

Groasis Waterboxx's disappear under "The walking sand dunes" June/ October 2011

It was June 2011 and we had been expecting to receive photo's of our experiment with the Groasis Waterboxx's in the Sahara. I had been to M'hamid in February and was so happy to see that the tiny branches had started to develop meaning that the roots where now receiving sufficient water for the grafts to develop into trees. Via skype Halim and Ibrahim Sbai of L'Association Zaila and I kept contact and spoke regular about the progress that was being made. The local men were now so positive about our experiment, seeing how quickly the trees had started to grow without receiving water since they had been planted.



55 grafts survive in Groasis waterboxx's

Finally the photos arrived showing the small trees that had developed in the Groasis waterboxx's. We were all so excited as 55 of the 60 grafts planted in these incubators were now growing in the sand dunes. A big step had been taken in the fight against desertification. We sent the photo's to Peter Hoff of Groasis and he was also amazed with our developments. As we were bringing another 10 waterboxxes with us in October he suggested that it would also be a good idea to plant vegetable seeds so as to provide food for the local people as well as for growing trees.



Summer sand storms

In July the harsh summer heat arrived bringing with her the summer sand storms. In august we received information that our waterboxx's, together with the trees, had not survived the 5 days of relentless sand storms. Trying to figure out what had happened we thought that they had been blown away but it wasn't until we arrived in M'hamid in October that we actually understood what really had taken place.

"Walking sand dunes".

So much sand had been blown around by the harsh winds and our waterboxx's had been covered by the "walking sand dunes". It was a terrible disappointment to us all to hear that only 8 of the 55 trees had managed to survive these summer sandstorms. After shoveling a major amount of sand away the men in camp had been able to recover 25 of the 30 waterboxx's but unfortunately the trees inside them had not been able to make it. Luckily the waterboxx's were sturdy and so they started to replant 8 of the waterboxx's before we arrived in October.

Hope and determination

This made us realize how important it was for the people living here. Our surviving "UFO's" had made their point by showing how well they worked. Together we planted the remaining waterboxx's but this time further away from the "walking sand dunes" in hope that this would not happen again. The trees that had survived give us hope and determination to continue with this wonderful but difficult project.

