



# Subsectors being developed today in the *Mediterranean* Agribusiness\_ *Aromatic & medicinal plants* ✨

Targeted business: cultivation (organic), plant extraction (essential oil, perfume, flavoring, coloring, antioxidant & nutraceutical), processing industries (freezing, drying), packaging

## Context and market

### *The subsector today*

⊕ Riding the organic wave, aromatic & medicinal plants (AMP) find growing outlets in the pharmaceutical and fast moving consumer goods industries (house care, perfume, cosmetics, agribusiness): aromats & spices, organic food, phytotherapy, essential oils for perfumers, etc. are trendier than ever!

⊕ Strong export potential: global organic products markets = USD 27.8 bn in 2006 (Europe + USA =96%).

### *Current Med positioning*

⊕ As Europe's traditional aromatic plants provider (Moroccan and Tunisian rosemary & thyme), the Med region offers a great pool of AMP resources waiting for a better valorisation. European organic cosmetics leader [Weleda](#) sources for ex. camomile from Egypt and rose and pomegranate from Turkey. Med governments (cf. [GAFI](#)) are looking for foreign investors for onion & garlic drying plants + essential oil extraction plants in Beni Souef, al Minya, New valley, Sinai & Sohag regions.

### *Weaknesses & obstacles*

⊕ Med production of AMP remains very traditional, aimed at local markets: a qualitative revolution is needed to access foreign markets. Integration to EU bio cosmetics & agribusiness clusters is key.

**Potential markets:** developed markets essentially (Europe & USA).

Local opportunities  Export

## 🔄 The Mediterranean: why, how ?

### *A great biodiversity combined with rich food & cosmetics traditions*

⊕ Great agricultural areas virtually chemicals-free; large pool of well known or promising vegetal species, to be used raw or simply dried (condiments, herbalist's shop) or further processed to be turned into industrial inputs (pharmacy, perfumes, cosmetics & agribusiness). Geographical proximity with Europe and low production costs.

### *Satisfying qualitative and quantitative export requirements*

⊕ Necessity to structure Med supply chains in order to better penetrate a world AMP market with fast moving standards (traceability, etc.). In 2007 came into force in Europe the REACH regulations: chemicals producers or importers (including essential oils & other natural extracts) beyond the threshold of 1 t/year and per producer/importer must cover the costs of product registration, tests and analysis before getting access to the market.

⊕ R&D: project of cultural and economic valorisation of APM from Southern Tunisia launched by Tunisia's [Institut des Régions Arides de Médenine](#) and the Centre International de Recherche Agricole en Régions Arides, with the support of the US Ministry of Agriculture.

⊕ Morocco is developing an 'aromatic codex' aiming at registering all aromatic plants, their extracts and uses following national and international standards, in order to help local businesses integrate international supply chains. The country also launched a research project with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on preservation technologies for certain APM using irradiation.



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They did it: pioneer stories

## Naturex, Mediterranean aromats conquering the world

Set up in Avignon (Southern France) in 1992, [Naturex](#), is a specialist in vegetal extracts. Naturex provides antioxidant compounds beneficial for human cells (ellagitannins) from the pomegranate tree and natural antioxidant additives for agribusiness based on rosemary extracts.

The group experienced an early international expansion. Its Moroccan subsidiary has become a must for many international buyers for the agribusiness and nutraceutical industries (a portmanteau of nutrition and pharmaceutical, i.e. natural dietary supplements).

Between 1999 and 2006, production capacities at Naturex Maroc have almost doubled. Heavy investments in fixed capital and human resources were justified by growing sales thanks to controlled production costs and top quality products (Mediterranean herbs and plants such as rosemary, almonds and apricots seeds for cosmetics, etc.).

In 2007, the group invested in new production capacities at its Nouaceur (Greater Casablanca) factory, dedicated to solvent extraction and hydrodistillation. The plant today covers 2 500 sqm. In 2007 the French mother company, Naturex SA, increased its stake in the capital of its Moroccan subsidiary up to 96.35%, through the acquisition of French development agency AFD's Proparco investment fund's shares (+/- 7%).

Today Naturex SA is about to become the world leader in speciality natural additives. Once the merger with the Ingredients division of Spanish Nutraceutical is complete, the group will have an annual turnover of EUR 185 million.

## Organic plants & aromats for the benefit of Rif women

The [Bni Boufrah](#) cooperative, which employs 35 women in the province of Al Hoceima (Moroccan Rif), manufactures aromatic and medicinal plant extracts.

Set up by 2 NGOs, Morocco's [ASASHA](#) and Fundacion [Codespa](#) from Spain, the cooperative was born from a development project aimed at empowering women from the Bni Boufrah region. Supported by Catalunya's Generalitat, the cooperative manages the production and marketing of plants traditionally used by Moroccan women.



## Going further into details... (resources, contacts, links)

- ✦ European Flavour & Fragrance Association ([www.effa.be](http://www.effa.be))
- ✦ Egypt's Medicinal Plants Conservation Project ([www.mpcpsgypt.com](http://www.mpcpsgypt.com))
- ✦ Morocco: Coopérative Bni Boufrah ([www.nouarf.com](http://www.nouarf.com)); Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique ([www.inra.org.ma](http://www.inra.org.ma)) and its web of regional centres + Société marocaine des plantes aromatiques et médicinales ([Somasm](#)).



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