

Parched Jordan starts growing vegetables in desert

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The Sahara Forest Project near Jordan's Aqaba aims to produce 130 tonnes of organic vegetables a year

Jordan, a water-poor country that is 90-percent desert, on Thursday launched a project to turn its sand dunes into farming land to produce food using sun and sea water.

King Abdullah II and Norway's Crown Prince Haakon attended a

ceremony to mark the official opening of the "Sahara Forest Project" near the southern port city of Aqaba.

In a first stage, the [project](#) aims to produce up to 130 tonnes of organic vegetables per year from an area the size of four football pitches.

It will use solar panels to provide power and include outdoor planting space, two saltwater-cooled greenhouses, a water desalination unit and [salt ponds](#) for salt production.

The project, whose funders include Norway and the European Union, is later to be expanded from three hectares (seven acres) to around 200 hectares (490 acres) of desert.

"This is a project that has a great promise for the future," Norway's Haakon told journalists.

"It is impressive to see how technology can be used in such a sustainable way to produce agricultural goods in a quite tough climate like here."



Crown Prince Haakon of Norway (L) and King Abdullah II of Jordan (C) visit the Sahara Forest Project

The project's director, Joakim Hauge, said the scheme tapped into Jordan's existing resources.

"Jordan has a lot of sunlight, it has a lot of desert, it has [sea water](#), it has CO₂. That is what we need to produce food, water and renewable energy."

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