

## Organic mint production within the Development Rural Project of Sidi Bouhmadi – Meskoura

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### Abstract

*The Development Rural Project of Sidi Bouhmadi – Meskoura (Settat, Morocco), started by CEFA in 1998, is composed by a range of complementary interventions in a variety of sectors (agriculture, livestock, health, and social) for the achievement of a common overall goal: the improvement in the quality of life in the rural area and the consolidation of the social and economic development of the local community. The villages where the project was executed are those of Sidi Boumahdi and Meskoura in the province of Settat. The project's direct beneficiaries include the 12,450 residents of the two rural districts that are involved in the project activities.*

*Within the agricultural component of the project, a Service Center was created to offer farmers the continuing support needed upon the completion of the project and the departure of CEFA personnel from the area; its activities include the launch of organic farming, with a particular emphasis on mint and olive trees.*

*The decision to grow organic mint was arrived at for a variety of reasons. First, due to the widespread tradition of producing mint and other aromatic herbs, the local farm approach already in place could be enhanced and improved.*

*Second, marketing research highlighted the existence of an important variety of mint, typical to the region, called "Rmaila Elharca mint." This specific variety of mint is very well known across all of Morocco, with an extremely large customer base. This, in addition to the organically grown certificate, could strengthen the marketability of the product, further distinguishing it in the mind of the consumer.*

*Last, additional crossed studies indicated the existence of a potentially large sales market for the product and a significant market demand because of the low level of product differentiation currently available in the Moroccan market. Thus, the growing trend in consumer preference favours new, innovative ideas with many middle and high-class customers looking to pursue more typical "westernized" consumption preferences.*

*As a result of CEFA's actions, within the span of a year, the availability of information regarding organic mint production had reached a wide spectrum of people in Morocco, convincing a large number of local NGOs and associations to follow CEFA's example of certified organic production. Moreover, for the first time in Morocco the option of creating a Moroccan organic certification authority, in addition to the two pre-existing European certification authorities, began to be considered.*

*Finally, with respect to typical rural development, usually in Morocco, most final goods and services are produced in the main cities, and small country farms only produce raw materials. However, as a result of the Service Center's activities such as mint production, farmers are now involved in all stages of production from growing the mint to packaging it. Thus, they can increase the benefit of their services and consequently their marginal profit, leading to future additional reinvestment of this profit into the farms.*

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