

## Amazigh women and Argan tree

Amazigh women and Argan trees have a lot in common. They are precious, invaluable pillars of Moroccan-Amazigh identity. They both exhibit a number of inspirational qualities. They have been the outcome of the same roots and region. Meanwhile, they struggle with similar challenges and long for success and prosperity.

Both of them are deeply rooted, indispensable pillars of Amazigh life, culture, and identity. Argan tree for Amazigh people is a source of not only an additional meager-but-interesting income, but also an inspiration for more perseverance, patience, and love for land, history, and culture.

Amazigh women are the backbone of the Moroccan society in general and in Amazigh speaking areas in particular and more specifically in the region of Agadir.



Berber women gather fruits in an Argan grove. Once dried, the kernels are pressed for oil and the husk used to feed livestock © Philipp Patrick Ammon

For socio-economic reasons, most of men are forced to quit their home villages leaving their wives, mothers, and grandmothers take the lead; they generate income, bring up kids, secure their families' needs, look after their sheep, and deal with all the challenges that might arise. Despite all these difficulties and hardships,

Argan trees and Amazigh women never stop loving, serving, and unconditionally supporting their communities. Argan tree is there for centuries stretching her branches as if she opens her arms welcoming people to reap her fruit, blossoming her leaves and nuts for goats to feed their themselves and their kids. For centuries, “Argan trees’ deep root systems help it weather long periods of drought, stabilizes the soil, decreases erosion and by extension prevents desertification.”(2)



*Goats in an argan tree, in Morocco / Copyright: [Elena Tatiana Chis](#) / [Wikimedia](#). [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)*

Argan trees can live up to 600 years. Similarly, Amazigh women remain as robust as mountains enduring countless life hardships. Lately however, women’s socio-economic conditions have tremendously improved whereas Argan trees are still suffering; it has even worsen now due to people’s carelessness and severe long periods of drought and unprecedented shortage of water. In brief, as we happily see women climbing the social ladder day after day, we sadly notice how Argan trees are shrinking day after day. “Morocco’s argan forests cover about 800,000 hectares near the Souss Valley, an area framed by the Atlas Mountains, Atlantic Ocean and Sahara Desert, which hosts roughly 21 million trees and has been given UNESCO protection as a ‘biosphere reserve.’” (1) Yet, the species is clearly and rapidly disappearing; my grandmother said once, “Landscape around our village was all covered by Argan trees, you cannot easily see the soil from afar, but now the remaining trees are sadly scattered around the place. Hectares of Argan trees are disappearing every year.

It is true that UNESCO has recognized Argan tree as an international human treasure. Nevertheless, concrete measures haven't been taken yet. It has actually become an absolute urgent necessity to save this special tree. We should act NOW.

1. Millions of Argan trees should be planted. Moroccan government has already started this initiative.
2. More efforts should target finding innovative inventions and machines, which can make the process of extracting Argan oil easier, faster and more effective.
3. As Argan oil is widely used for cooking and medical purposes, it has become a source of income mainly for Amazigh rural women. Therefore, Argan co-operatives should be funded, trained, and helped to sell their products locally as well as globally.
4. Argan tree and Amazigh woman have to be supported; the former through more protection and care, the second through more literacy and creation of small local businesses.

(1) <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2014/01/120255/argan-moroccos-tree-of-life-2/>

(2) <https://earthjournalism.net/stories/balancing-the-past-and-future-of-argan-trees>

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