

- CONCEPT NOTE -

NATURAL CAPITAL OF THE ARGANERAIE BIOSPHERE RESERVE : VALUE AND VALUATION.

Traditional indicators, based on national income measures such as GDP (gross domestic product), provide no information on the economic, social or environmental sustainability of current growth models. However, natural assets are increasingly included in national accounts and are starting to occupy an important place in financial ones, as means of preserving natural resources. Many governments are privileging this approach by including forests, mineral resources, agricultural land and wetlands in their economic accounts.

During the celebration of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, Morocco committed to establish a System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental and economic policies focused on sustainable development and human well-being. In addition, Morocco's Green Plan, driving force of the country's agricultural development, aims to support reforms related to the protection of natural capital and the introduction of sustainable practices in resource management.

The ARB has served to create economical value for the benefit of the population through the exploitation of its rich natural resources. However, this has had showed some negative impact on the state and sustainability of the Reserve. The evaluation of natural capital is a key component that can provide more information on the value of the ABR resources. Indeed, in the light of recent scientific research results and promising advances in the technical valuation of natural capital and ecosystem services, the scientific community and managers are challenged to present new options for the sustainable management of the ABR.

The 5th Edition of the IAC provides an opportunity to highlight issues related to natural capital and sustainable valuation perspectives. This edition presents the particularity of being an edition of synthesis and capitalization of the achievements and results of the scientific research on the Arganeraie and Argan tree. This 5th Edition will further crystalize the role played by the Congress since the organization of its first edition in 2011, as a scientific event that brings together all the stakeholders concerned by the ABR: researchers, professionals, policy makers, and local communities. This event helps guide scientific research on the Argan tree sector and the ABR towards priority issues and is an opportunity to assess the progress of the implementation of the Argan tree program contract and the different socio-economical dynamics that have structured the reserve, such as the recognition of the FIFARGANE as the inter-profession association, the rehabilitation of about 140 000 hectares of natural forest, the planting of 3500 hectares of Argan orchards and the exportation of around 1500 tons of Argan oil.

Organized right after the 2nd decennial evaluation of the ABR, the Congress should identify new directions with regards to the valuation of the ABR natural capital by showcasing the important set of services that this ecosystem provides, particularly at the economical level. The economic value of the ABR natural capital could constitute an advocacy tool for improving the living conditions of the local population and promoting the integrated development of the Arganeraie.

This edition wants to examine the roles played by the resources of the ABR, especially the Argan tree, in the development and creation of wealth; investigate and study new management methods with a view to implement innovative co-management approaches; enhance available advocacy information on natural capital to document the contribution of ABR resources and ecosystem services to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural well-being of the population.

All economic players in the Argan sector are affected by and concerned with the ABR sustainability, because they live within the ecosystem itself, consume its energy, resources and raw materials it provides (e.g. Argan fruit) and also by the risks they incur (often related to the supply of raw materials and natural regulation). Every segment of the production chain benefit from its interaction with the natural environment and requires the ecosystem to properly function.

The economic actors of the Argan sector must integrate in their risk management strategies the shortfall that they would incur if these services offered more or less freely by the ABR ecosystems were to disappear. There has been increased discussion around the topics of forest degradation, decline in natural regeneration rates, pollination drop, soil erosion, disappearance of some species and reproduction difficulties. Supporting the maintenance of ecosystem services and improving the sustainability of the supply chain contribute to the development of better economic visibility and investment strategies.

Nowadays, the Argan sector aims at being innovative, attractive to investments and able to contribute to job creation.

This concept note is a call for scientific contributions on the topic of natural capital and the different ways to value it in the case of the ABR.

The conference will be attended by national and international researchers, government officials, representatives of technical and financial partners, civil society representatives, professionals and representatives of other countries with relevant experiences.