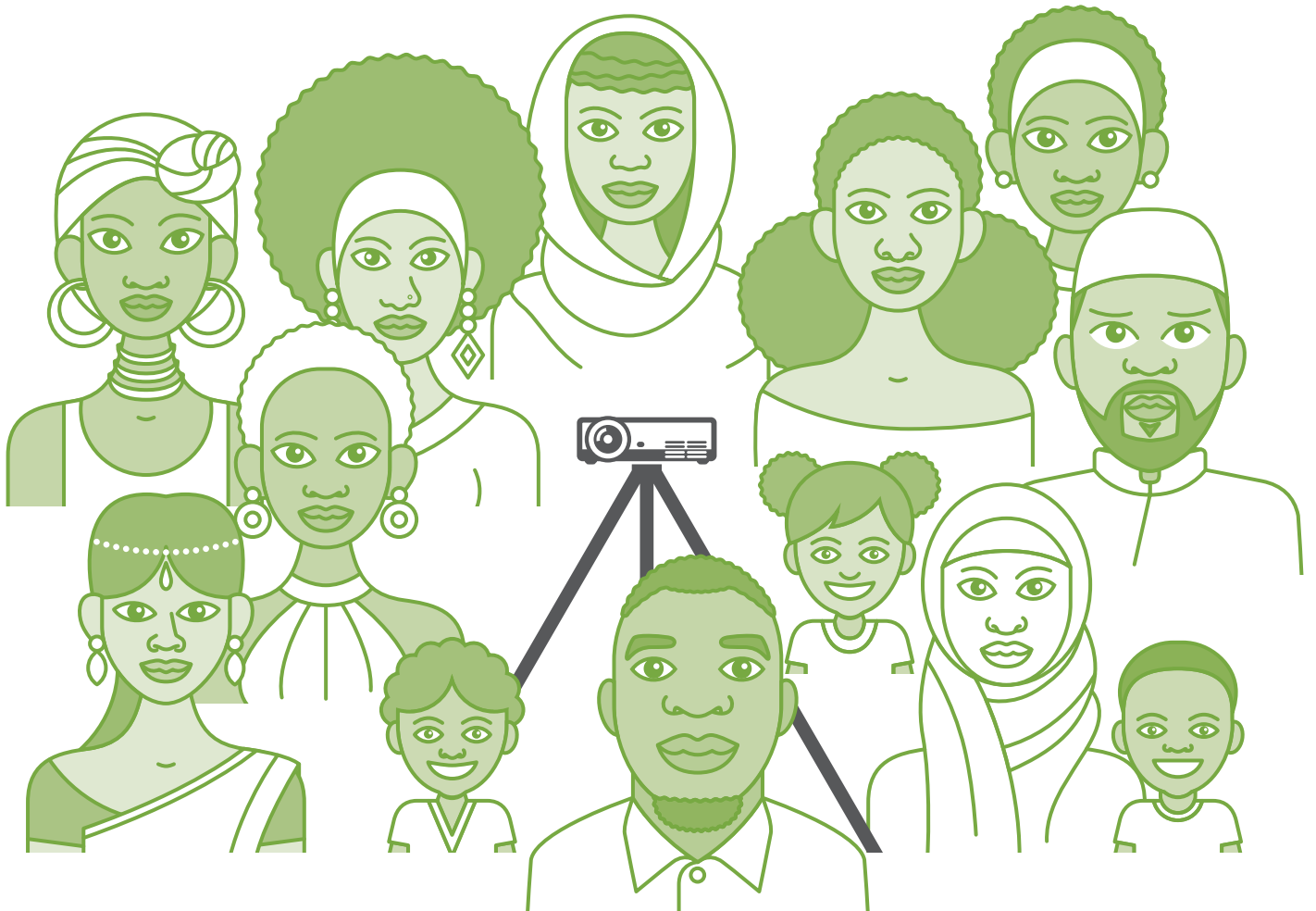


Young changemakers



Scaling agroecology using video in Africa and India

Paul Van Mele, Savitri Mohapatra,
Laura Tabet and Blessings Flao



AccessAgriculture

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Access Agriculture

40 Rue Washington
1050 Brussels
Belgium

✉ info@accessagriculture.org

🌐 www.accessagriculture.org



About Access Agriculture

Access Agriculture is an international non-profit organisation that works across all developing countries to enable the South-South exchange of and access to quality farmer-to-farmer learning videos to promote agroecological principles and rural entrepreneurship. Access Agriculture builds capacity for the production of videos and, upon demand, translates any video hosted on its platform into any local language. It enables access to these videos for multiple stakeholders, including rural advisory services, education

systems, media houses and farmer organisations. By improving access of youth, women, smallholder and marginalised farmers to relevant knowledge, Access Agriculture aims to contribute to more resilient food systems that can counter the changing climate and the erosion of our natural resources.

For more information on Access Agriculture, visit www.accessagriculture.org

A young woman's drive to revive oases in Tunisia



Faouzia Semeti

Faouzia Semeti, like many young agricultural engineers graduating from university, only learnt about applying pesticides to protect crops, not how to farm in harmony with nature. Faouzia is a sweet but fiery person, determined to share her passion for agroecology with peers from university and with farmers from her hometown Al Hammah oasis, about 400 kilometres south of Tunis, in Tunisia.

In 2022, Faouzia joined a post-graduate program for value chains in organic agriculture in Germany, during which she visited

Biofach, the world's leading trade fair for organic food. By talking to experts, she learnt how the harmful conditions in which crops are grown nowadays diminished the taste of food. Faouzia also learnt that medical doctors are advising cancer patients to eat organically produced foods.

That same month Faouzia's aunt in Al Hammah was diagnosed with advanced cancer. Her uncle travelled great distances to get healthy vegetables, fruits and chickens for his wife. He even started a small garden to grow their own food. *"Unfortunately,*

So many people in Tunisia are diagnosed with cancer and there is a lack of awareness of how the food we eat affects us



my aunt passed away. So many people in Tunisia are diagnosed with cancer and there is a lack of awareness of how the food we eat affects us," says Faouzia. This strengthened her determination that action is needed to educate people and raise awareness – from the seeds to the plate.

Upon her return, Faouzia initially thought of working in the capital, Tunis, but her heart

guided her back home to Al Hammah, where she decided to set up her agricultural consulting office. *“I could have set it up in the nearby, more commercial town of Gabes, but I wanted to be accessible to farmers,”* says Faouzia. She called her enterprise Mandra – a word in Amazigh, one of the Berber languages, which signifies the place where a harvest is stored or a place of blessings. The name reflects Faouzia’s desire to support any farmer in their transition towards a better and healthier agriculture.

She recruited a team – of mainly young women like herself – and established their services in line with the public authorities’ subsidy system to promote the development of agricultural land. *“Working this way, many farmers would seek out our services in order to get permission for their irrigation wells and get up to 50% financing for their projects, so it was a great way to start networking and meeting farmers directly.”*

In her small oasis village, many farmers had shifted to farming with hybrid seeds. When a friend shared a Facebook post from a local farmer Zakaria on the importance of conserving seed of local varieties adapted to oasis conditions, she immediately wrote to him requesting a meeting.

To her amazement, Faouzia was invited to a small guesthouse in Chinini village, close to the nearby town of Gabes. Sitting with Zakaria was Mabrouk Jabri, the owner of



By watching Access Agriculture videos, farmers feel connected with fellow farmers across the world

the heritage house. He turned out to be a long-time friend of Pierre Rabhi, a farm leader of

seed sovereignty and agroecology movements in France and North Africa.

Soon after this chance meeting, in 2022, the GIZ-funded project Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA) was launched in North Africa. *“When*



It is amazing that even children think all insects are bad and must be killed. They do not know there are good insects and how local ecology works. They are the future and need to learn

the call for the Young Entrepreneur Challenge Fund was shared by Access Agriculture and the Centre Technique de l’Agriculture Biologique (CTAB), I received the link from so many friends urging me to apply,” says Faouzia.

Faouzia recalls reviewing the Access Agriculture video library as if she was looking through cooking recipes: there were so

many practical steps farmers could take to revive the fertility of oasis lands and help conserve water. *“There is a lot of knowledge to help farmers, but most of all, the videos show the need to work in a participatory manner. The smart projector has been crucial as we could use it with groups to exchange and trigger important questions and learning,”* says Faouzia. She laughs thinking how farmers in Al Hammah feel they are located in remote areas and far from technology. By watching Access Agriculture videos, farmers feel connected with fellow farmers across the world.

One day a week, Faouzia and her colleague, Sabrina, watch Access Agriculture videos and decide how they are going to use them. They often test videos with farmers visiting their office, using their laptop, to get a discussion going and learn from their feedback. Once they have enough confidence, they screen the videos in a group setting. *“I immediately saw how the videos help summarise the ideas I share with farmers in meetings – ideas just land faster with video,”* says Faouzia.

The team started reaching out to local NGOs that support rural women, to develop ideas for projects around growing and drying chilli pepper. Their proactiveness has started to pay off as new projects kick off and are in need of trainers. Within only six months of working with the projector, Faouzia started getting requests to deliver workshops as part of large-scale, national

programmes that support rural women's entrepreneurship.

Faouzia is full of ideas on how to expand her business using videos. Inspired by the Gabes



and must be killed. They do not know there are good insects and how local ecology works. They are the future and need to learn, and even help their parents learn!"

Waleed, a local lead farmer, originally met Faouzia as part of an irrigation project, but now they are exchanging ideas and learning about vermicomposting. Waleed has a supply of red wigglers and Faouzia is excited to promote this by often screening the video

I hear from CTAB that farmers are tripling their food production using organic methods after three years in transition

Film Festival that showcases a large portfolio of films related to land issues, making these important stories accessible to local communities, Faouzia would like to explore a membership fee for movies, shows and videos focusing on the land preservation of the oasis ecosystem. *"Our communities are changing fast, so urgent action needs to be inspired and sustained,"* says Faouzia with determination.

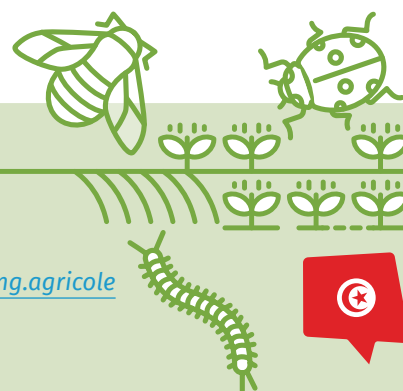
Faouzia knows that the future lies in the hands of the next generation, so she goes to local schools and youth clubs to show them videos, such as [Flowering plants that attract the insects that help us](#). *"It is amazing that even children think all insects are bad*

[Vermiwash: an organic tonic for crops](#).

Faouzia has the vision for Al Hammah oasis to be free of chemical and pesticide use, driven by strong cooperative work. To show how this works, she is making compost on her family land.

With lead farmers, like Waleed and Zakaria, Faouzia is setting up a network of model farms to demonstrate agroecological practices to other farmers in oases villages. This will allow farmers to see how easy it is to use alternatives to pesticides and fertilisers that are cheap, locally produced and friendly to the environment.

"I hear from CTAB that farmers are tripling their food production using organic methods after three years in transition. We know the road is long, but we are not backing down. We plan to create a solid plan to accompany farmers. The most important thing in our work? Never compromise on your values!"



Contact Faouzia Semeti

- +216 99 829 635
- mandra.ccfa@gmail.com
- [facebook.com/Cabinet.de.consulting.agricole](https://www.facebook.com/Cabinet.de.consulting.agricole)