

Teach a Man to Sell Fish and He'll Be Able to Feed His Family

Morocco's long coastline, spanning both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, has given rise to a vibrant fishing industry. While the local catch is widely available in coastal cities, preserving and transporting fish products to inland consumers have posed a challenge to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Informal small-scale suppliers purchase small amounts of fish and sell them from donkey-drawn carts, bicycles, and other traditional methods of transportation without refrigeration. This leads to lower-quality products, faster spoilage, and reduced incomes.



Donkey-drawn carts are a traditional method of fish transport in Oujda, Morocco

The MCC Compact in Morocco is addressing this problem through initiatives in the \$116 million Artisanal Fisheries Project. The Compact's implementing organization, MCA-Morocco (Agence du Partenariat pour le Progrès-APP), provides technical training and licensing to mobile fish vendors and partially subsidizes entrepreneurs' purchases of three-wheeled, heavy-duty motorbikes equipped with insulated ice chests.

MCC-funded technical training recently took place in Oujda, a large town near the Algerian border in northeast Morocco. One hundred and fifty mobile fish vendors attended, learning critical skills such as proper fish cleaning, storage-related hygiene, quality preservation, and road safety. At the end of the training, these vendors, who previously did not have permits to sell fish and could not refrigerate the product, became legally certified to do so from their newly-equipped motorbikes.

Prior to certification, vendors' carts and fish were routinely seized by police for lacking the proper licensing and for failing to meet hygiene standards; vendors reported that these high risk factors led to unstable incomes and made



Abdelaziz El Himer participated in the MCC-sponsored mobile fish vendor training in Oujda

it difficult to adequately provide for their families. The formal certification made possible by the MCC-funded program will substantially decrease vendors' risks of loss, improve quality and freshness, and increase vendors' incomes.

Abdelaziz El Himer joined the Oujda Mobile Fish Vendor Association in September 2009 and participated in the training. Certification proved a turning point in his life. "I'm married and the father of two children, but the informal nature of my job meant that my income was unstable, [and I was] unable to meet all of my family's needs. Because of this

project, and with the recognition of my work by Moroccan authorities, my children will no longer have any shame in saying that their father is a mobile fish vendor – especially when they see me come home at night, riding my motorbike, dressed in my uniform, and able to satisfy their daily needs."

Now that program-trained vendors are certified to sell fish and have obtained permits to drive motorbikes, they can adhere to business and hygiene standards, pay taxes, and enter the formal economy. Not only will participation in the economy diminish vendors' risks, but improved knowledge of industry best practices, coupled with access to refrigerated transport for their products, will help them obtain higher market prices and a more stable client base, increasing their incomes over time. In turn, consumers will receive a fresher, higher quality, more hygienic product.

APP plans to extend training, licensing, and motorbike subsidies to more than 2,000 mobile fish vendors across Morocco. The technical training and access to improved transport and storage for fish vendors is strengthening a vital link in Morocco's artisanal fishing supply chain.