TRANS-SAHARA

EU Project TRANS-SAHARA Officially Launched to Enhance Sustainable Agroforestry Management in the Greater Northern African Region

Press Release

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1. The TRANS-SAHARA Project

Brussels, March 2025 – The EU-funded project ***TRANS-SAHARA - Novel Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus-based approaches towards agroforestry management in the Greater Northern African Region****, a groundbreaking research project dedicated to advancing agroforestry practices in Africa, is officially launched. This initiative, funded under the Horizon Europe programme (HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01 - EU-African Union cooperation on agroforestry management for climate change adaptation and mitigation), aims to tackle climate challenges, enhance sustainable agriculture, and foster socio-economic resilience through a pioneering WEFE Nexus approach.*

With a budget of €5.5 million and a duration of 3 years, ***TRANS-SAHARA****, under the coordination of the European Research Executive Agency, this project brings together 21 partners from 8 African countries (Algeria, Chad, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, and Tunisia), 5 European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), Bavarian State Ministry for Environment and Consumer Protection (StMUV) Germany, and National University Corporation Wakayama University, National University Corporation Tottori University, and Tokyo University of Agriculture in Japan, as Associated Partners. The project will be implemented in conjunction with the UNCCD Great Green Wall Initiative. The project seeks to promote sustainable agroforestry by embedding water security into agroforestry systems through innovative measurement technologies, scalable agroforestry models, and sustainable business strategies.*

Agroforestry is an age-old practice increasingly recognised for its potential in mitigating and adapting to climate change. By integrating trees into croplands and pastures, agroforestry not only improves soil quality and agricultural productivity but also enhances resilience to environmental stresses such as droughts and soil degradation. Despite its benefits, large-scale adoption in semi-arid regions in Africa remains a challenge due to water scarcity, insufficient data, and limited stakeholder capacity. ***TRANS-SAHARA*** *aims to bridge these gaps by providing innovative tools and resources to support sustainable agroforestry management. Large-scale Living Labs will be established in Ghana, Ethiopia and Tunisia and smaller scale demonstrations in Chad, Djibouti and Senegal , to test and validate these solutions, ensuring that community needs and engagement remain at the core of its implementation.*

One of the key goals of ***TRANS-SAHARA*** *is to improve data availability by collecting, monitoring, and modelling hydrological, agricultural, biodiversity, and socio-economic data. This information will help to better understand the links between agroforestry management, climate resilience, biodiversity preservation, and*

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sustainable agriculture. Additionally, the project will develop a WEFE-Nexus-based Agroforestry Intervention Design Tool to facilitate the implementation of scalable agroforestry management systems, tailored to the specific needs of the three Living Labs.

*Capacity building is another cornerstone of **TRANS-SAHARA**. The project aims to equip local stakeholders with the necessary skills to assess and enhance agroforestry's socio-economic and environmental impacts. By strengthening their capabilities in data collection, reporting, and entrepreneurship, the initiative seeks to ensure that benefits of agroforestry are widely recognised and effectively implemented across drought-prone regions in Africa.*

*To encourage widespread adoption, **TRANS-SAHARA** will also focus on developing an innovation ecosystem that integrates business models for economically sustainable agroforestry practices. In addition to enhancing community livelihoods through regenerated ecosystems with enhanced water security that can support climate change adaptation, the project aims to create value for local communities through climate change mitigation measures including enhanced biomass and soil carbon storage, thus leveraging on synergies between climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches. The project's multi-stakeholder approach is designed to foster collaboration between researchers, policymakers, farmers, and local communities, making agroforestry a viable and scalable solution for climate adaptation and sustainable development across Africa.*

*The **TRANS-SAHARA** consortium is composed of leading institutions and organisations ensuring a well-balanced and multidisciplinary collaboration, including Technical University of Munich, which coordinates the project, along with the partners in Europe: Eurac Research in Italy, Zabala Innovation in Belgium and Spain, and Environment Europe Foundation in The Netherlands; and partners in Africa: World Agroforestry Centre in Kenya, Kwame Nkrumah University Of Science And Technology in Ghana, West African Science Services Centre On Climate Change And Adapted Land Use in Ghana, Pan African University Institute of Water and Energy Sciences in Algeria, National Research Institute for Agricultural Engineering, Water, and Forestry in Tunisia, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar in Senegal, Rural Polytechnic Institute for Training and Applied Research in Mali, University of El Manar in Tunisia, and three UNCCD Great Green Wall Initiative country offices: National Agency of the Great Green Wall in Chad, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development in Djibouti, Senegalese Agency for Reforestation and GGW in Senegal.*

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Social Media

Website	Linked In	X (Twitter)
https://trans-sahara.eu/	@trans_sahara_eu	@trans_sahara_eu

Contacts

Project Coordination Contacts:	Daphne Gondhalekar	
	Position:	Project Coordinator
	Email:	d.gondhalekar@tum.de
Media Contact	Janire García	
	Position:	Communication Manager
	Email:	janiregarcia@zabala.eu
	Anna Lorenzini	
	Position:	Communication Manager
	Email:	alorenzini@zabala.eu

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