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Aromatic and medicinal plants in Morocco: Lever for economic and social development**Mohammed Sghir Taleb**

Mohammed V University, Morocco

With its geographical situation (true crossroads between Europe and Africa and the Mediterranean and the Atlantic), with the diversity of its climate and its habitats, Morocco shelters a particularly varied natural vegetation, as well by its structure and its aspect, as by the diversity of the species. The floristic richness of the country is mainly related to the ecological heterogeneity of its biotopes. Indeed, of the desert to the high mountain and the littoral to the most continental borders, Morocco offers very varied ecological conditions which allowed the installation of species of various stocks. The most important formations of the Moroccan vegetable carpets are the forests and the matorrals which extend on approximately 5 million hectares. Then the formations come to esparto (*Stipa tenacissima*) which covers nearly 3 million hectares. The vascular flora of Morocco has 5211 species and subspecies distributed among 155 families and 981 genera. The number of endemic taxa amounted to 951 (18%). The rare or endangered flora species is estimated to be 463 and 1284 subspecies. The number of aromatic and medicinal plants in Morocco is estimated at about 800 species. These plants represent an important business in Morocco. The most important species are economically *Thymus* spp., *Artemisia herba-alba*, *Rosmarinus officinalis* and *Argania spinosa*. The use of *Rosmarinus officinalis* provides approximately 81.000-day work/year which corresponds to a value of 4.050.000.00 MAD. On the global level, Morocco produces 1,000 tons of essential oils: Dh ND 150 million; approximately 80 tons of medicinal plants: 100 million MAD and generates about 500,000 men day work. This presentation focuses on the diversity and socio-economic role of aromatic and medicinal plants in Morocco.

talebsmg@yahoo.com