



THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS THROUGH THE INVOLVEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE WOMEN'S GROUPS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (GFDA) NADHOUR CASE FROM ZAGHOUAN GOVERNORATE, TUNISIA

Nadia Ounalli¹

¹ *National Institute of Agronomic research of Tunisia (INRAT)*

Salah Selmi²

² *Higher School of Agriculture Mograne, (ESA Mograne) Tunisia.*

et Lamia Arfa³

³ *Agronomic National Institute of Tunisia (INAT)*

ABSTRACT

This study consists of an analysis of the contribution of local products to the coverage of local consumption through the analysis of the socio-economic situation of women in the rural area of the Nadhour zone of Zaghounan governorate. The methodological approach adopted is based on field investigations using surveys nearby women members of GDA Nadhour. These surveys have addressed the importance and role of these groups in promoting local products of rural women.

The Main results showed that women's agricultural development groups have a very important role in territorial development in connection with the promotion of local products, through the integration and orientation of rural women.

KEYWORDS: *integration, rural woman, Local products, Zaghounan.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Tunisia, women in rural areas represent 70% of the total workforce in the agricultural sector (Manon, 2010). They are present throughout the agricultural production chain: from working in the fields and driving livestock to the processing and conservation of products for self-consumption or the market. They take care of cultivating crops, picking olives, sowing legumes, harvesting vegetable crops and raising small ruminants (Baya, 2017).

The State has repeatedly conducted programs and strategies for the development and promotion of local products to meet the food needs of local populations (Belhedi, 2016). The Nadhour region in the governorate of Zaghounan were the subject of research on its local products and its valuations by women in this area. The support of GFDA's to promote the ability of women to generate income and to meet their family food needs is important.

This study consists of an analysis of the contribution of local products to the coverage of local consumption through the analysis of the socioeconomic situation of these women.

The methodological approach adopted is based on field investigations using surveys with 30 women members of the GDA of Nadhour. These surveys addressed the importance and role of GFDA in local development in the zone study and the importance of women's products in each area.

The main results showed that women's agricultural development groups have a very important role in territorial development in connection with the promotion of local products, through the integration and orientation of rural women. The participation of rural women adhering to the GDA Nadhour in socio-economic life is important on the one hand by the improvement of their know-how and by their participation in family expenses on the other hand



2. Objectives: The objectives of this study are to evaluate in a participative and concerted manner the adherence of rural women to the GDA of Nadhour and to formulate the recommendations and the best mechanisms for improving this adherence and for better promotion of women's products.

3. MÉTHODOLOGY

The surveys were carried out on a representative sample of the target population made up mainly of women members of GDA Nadhour. The sample was constructed based on the structure of the mother population and the resources available. The sample size is fixed at 30 women members of this group. The questionnaire was structured along the following main lines:

1. Socio-demographic characterization of the interviewees
2. Sales destinations and commercial circuits for products
3. Sources of procurement
4. Relations with the GDA, and general assessments of the services rendered by the GDA
5. General assessments of the role of women in the development of their financial situation
6. Observations, general suggestions and perspectives of the group

Data processing and analysis (General analysis or flat sorting and development of specific analyzes using SPSS and EXCEL).

4. STUDY ZONE

The Nadhour area: general agricultural context

The Nadhour delegation is located in the south of the governorate of Zaghuan, 90 kilometers away from Tunis (Koussani, 2018). It has 28,550 inhabitants and covers an area of 36,164 ha, of which 22,144 ha are arable land (CTV Nadhour, 2016). This area is part of the lower semi-arid bioclimatic floor. It is a climate marked by hot and dry summer and soft to moderate winter. The Nadhour delegation receives an average annual rainfall of around 360 mm (Bacha A, 2018).

The Nadhour area is marked by three geomorphological units. A mountainous area on the north side represented by erosive soils. Hills with a limestone crust scattered throughout the region which may be suitable for arboriculture. And a lowland area occupying the southern part for field crops, market gardening and fruity trees (Bouallègue H, 2015).

The Nadhour delegation has renewable water resources of around 23.2 million m³. It has two hill dams with a retention capacity estimated at 3.92 million m³ and 6 hill lakes mobilizing 1.114 million

m³. In addition, it has 166 boreholes including 142 private and 24 public and 240 surface wells in 2017 (CTV Nadhour, 2018).

Arboriculture occupies a very important place in this area with a share of 47% of the agricultural area. The importance of the water potential of the area has enabled diversification and differentiation of speculations. Arable farming is also important; it represents 40% of the arable area which is divided into three types (cereals, legumes and fodder) of which cereal cultivation represents 82% of the total area. We find vegetable crops which is on the one hand 13% of the usable area. The Nadhour region is characterized by a climate suitable for late season cultivation such as: tomato, potato and the cultivation of early vegetables such melon.

Relying on the large areas of the rangelands, livestock farming in the Nadhour region is very important, especially as a source of income throughout the crop year. Sheep farming is the most dominant practice in the region with a population of 50 000 heads (CTV Nadhour, 2016). In the second row, we find the goat breeding with a workforce of 4000 heads. Then, the cattle breeding which counts 1500 heads ensuring an important production of milk and red meats. Finally, other types of farming are present in the Nadhour region but of a low mass, such as poultry farming (95 poultry), equine farming (1000 heads) and beekeeping (600 hives) (TALEB W, 2017).

5. THE NADHOUR WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP (GFDA)

The Nadhour GFDA is of recent constitution. It was created in June 2016 and it had around 44 women members. The activities linked to this group are mainly based on the activities of the organic farm within the framework of the school canteen project funded by the World Food Program (WFP). Its area of intervention covers the Nadhour delegation. Its administration is headed by a Director and includes a team from the group's board of directors, which is made up of four women.

The group's current activities mainly cover assistance to women members in the transformation of their products such as cereals into various products (couscous, hlelem, nwasser, bsissa, etc.), the extraction of oils and aromatic waters (thyme, rosemary, lentisk...), the conservation of olives, the manufacture of soap, traditional Harissa and jam. In fact, by having the necessary machines and equipment, the group provides training on techniques for processing women's products, techniques for packaging and labeling products, techniques for marketing products.



This group manages and supervises the school canteen project funded by the World Food Program (WFP), by creating a botanical garden which produces vegetables to supply the kitchens of primary schools in the region.

This group is in a sphere where it will be able to exchange with the Support and Supervision Unit for rural women at CRDA Zaghouan. Also, Entrepreneurial Action for others organisations

(Enactus) of the Higher Institute of Management (isg) of Tunis. It's an international NGO which provides technical assistance to women adhering to the group.

Discussion meetings with the GDA Nadhour board of director's team and with CRDA Zaghouan officials in direct contact with this group gave rise to a rich exchange, the main results of which are summarized by the SWOT analysis matrix in table 1.

Table 1. SWOT matrix of the GDA situation Nadhour, Zaghouan

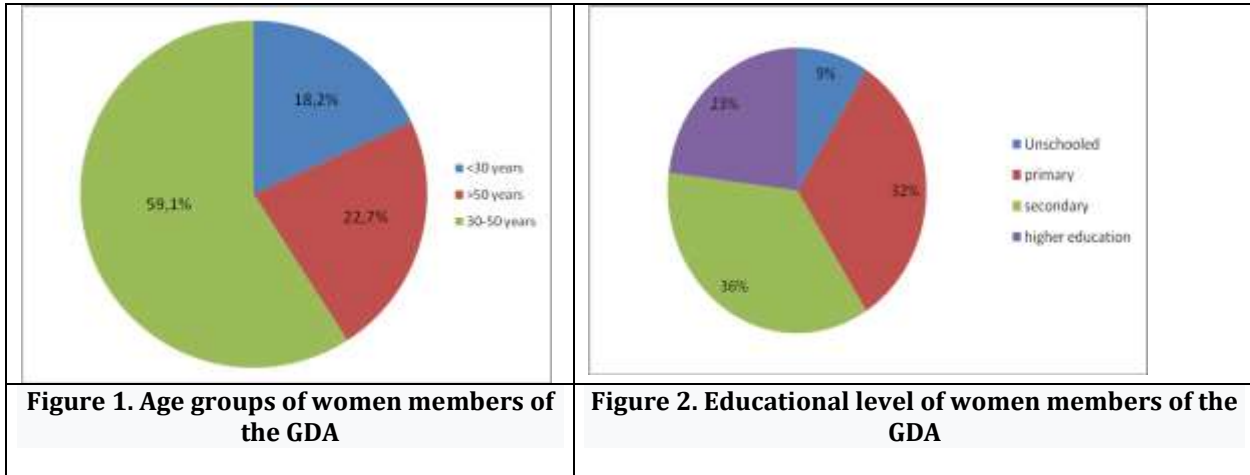
		Positive	Negative
Internal	STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Existence of a real need for women in rural areas ⊕ Motivation of the board of directors and women members;⊕ ⊕ Cooperation with CRDA, CTV, international NGOs, UTAP,⊕ ⊕ Qualification of available staff;⊕ ⊕ Opportunities for technical assistance to the GDA by ENACTUS and by CRDA (women's cell)⊕ ⊕ WFP funding opportunities for the school canteen project⊕ ⊕ Existence of local and natural potentials which can support the promotion of women's products⊕ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Low membership rate of women in the group ⊕ The ignorance of the benefits of membership and the non conviction of the interest ⊕ Lack of funding and equipment ⊕ Difficulties and high costs of inputs and problems of marketing women's products ⊕ Reluctance of members because of the difficulties of the group.
	OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Improvement of the socio-political and administrative context which could support the development of the group ⊕ Improvement of the local socio-economic context with a revitalization of the roles of local actors and especially local NGOs such as development groups ⊕ Promotion of the role of rural women and development of the social and solidarity economy ⊕ Favorable context for international cooperation to support socio-professional organizations (WFP, FAO, IFAD, WB, AfDB, EU, ILO, ENACTUS, etc.); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Lack of State financial support for development groups ⊕ Competition of products on the international market with cheaper prices ⊕ Low selling prices for women's products, leading to reduced profit margins. ⊕ High input prices for women's products
External			THREAT

6. RÉSULTS

6.1. GDA Nadhour Membership Analysis

The socio-demographic characterization of the respondents reveals that they have an average age of 41.1 years with 18.2% of them being under 30 years

old, and 59.1% are between 30 and 50 years old (figure 1). Their level of education is generally high with 23% of higher education, 36% of secondary education and 32% of Kotteb and primary education (Figure 2).



Regarding the main activity, these women are 63.3% of housewives. While the public service and the private service are occupied respectively by 18.2% and 13.6% of the women surveyed. Agriculture represents a

main activity only for 4.5% of this same population (Figure 4).

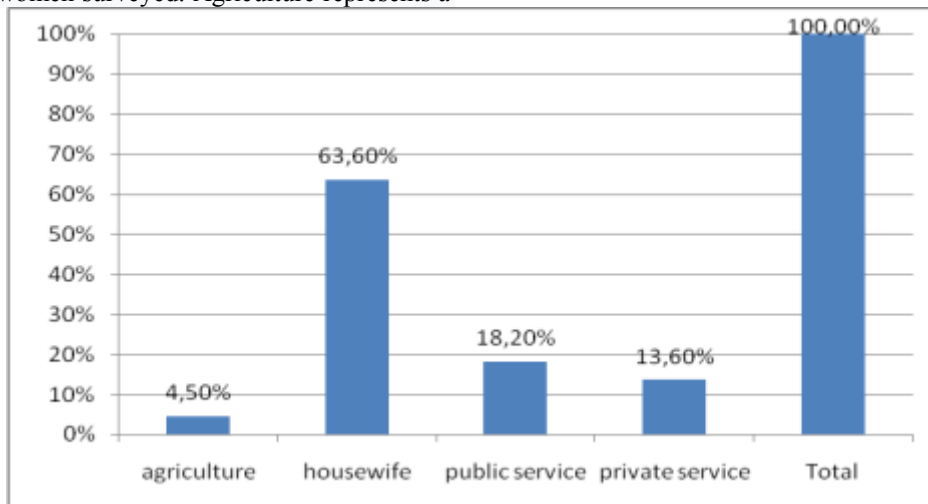


Figure 1. Main activities of the women surveyed

6.2. Analysis of the perception of the principles of solidarity and cooperation

The study of the perception of cooperation by the interviewees informs us about their level of knowledge and conviction in addition to their behavior towards membership in the group. The idea is to recall the main principles and ask whether the interviewee knows the principle or not and then ask his opinion. Survey results show that 40.9% of those interviewed are aware of the principles of collaboration and cooperation between women.

The women in the Nadhour area know each other and exchange ideas and experiences with each other. Indeed, some activities provide opportunities for meeting and knowledge between women like that

of "Oulla", and in seasons of picking olives and vegetable crops. Also, meetings at the GDA allow an exchange and knowledge between those who these women.

6.3. Perception of the level of development of products and agricultural potential

As for the perception of the level of products valorization and the specific agricultural and territorial potentialities of the region, 95% of the interviewed judges that it is little or not satisfactory. The current organization of the marketing circuit is considered bad by all of the women surveyed.

According to the results mentioned in Figure 4, the products of women members of the GDA of Nadhour present a great diversity. Indeed, 4.5% of GDA



Nadhour members are specialized in the extraction of essential oils from aromatic and medicinal plants thanks to the availability of these plants in the region. We note that 18.2% of women members manufacture

various cereal-based products (couscous, mhamssa, chorba, etc.), while 27.1% of these interviewees specialize in other products such as the production of (Hrissa, Jam, spices and pastry products...).

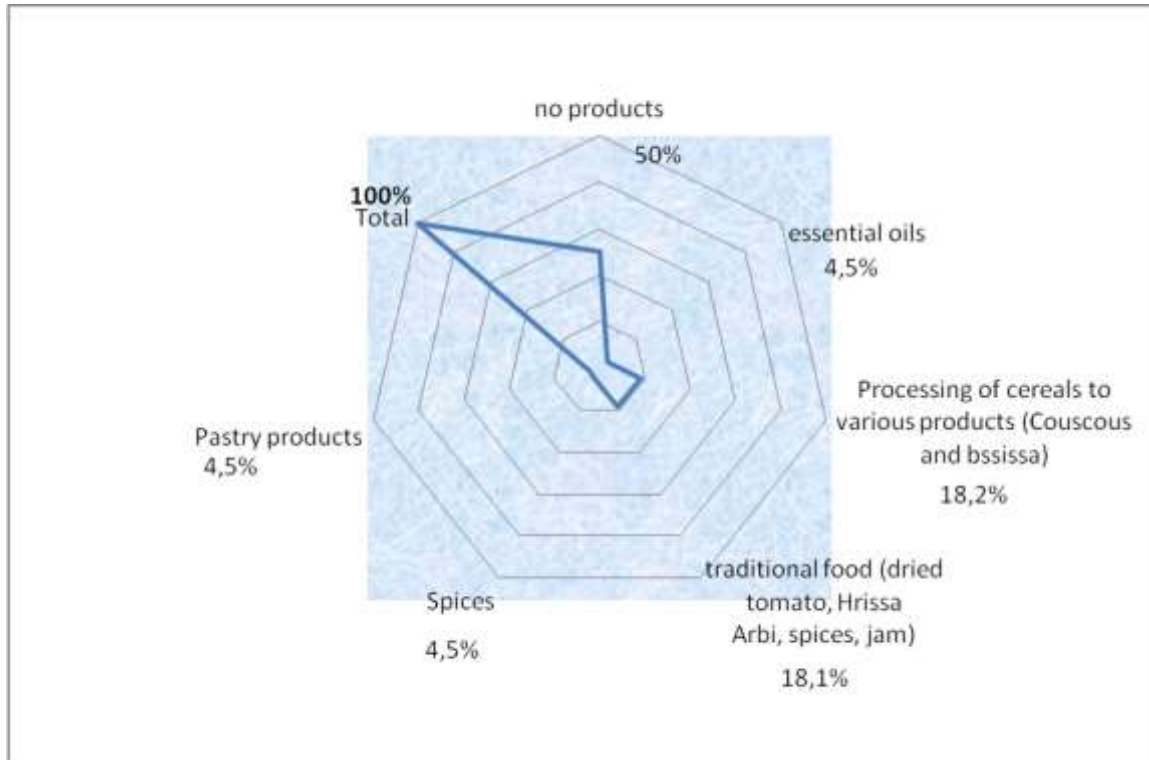


Figure 4 : Distribution of the sample according to the products of women members

Source: Own surveys, 2019

6.4. GDA Nadhour Membership Analysis

Analysis of membership in the GDA Nadhour shows that all of the women members of this group registered in 2016, the date of creation of the group. Five members respondents are members of the administrative council. The group started with 44 members, thus reflecting an average level of membership in view of the participation of women in rural areas.

The survey also showed that the means of information about the existence of the GDA are in decreasing order of public announcement to the delegation, direct contact, contact from neighbors and through founding members with 7.3%, 9.7%, 73% and 10% of those interviewed, respectively (Figure5).

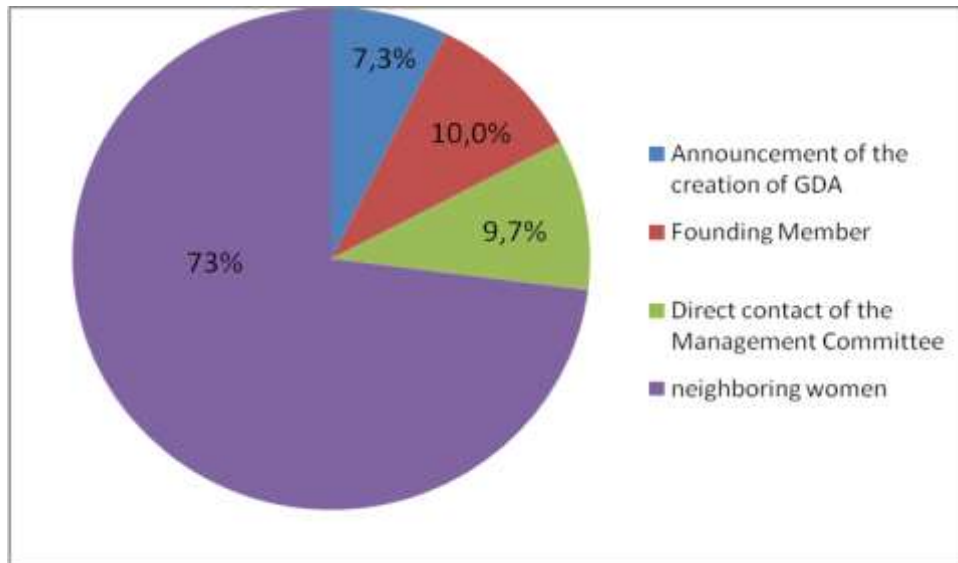


Figure 5: Means of information for the existence of the GDA

The investigation revealed an irregularity in the attendance of women members of GDA meetings and activities. According to the interviewees, the reasons for not joining the GDA are the ignorance of the benefits of membership and the non conviction of the interest. Some interviewees explain their withdrawal from membership because of the dissatisfaction of their needs by these groups.

Hence the importance of implementing a marketing and advertising strategy aimed at informing, convincing and encouraging women to join the GDA. The implementation of a GDA development and upgrading plan to better meet the real and priority needs of rural women could also increase the competitiveness of women's local products opposite to other imported products.

6.5. Perception of the GDA and appreciation of its functions and services

The results of the survey show that a good proportion of the interviewees perceived the GDA as the cooperative of the 1960s, while the rest perceive it respectively as a private enterprise from which individuals draw profile. This situation would largely explain the more or less hostile attitudes of women towards the GDA. Hence the interest, to clarify the concept of a GDA and to rehabilitate its image by means of information and communication campaigns with the main actors and in particular rural populations.

In addition, the surveys carried out with the identified sample made it possible to assess the various functions of the GDA. These same results reveal that the most appreciated functions of the GDA are the provision of services (67%), the strengthening of exchange and solidarity (52%), the promotion of

local products and the promotion of production, and for local consumption (85%).

The refinement of the appreciation of GDA Nadhour services, the degree of satisfaction "satisfied" mainly concerns training services (21%) and coaching / advice (34.7% moderately satisfied).

6.6. Sales destination, supply and main services of GDA Nadhour

Sales of women's products are made through the GDA in view of its role as facilitator and intermediary on certain occasions such as that of fairs or through point of sale. Thus, through social networks, and personal knowledge, this group has contributed. Sales are mainly made through an intermediary (50%), or directly to consumers (45%).

As for sources of supply, the group has not been able to succeed in its role of intermediary to facilitate the supply of raw materials, which are considered very expensive by all the women surveyed.

6.7. General appreciation of the role of women in non-governmental organizations

The general assessments relating to the role of women revealed that the general tendency considers that women are not sufficiently involved in the economic activities of the household (81%) because of the socio cultural heritage which favors activities in the home and the low integration of women into social life and its marginalization.

As for the opinion of the respondents concerning the roles of women to play in the future for the development of the local products promotion and the creation of an economic dynamic in the region. 95% of the women surveyed are for a real role



to be played by women in these perspectives. Moreover, these women are usually active in their households in the manufacture and processing of products based on local raw materials such as cereals,

vegetable products, and aromatic and medicinal plants (Figure6).

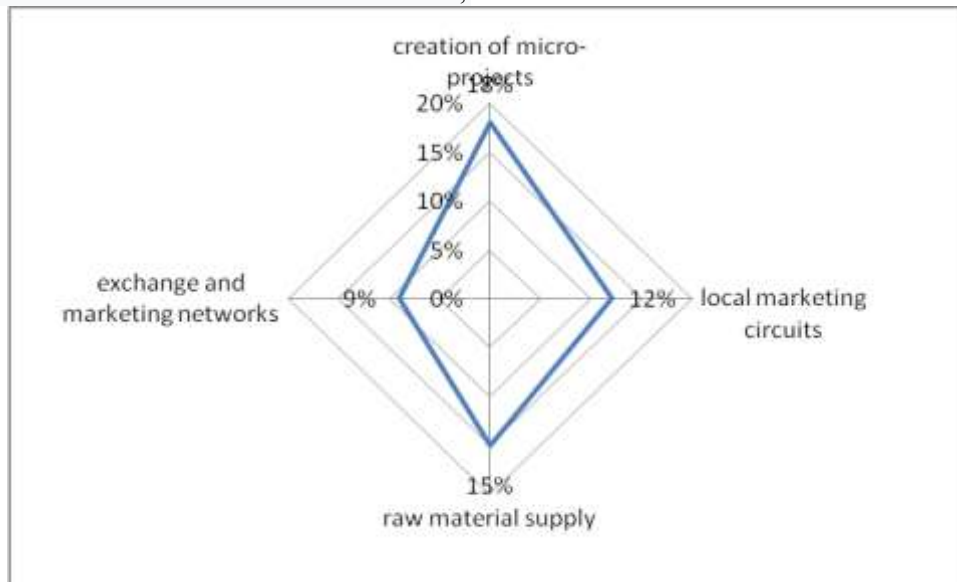


Figure 6: Activities to be developed that can be carried out by women

Concerning activities to be developed by these women. They indicated the creation of agricultural and artisanal micro-projects for the creation of a stable income for women and their families (18%), the promotion of the role of the GDA by their involvement in local and international marketing circuits to guarantee a respectable income for these women (12%), the supply of raw materials and training in marketing, labeling and packaging of women's products (15%), the creation of exchange and marketing networks with others groups in other regions of the country and in other countries (9%).

7. CONCLUSION, GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE NADHOUR GROUP

Analysis of the results of this study confirmed the hypothesis of low membership of rural women in professional structures, despite the advantages and strengths. Indeed, compared to the potential number of rural women in the Nadhour delegation, the number of members at the group creation in 2016 was set at 30 members. The reasons are multiple and can be broken down into three main factors:

- Recent constitution of the GDA and lack of information among women in rural areas;
- Reluctance of women to join the GDA for several reasons including ignorance of the benefits of this group and the confusion caused by the perception of a group as a cooperative like the collectivist experience of the 60s. This experience would explain largely the

more or less hostile attitudes of some women towards the group. Hence the interest, to clarify the concept of development groups and to rehabilitate its image through the implementation of a real communication information strategy for rural women and their families. The aim sought through this strategy is to better inform the socio-economic environment of these women of the principles of cooperation and the social economy, of the mission of these groups, its activities, its strategies, its functioning, its impact, its benefits in favor of its members.

This information and communication strategy could also be combined with a capacity development and training operation for board members and members. Concerning the local products of the Nadhour area, this area is marked by various agricultural products such as that based on cereals, aromatic and medicinal plants and based on market garden products. A know-how has been inherited by the women of the rural area, they have the knowledge of the techniques of transformation and manufacture of the local products like; couscous, Harissa, jams, oils and waters made from aromatic and medicinal plants. But a problem of funding as well as support was announced by women members of the Nadhour women's agricultural development group. Hence, the recommendation for the sustainability of funding through the creation of projects for women to guarantee them a stable and sustainable income and to encourage them to value the products of the region.

Acknowledgement



The authors are thankful to the GDA Nadhour staff, and Mme Faouzia Rouissi, Director of the financing and incentives district at the regional agricultural development commission of Zaghoun. Also, thanks to the students: Wiem Braham and Fahima Dabboussi, Higher School of Agriculture Mograne, Tunisia.

13. Taleb Wahida 2017. *The stakes of water resources in the Nadhour delegation in Zaghoun governorate, End of Studies Project at the Higher School of Agriculture in Mograne.*

REFERENCES

1. Baya, 2017. *Rural-women-in-the-agricultural-sector are exposed to the danger of road accidents*
2. Belhedi Amor, 2016 . *Regional and local development in Tunisia. Challenges and issues. Amor Belhedi International conference "Socio-economic and dynamic development of rural societies Plurality of actors, resources management and Territorial development"*.
3. Bouallègue Houda 2015. *Presentation of the Nadhour Delegation (page 22). Technical and socio-economic analysis of the functioning and dynamics of farms in the Nadhour delegation, 2015.*
4. Manon Garcia, 2010. *Is the woman an economic actor like the others? In: Multitudes 2010/3 (n ° 42), pages 94 to 99.*
5. *Map of the delegation of the governorate of Zaghoun, 2016. tunisieindustrie.nat.tn*
6. *Geographical map of the Nadhour delegation, 2016. tunisieindustrie.nat.tn*
7. CTV Nadhour, 2016. *Nadhour territorial extension unit. Zaghoun Regional Agricultural Development Commission.*
8. CTV Nadhour, 2017. *Nadhour territorial extension unit. Zaghoun Regional Agricultural Development Commission.*
9. CTV Nadhour, 2018. *Nadhour territorial extension unit. Zaghoun Regional Agricultural Development Commission.*
10. *Femme, 2000, octobre 2008. Rural women in a changing world: Opportunities and challenges. www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000/Rural%20Women%20web%20French.pdf*
11. Bacha Amel, 2018. *The problems of operation and organization of the GDA and their repercussions on the profitability of the agricultural holdings in the PI of Nadhour. Project of End of Studies at the Higher School of Agriculture of Mograne.*
12. Koussani Rania, 2018. *The socio-economic empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs: Case study of the Women's Group of Agricultural Development of Oued Sbaihia-Zaghoun. Graduation Project at the Higher School of Agriculture in Mograne.*