



U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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USTDA DIRECTOR WALTHER AWARDS GRANTS IN THE COLD CHAIN AND WATER SECTORS IN MOROCCO

RABAT, MOROCCO (August 29, 2008) – Building on the agency’s commitment to foster economic development in Morocco, USTDA awarded two separate grants today in the cold storage and water sectors. The grants, totaling \$917,686, were awarded to the Ministère de l’Agriculture et de la Pêche Maritime (Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing) and the Office National de l’Eau Potable (the National Office for Potable Water - - ONEP) as part of USTDA Director Larry W. Walther’s official visit to Morocco.

“Cold storage and water infrastructure are essential for trade to serve as a catalyst for economic growth,” said Director Walther. “These grants will make an important contribution to increasing Morocco’s trade capacity.”

The grants were conferred in separate signing ceremonies held in Rabat at the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime and ONEP headquarters. Director Walther signed both grant agreements on behalf of the U.S. Government. His Excellency Aziz Akhannouch, Minister of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing and ONEP Chairman Ali Fassi Fihri signed the respective grant agreements for their organizations.

The \$531,810 grant to the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing will support the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s (MCC) five-year \$697.5 million poverty reduction and economic growth Compact with Morocco. The USTDA grant will further the Compact’s objectives by funding technical assistance in the creation of cold storage infrastructure and facilities that would help reduce losses in palm date production. Because palm dates represent an important crop in Morocco’s agricultural sector, they are covered within the MCC’s Fruit Tree Productivity Project, which seeks to stimulate growth in the agricultural sector and reduce volatility of agricultural production.

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Under the second grant awarded today, valued at \$385,876, USTDA will assist ONEP in implementing a Geographic Information System (GIS) to support its role as the principle producer of potable water in Morocco. Water plays a critical role in the Moroccan economy and in the quality of life of the country's citizens. The availability of water is especially critical in the agricultural sector, which accounts for some 20 percent of Morocco's gross domestic product. ONEP is the main producer of drinking water in Morocco, producing 80 percent of the national production for both urban and rural customers. As water availability and wastewater management becomes increasingly more important in Morocco, GIS technology can provide an essential platform in which to make better-informed decisions about water management and allocation, and to improve long-range water resource planning.

The opportunities to provide USTDA-funded assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing and ONEP will be competed separately on the Federal Business Opportunities (FBO) website at www.fbo.gov. Interested U.S. firms should submit proposals according to the instructions in the FBO announcements. The Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing and ONEP will select the U.S. contractors that will carry out the assistance under their respective grants.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.