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PRESS RELEASE

Tunisians Show Interest in Integrated Development Pilot Project of the Foum El Oued Perimeter in the Laayoune Region

From February 5 to 6, 2018, a Tunisian delegation of 24 people, including farmers, teacher-researchers, Ministry of Agriculture officials, and agricultural school instructors visited the Foum El Oued agricultural perimeter in the Laayoune region.

The delegation came to carefully study the Foum El Oued agricultural development pilot project, which was financed and implemented by the Phosboucraa Foundation in partnership with the Regional Directorate of Agriculture, the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA), the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), and the Halib Sakia El Hamra Cooperative.

For the past three years, the Foum El Oued agricultural development project has aimed to eliminate a number of natural and technical constraints that negatively impact the region's crop yields. These efforts go beyond technical support for small-scale farmers and the sustainable management of natural resources by improving local living conditions, particularly in terms of drinking water, entrepreneurship training for rural youth, education, and health.

The Foum El Oued agriculture project already has several major achievements, including:

- Demonstrating that millet, blue panicum, barley, sesbania, and quinoa can effectively act as substitutes for corn and alfalfa by performing 14 trials of alternative crops on farms;
- Opening a water, soil, and plant analysis laboratory at the INRA research station in Foum El Oued;
- Holding three training sessions on seed production and storage techniques, managing new salt-tolerant crops, and manure composting;
- Organizing three study tours for farmers to a quinoa seed enhancement unit in Skhour Rhamna, a composting unit in Taroudant, and the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture in the United Arab Emirates;
- Fostering the education of farmers' children by distributing school supplies to 158 students and establishing two preschools in the municipality of Foum El Oued.

National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA)

The INRA's mission is to undertake agricultural development research. This public institution's origins go back to 1914 and the creation of the first official agricultural research services. Recently, it has undergone a structural reorganization aimed at modernizing its management process.

The purpose of the new organization is to provide the institution with:

Adequate strategic planning to build forward-looking capacities for adapting to, responding to, and anticipating the social demand for agronomic research;

- An outreach policy based on the regionalization and decentralization of research;
- An integrated monitoring, evaluation, and control system;
- An integrated and rational management of resources;
- A product marketing policy;
- A coherent information and cooperation policy.

The INRA operates through 10 regional agricultural research centers and 23 experimental areas spread out over the national territory and covering the country's various agrosystems.

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture:

The ICBA is a non-profit international agricultural research center established in 1999 under the visionary leadership of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government.

Phosboucraa Foundation

Created in May 2014, the Phosboucraa Foundation supports OCP Group's social and community involvement, and more particularly that of Phosboucraa, OCP's subsidiary operating in the three Southern regions. Its mission consists in defining and implementing development projects with a participatory approach involving consultations with communities, associations, and institutional investors in the Southern regions. Its main objective is to contribute to the human development of the Southern regions through five programs that benefit all communities:

- Agricultural development and environmental conservation;
- Social development, including education and health;
- Entrepreneurship;
- Preservation of sociocultural heritage and promotion of sports;
- Urban development.

Halib Sakia El Hamra Cooperative

- The Cooperative was established in March 1996 and is located 20 km from the city of Laayoune in the largest irrigated zone of the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region, which has an estimated 1,419 inhabitants. It covers six hectares and has 52 farms dedicated to dairy production.
- Thanks to the Cooperative, members can collect, process, and market the cow milk that is produced on their farms. The Cooperative supplies members with agricultural inputs and tools. It offers services for the benefit of members (tillage, sowing, harvesting, technical supervision, etc.).
- In the agri-food sector, the Cooperative produces pasteurized milk, fermented leben milk, and butter. It also has medium-term plans to develop a clean production unit to make yogurt and cheese.
- Since 2015, the Cooperative has benefited from a partnership with the Phosboucraa Foundation. This four-year partnership (2015–2018) is aimed at improving the incomes and living conditions of farmers by contributing to the sustainability of the existing farming system.