



Asma GHARBI - ECOBOIS

Kairouan

The story of Asma and her business ECOBOIS begins with a challenge. “Despite a master’s degree in Banking and Financial Economics acquired in 2005, as well as a professional master in Business Creation in 2009, I could not find a job in Kairouan that suited my professional qualifications and my status as a married woman with children,” explains Asma, “so I started working as a manager for my husband, a food wholesaler, which put me in contact with egg suppliers. That’s when the idea of working in recycling of wood came to me.”

While managing her husband’s business Asma noticed a business opportunity. On the one hand, farmers breeding chicks needed sawdust, which must meet hygiene standards. On the other hand, there were wood chips scattered next to the roads in the region that were not recycled properly or removed by the municipality.

Asma avidly began working on her idea and thanks to the support of her father, a farmer and agricultural engineer, she was able to conduct market research through a trial period in the family farm to test her product with her first customers, before officially launching her business.

Through the trial period she gained positive customer feedback and realized her project meets the need of the market. It also gave Asma the confidence to launch the business and she contacted the business incubator in Kairouan to help formalize her project. It was there that she

learned about the Mashrou3i Program organized by UNIDO and supported by USAID, the Italian Cooperation and HP Foundation. She applied to benefit from the HP LIFE training and to gain support for completing her business plan with the business center expert.

“HP LIFE e-Learning is an interesting training for entrepreneurs at the business idea stage who need to develop their project to make their dream come true as I did. The training is practical and focused. We can find support to solve specific challenges that arise in our projects in many business areas whether pricing, finance, distribution or marketing. I took advantage of all the HP LIFE e-learning modules and left the training with a solid business plan.”

ECOBOIS was established in 2016 in Kairouan’s Industrial Zone. The company currently employs 10 people and contributes to their social and professional integration, since they are all former prisoners who have served their sentences. The company has already gained a number of clients including Poulina, Gallus, SOPAT and numerous poultry farmers in the region.

“I’m excited about the future of my business and have a long term vision. With the support of Mashrou3i, I’ve overcome difficulties like sorting out my suppliers and winning tenders. My business model is scalable and in the future I think about exporting and also diversifying products by also working on decorative objects from wood chips.”