment, and the society.

More often than not, companies are not aware on the losses that occur in their production processes. How can UNIDO and projects like the MED TEST II, help businesses to manage inefficiencies and become more productive?

UNIDO and the regional MED TEST II project has with local expertise of the CNTPP demonstrated how best RECP practices, according to international set benchmarks, can work in the local context of Algeria's industry. Through the project, businesses were able to identify the value of their losses in their production and take the right countermeasures to prevent these inefficiencies. Investing in RECP is to invest in the future as this enables businesses to generate valuable savings, lower their production costs and maintain their competitiveness. Moreover, changing the mind-set on how to deal with water, energy and raw material consumption is often a long lasting effect that will continue to lead business in doing better business.

How important could the switch to resource efficient production be for Algeria's future economic development?

As one of the largest countries in the MENA, and with 70 % of its population under the age of 35, Algeria very much need to find new ways that could curb the economy and most importantly a sustainable growth and job creation. SMEs and industries play here an important role and could also contribute in diversifying the Algerian economy, which still heavily relies on the export of carbon energy. However, an increasing demand in water and energy, has created shortages in certain areas of the country, which of course also affects the productivity of the industry. Inefficiencies in the production create unnecessary costs for the businesses and the society. Therefore, every investment made in efficiency measures from the industry is an investment made in the profitability for the businesses, but also into the society as it sets free much needed resources to other parts of the society.

Adopting eco-innovations, in particular in the process of already operational and successful business models, can sometimes be difficult to achieve. What benefits can Algeria's industry gain from bi-regional platforms, such as the EU funded SwitchMed programme, in creating a demand for eco-innovative production practices?

For businesses, change is occurring much more rapidly today than ever before, even in Algeria. Staying on top and ahead of the competition will require the latest eco-innovative solutions, which can enable businesses to take advantage of new applications, opportunities and environmental and economic impacts that these technologies offer. A step in this direction is the TEST methodology, which is an integrated model that encompasses the inclusion of accurate management systems for energy, water, raw materials and waste – all which are tailored to a current business model, often requiring investments with a very short payback period. This can help industries in Algeria to meet the requirements of international markets by producing products that meet the growing of an international market.

Where would you see the Algerian industries play within a circular economy?

The concept of a Circular Economy is still very new, especially to Algeria, but it makes absolutely sense especially if you look on the potential for jobs that can be created along a circular value chain within Algeria. For instance, in the MED TEST II demonstration phase, one of the companies identified measures that would lead to 0.11 % annual savings of raw material. This doesn't sound much but when you look on the monetary value, this actually makes a huge impact for the company. Every raw material that can be saved is not only saving in input cost for the company, it is also an opportunity for the company to use the money elsewhere, for instance by investing in the creation of new jobs. Besides, we mustn't forget the double effect that savings in raw materials have, as it also saves valuable energy, water and raw materials that needs to be processed in order to produce this input. Moreover, if the supply chain remains in Algeria, the economy becomes less dependent on imports as the raw materials can be reprocessed here and be put back into the production value chain.

Annual environmental impact savings identified in the 12 Algerian food industries

54

professionals

from academia, business associations, government institutions and industries received training on the TEST tools during the demonstration phase of MED TEST II in Algeria

435,489

m³ per year of annual water savings

=

112,000

Algerian households annual water consumption

18,818

tonnes of annual CO₂ savings

=

4,030

cars' CO₂ emissions in a year

29.8

GWh per year of annual energy consumption savings

=

22,000

Algerian households annual energy consumption

819.3

tonnes per year of solid waste avoided

=

2408

years' worth of solid waste produced by a person in Algeria

Scaling up a resource efficient and cleaner production throughout the Algerian industry

By adhering to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), initiated by the United Nations in September 2015, Algeria is committed to include the dimension of sustainable development in all of its public policies. Consequently, Algeria has put in place a national plan for sustainable consumption and production methods (SCP NAPs) whose implementation in the industry sector is reflected in the concept of RECP. In this sense, the achieved results from the MED TEST II project are conclusive as they confirm the relevance and effectiveness of the TEST methodology as an instrument for industries that wish to overcome challenges related to a sustainable consumption and production. The cost effective measures, with a brief payback period, allows businesses to integrate RECP solutions in their current production without jeopardizing the business operations.

Making the transition from demonstration activities in the Algerian food industry to a sector wide mainstreamed adoption of RECP in the Algerian industry, would be pivotal to the achievements of the SDGs in Algeria. In this regard, UNIDO together with the Government, the CNTPP, and stakeholders from the industry and civil society have developed a roadmap with propositions on how to guide a sector wide adoption of RECP in the Algerian industries and what actions are required to do so. An action plan has been developed, which is based on the concept of leverage points and experience gained from the MED TEST II project in Algeria. The idea with this concept is to eventually create a system change around the topic of RECP for industries in Algeria that would encourage an adoption and change towards RECP within the industry.

(1) Strengthening of the local expertise and creation of a consulting and training market with regard to RECP

- 1.1 Strengthen the national expertise and encourage the creation of a consulting market with regard to RECP/TEST by periodical training actions aimed at the consultants emerging in freelance services or consultancy offices
- 1.2 Integrate an RECP/TEST training module in the training program of the environment delegates in the interest of systematization and broad diffusion of the RECP approach and principles
- 1.3 Shape the frameworks of the public institutions supporting the industry and the management of public funds (NCPC, APPRUE, ANDPME) in order to improve their evaluation capacity in relation to RECP projects and industry support
- 1.4 Mobilize the large polytechnic schools in an effort to diffuse the RECP/TEST approach by delivering trainings to the graduating engineers, in a pilot test (2019-2020) that could evolve towards a permanent and official character

(2) Strengthening of the incentive policies and mechanisms for the promotion of clean technologies and RECP, in synergy with the existing company support facilities

- 2.1 Submit to the government council a project in relation to the update of the FNPME/I/CI classification in an effort to make eligible for the fund aids the comprehensive RECP/TEST approach including:
 - The industrial in-depth RECP diagnostic
 - The elaboration and implementation of action plans induced by the RECP/TEST diagnostic
- 2.2 Present an AIM project concerning the creation and installation of an interdepartmental committee involving the MEER, MIM and ME in order to create a legal anchoring:
 - Allowing the cross-sectoral action linked to the promotion of the RECP and to any other approach or initiative requiring transversality and co-funding
 - Conditioning all state aids to the industry by an environmental engagement and by the RECP/TEST approach training of the professional staff of the N and N-1 levels, and of the environment delegates

(3) Incentive for RECP/TEST adherence of industries / Valuation of accomplished projects / Information access facilitation in relation to sustainable technologies

- 3.1 Launch a membership campaign to support 10 to 12 companies in a similar project to the MED TEST II project. For this, target the companies engaged in the ISO 26 000 approaches and orientate them to:
 - Request the support of the FNPME/I/PCI for financing of the diagnostic and the actions inducing raw material savings and an improvement of the competitiveness, in accordance with the classifications and current fund provisions
 - Adhere to the campaigns of the APRUE to benefit from the financing by the FNMERC, that are linked to the energy audits and energy efficiency improvement actions, in accordance with the classification and current fund provisions
- 3.2 Create a national database of the accomplished RECP/TEST projects, create benchmarking practices around the environmental and economic performance indicators, and publicize the success stories
- 3.3 Create a database on the eco-innovative and sustainable technologies, and make it available to the industry

(4) Promotional and awareness raising actions in favor of RECP approaches targeting industries

- 4.1 Conduct campaigns in the industrial environment in relation to awareness raising as well as targeted and continuous information; especially companies engaged in the ISO 14001 and ISO 26000 approaches shall be targeted in order to make them adhere to the RECP approach and the TEST methodology
- 4.2 Initiate the tradition of the national day for the promotion of RECP, a day that should be organized simultaneously in different cities with a high industry concentration, with an implication of the environment and industry boards, as well as the industrial local consumer protection associations
- 4.3 Review the selection parameters and the attribution criteria of the National Quality Award (NQA) in an effort to integrate criteria linked to the environmental performance and the RECP interest

(5) Creation of a national RECP label

5. Mobilize the national and international expertise to carry out a creation process of a national RECP label dedicating the trajectories of excellence and the exceptional performances

3

Building technical capacity and supporting green businesses in order to build a green entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Mediterranean.



Photo credit: @Felipe Furtado at UnSplash

Capacity building for green and circular economy business models

At SwitchMed we are building a green entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Mediterranean by supporting green entrepreneurs from southern Mediterranean countries. 10 local partners were selected to follow-up closely the programme on the ground. In parallel, an innovative training methodology was developed to support the creation of green business and adapted to the context of the Southern Mediterranean. The methodology – comprised of a handbook and workbook on green business model development and green business plan development & incubation– guides green entrepreneurs through the entire process of growing their green business idea into a full-fledged enterprise. The methodology also provides tools and test the green entrepreneur's business models, by explaining step by step how to validate the business model's hypothesis with targeted customers and stakeholders.

Many of these individuals have a sound business idea but may lack the knowledge needed to transform their idea into a viable business. For this reason, the Green Entrepreneurship programme also includes a comprehensive training and incubation programme for individuals on how to launch a green business, led by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC). The training programme – a five-day module delivered over three months in each of the SwitchMed beneficiary countries – requires green entrepreneurs to reflect on and articulate how their business idea will bring value to the economy, the environment and the community. Through the practical exercises, entrepreneurs must clearly identify the underlying problems and needs they are addressing, map their stakeholders, interview potential customers, document their mission and their environmental and social value proposition, evaluate the resources and energy needed to create their product or service and think about how they will generate revenue streams, amongst other activities. A key component of the training programme is the module dedicated to eco-design, which requires entrepreneurs to take an in-depth look at the entire life cycle of their products and services to evaluate and improve their environmental performance and to challenge them to incorporate innovative solutions in their business models. Circular economy principles form the

cornerstone of this module, which gets entrepreneurs thinking about the many dimensions of environmental sustainability that can be incorporated in their product or services. Materials, for example, can be chosen to maximise recycled content, renewability and recyclability to preserve natural resources and give value to other waste streams in the community. The incubation programme includes 55 hours individual follow-up advisory service by a local mentor, a tailor-made external technical assistance and support to develop a crowdfunding campaign, if applied, as well as support to access to finance throughout a period of 8 months.

In total, 123 local trainers were trained on-site, and finally, 84 were selected for the implementation of the training programme. Out of the 6,000 applicants who submitted an application to join the training programme, +2,300 green entrepreneurs were selected and trained. In the aftermath of the trainings, 166 entrepreneurs were selected and received a 10 hours individual coaching to improve their green business models. Out of the 157 entrepreneurs who submitted an application for the incubation phase, 49 were selected by an International High Level Jury that operated pro bono and included a group of independent experts from business, technical, institutional and academic sectors.

A national synergy workshop in each SwitchMed country was held to identify challenges and opportunities to promote green entrepreneurship and social eco-innovation initiatives, to identify specific measures and tools to strengthen the regulatory framework as well as to stimulate the market for sustainable products and services. In the end, a white paper was published, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the country green entrepreneurship ecosystem, in order to reveal the areas and axes where the needs for action are greatest and a whole collection of interviews.

Meet our local partners

Our local partners, selected by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC), have extensive experience in delivering training programmes specifically addressed to entrepreneurs, in promoting environmental sustainability and in identifying and mobilising local trainers who have, in turn, already trained potential entrepreneurs. The main task of the local partners is to assist SCP/RAC in identifying and selecting local trainers and potential green entrepreneurs to join our Green Entrepreneurship programme. They are also responsible for information dissemination and the organisation of training workshops along with their follow-up and evaluation.

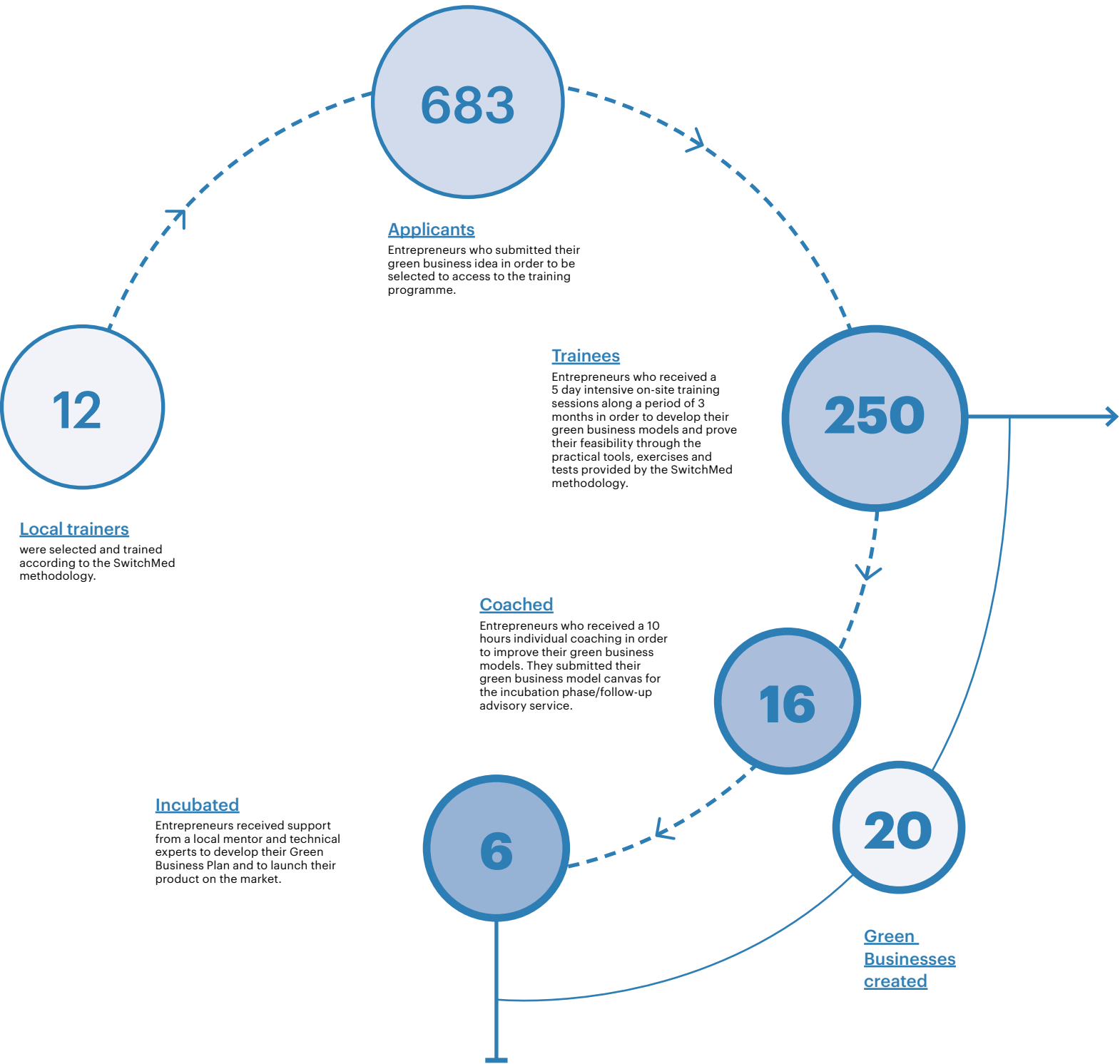


The National Centre for Cleaner Production Technologies (CNTPP)

Is a public institution whose objective is the transfer of know-how and experience in cleaner production and the provision of support for the emergence of an environmentally friendly industry. The CNTPP has a public service mission to assess the environmental liabilities of the industrial sector and to carry out studies on industrial upgrading actions.

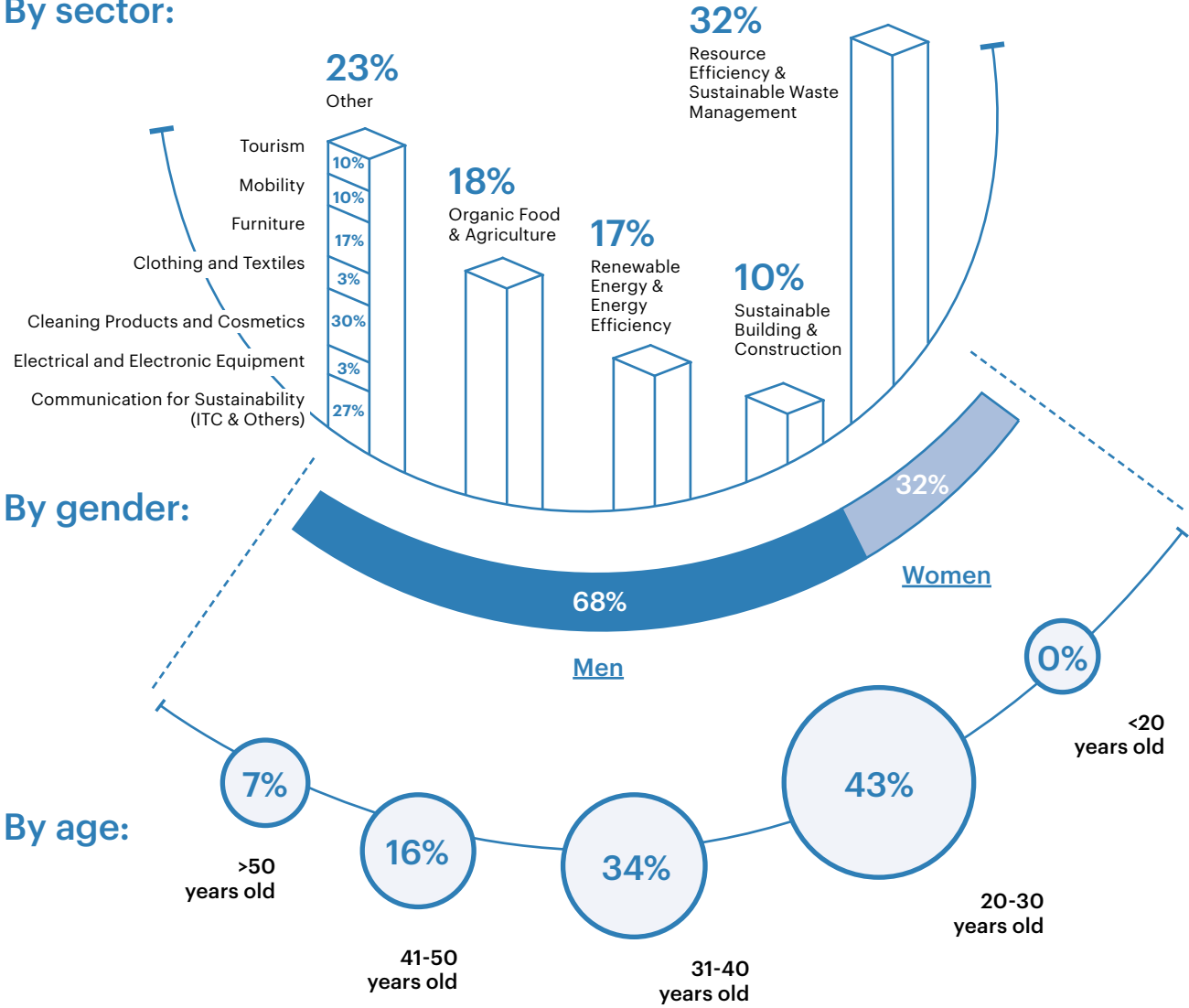
Our local mentors, carefully selected by SCP/RAC, have drawn up a solid cooperation framework for carrying out activities associated with the incubation programme. As trusted counsellors and guides, the local mentors' main tasks are to help and advise the green entrepreneurs selected by an international high-level jury to participate in the incubation programme. As part of the main incubation support, during eight months, the specific role of the local mentors is to provide 40 hours of one-to-one coaching, in addition to some extra administrative hours, aimed at helping green entrepreneurs develop a solid Green Business Plan, among other things. The mentoring framework is implemented according to the work plan and methodology developed by SCP/RAC, which includes "Launch Your Green Business" as the principal document and other supporting documents. Green entrepreneurs will not only receive support from local mentors, but will also benefit from technical input to their Green Business Plan and other support and assistance (e.g., for marketing and communication). The SCP/RAC Green Entrepreneurship team maintains constant communication with all stakeholders, as regular monitoring and follow-up is essential to ensure that not only qualitative but also sustainable support is provided.

How is the green entrepreneurship programme contributing to the environmental, social and economic impact?

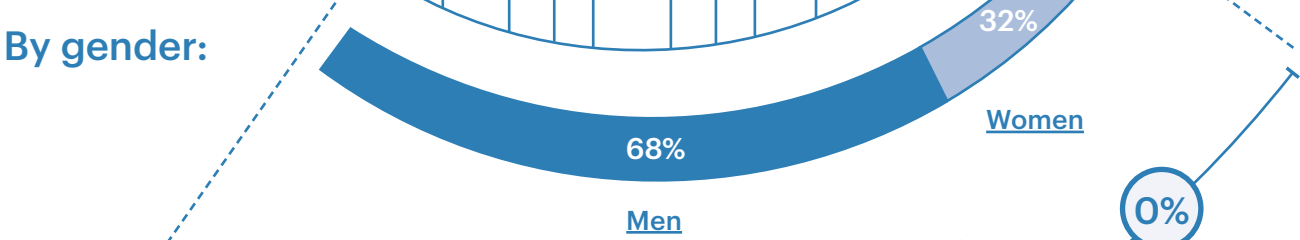


Analysing our Algerian 250 trainees

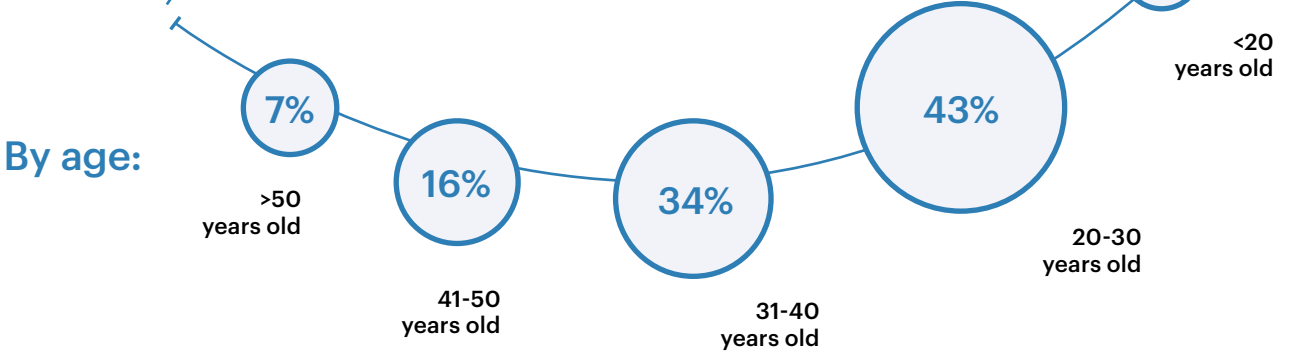
By sector:



By gender:



By age:



Meet our Algerian incubated green entrepreneurs

Les Bâtisseurs des Oasis Connecting innovation to cultural heritage

An eco-friendly construction company, which draws on combining the traditional building methods and ancient craftsmanship used in many ancient fortified villages, or Ksours, in the Sahara with cutting-edge innovation techniques. Daddi Addoun El Khoudir has taken on the challenge of building a better world.

Tell us about yourself and how the idea for your business was born
Over the last few years I've seen how my hometown in the M'Zab valley, which is 600 km. south of Algiers, has been taken over by the concrete buildings that are gradually dominating the urban landscape. Not so long ago, the M'Zab region was a place of ksours, or fortified villages, that were built during the 10th century and specifically designed to support a communal way of living. I was also conscious of the fact that the building and construction industry represents a massive source of CO₂ emissions globally and I wanted to do something about it. I have been very interested in ecoconstruction for many years. In fact, I am a structural engineer and had been worked in my family business in Berriane in the province of Ghardaïa since 1997. We started offering expert plumbing and heating services, later on we extended our range of services to natural gas and drinking water supply. In 2003, we started working in construction and we also developed a carpentry business to improve control over the value chain. At this point, I felt that it was the right time to start my own business. The greatest challenge is building houses that combine the comfort of modern life with traditional architectural techniques and a respect for the environment, thereby contributing to sustainable development. At the same time, these houses should be accessible to all social classes.

What is the environmental and social impact of your project?
'Les Bâtisseurs des Oasis' plays an important role in the preservation of ancient construction techniques and architectural heritage, as well as the environment. With the decline in the availability of conventional fossil fuels and global warming, reducing our energy consumption is a must. My goal is to build houses using eco-friendly and locally sourced materials - stone, limestone and mudbrick - as well as to implement energy efficiency measures to help reduce the carbon emissions associated with buildings. In fact, building in the south requires adaptation to climatic conditions due to the intense sunshine. For this reason, the choice of using stone and lime is wise. These two materials allow us to be energy efficient, while also giving us the opportunity to have small windows, providing us with natural lighting and minimising heat exchange. In addition, we do not use any toxic chemicals, from solvents, paints, composite timbers, and plastic, as they have been proved to cause health issues. The building techniques used by our ancestors avoid such problems through better ventilation design, the use of natural materials and products and breathable walls. Building houses in the palm grove allows us to adopt two techniques: that of the normal classic post-and-beam structure, coupled with an exterior cladding made of stone and lime, two local materials, as well as using reed between the two walls to act as a natural insulation. This is one of the innovations that I intend to spread in my construction activities, hoping to contribute to the dissemination of an environmental culture that is conducive to sustainable development.

I am creating direct employment opportunities, thereby contributing to the economic and social growth of my region. I take social responsibilities seriously, helping to train my workforce, promoting the environmental and legislative culture to our potential customers and pushing the public administration for greater building controls to ensure that regulations are fully applied. In fact, building in the south requires adaptation to climatic conditions due to the intense sunshine.

How have you benefited from the SwitchMed programme?
Being part of the SwitchMed green entrepreneurship programme has been a hugely valuable experience. Having access to a mentor has been particularly useful and has helped me fine tune my business concept and value proposition and develop my business plan. After completing the incubation programme, I successfully built a pilot project in the form of a 250 m² house that demonstrates predicted energy savings in the region of 2600kW per year. The technical expertise provided by SwitchMed helped me to develop the tools I needed for my marketing campaign, the end result of which was the launch of our corporate website and increased visibility for my company. The programme also gave me the opportunity to network with a lot of other committed environmental activists and sustainable development advocates. Indeed, both in Algiers and Barcelona, where I participated in the 2016 SwitchMed Connect event, I met numerous people who believed in my project and who encouraged me to keep going.



Photo credit: @Daddi Addoun El Khoudir

Ferrah Cactus Prickly pear oil will help your skin look younger overnight

In Medea, Ferrah Cactus is re-evaluating an as yet unexploited but widely-available fruit: the prickly pear, a plant belonging to the cactus family. Ferrah Reguia has mastered a technique to extract its oil, which holds interest for the agrifood, pharmaceutical and cosmetic sectors because of its exceptional anti-aging and hydrating properties.

Tell us about yourself and how the idea for your business was born
I am thirty years old and a biologist specialising in process engineering, phototherapy and health. While doing my master's thesis on prickly pears, also referred to as Barbary figs, specifically on the oil extraction process, I clearly became obsessed with these cactus fruits. Though prickly pear cactus grow abundantly in my region and have exceptional benefits for human skin, I realised that the plant is barely being exploited. The edible fruit has many seeds containing oil, and that oil has more vitamin E than any other beauty oil on the market. Prickly pear oil contains 150% more vitamin E than argan oil, in fact. It is also extremely rich in essential fatty acids, including omega-6 and -9, antioxidants, polyphenols, amino acids and vitamin K, which has exceptional hydrating and anti-aging properties for the skin. I started experimenting with different oil extraction capacity methods and the results were very revealing. That's when I started thinking about launching a business applying full circular economy principles: first extract, press and bottle the oil, then use the remains of the fruit to make jam and flour for animal feed.

I should point out that one tonne of these cactus fruits only produces 30 kg of seeds, which is equal to one litre of prickly pear seed oil. Each seed only contains five per cent oil and it is this combination of factors that makes prickly pear oil one of the most expensive beauty oils in the world, priced at between 600 and 1000 euros per litre.

What is the environmental and social impact of your project?
The process of extracting the fruit from the seeds is a lengthy operation, taking three to four days. It is a manual operation. I want to use as little electricity as possible during the extraction process, and so reduce the project's CO₂ emissions. The prickly pear is a common succulent plant in Mediterranean and subtropical regions that is beneficial for soil. The species is also important agronomically for its ability to be cultivated in arid and semi-arid areas, where irrigation is either insufficient or absent.

My business idea could boost the economy of a marginalised area. I plan to create 50 permanent jobs and 20 seasonal agricultural jobs during the harvesting of the fruits. By doing so, I can contribute to reducing social inequalities and unemployment. Based on an evaluative approach, the whole fruit will be used, as the remains after extraction can be transformed into seed meal, also used in the agrifood and cosmetics sectors. In this way Ferrah Cactus will reduce the amount of waste produced during the extraction phase.

How have you benefited from the SwitchMed programme?
The SwitchMed incubation phase meant a whole new world of possibilities for me. My mentor gave me great advice on how to turn my idea into a sound green business and most importantly, how to integrate the three dimensions of environment, economics and society into my start-up, Ferrah Cactus. During the mentorship I learnt that my project could be much more profitable if my business became more circular, and so I worked hard to achieve this. The financial expert covered everything I needed to develop a financial plan. This included, among other things, the accounting break-even point and operating results over three years. I also received advice on access to finance and was made aware of the main funding opportunities and which ones were the most appropriate for my business, including subsidies and grants. After all this, I submitted an application for government aid and subsidies, and I was granted 100 hectares of land with cultivated prickly pear plants. That was a massive milestone, as it enabled me to really start my business. Marketing and communication skills are essential, as the ultimate goal is to sell your product. I was very fortunate to have an external expert in that area who helped me acquire a comprehensive knowledge of a whole strategy: from market segments to communication tools, dissemination channels, strategy and messages that really explain the sustainability aspect. Marketing requires an understanding of the big picture and a commitment to the smaller details.



Photo credit: @Ken Bosma

PackEggs

Making egg consumption in Algeria more environmentally friendly

PackEggs upcycles paper waste into biodegradable egg trays that are stronger, cheaper and more practical than the current products available on the market, contributing to making egg consumption in Algeria more environmentally friendly. The project was founded by three millennials: Meriem Zeghiche, Nour El Houda Merniz and Alima Bennecer.

Tell us about yourself and how the idea for your business was born
The province of Batna, where we were born and live, is a centre for the majority of the country’s poultry and egg farming businesses. In fact, the Algerian poultry industry produces an average of 340,000 tonnes of white meat and more than 4.8 billion eggs a year, and consists of 20,000 farms employing around 500,000 people. Having grown up here, you realise the tremendous amount of paper and cardboard that is being wasted as a result of egg tray production, which are thrown away and never used again. We saw that there was a clear need for a small, effective egg packaging solution for consumers or small shops. The only egg trays we could find on sale were too big for normal customer requirements, holding as many as thirty eggs. They also failed to provide any protection for the eggs, which often became unfit for consumption due to breakage or being exposed to excessive light and moisture. Once we had completed our relevant degrees in finance, international trade and marketing, we started thinking about whether we could do something to address this and come up with a solution.
Trays need to protect the eggs and fit the appropriate size parameters, so that is exactly what our egg trays will offer both to consumers and egg retailers.

What is the environmental and social impact of your project?
PackEggs will secure jobs in our region while safeguarding the environment. In fact, we will need to employ people to help with the collection of waste paper for recycling and to build our sales team in an effort to increase our presence across the whole country through local distribution network. Besides job creation, collecting discarded paper reduces pollution in our province or the daily emission of two tonnes of CO₂ generated by its combustion. PackEggs will be offering retailers the opportunity to tell their customers that they are committed to sustainability and that also has the potential to deliver added value for them.

How have you benefited from the SwitchMed programme?
We participated in a training programme to help us develop our green business plan. Aspects such as sustainability and profitability were properly assessed prior to the launch of our project. As part of the incubation support plan, we received support from a local mentor over the course of eight months in order to transform our business concept into a successful reality. We found the guidance and advice we received during the process of designing and making our recycled egg tray extremely valuable.



Photo credit: @pixabay



Photo credit: @Annie Spratt on Unsplash

GBF Sarl

This Algerian initiative aims at banning single-use plastic bags once and for all

GBF Sarl offers a paper packaging alternative to harmful single-use plastic bags. Its founder, Amir Khaldi, thinks that since the Earth is suffocating under plastics, today’s economic and technological solutions must be durable and environmentally friendly. “A study on the destination of plastic waste in Algeria shows that 86.24% is discarded in landfills or buried, 5.50% is incinerated and 5.50% is used as fuel”, he says. Amir highlights the low environmental impact of the paper alternatives and their low cost. “We will sell a paper waste bag for a lower price than its cost of production, as profits will come from the sale of other categories of bags”, added Amir. The paper bags are suitable for packing cereals, semolina, flour, seeds, starchy foods, couscous, pasta, sugar, salt and livestock and poultry feed. GBF Sarl wants to integrate paper bags into the production and consumption cycle and raise awareness among people regarding the dangers of plastic so they will ask for a substitute product, to the point that packaging will be 100% sustainable.



Photo credit: @GBF Sarl

Optima Decision

The road not taken: Psychology meets transport planning

Optima Decision is a consulting firm that aims to urge decision-makers to evaluate and assess the way people move inside cities, as faced with new economic, environmental and social constraints, they need professional assessment. “We study a wide range of alternatives and impacts on the transportation system in order to influence beneficial outcomes”, Amel Ould Amer, Optima Decision’s founder said. She thinks that a solution to traffic congestion would mean a vast improvement in quality of life in Algeria. Today’s communities want to enjoy streets that are safe, comfortable and conveniently walkable by all people, from the very young to the elderly. Traffic congestion in metropolitan areas is an indirect contributor to global warming. Repeated ignition burns fuel at a higher rate than driving on open highways. Greenhouse gas emissions from transport have increased dramatically over the past 20 years and projections for the coming years are alarming. Optima Decision is positioning itself regarding this major problem by offering its know-how to develop transport and commuting plans. “We encourage our customers to take public transportation and bikes for a greener future”, Ould Amer says. Optima Decision plans, manages and implements transportation with a primary focus on city cyclists and pedestrians. According to Ould Amer, the project’s main goal is to help put transportation policies into place that are consistent with growth principles and reduce vehicle trips. She has conducted a study on the Algerian market to identify development opportunities and has established solid connections with French companies, which enables her to benefit from exclusive software and technical assistance adapted to the challenges of the transport sector in Algeria.



Photo credit: @Optima Decision

Grignum

An energy alternative made of solid waste for rural populations

Grignum aims to produce and locally commercialise a natural fuel made of organic solid waste as an alternative to fossil energy. This biofuel is a sustainable alternative for rural communities and is offered at a very competitive price compared to charcoal (20 DA per kg against 100 DA for charcoal). Grignum’s goal is to help protect the environment and reduce the consumption of wood by supplying a product that is cheaper than wood and cleaner than coal. This solution is based on using bulky and polluting solid waste, including olive waste. As well as reducing overexploitation of forests, it is also a potentially highly profitable economic activity that will create sustainable jobs. This is a value proposition for rural populations in remote and isolated areas as well as for industries using biomass-based equipment.



Photo credit: @Clem Onojeghuo

Photo credit: @Adam Cohn



"This project allows me to address environmental and societal issues by reducing waste, exploiting a natural resource without a chemical treatment and by creating jobs at a local level."

Ferrah Reguia, Ferrah Cactus

"In fact, building in the south requires adaptation to climatic conditions due to the amount of heat, it is for this reason that the choice of stone and lime is important these two materials allow energy efficiency and small windows allow natural lighting and minimises heat exchange."

Daddi Addoun El Khoudir, Les bâtisseurs des Oasis

"Recycling waste material creates job opportunities while significantly reducing pollution and saving resources. PackEggs is providing a new sustainable egg packaging ideal for consumers and small shops and that is also promoting recycling. SwitchMed guided us through the entire process of growing our green business idea into a full-fledged enterprise. We were delighted to be selected for the SwitchMed green entrepreneurship programme."

Zeghiche Meriem, Merniz Nour el Houda and Alima Bennecer, PackEggs

The Switchers: Discover inspiring changemakers who are switching towards a cleaner Mediterranean

Photo credit: @Daggett.fr

There are 340 Switchers showcased in the Switchers platform. They are all shining examples of how circular economy approaches can lead to business opportunities and also drive innovation that benefits people and the environment. In Algeria, there are 13 Switchers at the moment in the platform.

The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region hosted by SwitchMed and SCP/RAC. Switchers are individuals, enterprises or civil society organisations implementing innovative ecological and social solutions that contribute to a switch to sustainable and fair consumption and production. They are active in a variety of fields, including organic farming, sustainable tourism, waste management, organic textile, recycling of electronic waste, sustainable building, organic cosmetics production, among others. Most importantly, the Switchers is a community with a voice and a meeting place for people in the region who are passionate about shaping their environment towards a more sustainable future.

For the Switchers, circular economy solutions are at the heart of their business models and also inspire them to seek ways to innovate and achieve even higher levels of environmental sustainability in the design of products and services they provide. Together, these important economic actors are making significant progress towards the goal of the SwitchMed programme and one of the region's key sustainable development objectives: to accelerate the shift to more sustainable modes of consumption and production. In doing so, they are setting a positive example of how economic growth can also lead to protection of the Mediterranean and its precious, limited natural resources.

To read more on the stories of change makers at our new online Switchers platform at www.theswitchers.eu



Meet our Switchers in Algeria

Les bâtisseurs des Oasis
Connecting innovation to cultural heritage in Algeria

The Oasis Builders is an eco-friendly construction company that takes inspiration from the old houses in the ksour, or fortified cities. Switcher Daddi Addoun El Khoudir believes they offer a lesson in efficiency due to their basic but comfortable design and use of resilient materials.

The Oasis Builders combine modern and traditional styles and blend cutting-edge innovation with ancient craftsmanship, adapting building methods to suit environmental conditions and selecting the right materials, such as stone, limestone and mudbrick to create energy-efficient houses that represent the true historical and architectural heritage of the area. The project supports the socio-economic growth of the region by using locally-available resources and hiring local people.

Ferrah Cactus
An Algerian entrepreneur using prickly pears to produce a range of cosmetics

Ferrah Cactus creates cosmetics from the discarded parts of prickly pear cacti, which offer a wealth of beneficial properties. Ferrah Reguia identified the potential of this plant, of which the fruit, flowers and leaves can be utilised, and has studied its extraction capacity and health benefits.

Ferrah Cactus helps to reduce the waste of this kind of cactus and taps into its little-known range of beneficial properties. Prickly pear cactus oil is particularly rare and sought-after within the health and cosmetics industries because of its anti-ageing and moisturising properties for the skin. The oil is extracted by applying cold pressure without any chemical treatment, and the remains after the extraction can be easily transformed into seed meal, which is also used in the agro-food sector. The process represents a new source of employment in the local area, and Reguia estimates that 100 employees will be needed to properly manage her enterprise.

RnE Partner
Giving back to communities across Africa with renewable energy

RnE Partner, one of Algeria's first private renewable energy firms, is working on the development of a number of large-scale solar farms that will provide low-cost, sustainable energy for 100,000 homes. Adel works with a multicultural team helping to build the relevant infrastructure in the region to provide electricity access across Africa.

RnE Partner's solar rooftop and hybrid power projects will help businesses and farms switch from fossil fuels to clean energy. That will allow them to save money on energy and to become more profitable, while creating a positive environmental impact with a reduction in CO₂ emissions equivalent to planting two million trees each year. Hundreds of people will also benefit from the resulting employment, training and business opportunities in the solar energy sector.

Tahraoui Travaux Nord
The art and science of growing plants

Tahraoui Travaux Nord uses eco-friendly techniques and sustainably sourced materials to help preserve the natural biodiversity of the country's ecosystems. Founded by Fethi Tahraoui, the company incorporates both science and aesthetics in growing plants for outdoor spaces like parks, recreation areas and public gardens.

Tahraoui Travaux Nord understands the value of massive green spaces and the responsibility of preserving them, creating environmentally and socially attractive living environments. The company's team are experts in green space design and landscape development. They use a variety of ecological and sustainable techniques and a wide range of plants to meet the different requirements and ideas of their clients. In terms of the future, Tahraoui plans to continue to promote beautiful green spaces and to implement a marketing strategy.

Tafilelt

A utopian city in the Algerian desert

Tafilelt is a city built in a style which respects the environment and reflects the architectural and cultural heritage of this ancient region. Moussa Amara, technical director of the project, has reintroduced traditional techniques in stonework, metalwork and woodwork to combine tradition with modernity.

The 1,050 Saharan eco-houses of Tafilelt incorporate numerous environmental solutions, such as solar panels, sewage treatment mini-stations based on plants, and a recycling system. Tafilelt encourages its residents to be eco-citizens through various community initiatives, for example, families have been given training in waste management techniques and now they use organic waste to make compost or to feed their goats, a programme which has led to the volume of household waste being reduced by 60-70%. Other incentivising actions include rewards, such as eggs or milk, being given to those who treat their waste. An eco-park has also been created which frequently hosts sustainability events and activities.

Dar Terrehut
Connecting desert dwellers and communities through sustainable tourism

Dar Terrehut is a green project in the heart of the oasis of Taghit that promotes responsible tourism. The project aims to safeguard precious natural resources for future generations and to reconnect both national and international visitors with the Sahara desert through ethical and sustainable practices.

Dar Terrehut is a place where meals are served and sweet herbal tea or coffee can be enjoyed around a bonfire, but most importantly, it creates sustainable employment for the local people, promoting eco-adventures such as camel riding or hiking tours, all of which bring income to the Bedouin in the Saharan area. The guest house offers several rooms to accommodate a variety of customers, from couples to families and groups. It offers an eco-friendly stay and provides services for a wide variety of visitors to the Algerian desert: dreamers, nomads, researchers and travellers.

Rucher-école du Djurdjura
An ecological beekeeping project high in the Algerian mountains

Rucher-école du Djurdjura is an apiary school situated in a region where beekeeping is a traditional and ancient activity that holds great importance for the local economy. In addition to creating organic bee products like honey, royal jelly, pollen and propolis, the school is also an engine for local economic development through the creation of jobs.

Rucher-école du Djurdjura raises awareness about the importance of environmental protection and the essential role performed by bees in pollinating more than 80% of flowers and crops. Its students learn beekeeping practices that exclude the use of damaging chemicals, using medicinal herbs such as thyme and rosemary as an alternative for hive health. The apiary school also hosts training workshops for disadvantaged young women of the region, helping them to develop micro beekeeping projects. Once created, the organic bee products are sold at fairs organised by the Association for the Promotion of Mountain Apiculture.

Plasticycle Algeria
This is how one entrepreneur sparked a plastic waste revolution in Algeria

Plasticycle Algeria recycles large quantities of plastic from wholesalers which is then sold on to companies that use it in the manufacturing of textiles, plastics and other products. Besma Belbedjaoui's team of six are working to involve more communities and agencies in their project over the coming years.

Plasticycle Algerie's remarkable work is raising awareness about the recycling of plastic in Algeria. The project is a beacon of hope in the face of pollution, focusing on collecting, grinding and washing polypropylene plastic bottles, and separating organic and non-organic matter to dissolve it into tiny pellets. The next step on the horizon lies in educating the public about how to recycle, providing them with the necessary tools and reconciling three essential areas of Algeria's development: economy, environment and social impact.

Eco-Labina
Greening the construction sector to build a better future

Eco-Labina develops mudbrick building materials as an alternative to concrete, thereby reducing the environmental impact of the construction sector. Fouzia Bouamama's project uses 100% recyclable, natural materials, which provide numerous technical and environmental benefits.

Eco-Labina produces blocks of adobe and stabilised clay brick (BTS) for the construction industry. The company offers a model product with exceptional qualities, making it an eco-friendly, inert, healthy and affordable option. In addition, the manufacturing of mud blocks requires the use of very little water and energy resources. Thanks to a mobile production unit, the blocks are manufactured directly on the worksites in order to use local resources. Eco-Labina implements a policy of responsible remuneration for its employees.

ECO-SAHARA
The story of a young refugee who builds houses from plastic bottles

Eco-Sahara builds houses for refugee camps using plastic bottles sourced from the camps themselves that are then filled with sand. Lehbib's goal is to offer a sturdy form of shelter that also represents a low-cost and more environmentally friendly solution.

Eco-Sahara is located in a region where temperatures can reach up to 50°C, and plastic, besides being almost four times as strong as mud, also provides twice as much insulation. Another advantage of using plastic in housing construction is that it is naturally waterproof. Lehbib, born and raised in a camp, collects the discarded plastic bottles and, after filling them with sand, stacks them on top of each other to create strong walls. Once the basic structure is in place, it is covered with cement and painted white to lower the ambient air temperature. The rounded shape provides better protection against the sun rays and prevents sand accumulation during desert storms. The costs of building each house is approximately 1,000 euros.

Photo credit: @UnSplash



(1)

Photo credit: @UnSplash



(3)



(2)

Photo credit: @Rima Dates



(4)

Photo credit: @UnSplash

(1) **Renewable Energy Partner EURL**, renewable energy (2) **Rima Dates**, organic food & agriculture (3) **Rucher-école du Djurdjura**, organic food & agriculture (4) **Tahraoui Travaux Nord**, organic food & agriculture

Photo credit: @EcoSahara



(5)

Photo credit: @Dar Terrehut

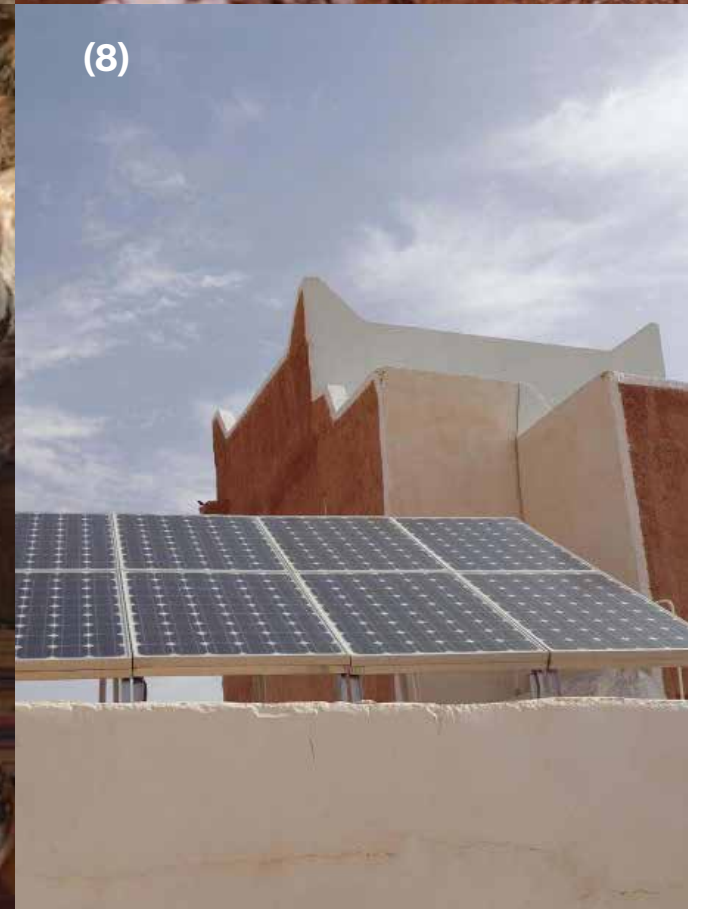


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Photo credit: @Rima Dates

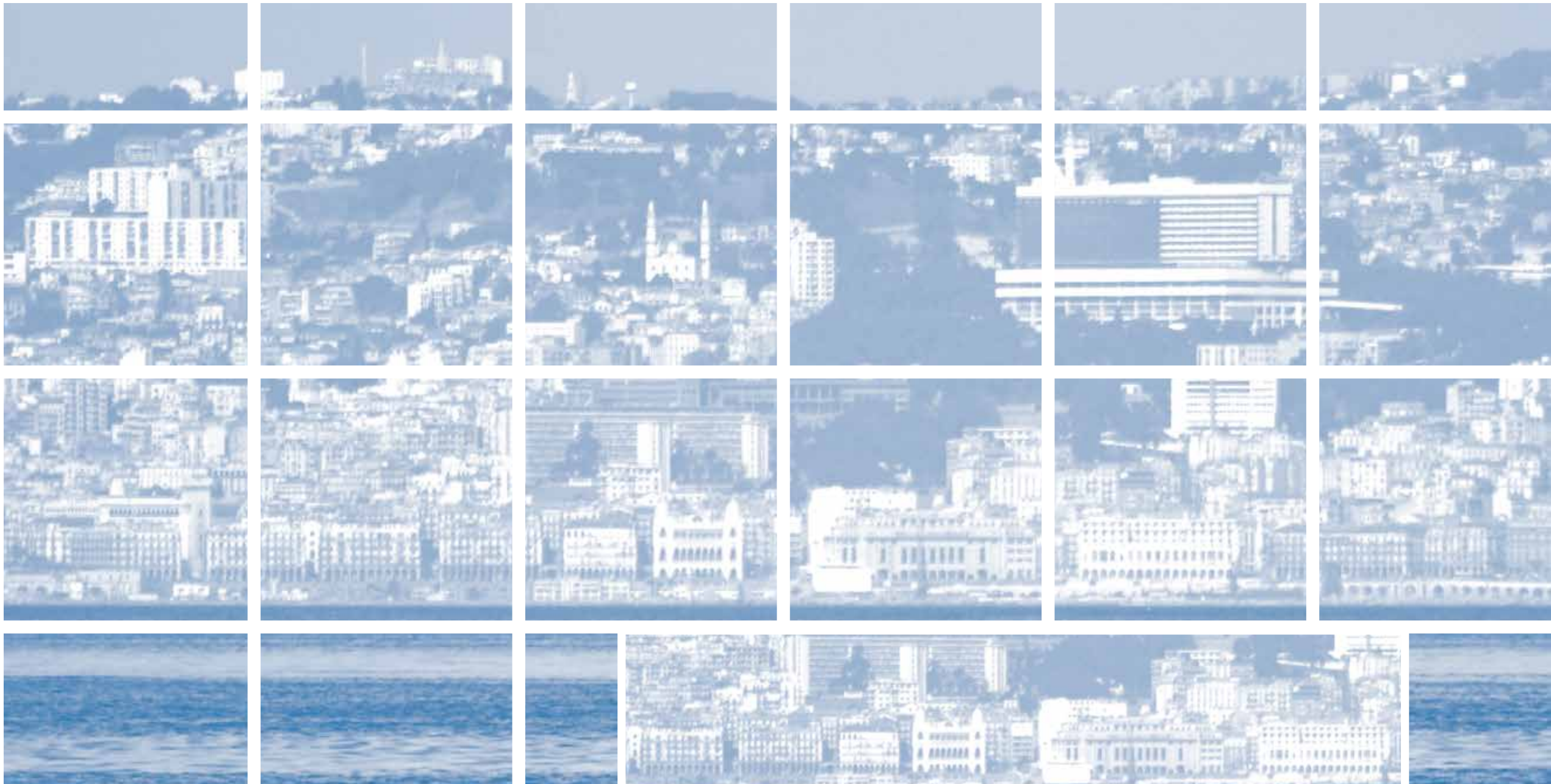


(8)

Photo credit: @Tafilelt

(5) **Ecosahara**, housing & construction (6) **Eco-Labina**, construction materials (7) **Dar Terrehut**, tourism (8) **Tafilelt**, construction

Photo credit: @OMAR-MALO



The White Paper on “[Promotion of Green Entrepreneurship and Grassroots Ecological and Social Innovations in Algeria](#)” is a publication that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the Algerian green entrepreneurship ecosystem, in order to reveal the areas and axes where the needs for action are greatest. It summarises the opinions of some forty stakeholders interviewed individually (public institutions, financial institutions, support structures, project sponsors) as well as the results of the Synergies workshop held on 12th December 2018 in Algiers, which brought together over 150 key actors from nearly 60 different organisations. The document is available only in French for the moment.



4

**Empowerment
of civil society
organisations and
citizens to lead
innovative solutions
addressing
environmental and
social challenges.**



Photo credit: @Carmenchu on Instagram

Supporting eco and social grassroots innovations

At SwitchMed we support community-based social eco-innovation initiatives to maximise their influence and impact, thereby contributing to the emergence of more sustainable models of consumption and production. A training methodology is developed to support eco and social innovations and grassroots initiatives on sustainable consumption and production which included a Handbook that provides basic knowledge and understanding on the fields of SCP and eco and social innovations. Furthermore, this Handbook presents challenges and opportunities for civil society organisations and grassroots initiatives aiming to work within these fields. It also helps to inspire and build a practical way of looking at collective projects or initiatives.

An intensive 4-day national workshop is organised in each of the SwitchMed target countries in coordination with our local partners. The attendees are gathered in an inspiring framework in order to develop different spheres of their projects, get inspired by other initiatives and help one another during the particularly participatory sessions. Specifically, the training aims to provide practical expertise in what concerns community initiatives while giving them the opportunity to take important steps in the development of their projects. A key component of the training is the module dedicated to analyse in depth the issues to tackle to start an initiative. Through the practical exercises, the leaders of the initiatives must prototype their projects, develop a canvas model particularly addressing the social eco-innovation within grassroots initiatives and develop a SWOT analysis. On average, 20 community initiatives were shortlisted in each country, making a total of 180 initiatives across the programme as a whole that received the training.

Afterwards, all the trainees have the opportunity to apply for the supporting phase of the programme to receive further coaching and technical support for the development and implementation of their initiatives. Two civil society ecological innovation initiatives are selected in each country. The assessment of the applications is done by a jury composed by the local partners, the local trainers, SCP/RAC and the external experts involved in the development of the training methodology.

The initiatives selected in each country for the support phase benefit from 50 hours of training that includes the development of a “support plan” for their initiative and regular coaching sessions for six months to support the implementation of the initiative. Also external technical or expert support based on the needs identified in the “support plan” is provided and when possible, support for the development of a crowdfunding campaign as well.

In total, 260 change agents and civil society organisations were mapped and, 16 local trainers selected and 8 local partners were selected and trained on-site for the implementation of the training programme. Out of the 570 candidates who submitted an application to take part in the national workshops to train civil society initiatives, 160 people were selected and trained belonging to 80 different initiatives. In the end, 14 initiatives received further support, as explained earlier. Civil society organisations also participated in the Synergy Workshops organised together with the Green Entrepreneurship programme.

Meet our local partners

Our local partner, as selected by SCP/RAC, is an organisation with extensive knowledge of the current situation in Algeria concerning civil society organisations, social movements and empowered communities aligned with sustainable consumption and production and ecological and social innovation as well as experience of organising/managing workshops. The main task is to assist SCP/RAC in identifying and selecting local trainers and potential grassroots initiatives to join our training programme.



Djanatu al Arif

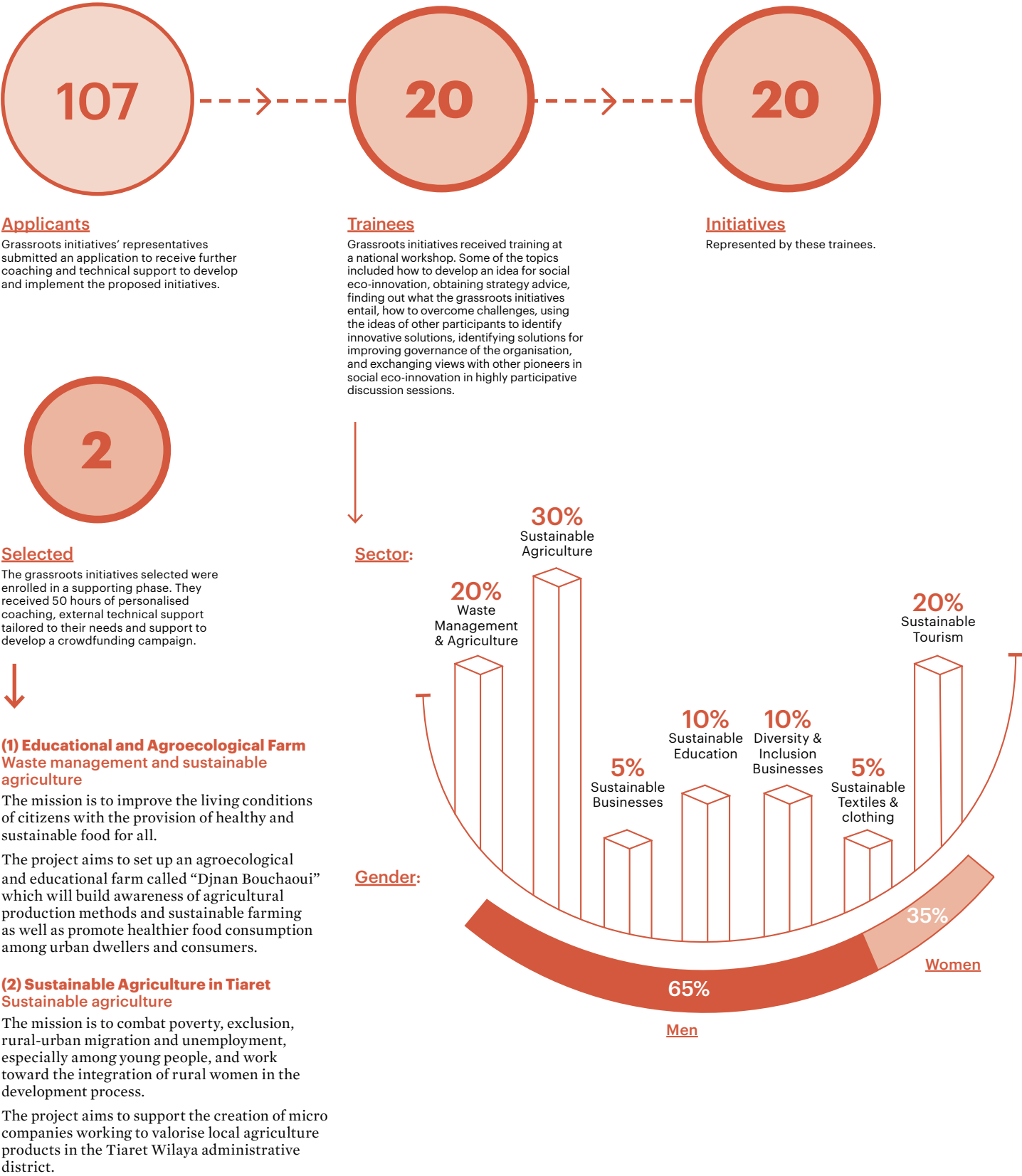
The Mediterranean Foundation for Sustainable Development Djanatu Alarif

This non-governmental organisation, based in Mostaganem, is very active in fields related to the protection of the environment and sustainable development. Thanks to its extensive national network, and in a spirit of responsible citizenship, it federates skills and experiences and makes them available to persons and organisations interested in environmental protection.

Our local trainers, carefully selected by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC), have extensive experience in initiating, implementing and evaluating environmentally and socially innovative projects and also have a deep understanding and knowledge of training methodologies based on empowerment, collective learning and a participative approach. At SwitchMed, they are responsible for actively participating in the regional co-creation workshop, together with other local trainers from the participating countries. Local trainers also support their local partner organisation and SCP/RAC in identifying grassroots initiatives and guaranteeing the participation of at least 20 social eco-innovative actors/initiatives in the national workshop. This task also includes the provision of support in disseminating the workshop call through the available channels in order to attract potential actors and initiatives for the national workshop. The trainers are also in charge of facilitating a four-day national workshop with the support and guidance of SwitchMed’s Civil Society Empowerment team.

The local trainers participate in the multi-stakeholder process to select the best two initiatives arising in the workshop to receive further technical support. They also provide 50 hours of individual coaching support over 6-12 months, aimed at the development of a support plan to identify technical needs for the proper development and implementation of the project.

Civil society organisations are empowered to act as agents of change and to start community innovations



Organic Waste Solutions

Waste management and sustainable agriculture

The mission is to reduce the impact of pollution and so advance social well-being while encouraging recruitment among vulnerable groups in the community.

The project aims to transform organic waste into compost, creating economic wealth and contributing to the development of organic agriculture.

Drinking Water for All
Water management

The mission is to contribute to improving living conditions for the inhabitants of Ain Saleh.

The project aims to install a drinking water treatment plant in the Ain Saleh Wilaya administrative district.

Responsible Urban Tours
Sustainable tourism

The mission is to anchor the bonds of coexistence between the two shores of the Mediterranean, and with the different regions of Algeria in particular.

The project aims to develop a network of urban walks related to the history of the city, and migration to the Maghreb in particular. A network of homestay bed -and-breakfast establishments is also being developed.

Communication Goes Green
Sustainable businesses

The mission is to bring sustainable solutions to a variety of stakeholders.

The project aims to create an innovation, consultation and training communications package for the green economy sector, providing solutions and support to companies, artisans and start-ups in their efforts to go greener while remaining profitable.

Pilot Farm
Sustainable agriculture

The mission is to preserve biodiversity by reducing anthropogenic impacts on the natural environment.

The project aims to develop sustainable agriculture through the production of organically dried tomatoes.

Besma Centre
Education

The mission is to contribute to reducing poverty by promoting the rights of sick children and improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups in the community.

The project aims to provide care and medical support as well as schooling opportunities to orphaned children and children with cancer and other diseases.

Tizi-Ouzou Traditional Crafts
Sustainable tourism

The mission is to develop income-generating activities at local level, creating sustainable and quality jobs to help reduce inequalities.

The project aims to promote the artisanal know-how of the Tizi-Ouzou region and preserve the vernacular cultural heritage, especially among young women at risk of social exclusion.

Valorising Olive Oil Extraction Waste
Waste management and sustainable agriculture

The mission is to build awareness of the opportunities and potential economic and environmental benefits of valorising waste.

The project aims to recover waste from the olive-oil extraction process for use as compost.

Djurdjura Responsible Tourism
Sustainable tourism

The mission is to contribute to the reduction of social exclusion through job creation in the sustainable tourism sector.

The project aims to develop sustainable tourism businesses that create income-generating activities for young people, particularly women, in the Djurdjura region, through the creation of homestay programmes and nature tours.

Safeguarding Local Oasis Heritage
Sustainable agriculture

The mission in to attract young people to work in date palm production, following a great loss of interest because of the risks and lack of recognition associated with the activity.

The project aims to foster local knowledge and know-how on date production and promote the rational and sustainable rehabilitation of the oasis ecosystem through local economic development.

Supporting Young Deaf People
Diversity and inclusion

The mission is to improve the living conditions of young deaf people.

The project aims to support unemployed young deaf people by helping them to create small income-generating cooperatives.

Educational Apiary
Sustainable agriculture

The mission is to build awareness on the importance of bees and promote more sustainable behaviours.

The project aims to set up apiaries which are accessible to anyone wishing to learn about ecological and sustainable beekeeping. These apiaries will therefore serve as teaching aids and places to share beekeeping know-how.

El-Bayadh Handicraft Workshop
Diversity and inclusion businesses

The mission is to reduce the risk of social exclusion through job creation in the arts and crafts sector.

The project aims to support the creation of artisanal workshops for rural women such as weaving wool carpets and similar activities, traditional sewing, etc., to generate new sources of income.

Textile Goes Green
Sustainable textile and clothing

The mission is to contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities in remote areas.

The project aims to develop a series of textile recycling workshops for disadvantaged young women for them to learn new skills that will enable them to generate income.

Social Entrepreneurship Centre
Diversity and inclusion

The mission is to reduce unemployment, especially among the most vulnerable groups such as young people and women, as well as tackle issues like local rural development, the economic inclusion of women, child protection, etc.

The project aims to encourage young people to bring about positive change by providing innovative social inclusion solutions.

Al-Kantara Gorges
Sustainable tourism

The mission is to develop a sustainable tourism initiative to increase tourism revenue in an area that acts as a driver for sustainable development.

The project aims to identify opportunities for sustainable tourism development while protecting this historical site in the Biskra province.

The Fig Tree Treasures
Sustainable agriculture

The mission is to boost investment in and increase fig tree production.

The project aims to rehabilitate the cultivation of figs by promoting the planting of fig trees and transforming its fruit into an added value product.

Res'Art Network
Diversity and inclusion

The mission is to help women artisans organise themselves to produce and market their products more effectively.

The project aims to strengthen a network of art and craftswomen from different regions of Algeria by creating a gallery, which will promote and increase the visibility of these local hand-made products.

Meet our Algerian civil society organisations supported

Composted olive oil waste is a promising waste treatment alternative

This initiative consists of recovering contaminant waste resulting from olive oil extraction in the Takerboust region in Algeria's Bouïra Province. This waste is used to obtain a compost which can be used as a natural fertiliser. The project also aims to foster a culture of waste recovery and environmental protection in society.

The olive oil industry offers valuable opportunities to farmers in terms of seasonal employment as well as off-farm milling and processing. While this industry offers significant economic benefits in terms of profits and jobs, the downside is that it leads to severe environmental harm and degradation.

The Thazmurth association is tackling the problem of reducing the environmental impact of the olive industry in the Aghbalou region. It recycles contaminant waste from olive oil extraction into compost that is subsequently used by local farmers. The association also fosters a culture of waste recovery and environmental protection in its community.

Considering the great olive oil production potential of the region, and its associated negative environmental impact, SwitchMed has provided association members with high-level entrepreneurship skills training aimed at strengthening the green micro-enterprise movement and local sustainable socioeconomic development. In Mostaganem, seventeen locals have benefited from green "Economic Competence Through Entrepreneurship Training" (CEFE label) and have gained valuable hands-on experience in project management and green entrepreneurship. Association founders have received professional coaching from a local mentor, who has supported and guided them throughout the support phase.

"Local and international expertise in agro-ecology and composting techniques, arranged by SwitchMed, has been very valuable in successfully running the project and better managing our association and its activities", says Mohamed Ouchene, association member and project founder.

Thanks to the perseverance and engagement of members who have transferred their knowledge to their community, to date some 100 people have been trained in composting and agro-ecology and in environmentally friendly agricultural techniques. Most were students, who are very active in organising reforestation campaigns and environmental education in schools around the region.

"Empowering young people and raising their awareness on the importance of protecting our environment is our mission, as it will be theirs in the future", says Mohamed Ouchene.



Photo credit: @Nikoli Afina on Unsplash

The association has also been invited to many agriculture fairs and exhibitions in Algeria to showcase their results and spread this environmentally friendly approach in the region.

Given the great environmental impact of olive processing wastes, it is imperative for policy makers and industry leaders to launch more concrete initiatives to develop a sustainable framework for tackling the problem of olive waste disposal.

"Local and international expertise in agro-ecology and composting techniques, arranged by SwitchMed, has been very valuable in successfully running the project and better managing our association and its activities."

Mohamed Ouchene, association member and project founder.



Photo credit @Thazmurth on Facebook

An educational farm for the promotion of sustainable agriculture

The TORBA collective offers a better quality of life to urban dwellers and farmers by proving that a new model of agricultural development is possible. TORBA has created a genuinely dynamic set of events to sell farm produce and train urban dwellers in permaculture and sustainable farming.

Considering pollution, climate change and our unsustainable way of living, now more than ever, social ties between urban and rural areas need to be strengthened. Everywhere, there is an urgent need to promote healthier food consumption and sustainable farming practices in harmony with the rhythms of nature. TORBA was born out of this desire to protect Mother Earth and to create local wealth that alleviates rural population drift.

In Bouïnian, Algeria TORBA has introduced the concept of shared gardens to involve consumers in the production and distribution of organic foods. This activity has enabled hundreds of urban families with their children to temporarily have access to a plot of land and to cultivate their own vegetables and learn permaculture practices in a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. TORBA also organises discovery classes for schoolchildren as well as eco-tourism, gastronomical and cultural events.

At Djnen Salim in Ouled Fayet, with the collaboration of Mr Bentaoual, the farmer who owns the land, TORBA has been working on a promising new project aimed at training people in permaculture practices: agro-ecological and educational farming. This project contributes both to the conservation of farmer's seeds and to the reduction of farming's ecological footprint. Given the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of TORBA in the region and the project's reproducibility potential, SwitchMed has selected it to receive bespoke assistance depending on its needs.

"Thanks to SwitchMed, we have received technical and managerial support and we are already reaping the benefits."

Abdelmadjid Arfa, founder of TORBA.



Photo credit @Collectif-Torba on Facebook

Thirteen TORBA members have received high-level training in agro-ecology thanks to SwitchMed, which has also assigned an expert to TORBA to improve its knowledge and know-how regarding mastery of cultural practices and enhance its their ability to set up and accompany an agro-ecological project.

"Thanks to SwitchMed, we have received technical and managerial support and we are already reaping the benefits", says Abdelmadjid Arfa, founder of TORBA.

Thanks to this project, since 2016 around 100 people with varied backgrounds, ranging from experienced small farmers to curious individuals (through a future conversion project in permaculture), have received training in agro-ecology. TORBA team members, in turn, are teaching people permaculture and farming techniques that are both profitable and respectful of health and the environment.



Photo credit @Collectif-Torba on Facebook

5

Enabling access to finance for green start-ups and entrepreneurs by mobilising impact investment: The Switchers Fund



Photo credit: @SwitchMed

Financial instruments for innovative green businesses

At SwitchMed we are supporting the region's green entrepreneurs by enabling access to finance, providing direct finance to new and established green entrepreneurs and mobilising local investors and enterprise support programmes as well as European resources through the newly created SwitchersFund.

The Switchers Fund's mission is to support innovative green entrepreneurs in the development of their projects, first through grants to test new ideas and attract new funders, and as these projects grow by introducing adapted financial products such as concessional loans and ultimately through equity participations.

In the current situation where private and public financial institutions have difficulties to channel their investments to Medium and Small enterprises in our partner countries in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood region, the SwitchersFund core business lays at facilitating international capital flows from investors to entrepreneurs to facilitate, thus contributing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As the first activity of the Switchers Fund, the Call for OSCE GEMS Award, granted a total of 90,000 euros in six South Mediterranean countries, 15,000 euros in each country to the best business idea. The OSCE GEMS Award was the result of the partnership between the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the SwitchersFund, and was established thanks to the support of the Italian Government.

In addition to this, the Business Support Services Facility complements the SwitchersFund's financial instruments by supporting innovative entrepreneurs via capacity building initiatives, and, in general, enhancement of their access to finance, which focuses on the following actions: green business model and plan development, mentoring and technical expertise, crowdfunding campaign support a "Green Start-ups Meet Investors". The latter, that connects start-ups with the right investors

during matchmaking events, is a national event held in each beneficiary country. By covering the major issues that an experienced investor will look for (and expect) before they invest and getting to know the upcoming start-ups to the international investors' community, SwitchMed aims at mobilising investment capital to help with the growth of green business in the Southern Mediterranean. Prior to the pitch, the green entrepreneurs that are selected receive 30 hours of capacity building session to improve their communication skills and to prepare their business to be evaluated by the financial players. The stages of the investment process are also taught during that session. In the aftermath of the events, an individual feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the project submitted with a monitoring of the contacts made with the investors during the meeting is offered to the green entrepreneurs with the aim of improving their capacity to meet the appropriate financial players. In total, 245 applicants submitted an application to join the Green Start-ups Meet Investor, 67 green entrepreneurs were selected and coached to give their pitch in front of investors. A total of 79 investors attended the events. A total 2,150,000 euros potential investment raised by the entrepreneurs is expected by the end of the programme.

An on-line financial toolkit for the green entrepreneurs, whether they are in ideation phase or already fully operational companies, was also developed to help them to better access to finance in the MENA region. The practical tool allows discovering their finance opportunities and all the necessary instruments and knowledge to approach potential investors, and determining, in 4 easy steps, the right funding strategy for their green business.

These activities, carried out by SCP/RAC, are jointly done with the European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks (FEBEA) and the Union for the Secretariat of the Mediterranean (UfM).

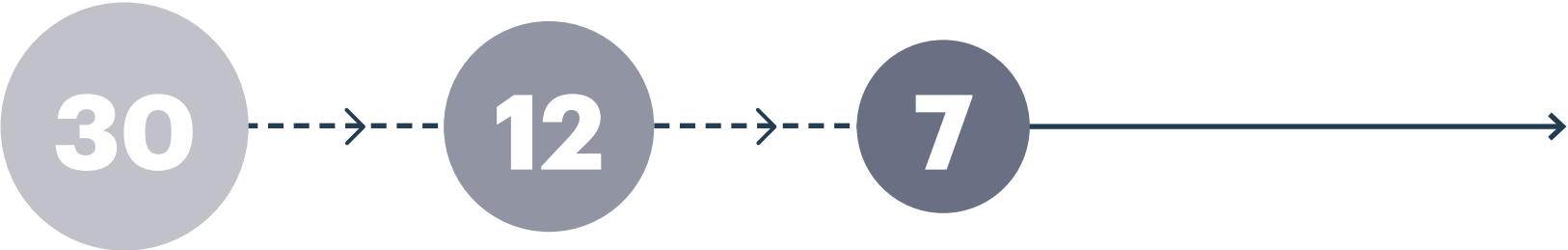
Meet our service providers

Our local service providers, carefully selected by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC), are organisations with extensive experience in supporting green entrepreneurs with their business development, assessing their positive impact and providing the necessary support to access finance. These organisations were selected for their capacity for empowering green entrepreneurs and their knowledge of financial opportunities in each country.

The main task of these organisations is to develop and implement capacity building sessions regarding access to finance and to improve entrepreneurs' communication skills. With this support, green entrepreneurs are enabled to pitch and showcase their innovative solutions before potential investors during specific national events.

The local providers have also supported SwitchMed in developing the country's first green regional portfolio reflecting the profiles of entrepreneurs, which has been disseminated among potential investors.

Access to finance capacity building programme for green entrepreneurs



Candidates who applied to join the capacity-building programme.

Green entrepreneurs who attended the capacity-building programme.

Selected green entrepreneurs to pitch during 'Green start-ups meet investors' November 20th 2017.

30h

Capacity-building for green entrepreneurs, who are guided through the stages of the investment process, to prepare their businesses for evaluation by financial players and improve their communications skills for more effective promotion of their business idea.

85%

Green entrepreneurs were approached by potential investors during and after the "Green start-ups meet investors" event.

25

Financial actors identified in Algeria.

14

Representatives of banks, guarantee funds, business angels and venture capital attended the "Green start-ups meet investors" event as potential investors.

200,000€

Is the potential investment raised by the Algerian green entrepreneurs.

Les bâtisseurs des oasis

Received the unanimously positive feedback from the invited investors because was chose as best business case during the 'Green start-ups meet Investors' event. They showed a solid business plan and potential growth. The **LOUADAH Group** (a renewable energies cluster) offered to support them during the growth face of the business.

Discover our 7 green entrepreneurs who pitch during the "Green start-ups meet Investors" event

Name of the company	Business stage			
Gringum		●		
Green Oasis		●		
Les Bâtisseurs Des Oasis			●	
Ferrah Cactus		●		
Alpokimia		●		
Open Mind Solutions			●	
Ecotoob		●		

Ideation
Early stage
Growth
Scale

Our newly launched OSCE GEMS Award contributes to sustainable development goals

Luisa Balbi's profile:

Luisa Balbi works with OSCE as policy advisor for Mediterranean affairs. She draws on her academic knowledge as well as relevant practical experience to identify pertinent issues, and has made a significant contribution in the area of human rights and democratic governance, particularly in the areas of gender mainstreaming, human trafficking and domestic violence.

With 57 participating states in North America, Europe and Asia, the OSCE —Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe— is the world's largest regional security organisation. The OSCE works for stability, peace and democracy for more than a billion people, through political dialogue about shared values and practical work that aims to make a lasting difference.

The OSCE took a decision to promote green and social entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean as a tool for contributing to stability and peace in the region and launched the OSCE GEMS Award, in partnership with the Switchers Fund, thanks to an initial endowment by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The OSCE GEMS Award rewards young entrepreneurs from Mediterranean countries with a grant of 15,000 euros to move forward innovative ideas with positive environmental and social impact.

SwitchMed interviewed Luisa Balbi, OSCE Projects Manager, for her insights on the selection process and the award.

Photo credit: @SwitchMed



Why has the OSCE decided to partner with the Switchers Fund to promote peace and stability through social and green entrepreneurship?

OSCE-participating states recognise the importance of promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns as well as strong good governance and adherence to labour, social and environmental standards. Social and green enterprises are increasingly recognised as a tool for social and financial inclusion, providing alternative sources of employment for marginalised groups or groups at risk of marginalisation and supporting the peace and stability process. Social and green entrepreneurs drive social innovation and transformation in a wide range of fields by developing or adapting products, services or approaches to a social or environmental problem. Launching a green or social business in the Mediterranean means a new way of doing business, putting environmental and social objectives first and offering exciting self-employment opportunities for young people and an inspiring example for others to follow.

In fact, the combination of existing environmental challenges in the Mediterranean, high youth unemployment figures and migratory pressures makes investing in green start-ups a logical step to tackle all these challenges at once. As the Italian Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent

Council, explained, the idea of an award for young entrepreneurs emerged last year during the Mediterranean Contact Group meeting. The OSCE hopes that the concrete business ideas proposed by the young entrepreneurs will help to improve security and stability in the Mediterranean region.

Can you tell us about the selection process?

A total number of 240 applications were collected from the participating countries. The selection process lasted several weeks and went through three stages in order to fully appreciate the potential value addition and impact of each business idea. Specific attention was paid to each application's policy on reinvesting profits into social or environmental activities, as well as the capacity to employ socially-excluded persons from the local community.

The positive social and environmental impact achieved by green entrepreneurs like Rima Dates clearly demonstrates the kind of integration and positive inclusion the OSCE is looking for. Their work is a driving force for prosperity and social economic development in their respective countries.

Each winner received 15,000 euros that they can use to upscale their socially and environmentally sustainable business ideas.

In Algeria, Rima Dates was the winner of the 15,000-euro OSCE GEMS Award. What were the assets and added value that Rima Dates demonstrated to the jury?

Rima Dates was able to show how the seed fund will be used to enhance seed quality and provide job opportunities for women in their community, in a positive move towards gender balance. Another aspect that influenced OSCE's decision was their capacity to dramatically reduce the waste of organic products and reintroduce 60% of date varieties, which normally end up as cattle feed, into the value chain.

In six months' time, OSCE will be reviewing Rima Dates' report. What's next?

The OSCE, together with the Switchers Fund, expects more from the six-month report than mere information about how the money was used. We are extremely interested in measuring the impact of the business, to see how stakeholders and local communities benefit from it, and understand the potential of such initiatives so that all this data can be translated into future investment decisions.

Do you think the OSCE GEMS Award contributes to the UNDP's sustainable development goals (SDG)?

Absolutely yes! And especially to SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals.

SDG 17 is actually one of the most relevant goals because it is the one that binds all the others together. The GEMS Award partnership has successfully mobilised additional financial resources for participant countries and has done so from multiple sources (promoted by the 17.3 indicator of SDG 17). It has also shown how global commitment and strong partnerships are essential to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, and in developing countries in particular.

Access to finance for green entrepreneurs: Algeria and the need for innovative solutions

A key challenge for Algerian green entrepreneurs is access to finance, especially for very small projects in the early business development stages. “It is the highest wall to climb for them. We know that because we’ve listened to them,” says Claudia Pani, SwitchMed’s Project Manager and impact investment expert. Over the last two years, SwitchMed has developed a number of activities that help to determine the options and innovations available in each MENA country in relation to access to finance, and has created a variety of financial tools and specific moments for them.

The Switchers Fund, for instance, has an important role connecting financiers and investors with innovators and offering financial instruments that combine equity, debt, guarantees and grants. Launched in 2017 as a joint initiative of SwitchMed, the European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Financiers (FEBEA) and the European Company for Ethical and Alternative Financing, the Fund assists green startups with the most promising business models in green economy sectors. Algeria is one of the eight countries targeted by the Fund and also one of the six countries participating in The Switchers Fund OSCE GEMS Award, which offers a grant of 15,000 euros each to six green entrepreneurs. Among the winners was the Algerian project Rima Dates, a green company that takes unused and low-quality dates and turns them into high-quality products, while improving income conditions for local farmers. Grants like this can be a helpful injection of capital for green projects with a well-defined business model that are finding it difficult to break out of the growth stage.

In Algeria, green entrepreneurs have to demonstrate their success if they are to attract more investment. The absence of a public seed fund for innovative projects, the underdevelopment of crowdfunding and the scarcity of investment companies and business angels make it difficult to effectively promote green and social entrepreneurship. Financiers and investors perceive green startups as risky, though there is certainly an interest in new products; their limited understanding of these innovative business models seems to make them shy away from supporting the seeds of the new circular economy. Many projects have been supported by public schemes and international cooperation programmes, particularly in the areas of waste management, renewable energies, aquaculture and sustainable agriculture. However, the poor maturation of business models and low equity of project promoters hinder the progress of green entrepreneurs’ ideas. An idea may be good, but knowledge is needed to transform that idea into a viable long-term business, and obtaining the revenue stream required to build a brand can be very challenging.

As Besma Belbedjaoui, founder of Plasticycle Algeria, says, “in 2011, different movements and ideas emerged in the Arab world and caused ripple effects all around.” Certainly there is an increased awareness of green economy and sustainable practices, proof of which are the success stories that we find among our Switcher’s community. Besma herself is a Switcher and a woman entrepreneur who started a recycling plastics project about two-and-a-half years ago. Despite the challenges of the start-up stage, finding herself in an industrial field and with electrical and human power needs, she continued to resolutely lobby for environmental ideas and requested a loan to finance her project. “I applied to the National Youth Employment Support Agency, which offers loans for projects based on innovative ideas. It took a while and I received many

negative answers, but finally, I got the loan,” she explains. Besma firmly believes that these efforts will pay off over the coming years. “Funding is key, and in return, we can and will be heard, because we have the plan,” she proudly asserts.

Faced with the hazards that affect hydrocarbon exports, Algeria must encourage investment in key sectors of green economy such as renewable energy, water, recycling, waste management, eco-building, sustainable transport and responsible tourism, to generate wealth and help to address two of Algeria’s principal challenges: economic diversification and job creation. In this country, industrial waste was recorded at 2.5 million tonnes per year, and waste management projects and facilities are still insufficient. Algeria is in the process of banning the use of plastic bags, paving the way for new markets such as ecological plastic and paper packaging production. Amir Khaldi, founder of the Algerian project GBF SARL, ventured into this market and produces 100% ecological plastic through his initiative, GBF SARL. Concerned about the plastic problem he says that “a study on the destination of plastic waste in Algeria shows that 86.24% is discarded in landfills or buried, 5.50% is incinerated, and 5.50% is used as fuel.”

For Algerian industries, the promise of cost savings and increased competitiveness remain primary motivators for the adoption of circular economy solutions. For green entrepreneurs, circular economy solutions are at the heart of their business models and inspire them to seek ways to innovate and achieve even higher levels of environmental sustainability in the design of the products and services they provide.

Many of the green entrepreneurs supported by SwitchMed stand as shining examples of how circular economy approaches can lead to business opportunities. Most Algerian Switchers are focused on resource and energy efficiency, and organic food and agriculture, driving innovation to benefit both people and the environment. These stories show us a first but promising glance at the potential of young Algerians who, despite the challenges they face, are willing to take on their destiny and undertake green and social projects and enterprises for the benefit of their people and country.

Now efforts must also include the shift to a more sustainable funding model that can offer reliable access to funding sources. The Switchers Fund is setting a positive example of this, helping to raise awareness about how economic growth can also lead to protection of the Mediterranean and its precious, limited natural resources.

Support eco and social innovations of green entrepreneurs and Switchers through a mix of grants, loans and equity participations. Join now
The Switchers Fund
 and contribute to the first MENA impact investing Fund.

6

**Exchanging,
synergising
and engaging
with business
& investment
networks to
scale-up demo
actions.**



Supporting the visibility, effectiveness, long-term sustainability and impact of the SwitchMed programme

The SwitchMed Networking Facility, led by SCP/RAC, aims to contribute to the visibility, effectiveness, long-term sustainability and impact of the different activities carried out under the SwitchMed programme. In order to deliver this, the Networking Facility focuses on three main areas of activity:

Firstly, we enable extensive communication and networking and facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt among SwitchMed partners, connecting them with key external stakeholders. We have been working closely with 32 strategic partners in order to achieve common goals. We have also developed the SwitchMed Action Network, an online platform with a mobile app, to exchange knowledge related to SCP initiatives taking place in the Mediterranean, provide inspiration through disruptive innovations integrating closed-loops and collaborative consumption business models, showcase stories and participate in facilitated in-country stakeholder dialogues. It also functions as a database of experts. Another major activity is the organisation of SwitchMed Connect, a gathering of Mediterranean stakeholders to build synergies, exchange knowledge and scale-up eco and social innovations. Leading start-ups and entrepreneurs, industry agents, initiatives, change agents, policy and financial institutions working on applications related to productive, circular and sharing economies in the Mediterranean come together in Barcelona every year. In total, three events have been held, bringing together more than 1,000 stakeholders from 16 different countries.

Our second area of activity involves encouraging the scaling-up of activities and impact, with a focus on harvesting lessons learnt in order to replicate demonstration pilot projects, thereby contributing to activities' long-term sustainability and increasing visibility with regard to the impacts effected during the programme. To that end, the Networking Facility has promoted the production of regional and national scaling-up roadmaps that aim to replicate and continue the green innovations and demo activities beyond the lifetime of the programme. The Networking Facility has designed a general theoretical framework for scaling-up analysis based on the identification of a specific strategy tailored to the SwitchMed programme. In order to gain traction with regard to

sustainable consumption and production and generate greater impact, the scaling-up of the SwitchMed programme has been defined as “expanding, adapting and sustaining demonstration actions in more locations and over time to reach beyond the original target groups, with the ultimate vision of sustainable consumption and production being mainstreamed into everyday economic life across Southern Mediterranean countries”. For instance, the compelling outcomes and impact achieved by the SwitchMed Green Entrepreneurship programme indicate the growing demand for business support in Southern Mediterranean countries for the creation of circular economy business models, and clearly demonstrate the potential benefits of these business models. As the full potential equates to the creation of millions of jobs, effective strategies should be explored for scaling up the impact achieved.

The third line of action includes reinforcing the internationalisation of green start-ups and SMEs through closer cooperation between businesses and investment networks in Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries. As such, the Networking Facility has mapped the range of financial instruments available in four selected countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco), as well as in Europe, and has organised seminars with national and international investors to discuss the barriers that restrict access to markets and sources of finance.

Despite the results for the relevant countries being collected at national level, it is important to process the results achieved across beneficiary countries and to provide a regional perspective; thus we collect data and facilitate information exchange across all SwitchMed activities, primarily at regional and thematic levels, communicating these to external stakeholders in line with the programme identity, as has been done since the start. Indeed, well-proven methodologies, tools and initiatives that avoid unnecessary efforts are used or carried out on a regular basis.

Meet our strategic partners

We work in strategic partnership with international and national organisations that are very experienced and active in addressing the shift to sustainable consumption and production in the Mediterranean region. Our strategic partners are like-minded organisations to facilitate the exchange of ideas, build bridges and synergies and foster cooperation among diverse organisations in different countries with shared goals.

Our strategic partners represent a diverse range of organisations whom we trust to help us execute our mission. Their expertise enables us to do far more than we could alone, and their passion and talent inspire us.

Our strategic partners have long-term commitment in the Mediterranean region have deep technical expertise on sustainable consumption and production work on a broad range of topics such as eco and social innovation, collaborative economy, life cycle assessment, green entrepreneurship business models...involve the Mediterranean countries in project design and implementation share the same values and vision for the region with us.

Our current strategic partners are:





Credits

Concept
SwitchMed

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