

Tropical Agriculture in Algeria 1840-1940 Cotton and Indigo as a model

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Abstract---The French Agricultural project in Algeria formed a major base of settlement and economic hegemony from the beginning. It founded this strategy by sending the tropical agriculture project to produce many crops such as: Tobacco, cotton, indigo, coffee, aromatic plants, and hashish, in line with the expectations of the French market, which has lost contact with the region of the Far East and the Pacific Islands. In light of these circumstances, France decided to establish this agriculture in Algeria. This research grapples to answer the following questions: What are the rules that I bet on, and what is the nature of this project and its economic background?

Keywords---Tropical Agriculture, Cotton, Nile, Algeria, France.

Introduction

Tropical agriculture formed a focal point for French colonial policy in Algeria at its early stage. Accordingly, France aimed to cover the shortage of tropical products that it used to import from its distant colonies. Thus, to keep pace with industrial development in France, it worked on transforming Algeria into a tropical farm.

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Tropical agriculture in Algeria had many objectives due to continuous experiments, observed potentials, applied techniques, and imported varieties with high leaf density, which achieved significant profits. This contributed to directing colonial capital towards this sensitive sector. On this basis, what are the results achieved in this agriculture regarding cotton and indigo during the period 1840-1940 .?

1-Cotton cultivation

The early beginnings of the French occupation of Algeria marked a policy to move forward in the cultivation of tropical crops, compensating for the shortage that may affect France due to the loss of its tropical colonies. Thus, some voices called for interest in the cultivation of tobacco, cotton, indigo, coffee, sugar cane, cocoa and others. Preliminary experiments of cotton cultivation were accompanied by trends calling for the creation of small properties. New villages and settlements and their reconstruction were established, not with new centenarians and withdrawal, but with a capitalist European thought that keeps pace with the economic development taking place in Europe. This paper examines the strategy followed and the success of these experiments in Algeria in the period in question.

1-2-Preliminary experiments of cotton cultivation in Algeria

Cotton cultivation was considered a strategic agriculture in French agricultural policy. It compensated for the large shortage of this material in the internal market after France's loss of its tropical colonies. Thus, this agriculture has known continuous interest and development, keeping pace with the government's policy of directing and settling tropical crops in Algeria.

Hardy Auguste published his book specialized in cotton cultivation in Algeria. He introduced it in some detail and technique from choosing the right varieties of care, anti-pathology and fertilization, production, storage, and manufacturing mechanisms. He expressed the contribution of the most important leading countries in the field and hinged on the advanced technologies adopted in Egypt, Brazil and the United States, which shows that this work is of fundamental importance in settlement thought. The book presumably contributes to directing farmers to pay attention to this plant species.

Having concluded that cotton cultivation in Algeria is comparable to that of Georgia and the American Carolinas in terms of quantity and diversity, the writer hailed the future of cotton cultivation in Algeria. However, he did not give us accurate statistical information on cotton production in Algeria at that time, which indicates that the book falls within the policy of motivation, awareness and guidance adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture in the field.

As of that date, cotton cultivation continued to flourish, with annual production increasing from 465,000 kg between 1843-1845 to 785,000 kg between 1845-1848, to 960,000 kg between 1848 and 1851. In front of the prosperity of agriculture and the expansion of the area, the production amount reached 1.136.000 kg between 1851 and 1852 (Guérin, 1856, p. 52).

The development in the field has benefited from the continued support of the French government in facilitating access to agricultural land and its service. The glare was fuelled by growing demand for the product in French factories as they lost their old colonies, which were their main source of cotton. The number of farmers interested in cotton increased from 03 investors in 1851, exploiting small areas with limited capacities, to 900 farmers in 1853, exploiting 573H, increasing to 1.720H years later (Guérin, 1856, p. 53).

This great openness carries with it the desire of the government to consolidate this agriculture, which has become a source of wealth in its time. Besides, it seems that the climate and soil gradually helped to

develop this wealth. The competition of American goods in the European market, in addition to the policy of the state, gave priority in the import of Algerian goods at the expense of others.

This policy of encouragement has prompted the government to develop future measures and plans, including the adoption of laws that contribute to the promotion and improvement of production and the expansion of its area beyond borders. This included the adoption of an Imperial Decree of 15 October 1853 establishing national competitions for cotton producers, the award of incentive prizes to the best producers, and the establishment of an annual competition with a financial value of 20,000f (Louis, 1856). With the provision of support to farmers in the processing of seeds and their acquisition and the facilities in financial transactions, grants for the benefit of investors in the field have raised. The state pledged to buy crops directly from farmers (Ménerville, 1867, p. 91).

The agricultural policy that followed contributed to the continuous increase of female investors, and the production increased from 507,000 kg in 1854 to 780,000 kg in 1857 (M.P, Paris). This raised the area for cotton cultivation to a limit of 2,000H, at the very least, which is relatively large compared to the historical period. In this short period, it could only be achieved through concerted government efforts and a large turnout in the sector, despite the fog of the agricultural landscape around cotton in Algeria. These initial plans contributed to higher yields of cotton as a result of higher selling costs and lower production costs of 400 F/H (A.O.M lettre N0 ,1255 AG/PA. de 30/12/1860). and net profits of hectares of some farms in the Oran region reached 3.480 F in 1855. The threshold of 7.005H (Guérin, 1856, pp. 53-54) per hectare in fertile breeding fields was a factor that contributed to the direction and concentration of this cultivation in specially formed plains.

This profit opened the wide field for European capitalism to invest in the field of the widest doors and the promise of cotton cultivation in that period agricultural culture par excellence has promising future prospects .It continued to grow by benefiting from the high prices in the European market, and the remarkable success of the initial tests in Algeria, which the French agricultural policy is counting on to meet the growing French deficit in cotton fiber. Algeria's exports of net cotton processed and filtered rose according to the data of Table 1.

Table 1: Cotton production between 1853 and 1864

Year	Production /kg	Year	Production /kg	Year	Production /kg
1853-1854	85.710	1857-1858	104.416	1891-1862	118.412
1854-1855	71.310	1858-1859	106.431	1862-1863	127.833
1855-1856	66.972	1859-1860	106.472	1863-1864	3367.518
1856-1857	93.070	1860-1861	159.652		

Source. Arthur Alexandre Behaghel. *L'Algérie*, tissier libraire éditeur, Alger, 1865. .175-176.

It is noted that the policy of support and encouragement paid off early, with exports rising from 85.710 kg in 1854 to 71.310 in a year, jumping to 104.416 kg in 1858. Although this amount does not contribute to 7.2% of the French market needs, it was encouraged hoping that exports will double significantly in the face of the state's efforts to support the sector continuously. Its policy of giving priority to Algerian products at the expense of others also contributed to the rise in exports by giving an upward lift to settle at 367.518 kg in 1864.

1-2-Cotton cultivation in Algeria between 1865 and 1930

These indicators will make a difference in the cultivation of cotton at the near level as the high prices in Europe. The success of the first agricultural experiments in Algeria opened the door wide in front of the continuous flow of capital, benefiting from the government facilities provided. This cultivation expanded to varying degrees in Annaba, Constantine, the plains of Chlef, and Oran.

These efforts boosted the increase in the cotton area in the Western Region in 1857 to 902.9H (Rapports Sénat , n°123, 1860), while the province of Algiers was provided through a specially formed 75H, and distributed 522.09H in the Eastern Province. This made the western region to harvest among the first three in the cultivation and production of cotton. This area gradually rises in 1858, taking advantage of the successes achieved, reaching 1.082H (Sénat, 1859) in the western region and rising in the province of Constantine to about 815H. While the area ranged, the province of Algiers did not improve much, reaching 80H (A.B).

The pace of government encouragement of the sector was increased by a new imperial decree on 25 April 1860, which provided for the granting of money to exporters of cotton. The western region got the lead, working on the localization of cotton cultivation, especially after 1865, wherein it was distributed in the plains of Oran 1200H, 1200H in the plains of Hebra, and 600H provided in Ghalizan. This development has improved the flexibility of the hectare, which amounted to 10P/H. Prices rose to 125f/100 k (Thomas, 1870, pp. 08-11).

This rise was short lived, and it quickly ran into difficult seasons that contributed to a significant reduction of space after the 1867 Nakba marked by severe drought, accompanied by an invasion of locusts of cotton fields. Factors that affected cotton production led to a 2.200H percent reduction in area in just one year.

The policy of state support in the development of the sector was offset by the continuous increase in demand for Algerian cotton in the French market. This led to a rise in prices to record levels, rising from 90 F/100 kg in 1865 to 150 P/100 kg in 1868, as a result of the decline in production and the contraction of the area by 4.000H in 1867, to decline to 1800/H in 1868 (Thomas, 1870, p. 8).

This crisis has confused those in charge of the sector, showed farmers the danger of the natural factor in storming their agricultural efforts, and demonstrated new dangers for the government and the Ministry of Agriculture. It threatens the future of cotton cultivation in Algeria unless the state intervenes to save the situation, and urges those responsible and farmers to adopt scientific methods. Various irrigation techniques have been introduced; deep tillage has been used which increases the plant's utilization of soil savings; and interest in fertilization has increased significantly in cotton fields especially in Oran, Tipaza, and Mitidja. Cotton cultivation was enhanced by the experience of Spanish arrivals, who added their touch to the sector.

By the end of 1869, cotton cultivation benefited from a series of irrigation projects, which contributed significantly to the recovery of the sector, including the Al-Hibra Dam project that allowed the land 36,000H. It is noteworthy to raise its capacity in the few years to irrigate 80.000H and the dam of Wad Hamza, which contributes to watering 36.000H. Other large projects enable the agricultural sector to water 170,000H in the western region, where cotton plantations have flourished significantly.

These efforts led the state to plan to raise the total area to 200,000H, enabling it to produce at least 8,000 tons per year to meet the growing need for cotton mills in France. After the sector recovered from the effects of the drought crisis that hit the country in 1867 and improved natural conditions, in conjunction with the efforts of the government, the area rose to 3000H in 1869 (Thomas, 1870, p. 8).

The future of cotton cultivation in Algeria has been threatened in light of the data received. It lacks a clear future narrative that the state has not found the real mechanisms to localize the cotton culture in Algeria. As agriculture is one of the most important pillars of the French economy in Algeria, it was not able to face the outstanding challenges despite its continuous efforts, in light of the net revenues of 600/F hectares in 1869 .

This relative prosperity was not a sufficient guarantee, contributing to openness to cotton cultivation. Apprehension and hesitation remained the hallmark of the sector despite its high prices on the French market. It seems that the state was not convinced of the achievements achieved as planned, which led it to evade the decisions of support directed to cotton producers, which accelerated the decline of the area gradually (Table 2).

Table 2: Cotton production between 1872 and 1884

Year	Cholon		Parents		Total	
	Area/h	Production/ kg	Area/h	Production/ kg	Area/h	Production/ kg
1872	1.395	1.598.787	47	3.616	1442	1.602.403
1873	1.325	2.843.264	60	5.800	1385	2.849.064
1874	592	2.690.509	47	1.959	693	2.692.468
1875	193	3.575.588	38	2.700	231	3.578.288
1876	294	3.650.676	//	//	294	3.650.676
1877	197	2.782.497	//	//	197	2.782.497
1878	120	2.669.330	//	//	120	2.669.330
1879	124	1.226.181	//	//	124	1.226.181
1880	126	2.432.318	2	2	128	2.432.320
1881	176	2.120.269	//	//	176	2.120.269
1882	98	22.500	//	//	98	22.500
1883	33	8.000	//	//	33	8.000
1884	16	4.678	//	//	55	4.678

Source. S.G.A: 1882 a 1884,P. 154.

It is noted that cotton cultivation in Algeria has lost its identity, and the policy of giving up support has been characterized by achievements, as the general area fell from 1442 in 1872 to 55 in 1884, at an average of 115 H annually. Production took place from 2,849,064 in 1873 to 4,678 in 1884.

This sharp and undermining decline in cotton activity came during the Third Republic, which adopted a policy different from the previous one, aimed at cutting support for cotton activity (Statistique générale de l'Algérie, 1885), because it did not achieve the desired goals. The support provided to the hectare is at best equivalent to the value of the produced crop, as well as the low quality and difficulty of adapting the excellent varieties to the Algerian environment. In addition, there is the low level of return on an ongoing basis. This suggests the imminent extinction of this agriculture, the failure of the cotton cultivation experiments in Algeria. Indeed, it proved to longer be able to compete in the French market for goods with high quality and low prices like in the American continent, India, Egypt, Spain, and Turkey.

Over time, cotton cultivation has lost its strength in favor of the new agricultural orientations of chromium, and the Third Republic has evaded the policy of producer support, thus continuing to decline rapidly. The increase in production in light of the reduction of the area to high yield can also be explained significantly by the use of fertilizers and the benefit from irrigation projects established by the state, with the development of some species with paper density.

It can be said that Algeria's cotton exports fell very much in the late century, as they did not appear in the official agricultural statistics –another evidence that this agriculture lost its strength in Algeria at the end of the nineteenth century.

The large consumption of cotton in the French market after the World War appears to be the result of economic openness and increased demand for cotton to nearly 2.2 million tons per year, equivalent to 48%. The high global consumption of matte (Bloud, 1925, p. 9) and its high costs have contributed to a serious rethinking of the re-emergence of this cultivation in Algeria, where the area increased significantly between the years 1924 and 1925 in various provinces (Table 3).

Table 3: Evolution of cotton cultivation in the Algerian provinces between 1924 and 1925

	1924	1925	Average yield s/h
Oran	800H	1500H	14
Algeria	700H	1200H	10
Constantine	20H	1000H	07
Total	1520H	3700H	/

Source. Statistique générale de l'Algérie (1925)

The rise of the area from 1520 in 1924 to 3700 H in one year raises a great question about the developments in French agricultural policy to revive cotton cultivation at this unprecedented pace. Cotton cultivation did not reach the threshold of 3500 BC under any roof despite the great support given to cotton by the Government of the Second Republic. Several factors that surfaced appear to have contributed to this paradigm shift, including the increase of French demand for cotton, and the large spread of the irrigation network. The sector strengthened dozens of dams in the three provinces, especially in Chlef, Mateur, and Skikda, which played a major role in covering the requirements of cotton. The sector benefited from significant amounts from financial institutions (française, 13/07/1936).

The foresight of agricultural policy theorists for the future of viticulture in Algeria has accelerated the emergence of the cotton sector as a strategic alternative. They realized the impossibility of the steadfastness of viticulture in light of new developments, after the recovery of French vineyards. The State implemented the decisions to reduce the exports of Algerian chromium to France, in compliance with the growing pressure from the French chrome unions to reduce the areas of chromium in Algeria. This decision followed the disappearance of the economic justifications that require its development in Algeria. Algerian wines compete with French products in the European market.

These previous factors precipitated a giant leap in one year for cotton spaces, as it rose from 1920 in 1924 to 3700 in 1925. This is an economic adventure hiding behind the government plans to raise this wealth. It has been offset by pan-European economic recovery, whose demand for cotton after World War I has increased dramatically .

The agricultural production of cotton was mainly directed to meet the requirements of the French market, where 350 tons of raw fiber were exported in 1924, rising to the threshold of 1000 tons in 1925. It was the year that was known to produce as much as 1.834 tons (Source: A.B (Siège Social –Crédit Foncier Agricole d'algérien -16 Octobre 1926) be: 98AH/1S). A significant decline in 1926 at 1,580 tons, influenced by extreme natural conditions, contributed to a significant rise in prices ranging from 2,100-2,600 tons per ton by quality (Statistique générale de l'Algérie 1925). In 1930, the area reached 5000H (Montchanin, 1931, p. 730) borders, distributed in the Annaba plains, Skikda, **Relizane**, and the Chlef plains, to test stations, improve varieties, and select seeds.

Cotton cultivation experiments continued in the steppe and desert areas, as was the case with Wadi Suf farms, which achieved good results despite the limited experiments on the typical farm of Tadjmout in Laghouat (hertz, 1989, p. 169). At the expense of informed documentation, the quantity of production was limited and fell short of the required standard. These experiments could only be individual initiatives of persons or institutions with a view to reviving and expanding agriculture, and a search for agricultural areas that allow this breed to acclimatize.

2 -Linen plant - lin-

Similar to tobacco and cotton, agricultural policy theorists have tried to send in many tropical crops and set up multiple agricultural experiments in order to find ways to localize them, with particular attention to those related to the textile industry.

2-1- French interest in planting indigo seeds

The economic importance of linen and its seeds in Europe increased significantly after the industrial revolution. The aim was to use it in several areas, including the manufacture of fabrics, paper, energy, and various cosmetics, and as a feed for some bird varieties. However, this agricultural variety lost its economic advantages in the European and French environment in particular. France has been covering its requirements from its tropical colonies and has tried to establish this agricultural trade in Algeria optimally. The first experiments showed, despite its limited area, to give a crop with high economic value.

It is noteworthy that the colonial press entered into this line. It tried to contribute to the promotion of the cultivation of indigo strongly, to emphasize its economic importance, and to give it the economic dimension entrusted to it. With this, Algeria has specialized in two basic categories: Italian Indigo (le Lin d'Italie), Lenain Riga (le Lin de Riga), and a promise of the finest and most economically valuable species. However, this specialization came after several experiments and bets, confirming the effectiveness of the French agricultural policy by making the colony a special area for tropical products.

2-2- Nile cultivation in Algeria between 1854 and 1884.

The first statistics indicate that there are more than 4 h dedicated to linen, a significant part of which is in Skikda, contributing to the production of 5.937 kg in 1854 of seeds and large quantities of oil. The total value is 3.586 f (Guérin, 1856, p. 50).

These results contributed to the orientation of European capital towards the Nile, taking advantage of the rise in the hectare crop, where experiments confirmed that the cultivation of 100 kg of Italian staple can give you about 12 BC of seeds, 20 Bars, with a commercial value of 460-480 P (Roger, 1970, pp. 72-78) as a result of the agricultural process. It rises to 770-915 p for the Riga variety, which gives an estimated yield of 7-10 s of seeds, and about 32-50 s of bars and leaves (Du Mesnil, op.cit, pp. 37-38.). This abundant production is boosted by high prices ranging from 24 to 35 P/100 kg (Ernest, 1883, p. 125), in light of low labor costs because the cultivation of this plant variety does not require significant efforts.

The initial experiments opened the door to the expansion of the French Third Republic in the sector. After examining the remarkable successes of tobacco agriculture, the area rose between 1872 and 1884 (Table 4).

Table 4: Production Nyla liga Italianponile in Algeria between 1872 and 1884

Total				Parents				Cholon				Year
Threads/P	Seed/P	Fibres/P	Area/H	Threads/P	Seed/P	Fibres/P	Area/H	Threads/P	Seed/P	Fibres/P	Area/H	
Nayla liga												
2830	487067	94900	836	1930	27400	15900	58	900	459667	79000	778	1872
2280	1823420	563950	3467	2280	62050	14030	65		1761370	549920	3402	1873
200	2224015	261149	3570	200	48400	800	70		2175615	260349	3500	1874
100	2051985	130938	1964	100	44500	538	76		2007485	130400	1888	1875
148	1998817	342110	2537	148	77109	410	87		1921708	341700	2450	1876
267	1219663	173466	1868	117	77595	216	92	150	1142068	173250	1776	1877
117	1163077	192774	1489	117	77895	216	90		1085182	192558	1399	1878
130	734795	10906	831	130	52973	216	66		681822	10690	765	1879
0	607738	16380	947		5000		5		602738	16380	942	1880
1122	436992	23164	718		3010	220	12	1122	433982	22944	706	1881
6735 6	1508080	45899	1873		3056	300	12	67356	1505024	45599	1861	1882
6753 0	1161241	25678	1825		3265	400	14	67530	1157976	25278	1811	1883
6684 5	1589260	16729	1276		3253	300	13	66845	1586007	16429	1263	1884

Italianponile												
	1818542	227715	1824		50065	9000	57		1768477	218715	1767	1872
1000	4906480	1134676	5975		165650	2515	221	1000	4740830	1132161	5754	1873
600	1886891	454665	5055		67789	460	294	600	1819102	454205	4761	1874
10800	1497322	824400	3933		200057	39000	241	10800	1297265	785400	3692	1875
16000	1677009	1395450	3018	1200	107002	10440 0	164	14800	1570007	1291050	2854	1876
14815	1673331	1230252	2753		106964	104150	167	14815	1566367	1126102	2586	1877
14858	1521170	1213295	2926		107181	10420 0	169	14858	1413989	1109095	2757	1878
	1384879	24744	1866		62005		46		1322874	24744	1820	1879
	1611195	549310	2138		75475		46		1535720	549310	2092	1880
2950 00	1128850	552948	1975		73950		77	29500 0	1054900	552948	1898	1881
	1421645	822980	2521		51150		59		1370495	822980	2462	1882
	1412813	894313	1830		51200		60		1361613	894313	1770	1883
	1272778	827870	1747		51208		63		1221570	827870	1684	1884

Source. S.G.A :1882 a 1884, P. 155.

This data indicates that the large increase in the area was the result of the rise in French imports of the threshold material (28 million kg since 1853-1860), and keeping pace with the growing demand in the French market. Official data confirmed that the area has been in sharp decline since 1885, dropping to 1.214, contributing to the production of 656,838 kg of seeds and 696,008 kg of bars (Algerie, 1886, p. 217).

2-3-Nile cultivation in Algeria between 1930 and 1950

These results were achieved due to the intensive use of fertilization in the cultivation of flax, and the cultivation of indigo spread in the plains of Annaba, Skikda, and Relizane (Du Mesnil, 1966, p. 12). It turned out that the value of the products is comparable to the finest species produced in Russia. Thus, they expanded the area over time, increasing the amount of production to reach 207.000P annually between 1934 and 1938, and rising to 250.000P in 1949. The limit is 295.000P in 1950 (In, 1951, p. 14).

Although cotton, and, to a lesser extent, flax cultivation have achieved good results, despite financial difficulties and climate fluctuations, some varieties such as coffee, sugar, sesame, castor, peanuts, Cannabis, as a form of saffron, and radishes fear stagnant water in winter and summer drought, which are key features of the climate in Algeria. It was thus unable to adapt to the Algerian environment, despite repeated experiences in the country's central western plains.

3 Conclusion

This interest in tropical products, especially cotton and indigo, is attributed to the loss of France's colonies, the increase in the costs of acquiring them significantly, and the great economic openness that France has known. The agricultural authorities have also tried to create an agricultural environment compatible with their directions, but the climate has hampered their efforts and accelerated the abortion of their project by making the settlement a farm for tropical products, despite the results achieved in some varieties. It seems that the French authorities realized the failure of its policy early, so it directed its financial and human potential towards the intensive exploitation of forest resources, grain, and vines; which would know a very significant development in its means and mechanisms and the volume of its exports to France.

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Source :A.B (Siège Social –Crédit Foncier Agricole d'algérien - 16 Octobre 1926) be :98AH/1S. (n.d).

Source: A.O.M)Commercialisation du tabac en Algérie Voter lettre N0 ,1255 AG/PA. de 30/12/1860
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