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## **Report on the 2024 country visit of the IFAD Executive Board to the Republic of Tunisia**

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**Action:** The Executive Board is invited to take note of the report on the 2024 country visit to the Republic of Tunisia, as contained in the document.

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**Technical questions:**

**Executive Board country visit participants  
through Dr Yaya O. Olaniran**

Minister

Permanent Representative of the  
Federal Republic of Nigeria  
to the United Nations Food and  
Agriculture Agencies in Rome

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## Report on the 2024 country visit of the IFAD Executive Board to the Republic of Tunisia

### A. Background

1. The Republic of Tunisia, located in the Maghreb, is small in area (162,000 km<sup>2</sup>) compared to its neighbours. With a population of 12.4 million, it is one of the most urbanized countries in North Africa and the Arab region, especially along the coast, with major agglomerations like Tunis and Sousse. However, rural people account for around 30 per cent of the total population.
2. Tunisia is currently classified as a lower-middle-income country. Historically, its economic growth has depended on oil, phosphates, agrifood products and car parts manufacturing. The country's economy also relies on tourism, which is subject to risks due to sporadic security issues, although none have occurred during the last 10 years. The services sector (especially tourism) accounts for almost two thirds of GDP and between 50 and 60 per cent of employment in Tunisia.
3. The social and political unrest in Tunisia in 2010/2011, which then spread as "Arab Spring" to other countries, led to the ousting of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. It originated in high unemployment, food price inflation, corruption, a lack of political freedoms and poor living conditions, and was sparked by the self-immolation of a vendor in protest against police brutality and economic hopelessness in 2010. Following the ousting, emphasis was put on democratization and addressing inclusion, poverty and economic opportunities. The Arab Spring took a major toll on the country in terms of attracting investments, and the policymaking environment decelerated, resulting in slower implementation of new policies and reforms.
4. The country subsequently went through a difficult period, with a steep decrease in GDP in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by the worldwide repercussions of the war in Ukraine. Despite encouraging trends including the stabilization of GDP growth and inflation, the situation remains fragile, with a price inflation rate close to 7 per cent and an unemployment rate of 16.4 per cent in 2023.
5. The change in government and priorities placed on democratization, inclusion, economic opportunities and poverty reduction helped to decrease the national poverty rate from 20 per cent in 2010 to 16 per cent in 2020 (projected at around 17 per cent in 2024). However, significant regional disparities remain and were visible to members of the delegation during their visit. While the poverty rate is at 10 per cent in urban areas, it is still at 26 per cent in rural areas and rose to 37 per cent in 2021 in the Centre-West, the country's poorest region. Areas in the interior like the Centre-West and North-West are significantly poorer than coastal areas, indicating a widening development gap in terms of basic infrastructure (transport), services (health, education and training, finance), economic activity and employment. Despite its relatively small size, the country has a very diverse ecological landscape, ranging from desert in the south to humid mountains in the North-West and along the coastline.
6. Tunisia has a young population. According to the latest national census in 2014, nearly 48 per cent of the Tunisian population is under 30, with 24.5 per cent aged 15 to 29. Their challenges are significant. The country's education system remains weak, with 8 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 not having completed primary school. Two categories of vulnerable young people coexist: young men and women without degrees and without opportunities for stable work; and young graduates who have the capacity, but not the means, to start viable economic activities.

7. Women and girls are considered key actors in the country's development. But gender-based inequalities persist, particularly in rural areas. Their role is not well recognized and is largely underestimated in society. In rural areas, illiteracy rates are notably higher for women (32 per cent) than for men (27.2 per cent). Girls are also more likely than boys to be withdrawn from school by their parents.
8. Agriculture still has a key role in the economy (contributing 9 to 11 per cent of GDP and 12 per cent of export revenue, and employing 14 per cent of the workforce) and in food security. But the sector is characterized by low productivity; investment in agriculture is low, and incomes are less attractive, falling and highly unpredictable (because of rainfall variability and other factors). National crop production is dominated by arboriculture (especially olive trees, as Tunisia is one of the biggest olive producers in the region) and cereal crops (mainly durum wheat). Livestock farming contributes around 40 per cent to agricultural production value, while fisheries account for 9 per cent of the value of agriculture. IFAD works in the marginal areas of the country where, particularly in the pockets of poverty, the main sectors are arboriculture (olive trees, fruit trees), small ruminants (sheep, goats), local products (prickly pear, honey, aromatic herbs, essential oils) and horticulture.
9. The main constraints holding back the transformation of the agricultural sector are a lack of investments in the sector due to low productivity, insufficient organization of producers and agrifood value chains, limited access of small-scale producers to agricultural advisory and financial services, and the growing impact of climate change. Food security is threatened by the combined effects of climate change, the degradation of natural resources and the effects of the war in Ukraine, as Tunisia is highly dependent on imported cereals (particularly durum wheat). In the period between July 2023 and May 2024, the Russian Federation and Ukraine supplied about half of the country's wheat imports.
10. IFAD began to work in Tunisia in 1981 and has so far funded 15 projects, for a total of US\$552 million, benefiting 143,000 households. The current country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) was designed in 2019, with a duration of six years (extended to 2026 because of COVID-19), and five projects have been implemented so far. The COSOP's strategic objectives are:
  - Better access to productive (and socially and technically sustainable) basic infrastructure and sustainable natural resource management;
  - Inclusion of poor rural people in more structured agricultural value chains; and
  - Economic and social empowerment of vulnerable rural women and youth.
11. The COSOP was drafted in response to the challenges described above and draws on lessons learned from previous projects and programmes and the recommendations of the 2019 country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE). The CSPE concluded that the programme had made a major contribution to improving living conditions in disadvantaged rural areas and had shown remarkable environmental and natural resource management results, but with persistent sustainability risks. It resulted in significant progress in participation by rural populations in the management of collective assets, with agricultural development groups remaining fragile. Despite many relevant and fruitful partnerships, private sector involvement in the programme and the scaling up of results and innovation remained limited. In addition, the CSPE highlighted the insufficient impact of projects on the social and economic empowerment of rural women and young people and recommended better targeting to the poorest and most vulnerable rural populations (including women and youth). It also pointed to the need to strengthen and scale up innovative interventions that promote rural poverty reduction in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, to strengthen strategic partnerships

to promote policy engagement and to tailor the institutional anchoring of projects and the nature and approach of future interventions in the context of decentralization.

## **B. Proceedings**

12. As part of the annual country visit programme for IFAD, an Executive Board delegation comprising representatives from Brazil, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States and led by their spokesperson, Dr Yaya O. Olaniran, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome, visited the Republic of Tunisia from 3 to 8 November 2024. The Board members were accompanied, inter alia, by Donal Brown, Associate Vice-President, Department for Country Operations; Charles Tellier, Director and Chief of Staff, Office of the President and Vice-President; Dina Saleh, Regional Director, Near East, North Africa and Europe (NEN); Philippe Rémy, Country Director, NEN; Nicola Maranzano, Assistant to the Director, NEN; Mohamed Adam, Communications Analyst, Communications Division; Indran A. Naidoo, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; Claudia ten Have, Secretary of IFAD, Office of the Secretary (SEC); and Flavia Antonelli, Conference and Interpretation Meetings Assistant, SEC.
13. The main objectives of this mission were:
  - (i) Visit activities co-funded by IFAD and Government of Tunisia, so as to increase the Executive Board's knowledge of activities on the ground and allow Board members to meet beneficiaries, government officials and other partners;
  - (ii) Promote dialogue with central and local government officials regarding IFAD's role in Tunisia, among other matters; and
  - (iii) Gain insights into IFAD's investments – in such areas as the seed sector, gender in agriculture, livestock, mechanization, input vouchers, agricultural financing, and extension as means of promoting rural development – which could prove useful to other countries.

## **C. Overview of the field visit**

14. The delegation combined talks with the Government of Tunisia and the United Nations Resident Coordinator, United Nations agencies and representatives from development partners in Tunis with visits to two IFAD-supported projects in different regions of the country (see the appendix for additional information on the projects):
  - Agropastoral Value Chains Project in the Governorate of Médenine (PRODEFIL); and
  - Economic, Social and Solidarity Project (IESS) in the Governorate of Kairouan.
15. In addition to presentations by the project teams in Médenine and Kairouan and talks with the relevant authorities in the governorates, field visits were organized in the respective project areas. The delegation looked at PRODEFIL activities in the Médenine region (US\$36.85 million, 2014–2023), which aimed to improve living conditions for vulnerable rural people and to create new employment opportunities by strengthening the resilience of agropastoral production systems and value chains (sheep, goats, camels, wool, leather, milk). Activities visited included a marketplace and fair with young entrepreneurs and start-ups presenting their products and services, a cooperative of pastoralists and an animal service centre as well as basic infrastructure (rural access roads, water) and rangelands linked to it.

16. In the IESS (US\$51.3 million, 2021–2027) project area in the Governorate of Kairouan, activities visited included a kindergarten, which aims to reduce the burden on women and allow them to engage in income-generating activities supported by the project (e.g. a local store owner, a barber, a mobile food distributor and a family intervention to provide a rain catchment and cistern, linked to a household garden to demonstrate the possibilities of better nutrition). The delegation also participated in a session of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach, which addresses gender and social injustice in economic development efforts through an inclusive and participatory process at household level.
17. In Tunis, the delegation held high-level meetings with government representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MoA) and the Ministry of Economy and Planning, as well as other ministries. The delegation also met with the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and with representatives of other United Nations and international agencies and development partners.

#### **D. Impact of IFAD programming and issues affecting its success**

18. Overall, feedback from government officials showed strong support for IFAD's programme in Tunisia, as agriculture remains an important pillar of the economy. MoA, which accompanied the mission throughout its visits in the field, emphasized that all projects had a perfect fit with government plans for the sector. IFAD had demonstrated in its long-term support that it always looked for close cooperation with Tunisian institutions, which had also strengthened institutional capacities. Highlights included close alignment in the fight against rural poverty and in improving the livelihoods of rural people, as well as in promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices, in improving infrastructure and access to markets, and in supporting local products and the private sector in the form of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). MoA also commended IFAD's approach to promote active participation of local communities in decision-making processes and in mobilizing additional partners. In the meetings with the delegation, MoA indicated that its future priorities for IFAD's support included helping speed up the transition to greener and more inclusive agriculture, better financial inclusion of small-scale farmers into value chains, supporting prevention against the effects of climate change (like flooding and soil erosion in vulnerable areas) and greater digitalization of farming. IFAD support was also sought in the social and economic inclusion of marginalized parts of the rural population (especially rural women and youth) and in the promotion of more resilient and sustainable agriculture able to adapt to climate change.
19. The delegation had the impression that IFAD and other development partners have a good understanding of the Government's current priority to strengthen social peace and stability and implement reforms for economic growth in a period of political, social and economic challenges and limited fiscal space (inflation, debt, etc.). These factors could affect coordination with development partners, which may become more bilateral, ad hoc, and sometimes burdensome for all sides (which in turn can also lead to capacity constraints on the Government's side). This is also reflected in the agricultural sector, where development partners are seeking strategic guidance on future policy orientation and are willing to provide support.
20. With the CSPE dating from several years ago and the projects visited at different stages of implementation (PRODEFIL concluded in 2023, IESS runs until 2027), recurring themes in the discussions of the delegation concerned ownership and sustainability. It was also clear that the effects of the Arab Spring, COVID-19 and the repercussions of the war in Ukraine have not yet been fully digested and that the implementation of projects had to cope with delays, increased costs and higher investment needs in capacity-building (including on financial management and procurement).

21. The meetings with both government officials and local stakeholders made clear that the effects of climate change on the livelihoods of rural people and agriculture are already being felt. In PRODEFIL, for example, sufficient rainfall was recorded in only one of five years and rainfall in project areas affected vulnerable crops while average temperature increased, with the future looking even bleaker. Thus, it is important that IFAD projects address climate adaptation and resilience and think creatively about options (e.g. carbon sequestration opportunities in pastoralism). Members of the delegation saw that some remarkable work was already being done and also saw a need to look at national policies on the environment, natural resource management and climate adaptation.
22. While a new and up-to-date CSPE will not be available until at least 2026,<sup>1</sup> economic activities supported by the projects appear to have resulted in supporting higher and more diversified incomes. In PRODEFIL, 56 per cent of beneficiaries reported an improvement in their livelihoods. Improvement in gender equality might also have contributed, but there was a message that overall productivity in agriculture remained low. The Government pointed to different approaches being used to address the poverty of households, depending on their circumstances (e.g. land ownership, level of education), using subsidies for income-generating activities for the (registered) poorest families. IESS project activities included training in agricultural (e.g. irrigation, processing) and economic (entrepreneurship, income-generation, financing, business start-up, digital knowledge) fields, as well as specific activities directed to improving livelihoods at the household level, for example, allowing women to participate more in these activities and economic life (kindergarten, water provision, irrigation, literacy courses, use of digital devices). Activities also addressed areas like nutrition and health and hygiene. It will be important, as planned by IESS, to systematically collect and assess evidence of results, and to look at sustainability.
23. The effect of investments in social and economic infrastructure (agricultural service and animal health centres, irrigation, water, soil management, renewable energy, rural roads etc.) and services, even if small, could already be sufficient for young adults to see new prospects and stay in rural areas. Members of the delegation also enquired about the availability of sufficient operating funds to increase infrastructure use, especially when it has been handed over already. But while infrastructure support was seen as critical, it was not deemed sufficient. The need to take sufficient time and bring sufficient resources, including for capacity-building and strengthening and training, as well as targeted business advice and a close cooperation of different partners, was also raised.
24. The creativity and engagement of young adults and local small-scale entrepreneurs impressed the delegation as offering an opportunity for rural Tunisia. The delegation met university graduates trying to start businesses in rural areas, building on local products, innovations and digital marketing, who needed to be guided and supported (including on marketing, branding and packaging). But developing and sustaining local value chains and building the local economy and entrepreneurship, linking farmers to SMEs, was also dependent on access to finance and advisory services (which was still too difficult), as well as on training and scholarships. The creation of an improved ecosystem for businesses (including access to finance, grievance mechanisms for dispute resolution, a network of laboratories to test quality, etc.) was considered important, as different actors had to come together through collaboration between MoA and other ministries.
25. The delegation also was able to see first-hand progress in better organizing the local population and allowing their participation in the management of infrastructure. Capacity-building was seen as important to spread innovation and support scaling (especially if export markets were targeted too, requiring

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<sup>1</sup> The last CSPE was dated 2017 and the next is planned for 2026.

certifications and other knowledge and support). PRODEFIL was a case in point: better governance of agropastoral approaches (e.g. creating consensus on cattle paths, participatory preparation of resource management plans) was dependent on better organization of relevant farmers and stakeholders, but also on clear legal framework conditions (Pastoral Code, section E) and the institutions and institutional capacity to enforce them. While the delegation learned of impressive progress, the need for support to build and sustain still fragile intermediary organizations and cooperatives remains high.

26. The delegation saw the importance of specifically targeting women and young adults who can help to energize local community development. The delegation was informed that 40 per cent of those aged 25 to 49 were not in employment, in addition to one in three university graduates. Looking at PRODEFIL's positive experience in providing support to young adults, the delegation felt that jobless graduates could be further targeted. This point was also raised by the Governor of Kairouan, who emphasized that women and youth needed to play a greater role in rural life and the economy. He also pointed out that vulnerable families need to be provided with support, building on information on poverty status, which was mostly available in the project areas. With only 15 per cent of women participating in the permanent workforce and with many villages bearing an extra heavy burden (due to males migrating to the coast or beyond), greater efforts to promote women's empowerment are needed. The delegation saw some relevant interventions from IESS in that regard.
27. Some members of the delegation also pointed to the potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with a view to sharing experiences from countries like Brazil in arid and semi-arid areas with pastoralism, agriculture and natural resource management and related challenges.

#### **E. IFAD's capacity in policy engagement**

28. The delegation recognized that the 2017 CSPE had recommended strengthening strategic partnerships to promote policy engagement as an ongoing effort. The visit allowed discussions with the Government of Tunisia at the national level, at the level of governorates and at the local level, as well as with development partners and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. It was clear that more emphasis could be put on policy dialogue and the delegation encouraged such policy dialogue as a means of promoting rural development between IFAD and other development partners with the Government at different levels.
29. From the field visit it was clear that the projects generated enough learning and evidence to nurture active policy engagement. Employment, for example, remains a central issue for the Government where lessons learned from IFAD-supported projects could be disseminated more widely through policy dialogue. The legal framework for agricultural enterprises could possibly be improved to create better conditions for SMEs to access credit in the future. The delegation welcomed IFAD's efforts to address, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UN Women in policy dialogue with the Government and development partners, issues of rural women's economic empowerment and traditional barriers for women (e.g. around land rights or when social programmes still address primarily the male head of the household). The Government pointed to its Rural Women's Protection Fund. It was recommended that IFAD also look at the experience of the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors and of other development partners in promoting a more holistic approach and to the planned revision of the Revenue Code for Women. An important field for policy dialogue also emerged in relation to the issue of pastoralism and the Pastoral Code, which has been awaiting approval, implementation and harmonization of legal texts since 2016. Approval and implementation are important to maintain agropastoralist activities in the future. The delegation also pointed to the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and

Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security as a possible source of information.

30. The delegation could see first hand the commitment and ownership of MoA to projects once IFAD funding comes to an end. While in the case of IESS it was probably still too early to come to a conclusion, in the case of PRODEFIL, sustainability and continuing advice as well as maintenance of infrastructure and other project activities are being taken into account by the local government, which is positive. What can be fully borne by producers' associations in the future, how much has to continue to be provided by the Government and other questions should also be part of policy dialogue in the exit strategy. Associations like the agricultural development group in the mountain rangelands managed to increase the number of members even after the projects' end and continued to show strong ownership, asking members to pay annual fees and fees for water, and undertaking continued activities on animal feed, vaccination of animals, and awareness-raising and income-generating activities (like the store and cafeteria). But continued support and advice at a different level seemed appropriate (e.g. the discussion on payments of guards, assuring that grazing restrictions are upheld). While MoA's commitment to sustain the activities in the rangelands was clear, this has not always translated into budgets, even for relatively limited funds; the enactment of the Pastoral Code should provide the basis for the implementation of sound rangeland management. Policy dialogue on options for possible new sources of revenue like carbon sequestration practised under extensive agriculture may still prove relevant.
31. Finally, a regular forum or format for policy dialogue between MoA (and other relevant ministries) and IFAD and other development partners has to be found. Current modalities that were initiated and supported by IFAD appeared to be too irregular or were happening with little or no government involvement.

## **F. Recommendations**

32. The delegation was conscious of the limitations of a short visit to a country and projects in assessing the success of IFAD support. If there was a common thread, then the challenge of improving scale and assuring long-term impact and sustainability of support and transformative approaches would be part of it. Based on the impressions shared between members and discussed with the IFAD team and government representatives, the delegation would like to put forward the following recommendations to the Government of Tunisia and IFAD:
  - (a) The delegation welcomed the continued support and ownership of projects and programmes by the Government and stakeholders even after IFAD's financial support has come to an end. This is key to sustainability. It recommends (continued) government ownership and leadership during and after conclusion of IFAD's support,<sup>2</sup> including in addressing financing, advice and necessary policy changes. It also encouraged closer and more systematic collaboration among different government ministries working for example on economic and social inclusion in rural areas, while maintaining the involvement of local actors and stakeholders, as already supported by IESS between MoA and the Ministry of Social Affairs at local and national levels.
  - (b) Policy interventions focusing on local needs of rural poor people, especially women and youth, are another key aspect for sustainable transformation, and deliberate targeting efforts need to be further upheld, especially when unemployment of potentially very productive young people remains so high.
  - (c) The Government of Tunisia and IFAD both emphasized the importance of economic and social inclusion. The delegation supports this and calls for

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<sup>2</sup> This includes thinking about an exit strategy early on in order to give stakeholders and MoA a chance to address necessary steps for sustainability and adapt project design accordingly.



further emphasis on women and youth to allow them to participate more strongly in economic activities, enhancing access to basic services, local finance, training, capacity-building and extension services and infrastructure in rural areas.

- (d) Smallholders and pastoralists need to be further supported in organizing themselves, for example in cooperatives, in order to be able to manage economic challenges and increase resilience.
- (e) Climate change is already a serious and significant challenge for smallholders and poor rural communities and will become even more relevant in the future. Agricultural policy needs to address risks and possible adaptation measures, including promoting sustainable natural resource management. The Government should continue to use more of IFAD's excellent know-how in this area and its ability in mobilizing additional climate funds.
- (f) Small-scale infrastructure like tertiary and feeder roads or assembly points (e.g. to enable livestock vaccination) have a catalytic effect in opening rural areas. In terms of their sustainability, the Government and user groups need to work hand in hand. They must remain a priority for IFAD in Tunisia.
- (g) Rural and remote areas still seem to struggle with a gap in finance and microfinance in terms of lending to smallholders and rural small-scale business owners. Developing the subsector, including through reviewing national legal framework conditions (law on finance and microfinance) and specific support to mobilize the financial and banking sector to open up job opportunities could be considered a priority in the future.
- (h) The delegation encourages the Government to address important policy bottlenecks, which could provide numerous benefits to inclusive rural development; for example, approving, institutionalizing and implementing the Pastoral Code at local and national levels.
- (i) The Government rightly emphasized the need to identify and evaluate results and to formulate lessons learned. IFAD, including the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, will address this through a CSPE and a COSOP review as a basis for the new COSOP in 2026.
- (j) Existing knowledge and lessons learned from both rural communities and external partners like IFAD should be leveraged by holding regular consultations and coordination meetings under the leadership of the Government (MoA) at the national level with development partners, and at the governorate level with IFAD, other development partners, and local actors and stakeholders.
- (k) The delegation also suggests to look closer into options for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, based on similar challenges in countries with agriculture in arid and semi-arid areas.

## **G. Conclusions**

33. The delegation gained insight into the rural development challenges and opportunities that Tunisia experiences, building on a relatively young and educated population looking for employment and economic opportunities. It also gained a better understanding of some of the particular challenges facing the country in addressing poverty, social and economic inequalities, youth unemployment, migration, stability and governance challenges, as well as issues around tackling the increasing effects of climate change like water shortages, drought and soil erosion. The projects visited and the collaborators the delegation talked to are working hard to address some of these challenges. They have a strong focus on social and economic inclusion, including of the poorest segments in rural areas. The delegation welcomes the Government of Tunisia's increasing collaboration with IFAD

based on common perspectives on sustainable agricultural transformation and rural economic and social inclusion, and on the development of both local associations and farmers' groups and the local private sector, which also help the Government to focus its limited resources. It welcomed the openness to address policy bottlenecks, such as the Pastoral Code awaiting approval, as well as the initiative by MoA to feed some lessons learned from collaboration under IFAD-supported programmes into the discussions of the new five-year plan now in preparation, and into the work on new strategic orientations in different subsectors and on climate adaptation. The delegation also welcomes the offer by IFAD Management to bring experiences from other countries to Tunisia (e.g. through South-South and Triangular Cooperation).

## **H. Acknowledgements**

34. The participating IFAD Board members would like to express deep appreciation to the Government of Tunisia, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries and the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and to the Governorates of Médenine and Kairouan for their hospitality and insights. Members of the delegation also appreciated the interaction with stakeholders in the field – local communities, cooperatives, groups and individuals – and were impressed with their engagement.
35. The delegation would also like to extend a sincere thank you to all IFAD staff involved in the hard work that went into preparing the visit and making it a success.
36. The delegation thanks the United Nations Resident Coordinator, United Nations staff and development partners in Tunis for sharing their perspectives on working with IFAD and in the sector.

## PROJECT VISIT



©IFAD/Chris McMorrow

## Tunisia

### Agropastoral Value Chains Project in the Governorate of Médenine (PRODEFIL)

PRODEFIL was launched in June 2015 with the overall objective of improving living conditions for vulnerable rural people and create new opportunities for employment by strengthening the resilience of agropastoral production systems and the related value chains.

The project directly targeted small livestock breeders with fewer than 50 head of small ruminants or five head of camelids, and smallholders farming less than 20 ha of rainfed rangeland and other land.

The project's total budget of US\$36.85 million was cofinanced by IFAD, the European Union, the Tunisian government and local project participants.

The project aimed at enabling public and private actors to manage and sustainably develop local territories and agropastoral value chains, particularly those involving camelids and small ruminants, within three delegations in the Governorate of Médenine. It aimed to enhance the resilience of these communities by improving their access to resources, knowledge, and markets. Training programs were implemented to equip farmers with modern agricultural techniques and sustainable practices that could boost productivity while conserving natural resources. Additionally, infrastructure such as water management systems and roads were upgraded to facilitate better connectivity and resource distribution.

The project also emphasized the importance of women's participation in agriculture, providing them with opportunities to engage in decision-making processes. By fostering inclusive growth, the project not only improved livelihoods but also strengthened social cohesion within the communities.

As a result, many smallholders reported increased yields and income levels, leading to improved living standards. The focus on building local capacity ensured that the benefits of the project would endure long after its completion, paving the way for continued development and prosperity in the region.

The project benefited 20,225 rural households at its completion in June 2023.

### KEY FACTS

#### COUNTRY

Tunisia

#### IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

2014 - 2023

#### IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Environment

#### TOTAL COST OF THE PROJECT

US\$ 36.85 million

#### IFAD FUNDING

US\$ 19.5 million

#### CO-FINANCIERS

European Union: US\$ 2.9 million  
National Government: US\$ 10.15 million

### PROJECT VIDEOS

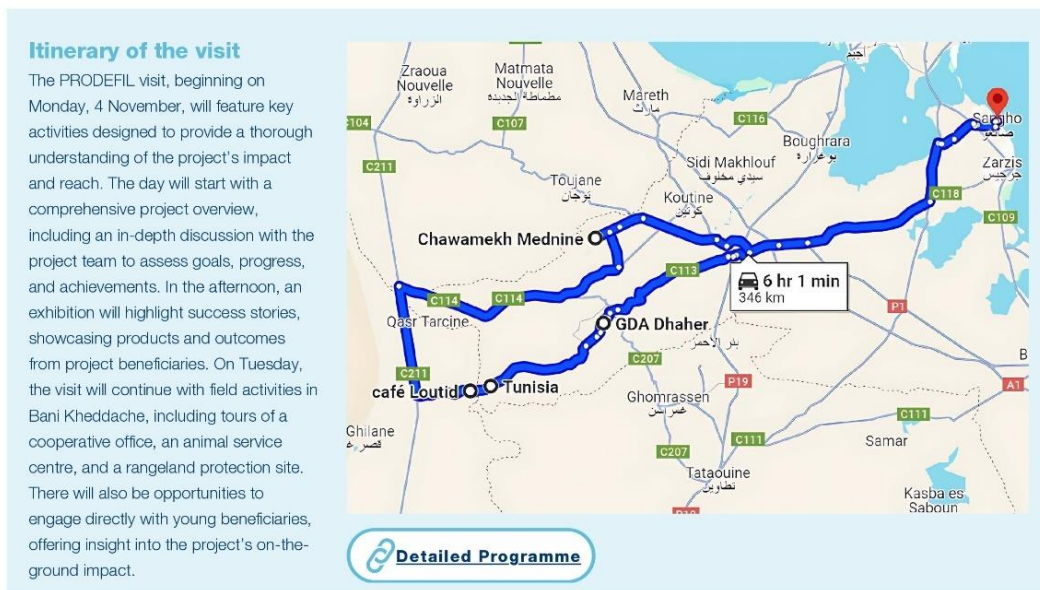
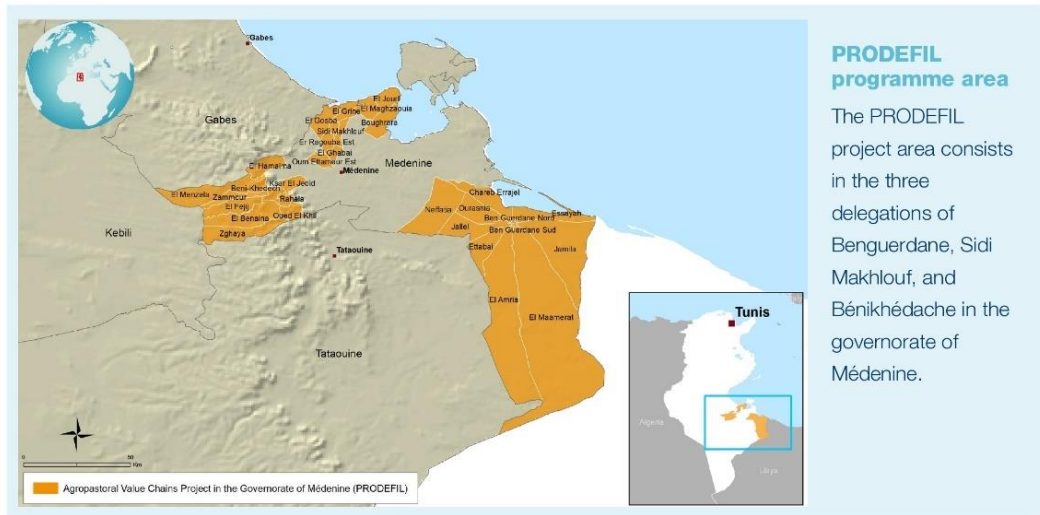


[Tunisia: Helping shepherds to adapt to climate change](#)

[Tunisia: Encouraging young women in business](#)

[Tunisia First ever female camel farmer](#)







## PROJECT VISIT

**IFAD**  
Investing in rural people

## Tunisia

### Economic, Social and Solidarity Project (IESS)

The Economic, Social and Solidarity Project (IESS) is a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing the livelihoods and resilience of rural communities in Kairouan Governorate in Tunisia. Launched in December 2019, this ambitious project is set to run until 2027, with a total budget of US\$51.27 million. The project is co-financed by IFAD, the Adaptation Fund, the Tunisian government, and local project participants.

Since its inception, the IESS project has made notable strides in reaching out to marginalized communities, providing them with essential resources and support to improve their agricultural productivity and overall quality of life. The project is expected to benefit approximately 50,000 rural people by its conclusion in 2027.

The IESS project emphasizes a graduation approach aimed at enabling rural producers, particularly in the Kairouan region, to transition sustainably out of poverty. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, improving market access, and fostering social solidarity, the project helps participants not only meet their immediate needs but also build long-term resilience and self-sufficiency. This approach is designed to ensure that beneficiaries "graduate" from poverty, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty) and 2 (Zero Hunger).

### KEY FACTS

#### COUNTRY

Tunisia

#### IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

2021 - 2027

#### IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Environment

#### TOTAL COST OF THE PROJECT

US\$ 51.27 million

#### IFAD FUNDING

US\$ 23.8 million

#### CO-FINANCIERS

Adaptation Fund: US\$ 9.21 million

Beneficiaries in-kind: US\$ 1.79 million

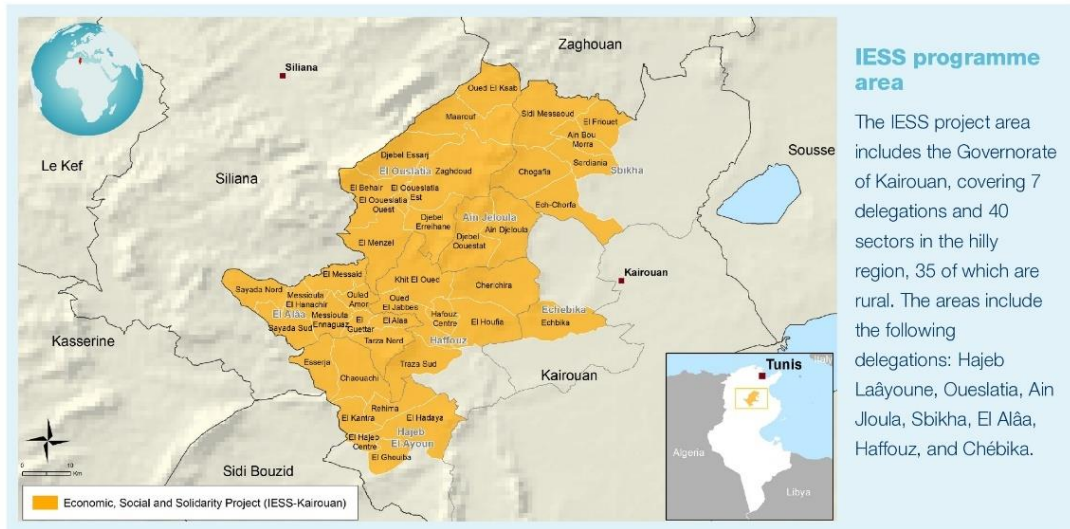
National Government: US\$ 15.88 million

### PROJECT VIDEOS



Tunisia: [A new hairdresser in town](#)





**Itinerary of the visit**

The IESS visit begins on Wednesday, 6 November, with a project presentation and discussion at La Kasbah Hotel, followed by a cultural visit to the Kairouan Mosque and Medina, organized by CRDA. The day concludes with a debrief back at the hotel.

On Thursday, 7 November, the itinerary includes field visits in Suden covering a kindergarten, income generating activities and a water tank site. A GALs (Gender Action Learning System) session will also be held at local sites Bit Said and Bit Belaid, before returning to La Kasbah Hotel.

[Detailed Programme](#)

