



Ezzedine GUELLAOUI - “Guellaoui Industrial Tanks”

Kairouan

It's early in the morning and the sound of metal banging and clunking can be heard coming from Ezzeddine Guellaoui's workshop in El Mansoura, an industrial area near the city center of Kairouan. Ezzeddine is busy welding the final parts of a wrought iron door and his two employees are making the finishing touches to some windows. Everything must be delivered the next day to one of his clients.

Ezzeddine has always been interested in metalworking. “I learned the trade at a vocational training center here in Kairouan,” he says. “After obtaining my welding certificate in 2003, I worked hard in several companies including a large oil factory, where I gained a lot of practical experience.”

When offered the opportunity to move to Libya for a job in the welding sector, Ezzeddine jumped at the chance. He nostalgically recalls working there in the years before the Arab Spring and the political crisis in Libya.

“Demand from the Libyan farmers was so great that, with the help of two employees, we would build a 20 m³ cistern every day,” says Ezzeddine. “But after the revolution things became difficult and I lost many customers. In 2015, I decided it was time to go back to my hometown.”

Kairouan is an agricultural region, renowned for dairy farming and the production of olive oil. Ezzeddine saw an opportunity to apply his experience and what he learned in Libya by launching his own business. The high-potential start-up offers local agribusinesses large stainless-steel tanks for storing their produce,

such as milk and olive oil.

To prepare for launching his business, Ezzeddine went to the Kairouan Business Center where he heard about the Mashrou3i project organized by UNIDO and funded by USAID, the Italian Cooperation and the HP Foundation. Ezzeddine was immediately assisted by the Mashrou3i regional expert who helped him to finalize his business plan and to submit his loan application to the Tunisian Bank of Solidarity (BTS).

In December 2017, he successfully obtained the financing agreement from the bank and by January the following year he had already installed equipment and started his business activities with 2 full-time employees. Ezzeddine's welding workshop currently focuses on producing wrought iron pieces and meeting the needs of small-scale farmers in the surrounding area. This has allowed him to better understand the local market and to attract new potential customers for his storage tanks.

Thanks to the ongoing support of Mashrou3i, Ezzeddine has received a micro credit to purchase the additional equipment he needs. The UNIDO expert in marketing and communication is also helping Ezzeddine to prepare for a radio interview to promote his company to target farmers across region before the start of the olive harvest season.

The entrepreneur is harnessing his ambitions. “Thanks to the support of Mashrou3i, I am achieving my goals and feel confident that my storage tanks meet the needs of local agribusinesses,” Ezzeddine says.