



## Moroccans Secure Precious Resources



Photo: Ghada Khouri

Tanneries in Fez now use recycled chromium to tan hides as a result of USAID's project to protect the environment in Morocco.

Pollution and destructive agricultural practices threaten Morocco's limited water supply. The projected doubling of the country's population over the next thirty years will worsen the problem, causing demand to go up and supply to fall. This, along with continued drought and soil erosion, has added to the urgency of managing Morocco's water more efficiently.

USAID implemented three pilot projects to show Moroccans that protecting the environment does not mean less income. First, USAID built a chromium-recovery plant that connected sixteen tanneries in Fez using pipelines. The tanneries had severely polluting the Sebou River by dumping the chromium used to cure hides. USAID worked with the recovery plant in Fez to reduce chromium concentrations by more than 90%. The recycled chromium is sold back to tanneries, making the plant financially self-sufficient.

Next, USAID built a financially self-sustainable wastewater-treatment plant in Drarga, where raw sewage had compromised residents' health and severely contaminated the aquifer from which the village draws its water. The plant provides compost and treated wastewater to farmers for purchase, and for use in irrigation, taking pressure off the aquifer.

In the Nakhla watershed near Tetouan, USAID implemented a program to prevent soil erosion and silting of the reservoir by introducing innovative farming techniques such as the planting of 160,000 income-producing trees, and stabilizing 1.5 kilometers of ravines using check dams and gabions. USAID introduced wood-conservation mechanisms, including importation of goats and bees, which provide alternative sources of revenue instead of cutting down trees for income, as well as better stoves which reduce the usage of wood for heat. These techniques have prolonged the life of the reservoir by fifteen years.

Photo & Caption