

Comprehensive Analysis of the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region in Morocco for Collaborative Initiatives with Dutch Companies in Horticulture

(as part of the combi approach)

1. Context:

Morocco possesses a diverse horticultural sector that plays a significant economic role within the country. Horticulture makes a substantial contribution to the Moroccan GDP and engages a considerable portion of the active population. Key crops include cereals, citrus fruits, olives, and vegetables.

Despite its potential, the Moroccan horticultural ecosystem grapples with a series of significant challenges that require sustained attention. The sector contends with climatic constraints, particularly the recurrent threat of drought to crops. This reality necessitates an ongoing adaptation of cultivation methods, and the pursuit of innovative solutions to safeguard yields. Efficient water management stands out as a critical concern. In a context of diminishing water resources, farmers must adopt resilient water management practices, including the reuse of irrigation water and the integration of water-efficient irrigation systems and the exploration of techniques for rainwater harvesting and storage. Another essential challenge is the promotion of sustainable horticultural practices that preserves soil fertility, and reduces the excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers. The adoption of agroecological methods can help mitigate the environmental impact of horticulture on biodiversity while maintaining long-term productivity.

The 11 billion EUR National Drinking Water Supply and Irrigation Program 2020-2027 has been established to guarantee water security and to fight the adverse effects of climate change and scarcity. The government has also embarked in an ambitious program for water and for improvement in agriculture (as stipulated in e.g. [Generation Green](#)).

In the *Rabat-Salé-Kénitra* region, horticulture is an important agricultural sector. This region is known for its favorable climatic conditions including mild winters, ample sunlight and availability of water sources, making it an ideal place for year-round horticultural activities. Various crops are grown in the Kenitra region, including citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, strawberries, and grapes. Many horticultural companies in Kénitra use greenhouses allowing farmers to regulate growing conditions. Kenitra is conveniently located near the port of Tangier-Med, one of the largest ports in Africa. This facilitates the export of horticultural products to European markets and other international destinations.

In light of the above, The Netherlands has gained global recognition for their high-tech horticultural expertise, innovation, and horticultural resource management. This expertise has allowed the Dutch sector to achieve remarkable levels of productivity coupled to sustainability in the Dutch horticultural sectors. The Netherlands can contribute to Morocco's ambitions by knowledge exchange, and by providing (commercial) solutions supporting integral water management, water technology and technologies within the realm of e.g. climate smart agriculture.

An example of collaboration between the Netherlands and Morocco can be found in the joint investments in a Centre of Excellence on Horticulture (CEH) based in Agadir. The CEH is a newly developed research and training facility for protected cultivation. A multistakeholder Impact Cluster is under development, in a diamond approach with Dutch (WUR, LDE, InHolland, HAS etc.) and Moroccan (IAV/CHA) knowledge partners and several

companies in horticulture (Hoogendoorn, Koppert etc), supported by the Dutch and Moroccan Governments (Embassy, RVO, LNV). **In addition to the project in Agadir, the region Rabat-Salé-Kénitra shows potential for further collaboration** under the Combi-track initiative¹. Therefore, this study will investigate the local specificities in this region.

2. Objectives:

RVO and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Morocco are commissioning a market study that explores specific opportunities for Dutch businesses in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region. The objective behind this Terms of Reference (ToR) stems **from the need for a comprehensive overview of the horticultural sector in the region** in general, including trends and potential opportunities for Dutch market engagement, and **further insight social and economic drivers** in particular.

A second objective is **to define the areas of collaboration** that could involve knowledge exchange, capacity building and trade and/or investments. This could include sharing expertise on optimizing crop yields through data-driven insights, implementing smart irrigation systems to combat water scarcity, adopting sustainable farming practices that reduce environmental impact, etcetera.

In order to attain these objectives, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the horticultural ecosystem. The assessment needs to provide a detailed **analysis of the horticultural sector in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region**, with a focus on **regional social, and economical vulnerabilities**. The study should also include a stakeholder analysis of the region that specifies local needs, and defines suitable interventions in collaboration with Dutch companies.

The study should answer at least the following questions:

- What are the latest (policy, private, and relevant international) developments in Morocco, and in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region in particular, in the field of horticulture?
- What relevant projects in the horticulture sector are available, or planned?
- Stakeholder analysis: Which public and private parties play a role in these developments? What power relations should be considered?
- What are the recent statistics at (sub)-region level for production (specified per value chain), and for import and export of horticultural products (specified by country/region)?
- Sustainable Practices: what are trends in sustainable horticultural practices, including the use of modern irrigation techniques, organic farming methods, and integrated pest management?
- What are the capacity needs/demands in the market and what regional differences are to be considered in comparison with other horticultural regions in Morocco?
- Which value chains and/or products provide the most promising business opportunities? Evaluate the types of crops and agricultural practices prevalent in various regions.
- What are productivity levels and challenges related to food production?
- What are (un)favorable conditions to take into account (including financing)? What are potential risks or export barriers?
- What are unique selling points of Dutch horticultural companies and knowledge institutes in this market, looking at elements such as innovation, digitalization,

¹ The Combi-track in Morocco is a multi-annual program combining projects that enhance trade relations and knowledge exchange in the field of climate smart agriculture.

knowledge delivery, and quality? And what is the willingness to pay for these innovations?

- Competitor analysis; who are the main competitors of the Dutch in this market? What are their USPs versus the Dutch USPs? What are differences in quality and pricing?
- What kind of knowledge and/or technologies can be delivered by which Dutch partners? How can the Netherlands showcase especially their high-tech horticultural technology solutions, including smart greenhouses, vertical farming, and hydroponic cultivation, to Morocco?
- What are local specificities to take into account on the parameters for sustainable greenhouses; water availability, climate, number of sun hours, etcetera?
- What are pathways for Dutch parties to enter this market?
- What are potential capacity-building opportunities in Morocco's horticultural sector that the Dutch government or knowledge institutes can support?
- In which areas is the biggest potential for job creation, especially for youth and women?

3. Methodology

The methodology for this study will include the following activities:

- **A Desk Research:** including a review of existing data and literature on horticultural market in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region in Morocco, by reviewing e.g. industry reports, statistics, academic research, government policy documents, and media reports.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** interviews with stakeholders involved in the regional market, such as representatives from government, research and knowledge institutions, international organizations, and the industry experts from the private sector in both Morocco and the Netherlands.

4. Scope of the Study:

The study areas to be included are:

- a. Horticultural production in green houses;
- b. Construction of greenhouses;
- c. Inputs for horticultural production;
- d. Knowledge and consultancy services in horticulture;
- e. Digital and energy saving solutions for greenhouses;
- f. Water saving interventions for greenhouses;
- g. Capacity-building opportunities.
- h. Job creation, especially for youth & women

In more detail, the research should provide insight into the following elements:

a) Precision Water Management:

- Explore opportunities to leverage Dutch expertise in advanced irrigation techniques and smart water usage practices to address water scarcity challenges, increase crop yields, conserve biodiversity, and promote resource-efficient farming.

b) High-Tech Horti-Infrastructure:

- Investigate the potential for advanced horticultural technologies, drawing on the Netherlands' advancements in areas such as vertical farming and smart greenhouses.
- Investigate potential to foster collaboration between Moroccan and Dutch horticultural experts to adapt cutting-edge technologies to Morocco's unique climatic conditions.

c) Analysis of Climate-Resilient Crop Varieties:

- Investigate the potential to combine Moroccan agronomic knowledge with Dutch research capabilities to develop climate-resilient crop varieties capable of thriving in adverse climate conditions.

d) Ecological Conditions:

- Assess the ecological conditions (water availability, water quality, energy sources, energy consumption) in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region, and determine their carrying capacity for intensified horticultural activities;
- Provide region-specific recommendations for interventions and collaborations with Dutch companies;

5. Expected Results

The final result of the assignment will be a report of approximately 30 pages containing at least the following elements/chapters:

1. Introduction

A short background describing why the market study was conducted.

2. Executive Summary

An executive summary of maximum one page.

3. Market Analysis

- The analysis should take the scope and research questions under section 2 and 4 into consideration.
- Upon completion the report should highlight:
 - Export Opportunities: how can enhanced horticultural practices, driven by Dutch expertise, lead to an increase in high-quality produce for export markets, expanding Morocco's reach and improving its trade balance?
 - Technology Transfer: how can the introduction of Dutch horticultural technologies in Morocco create a demand for related equipment, systems, and services, fostering a potential market for horticultural technology providers?
 - Research and Development Ventures: how can joint research projects lead to the emergence of innovative horticultural solutions with commercial potential, nurturing a market for novel technologies?
 - Value-Added Products: how can collaborative initiatives pave the way for the development of value-added products, such as processed foods, beverages, which could find new markets both domestically and internationally?

4. Opportunities, risks and challenges

- Industries/sectors with the largest opportunities, including estimation of market volume and potential;

- Identification of potential customers in these industries / sectors, including an indication of their financial strength;
- Funding opportunities, including opportunities offered by International Financial Institutions such as World Bank, EU, and others;
- Dutch solutions which match the opportunities identified in these industries/sectors;
- Unique Selling Points of the Dutch business versus other countries with similar solutions;
- Capacity-building opportunities where Dutch companies/institutions can offer support.
- Country or sector related risks (e.g. corruption), barriers to entry (e.g. permits, supplier approval registrations, etcetera), cultural and contextual sensitivity: Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions, data availability, digital and technological level, or other market weaknesses;
- Section on Responsible Business Conduct as described under section 10.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Analysis of the match between the needs and demand in the market and unique selling points of the Dutch businesses, leading to specific and realistic business opportunities;
- Conclusions and practical recommendations for both the Dutch private sector and Dutch knowledge institutions on how to engage and with which Dutch products, organizations, sectors, etcetera.

6. Annex with an overview of sources and interviewed companies and organizations

6. Deliverables & Planning

The assignment will result in four deliverables:

1. A concise work plan elaborating on the planned activities and dates to be delivered within one week after signing the contract;
2. A draft report four weeks before the deadline of the 1st of January 2024. A debriefing to discuss comments on the report will be planned one week after delivery of the draft report.
3. A final report shall be delivered on the 31st of January 2024.
4. A presentation of the report to the Dutch sector through an online seminar, which should take place latest the 10th of February.

7. Researcher qualifications

The below listed qualifications are expected:

- Proven experience in market research;
- Experience in and knowledge of the horticulture sector in Morocco;
- Excellent English writing and communication skills (for a business audience);
- French language skills are considered an asset.

8. Budget

The total budget available for this study is € 25.000,-, including VAT. This budget is made available from the Combi-aanpak Toolkit. Costs such as travel and DSA are all included in

the total budget. The consultant may decide to involve other/local consultants who will fall under his/her responsibility, and within the total budget.

The payments will be disbursed upon the achievement of the corresponding milestones as outlined below:

Percentage	Deliverable
50%	Upon submission of a satisfactory inception report and action plan
50%	Upon submission of a satisfactory report after the completion of the market study, including consultations with target representatives and stakeholders

9. Output Form

The draft report of a maximum of 30 pages and written in English should be sent to j.h.satter@minbuza.nl and renate.douwes@rvo.nl through electronic mail. The report is considered final after approval from the Dutch Embassy in Morocco and RVO. The final report should be delivered to both the embassy team and RVO in electronic version.

10. Responsible business conduct

The contractor commits itself to act in accordance with international guidelines (such as OECD) on Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) taking into consideration the consequences of its activities for human beings (think of labor rights), animals, the environment and nature (think of natural resources and pollution). The report will therefore also include in the deliverables a reflection on identified and potential RBC risks in the horticultural industry in Morocco. It will also highlight potential mitigation measures. These can also include opportunities such as making a particular contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. Copyright

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Morocco and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) will have the exclusive copyright on the study and will be the only organizations allowed to copy and distribute the study. A summary of the final version of the study will be published on the RVO website, and the full study will be available upon request through a form on RVO.nl.

12. Communication

Questions, work plan, drafts, reports and other deliverables and communication shall be addressed to:

Renate Douwes
Business Development Coordinator, RVO
renate.douwes@rvo.nl

13. Contracting party

The contracting party is the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Morocco, in the name of Mr. J. Satter, Agricultural Counselor.