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goats in an argan tree

If you look up into a tree, you can often spot animals like squirrels and birds. But you may see a very different animal in the argan tree in Morocco: goats! Moroccan goats climb the argan's branches to eat its fruits.

The argan tree is a rare tree that only grows in Sous Valley in southwestern Morocco. This area is quite dry and hot. There are not many food sources for goats in this part of Morocco. So, these goats have gotten creative! When argan fruits ripen, the goats come in groups. They carefully climb up the argan trees, which can be up to 30 feet tall. They risk being pricked by its thorny branches. Then, the goats feast on the yellow and dark brown fruits of argan trees. The fruits make up between 47% and 84% of the tree goats' **diet**, depending on the season.

These goats cannot **digest** the nut inside the fruit, however. They either spit out the nut or pass it through their digestive system. Farmers gather

these softened nuts and crack them open to get to the seeds. These seeds are roasted, ground, and pressed to **produce** argan oil. Argan oil is a rare item that has become popular throughout the world. This oil is used in cooking. It is also used as a skin and hair cosmetic.

Although these goats help farmers **produce** argan oil, there are other consequences to their tree climbing. Goats often spend an average of 6 hours per day on the branches of these trees. Their hooves damage the tree's branches. These tree-climbing goats are also a large tourist attraction in Morocco. Farmers have brought in more and more goats to this area to attract tourists, causing a decline in the health of the argan trees. Argan trees are now considered endangered. Some environmentalists are trying to help document this issue to save these trees. Hopefully, these trees will stand the test of time... and these goats will be able to continue enjoying these fruits for many years to come!