U4 HELPDESK ANSWER 2026

Morocco: Corruption and anti-corruption

A focus on the agriculture, land and water sectors

Vlora Rechica (TI)

Reviewed by
Jamie Bergin (TI), Caitlin Maslen (TI)
Jon Einar Flåtnes (U4)

Morocco has strengthened its formal anti-corruption framework since the 2011 constitution, but enforcement lags behind. Surveys point to persistent bribery, while patronage networks associated with the monarchy have been described as influencing access to public resources. Conflicts of interest reach the highest levels of government, and well-connected actors are rarely held to account. This Helpdesk Answer provides an overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Morocco. It then examines how these risks play out in the agriculture, land and water sectors. There, agricultural subsidies tend to go to the larger, well-connected producers, and collective and state land is transferred with little transparency. Farmers also report bribing local authorities to drill unauthorised wells. Several oversight bodies monitor these sectors, but their mandates overlap and they publish little evidence of results.

U4 Helpdesk Answers are tailor-made research briefings compiled in ten working days. The U4 Helpdesk is a free research service run in collaboration with Transparency International.

helpdesk@u4.no

Related U4 reading

Schöberlein, J. What works in anti-corruption programming: Lessons from the Middle East and North Africa region (2019)

de Soysa, A. The state of public participation in budget processes: Multi-country assessment trends and findings (2024)

Shipley, T. Corruption risks related to investment in vaccine manufacturing facilities in Africa (2022)

How to cite

Rechica, V. 2026. Morocco: Corruption and anti-corruption – A focus on the agriculture, land and water sectors. Bergen: Transparency International and U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute (U4 Helpdesk Answer 2026)

Published

Originally written in October 2026; reviewed and published in November 2026.

Keywords

Morocco, agriculture, land governance, collective land, groundwater, irrigation, agricultural subsidies, oversight institutions

Caveat

The evidence base is uneven. Documented findings come from Cour des comptes audits and judgements, World Bank programme documents, peer-reviewed field research and nationally representative surveys. Several recent cases, however, rest on press reporting or on allegations made by interviewees. The paper therefore distinguishes throughout between documented cases, reported allegations and governance weaknesses that create corruption risks.

Query

Please provide an updated overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Morocco, with a particular focus on corruption risks in the agriculture sector, including agricultural subsidies, land governance, and water and irrigation governance.

Main points

- Corruption risks in Morocco are rooted in the concentration of power in the monarchy and the network of elites around it, known as the Makhzen. Access to public office, land, water and state support is widely distributed through patronage networks in exchange for loyalty, and scrutiny of the palace and its entourage remains limited.
- Morocco scored 39/100 on the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking 91 of 182 countries. This is a two-point improvement on 2024 but below its 2018 peak of 43.
- Other indices, including the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and the OECD Public Integrity Indicators, show formal anti-corruption frameworks running ahead of their enforcement. In 2024, just over half of Afrobarometer respondents said the government was handling the means to counter corruption badly.
- Bribery, political corruption and conflicts of interest are documented across sectors, although the strength of evidence varies. By July 2024, 28 members of the house of representatives had been convicted of, or were being prosecuted for, financial crimes. Conflicts of interest at the highest level of government, including the overlap between political office and private business interests, have repeatedly drawn allegations in parliament and the press.
- Patronage and clientelism shape access to land, water and subsidies. Research on rural Morocco describes an informal social contract in which the state grants access to productive resources in exchange for loyalty and tolerates rule breaking to preserve social peace. Houdret and Amichi (2022) argue that, since the Plan Maroc Vert, the principal beneficiaries have shifted from older rural notables to a new class of capital-rich agricultural investors.
- Patronage networks and elite capture shape the distribution of agricultural subsidies. Field research and the World Bank find investment support concentrated among larger producers with political and business connections. The Cour des comptes, Morocco's supreme audit institution, found subsidies paid for investments whose eligibility had not been verified.
- Field studies in Souss-Massa region and the Middle Drâa record farmers describing bribes paid to local authorities, which some called obligatory, to drill unauthorised wells, with drilling companies arranging the payments.
- In the Saïss plain, research on a large public irrigation project finds that the selection of beneficiaries was influenced by local powerholders and Ministry of Interior agents.
- Collective (*soulaliyate*) land, around 17% of agricultural land, is administered under

Ministry of Interior guardianship with limited transparency about transfers, beneficiary lists and compensation. Reported risks include transfers to investors, consent given by community representatives on terms members contest, and the exclusion of women from compensation.

- Oversight of agricultural programmes is spread across several bodies, including the Ministry of Agriculture's inspectorate, the Inspection Générale des Finances and the Cour des comptes. They perform real control functions, but they publish little, monitoring of programmes is thin and local checks are applied selectively, so there is little evidence on whether they have reduced corruption in the sector.

Contents

Methodology **6**
Background **9**
Overview of corruption in Morocco **12**
Extent of corruption 12
Forms of corruption 14
Political corruption, patronage, clientelism and favouritism 14
Bribery, embezzlement and misuse of public resources 15
Conflicts of interest, undue influence and regulatory capture 16
Agriculture, land and water sectors **19**
Sector structure and institutions 19
Political economy of the sectors 22
Land governance 23
Patronage and favouritism in land allocation 24
Weak accountability for land revenue and compensation 25
Agricultural subsidies and investment 27
Favouritism and elite capture of subsidies 27
Fraud, bribery and misuse of subsidy funds 28
Capture of subsidy policy 29
Water and irrigation sectors 30
Tolerated rule breaking and clientelist water governance 30
Bribery in well drilling and enforcement 31
Legal and institutional anti-corruption framework **34**
Legal framework 34
International conventions and initiatives 34
Domestic legal framework 34
Anti-corruption, oversight and enforcement institutions 36
Oversight and control of agricultural programmes 37
References **42**

Methodology

This Helpdesk Answer is based on a desk review of publicly available literature in English and French. The review combined keyword searches with snowballing from the reference lists of key studies, such as Houdret and Amichi (2022), Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. (2022) and Mayaux (2026), and it prioritised sources published since 2017, covering the later years of the Plan Maroc Vert (PMV) and the Generation Green strategy periods. Older studies were used where they remain the main evidence on a practice or programme.

Searches were run in Google Scholar, Google, and large language model (LLM) tools to identify additional sources. All sources identified through LLMs were verified against the original publications, such as the websites of the Cour des comptes, the Instance nationale de la probité, de la prévention et de la lutte contre la corruption (INPPLC), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agence pour le développement agricole, the World Bank, the OECD and Transparency Maroc. Search terms combined "Morocco" or "Maroc" with corruption-related terms (corruption, bribery, pot-de-vin, clientelism, patronage, favouritism, elite capture, conflict of interest, conflit d'intérêts, fraud) and sector terms (agricultural subsidies, Fonds de développement agricole, Plan Maroc Vert, Génération Green, collective land, terres collectives, soulaliyates, state land, groundwater, wells, irrigation).

Four types of sources were used. Governance indices and surveys (the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), the OECD Public Integrity Indicators, Afrobarometer, the Global Corruption Barometer and the World Bank Enterprise Survey) provide the national picture. Official and programme documents (Cour des comptes reports and judgements, World Bank programme appraisal documents, and ministry and ADA publications) document the institutional set-up and control weaknesses. Peer-reviewed field research, mostly based on interviews in specific regions such as Souss-Massa, the Saïss plain and the Middle Drâa, provides most of the evidence on how corruption operates in practice in the land and water sectors. Moroccan and international press reporting was used for recent cases not yet covered by research or audits.

Data on the extent of corruption in agriculture, land and water governance are not available at national level. The sector analysis therefore relies on documented cases and field studies, which illustrate how corruption operates but cannot be generalised to the country as a whole. Throughout, the paper distinguishes between documented cases, reported allegations and governance weaknesses that create corruption risks.

Table 1: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABH	Agence du bassin hydraulique (river basin agency)
ADA	Agence pour le développement agricole (Agricultural Development Agency)
AUCPCC	African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CNAC	Commission nationale anti-corruption (national anti-corruption commission)
CNSS	Caisse nationale de sécurité sociale (national social security fund)
CoI	Conflict of interest
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
DPA	Direction provinciale de l'agriculture (provincial directorate of agriculture)
DRA	Direction régionale de l'agriculture (regional directorate of agriculture)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FDA	Fonds de développement agricole (Agricultural Development Fund)
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCP	Haut-Commissariat au Plan (High Commission for Planning, the national statistics office)
IAV	Institut agronomique et vétérinaire Hassan II (Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine)
IGA	Inspection générale de l'agriculture (general inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture)
IGF	Inspection générale des finances (general inspectorate of finance, Ministry of Economy and Finance)
IIAG	Ibrahim Index of African Governance
INPPLC	Instance nationale de la probité, de la prévention et de la lutte contre la corruption (National Authority for Probity, Prevention and the Fight against Corruption)
INRA	Institut national de la recherche agronomique (National Institute for Agricultural Research)
MAPMDREF	Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests
MENAFATF	Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force
MIPA	Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis
ONCA	Office national du conseil agricole (National Office for Agricultural Advisory Services)
ONEE	Office national de l'électricité et de l'eau potable (national electricity and water utility)
ONSSA	Office national de sécurité sanitaire des produits alimentaires (National Food Safety Office)
ORMVA	Office régional de mise en valeur agricole (regional agricultural development office)

Abbreviation	Meaning
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PAM	Authenticity and Modernity Party
PJD	Justice and Development Party
PMV	Plan Maroc Vert (Green Morocco Plan)
PPP	Public-private partnership
RNI	National Rally of Independents
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption

Background

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy in which the king retains extensive executive, religious and arbitral powers alongside a head of government, whom the king appoints from the party that wins the most seats in the house of representatives (Hind 2020; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2024). A coalition led by Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch of the National Rally of Independents (RNI), with the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) and Istiqlal, governed from 2021 to 2026. Akhannouch stepped down as RNI leader in February 2026 and was replaced by Mohamed Chaouki (Morocco World News 2026). Parliamentary elections were held on 23 September 2026 (Maroc.ma 2026). According to provisional results announced by the Ministry of Interior on 24 September 2026, PAM won the most seats (97 of 395), ahead of the RNI (66), Istiqlal (65) and the PJD (54), on a turnout of 38%, down from 50% in 2021 (Al Jazeera 2026). In October 2026, PAM formed a new four-party coalition with Istiqlal, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), with Fatima Ezzahra El Mansouri as head of government (Hespress English 2026). The Economist Intelligence Unit classifies Morocco as a hybrid regime,[1] scoring 4.97 out of 10 and ranking 91 of 167 countries in its 2024 Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit 2025).

Public frustration with corruption and the quality of public services has grown in recent years (Arab Reform Initiative 2025; Zarhloule 2025). In autumn 2025, youth-led protests organised online under the GenZ 212 banner spread to cities across the country (Arab Reform Initiative 2025; France 24 2025a). The movement coalesced after the deaths of women following caesarean sections at a public hospital in Agadir in mid-September 2025 (Arab Reform Initiative 2025). Protesters demanded better health and education services, an end to corruption and, in several instances, the prime minister's resignation (France 24 2025b). They also criticised spending on infrastructure for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations and the 2030 FIFA World Cup (France 24 2025a; Zarhloule 2025). Three people were killed by police in Lqliaa, near Agadir; the authorities said the officers had acted in legitimate self-defence (France 24 2025b).

Morocco's economy has grown steadily, but unemployment remains high, particularly among young people. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4.6% in 2025, and the OECD projects growth of 5.0% in 2026 and 3.9% in 2027, supported by

[1] The Economist Intelligence Unit classifies countries as full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes or authoritarian regimes. In hybrid regimes, elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being free and fair, government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common, corruption tends to be widespread, the rule of law is weak, and the judiciary is not independent.

exceptional winter rainfall and public infrastructure investment (OECD 2026a). Headline inflation averaged 0.9% over the first ten months of 2025 (OECD 2025). According to the High Commission for Planning, the Morocco national statistics office, 9.5% of the labour force was unemployed in the second quarter of 2026. Among young people aged 15 to 24, the unemployment rate was 27.2% (HCP 2026).[2]

Aziz Akhannouch, prime minister since 2021 and a target of many protesters' demands for resignation (France 24 2025b), is also closely tied to the sectors examined in this paper. As minister of agriculture from 2007 to 2021, under three heads of government, he oversaw an expanding portfolio that came to include rural development, water and forests. During his mandate, he also oversaw the launch of the Plan Maroc Vert (PMV) in April 2008 and presented its successor, Generation Green, in February 2020.

Agriculture contributes around 12% of GDP and remains the largest source of rural employment (Mengoub et al. 2026). In 2025, agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for 25.5% of total employment and 60.5% of rural employment (Médias24 2026). Since 2008, agricultural policy has been set by two successive national strategies. The PMV (2008–2020) sought to modernise agriculture and raise output and exports, mainly by attracting private investment, alongside a smaller "solidarity" component for smallholders (ADA n.d.a). Its successor, Generation Green (2020–2030), puts more emphasis on building an agricultural middle class and on employment for young people (Ministère de l'Agriculture n.d.b). Both strategies rely on three instruments: public subsidies for private investment, the mobilisation of state and collective land for private operators (World Bank 2017) and the expansion of irrigated, largely groundwater-based agriculture (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022). This paper is structured around these three instruments because each place scarce and valuable resources (land, water and public funds) under the discretion of officials across several agencies. Discretion is not a problem in itself, but where it is combined with limited transparency and weak accountability (Klitgaard 1988), officials can allocate land, water and subsidies on the basis of connections, loyalty or bribes rather than published eligibility criteria, with little risk of detection.

These sectors are also under growing environmental pressure. Morocco is one of the world's most water-stressed countries, with up to 88% of mobilised surface and groundwater being used for irrigation (EcoActu 2022). Moreover, recurrent drought and climate change are intensifying competition for groundwater and land (Wehrey and Bonney 2025).

[2] This is the first estimate produced under the office's new labour force survey, so it is not comparable with figures published before 2026.

Scarcity does not in itself cause corruption. However, where access to land and water already depends on discretion and connections, scarcity raises the value of that access and can intensify competition for favourable treatment. This Helpdesk Answer first gives an overview of corruption in Morocco, then examines corruption risks in land governance, agricultural subsidies, and water and irrigation sectors, before reviewing the legal and institutional anti-corruption framework and the sectoral oversight bodies.

Overview of corruption in Morocco

Extent of corruption

Morocco scored 39/100 on Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and ranked 91 of 182 countries. This is up from 37/100 in 2024, but below its 2018 score of 43/100, when it ranked 73 of 180 (Transparency International 2025). Transparency International notes that no country in the Middle East and North Africa has improved significantly since 2012, and that in Morocco restrictions on civic space undermine investigations into embezzlement by elected officials and civil servants (Transparency International 2026). Analysing the results, Transparency Maroc characterises corruption in Morocco as "systemic and generalised" (Transparency Maroc 2026). Morocco's percentile rank[3] for control of corruption on the Worldwide Governance Indicators fell from 44.6 in 2013 to 33.0 in 2023 (World Bank Group 2024).

Composite governance indices point to stronger formal frameworks alongside weak enforcement (Table 2). On the Ibrahim Index of African Governance,[4] Morocco's overall score rose by 5.3 points between 2014 and 2023, but the modest gain in its anti-corruption score came almost entirely due to gains in anti-corruption mechanisms, while scores for the absence of corruption in state institutions and in the public sector declined. Separately, its score on the index's rural land and water access indicator, which belongs to the rural economy sub-category of the indicator, fell by 14.2 points over the same period,[5] although at 84.5 out of 100 it remains high (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2024). The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2026 describes corruption as "endemic, i.e. deeply rooted in state institutions and central to the regime's functioning". It observes that public officials are rarely prosecuted, that the monarchy and its entourage remain exempt from scrutiny and that political interference hinders the implementation of recommendations from the Cour des

[3] The percentile rank places a country against all others measured: a score of 33.0 means that roughly two-thirds of countries were assessed as controlling corruption more effectively than Morocco, and the fall since 2013 means its relative position has worsened.

[4] The Ibrahim Index of African Governance scores 54 African countries from 0 to 100, where a higher score is better, and ranks them against each other. Scores are published with a ten-year trend, here covering 2014 to 2023, so a country can improve its score while falling in the ranking, or vice versa.

[5] This indicator assesses rural populations' access to land and water resources, including for agriculture.

comptes[6] (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). The OECD Public Integrity Indicators show the same gap between law and practice: Morocco meets 78% of criteria on conflict of interest (CoI) regulation in law but 33% in practice, and 20% on lobbying regulation in law but none in practice (OECD 2026b).

Surveys by civil society organisations and research institutes point to frequent bribery and low confidence in the state's response. In Transparency International's 2019 Global Corruption Barometer, 74% of respondents judged government performance on corruption as bad (Pring and Vrushi 2019). The most recent Afrobarometer survey, conducted in February 2024 with a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adults, found perceptions of corruption highest for elected bodies: around a third of respondents said that most or all municipal councillors (32%) and members of parliament (32%) were involved in corruption, compared with 28% for the prime minister's office, 25% for civil servants and 12% for the police and gendarmerie. Nearly a third (31%) believed that citizens risk retaliation if they report corruption, and 39% said that officials who commit crimes often or always go unpunished (Afrobarometer 2025).

The OECD's June 2026 economic outlook states that Morocco's anti-corruption framework has been strengthened, but that perceived corruption remains high, especially in public procurement (OECD 2026a). Its previous edition recommended legislation on lobbying, further digitalisation to reduce face-to-face interactions with officials, and dividing large public contracts into smaller lots (OECD 2025). The OECD also notes that information on corruption cases is hard to obtain (OECD 2024).

Table 2: Morocco's performance on selected governance indicators

Indicator	Morocco score	Source
Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 (0–100)	39/100; ranked 91 of 182 countries	Transparency International 2025
Worldwide Governance Indicators: control of corruption, 2023 (percentile rank)	33.0 (44.6 in 2013)	World Bank Group 2024
Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2024: anti-corruption (0–100)	51.3; 13 of 54 (overall governance 62.0; 8th)	Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2024
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2026: anti-corruption policy (1–10)	3/10 (prosecution of office abuse 4/10)	Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026

[6] The Cour des comptes is Morocco's supreme audit institution. It audits public finances and public bodies and has jurisdiction over budgetary and financial discipline. Its regional courts (cours régionales des comptes) audit local and regional government.

Indicator	Morocco score	Source
Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2026: Morocco	Conflict of interest: 78% in law/33% in practice; Lobbying: 20% in law/0% in practice	OECD 2026b
Global Corruption Barometer 2019	31% surveyed said they paid a bribe in the previous 12 months	Pring and Vrushi 2019
Afrobarometer Round 10 (2024)	52% of respondents said the government was handling the fight against corruption badly ("fairly badly" and "very badly" combined)	Afrobarometer 2025

Forms of corruption

This section outlines the main forms of corruption in Morocco identified in the recent literature. The following section on agriculture, land and water governance examines how each of them manifests in those sectors.

Political corruption, patronage, clientelism and favouritism

Studies of Moroccan governance treat patronage and clientelism as structural features. The Makhzen,[7] the network of monarchy linked political, economic and security elites, is described as exercising influence over decisions that exceeds that of elected institutions (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2024; Sater 2017). Appointments are reportedly made on the basis of loyalty or family ties rather than merit, known as *parachutage* (Chtatou 2019). BTI 2026 describes this as a political system relying on top-down decisions and patronage networks, and public administration as suffering from patronage and corruption (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026).

The monarchy sits at the centre of these networks. BTI 2026 notes that royal holdings such as Al Mada benefit from privileged access to financing and resources (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Where access to land, credit and public contracts depends on connections rather than competition, patronage reinforces the concentration of economic power in a few large firms, a pattern the OECD observes across many sectors of the economy (OECD 2024). The section on the agriculture, land

[7] The term Makhzen originally referred to the royal court and the administration built around the sultan and his local representatives. Under the French protectorate, it came to denote the state's apparatus of power and control. Today it describes a mode of governance that shapes relations between the ruler and the ruled (Tozy 1991, cited in Houdret and Amichi 2022: 658).

and water sectors examines how this works in practice, including in irrigation concessions and the allocation of state and collective land.

Patronage also extends to elections, where material benefits are reportedly exchanged for votes, and there are recurring allegations of corruption in electoral processes (PACE 2021; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Observing the 2021 elections, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) reported complaints about the widespread use of money to secure votes, concentrated in rural areas and marginalised districts and lodged particularly by the Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Party of Progress and Socialism and the Unified Socialist Party. The observation mission also documented allegations of vote buying through the payment of school fees or school equipment, a lack of transparency in campaign financing and cases of corruption among civil servants that political parties had not properly addressed. The campaign was also marked by accusations between parties of excessive spending: the RNI spent around US$200,000 on social media advertising, roughly ten times its nearest competitor (PACE 2021). Morocco has no independent central election commission, a long-standing PACE recommendation, and the Ministry of Interior manages the electoral process (PACE 2021). According to BTI 2026, the 2023 annual report of the National Authority for Probity, Prevention and the Fight against Corruption (INPPLC) found that bribery and election fraud remained common (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026).

Parliamentary integrity remains a concern. In January 2024, Transparency Maroc reported that 29 members of parliament had been implicated in corruption cases brought before the courts in recent years (Médias24 2024a; Middle East Eye 2024). By July 2024, TelQuel counted 28 members of the house of representatives, roughly one in thirteen, who had been convicted of or were being prosecuted for financial crimes such as corruption, embezzlement and fraud (Courrier International 2024). BTI 2026 reports that a 2023 drug trafficking scandal implicating high-ranking officials exposed the nexus between politics, business and crime (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Arrests linked to the case included two PAM members of parliament among 25 suspects (Sanz 2024). Politico has reported alleged attempts by Moroccan authorities to influence members of the European Parliament, including offers of support for election campaigns and hospitality (Braun and Moens 2023).

Bribery, embezzlement and misuse of public resources

Survey evidence suggests that petty bribery in dealings with the administration is common. In a 2022 survey by the Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis, 66% of respondents considered bribery extremely widespread and a further 27% somewhat widespread, and 90% said it was common practice to pay extra to have an administrative task completed faster (MIPA 2022). Afrobarometer's 2024 data also show that among respondents who had tried to obtain an identity document or

official authorisation in the previous year, around 28% said they had paid a bribe, given a gift or done a favour at least once to obtain it (Afrobarometer 2025). The bribery rate for medical services in the 2019 Global Corruption Barometer was 32%, the highest in the Middle East and North Africa (Kukutschka and Vrushi 2019). Firms report similar experiences. In the World Bank's 2023 Enterprise Survey, 29.6% of Moroccan firms reported having received at least one request for a bribe in dealings with public officials, and half (50.3%) were expected to give gifts to obtain a construction permit. Asked to name the biggest obstacle to their operations, 15.7% of firms cited corruption, the second most common answer after practices of competitors in the informal sector (21.7%) (World Bank 2023b). In 2020, the news site Yabiladi reported alleged collusion between court staff at the Casablanca court of first instance (judges, prosecutors, clerks and bailiffs) and lawyers acting for banks, insurers and utility companies. Tens of thousands of debt recovery cases were processed without the defendants' knowledge because summonses were sent to false addresses (Yabiladi 2020; USDOS 2021).

Documented large-scale cases include the embezzlement of funds from Morocco's National Social Security Fund (CNSS), which a parliamentary inquiry found in 2002 had been taking place since the early 1970s (TelQuel 2016). Criminal convictions followed only in 2016, and in 2020 the Casablanca court of appeal ordered those convicted to repay 31.9 billion dirhams (around US$3.4 billion[8]) (Machloukh 2020). In 2022, 31 people, including Ministry of Health officials and suppliers, were charged for allegedly facilitating the award of contracts for medical equipment for public hospitals in return for commissions, cash and benefits in kind, and investigators seized large sums of cash from two biomedical engineers (Le Desk 2022; MAP 2022). In September 2024, the Casablanca court of appeal convicted 29 of the officials, with sentences ranging from a one-year suspended term to eight years in prison and fines of up to 800,000 dirhams (around US$80,000) (Ibriz 2024; Le Desk 2024). BTI 2026 reports allegations of fund mismanagement, bribery and favouritism in reconstruction contracts after the 2023 Al Haouz earthquake (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026).

Conflicts of interest, undue influence and regulatory capture

Three related risks arise where private and public interests meet. A conflict of interest occurs when an official's private interests could improperly influence the performance

[8] Unless the cited source gives a US dollar figure, dirham amounts in this paper are converted into US dollars at the World Bank's official average exchange rate for the year to which the amount refers; for totals covering several years, the rate for the final year is used, and for 2026 the 2025 average (9.35 dirhams per US dollar) is used (World Bank 2026). Figures are rounded. The dollar figures for the value of the state's private domain and for the Chtouka field research are those given in the sources (Agence Ecofin 2017; Houdret and Heinz 2022).

of public duties (OECD 2003). Undue influence occurs when private interests shape laws and policies through channels that are neither transparent nor regulated, and regulatory capture occurs when regulators act in the interests of the firms they oversee rather than the public interest (OECD 2017). The evidence reviewed below suggests that in Morocco, all three risks are facilitated by the concentration of economic power in a few firms, including royal holdings, and by weak rules on lobbying, conflicts of interest and movement between public and private positions.

Conflict of interest rules in Morocco cover only economic interests and do not extend to other private interests, such as family or personal ties, that can influence official decisions. Draft laws announced in 2020 to broaden them have not been implemented (OECD 2024). A dedicated law on conflicts of interest and revisions to the laws on access to information, asset declarations and whistleblower protection also remain pending (Transparency Maroc 2026). These gaps matter most where political office and private business overlap. The most prominent recent case concerns Aziz Akhannouch, prime minister from 2021 to 2026. The contract for the Casablanca-Settat seawater desalination plant was awarded to a consortium including Afriquia Gaz and Green of Africa, subsidiaries of the Akwa group majority owned by the Akhannouch family, together with the Spanish company Acciona (TelQuel 2024). Opposition parties alleged a clear conflict of interest. The prime minister told parliament that the tender had been transparent and that the project would receive no state financial support[9] (Le360 2024).

Morocco has no framework defining lobbying actors or activities, no system for disclosing lobbying information and no standards governing movement between public and private sector positions (OECD 2026b). The beneficial ownership register is operational but does not give free access to the full identity of owners (OECD 2026b). Private interests can therefore approach decision makers, and officials can move into the sectors they previously regulated, without public scrutiny. The legislative record points in the same direction. Transparency Maroc reports that early in its term, the 2021–2026 government withdrew a bill criminalising illicit enrichment and a bill on the illegal occupation of public property, and that the anti-corruption legislation envisaged by the 2011 constitution remains frozen (Transparency Maroc 2026). Transparency Maroc continues to press the government to end this impasse (Transparency Maroc 2026).

Many sectors of the Moroccan economy are dominated by a few large firms, and competition enforcement is rising only from a low base (OECD 2024). Royal holdings

[9] The consortium is building the plant under a public-private partnership with the national electricity and water utility (ONEE) and will operate it for 27 years. The 6.5 billion dirham (around US$700 million) investment is financed through the partners' equity and loans from Moroccan and Spanish banks and Spanish public export finance institutions (Acciona 2025).

are among the largest of these firms (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Competition enforcement has become more active; in 2023 the competition council fined nine fuel distributors around US$180 million for price fixing (Reuters 2023). However, Transparency Maroc has raised concerns, cited by BTI 2026, that enforcement has targeted rivals of firms linked to the then prime minister and the palace (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Where regulators apply the rules selectively, enforcement can protect politically connected incumbents rather than consumers.

Agriculture, land and water sectors

Sector structure and institutions

Moroccan agriculture is dualistic. Most farms are small and family run, often operated by elderly, low-literacy household heads, while a small number of large, export-oriented farms control a disproportionate share of land (World Bank 2017). This gap also exists in irrigated agriculture. About one-third of farms in every size class have irrigated land, and small farms (under three hectares) irrigate a larger share of their land (25.3%) than medium-sized farms (15.8%) or large farms of 20 hectares or more (16.4%). The difference lies in scale: large farms make up 4.5% of irrigated farms but control 32.2% of irrigated land, while farms under three hectares make up 57.8% of irrigated farms but hold 19.3% of irrigated land. The largest farms average 21.4 hectares of irrigated land, against one hectare on small farms (Mengoub et al. 2026). Land tenure compounds this inequality as only 18.7% of arable land is titled, falling to 12.5% on small farms (under three hectares), and titled land is the only form banks accept as collateral (Mengoub et al. 2026).

In its discussion of property rights, BTI 2026 notes that palace-owned land operates outside typical regulations but does not specify which (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Royal agricultural holdings also benefit from public irrigation schemes. Royal estates were among the participants in the El Guerdane public-private partnership (discussed below), whose operator was closely linked to the royal household and whose selection of beneficiaries was criticised as opaque (Houdret and Bonnet 2016). In the Saïss project, the king's farm stands to receive the largest share of water (Mayaux 2026).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests (MAPMDREF) sets policy and has delegated service delivery and investment support to deconcentrated services, autonomous agencies and public-private partnerships (PPPs) (World Bank 2017). The main institutions relevant to this paper are listed below, while Figure 1 shows how they relate to one another:

- The regional directorates of agriculture (DRA) and, under their authority, the provincial directorates (DPA). They identify PMV and Generation Green projects and appraise and implement pillar II projects. Pillar II is the "solidarity" pillar of both strategies, aimed at smallholders in marginal areas, while pillar I supports modern, market-oriented and export-focused agriculture (ADA n.d.a). The

directorates also host the Agricultural Development Fund (FDA) one-stop shops (*guichets uniques*) through which farmers apply for subsidies (World Bank 2017). Generation Green gives regional directorates and provincial councils a larger role, which its designers present as a way to increase responsiveness and accountability (de Souza et al. 2025).

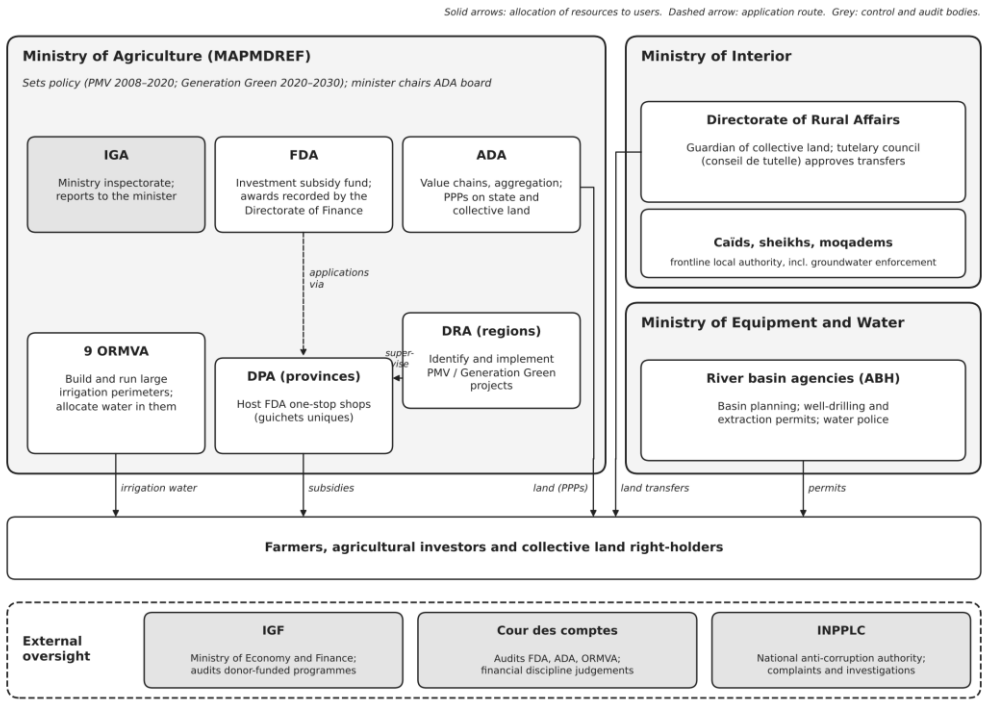
- Agence pour le Développement Agricole (ADA), created in 2008: it proposes action plans for high-potential value chains, oversees pillar I and pillar II projects and runs PPP projects that mobilise state and collective land for investment. Its board is chaired by the minister of agriculture (World Bank 2017). The ADA's own statement of the PMV's foundations includes placing public, collective and habous[10] land under private management and delegating the management of irrigation water, alongside a solidarity pillar for small-scale farmers (ADA n.d.a).
- Fonds de Développement Agricole (FDA): the main instrument for investment support under the PMV. It provides grants covering 10–30% of the cost of private investments in modern equipment, irrigation and processing, up to set ceilings, and supports aggregation projects that link small-scale producers with processors (World Bank 2017: 7–8). Farmers apply through one-stop shops hosted by the regional and provincial agriculture directorates, and the ministry's Directorate of Finance records applicants and awarded grants (World Bank 2017: 17, 19).
- The nine regional agricultural development offices (ORMVA): these public establishments build and manage irrigation infrastructure and allocate water within the large-scale irrigated perimeters (Ministère de l'Agriculture n.d.a).
- The river basin agencies (ABH), established under the framework of water law 10-95, with individual agencies created by decree. Water Law 36-15 (2016) maintains their role in basin-level water planning and in deciding applications for authorisation to drill wells and extract groundwater. They currently fall under the Ministry of Equipment and Water.
- The Ministry of Interior exercises guardianship over collective land through its directorate of rural affairs and a tutelary council (*conseil de tutelle*), which approves transactions on collective land and whose decisions historically could not be challenged (Sakhraji and Terrass 2025). Its *caïds*[11] and provincial authorities are also the state's frontline presence in rural enforcement, including of groundwater rules (Houdret and Heinz 2022: 571–572, 576).

[10] Habous land is land held as a religious endowment (*waqf*), administered by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs.

[11] Ministry of Interior official who heads a caïdat, the basic administrative district in rural areas.

Several studies identify fragmented mandates among these actors as a governance weakness, including field research in the Middle Drâa[12] (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022; 2025), the World Bank's appraisal of its PMV programme (World Bank 2017), BTI 2026 (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026) and Carnegie's study of climate governance (Wehrey and Bonney 2025). In the Middle Drâa, government officials described the agriculture, water and interior sectors as pursuing contradictory goals. The Ministry of Agriculture promotes investment, the water administration seeks to limit groundwater abstraction to protect depleted aquifers, and the Ministry of Interior avoids strict enforcement to prevent unrest (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022; 2025). The World Bank rated the fiduciary risk of its PMV programme "substantial" because of the number of central directorates, provincial directorates and agencies involved (World Bank 2017). BTI 2026 reports turf wars between the Ministries of Agriculture and Water that stall reforms (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Wehrey and Bonney (2025) note that there is still no tool to monitor climate-related programmes or spending across ministries.

Figure 1: Main institutions involved in governing agricultural subsidies, land and water in Morocco



Source: author's compilation based on World Bank (2017), Ministère de l'Agriculture (n.d.a), Houdret and Heinz (2022), Sakhraji and Terrass (2025) and the sources cited in the section on oversight and control of agricultural programmes.

[12] The Middle Drâa Valley is an oasis region in south-eastern Morocco, between Ouarzazate and Zagora, where agriculture depends on releases from the Mansour Eddahbi dam and on groundwater.

Political economy of the sectors

To explain how power is exercised in rural areas, Houdret and Amichi (2022) conceptualise Morocco's patronage system as a rural social contract. Central authorities control the distribution of water and land and grant access to clients, such as rural notables and, more recently, agricultural investors, in exchange for loyalty (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 646–647). Rural notables, such as large-scale landowners and tribal leaders, historically acted as the "eyes and ears" of the Makhzen (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 647). Since economic liberalisation, and particularly since the Plan Maroc Vert (PMV), a new class of well-off agricultural entrepreneurs has increasingly displaced older rural elites as the regime's pillar in the countryside. In both Morocco and Algeria, these entrepreneurs invest in local agricultural advisory institutions, such as chambers of agriculture, and in water user associations to gain access to information on new public subsidies and to influence grant decisions (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 652–654). In the Souss valley, many agricultural investors come from other business sectors, from politics or from the military (Bonnet 2013, cited in Houdret and Amichi 2022: 655).

The overlap of political office and private business interests is the clearest source of conflict-of-interest risk in these sectors. Over 14 years as minister, Akhannouch presided over the instruments examined in this paper: the FDA subsidy schemes, the ADA and its public-private partnerships on state and collective land, and the ORMVA irrigation perimeters. Houdret and Amichi (2022: 655) note that, as agriculture minister, Akhannouch, then ranked by Forbes as Morocco's third-richest man, extended his portfolio to rural development and controlled substantial related funding "in a highly opaque and contested way". The same overlap has since reached the water sector. As noted above, the Casablanca-Settat desalination contract was awarded to a consortium including subsidiaries of the Akwa group, majority owned by the Akhannouch family while he was head of government (TelQuel 2024). Akhannouch has rejected accusations of a conflict of interest (Le360 2024). No court or audit body has found that he acted improperly; the concern is that no rule required him to step aside from decisions affecting sectors in which his family held interests.

Two institutional factors heightened these risks. First, the Ministry of Agriculture set the eligibility rules for FDA subsidies, oversaw the ADA's allocation of state land and supervised the inspectorate that verifies compliance, which reports directly to the minister (World Bank 2017; Ministère de la Transition Numérique et de la Réforme de l'Administration n.d.). Decisions and their verification therefore sat under the same political authority. Second, Moroccan conflict of interest rules cover only economic interests (OECD 2024), do not clearly define the situations that give rise to a conflict of interest, and set no sanctions for members of government who breach

them (OECD 2026b: 5). No formal mechanism therefore existed to manage the overlap between the minister's public role and private interests.

Land governance

Access to land has long been one of the main instruments of patronage in rural Morocco. Two ministries control most of it: the Ministry of Interior, which acts as guardian of collective land, and the Ministry of Agriculture, which reallocates state land to private investors. Who benefits has changed over time. After independence, the monarchy redistributed former colonial land to rural notables in return for their loyalty (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 647). Since the Plan Maroc Vert, land and the subsidies attached to it have increasingly gone to a new class of well-off agricultural entrepreneurs, some of whom come from other business sectors, politics or the military (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 652–655). BTI 2026 concludes that weak protection of property rights allows expropriation and the privatisation of public land in ways that often benefit political and economic elites (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Small-scale farmers and collective right-holders have been the main losers, and among right-holders women have faced particular exclusion (Biya 2024; Sakhraji and Terrass 2025). This section first sets out the legal framework for collective and state land, then examines evidence of favouritism in land allocation and gaps in accountability for land revenue.

Collective land belongs to ethnic communities (tribes) under the guardianship of the Ministry of Interior. Members hold usage rights allocated by the community rather than ownership. Of the roughly 15 million hectares of collective land, large areas are pastoral rangeland used for grazing; the rest includes farmland cultivated by right-holders and land within irrigated perimeters (Jkaoua 2011). By BTI's estimate, collective land covers more than a third of the national territory (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). Collective farmland makes up 17.4% of Morocco's agricultural land (Mengoub et al. 2026). Law 62-17 of 2019 governs it, replacing the 1919 *dahir*.[13] Companion laws 63-17 and 64-17 cover the delimitation of collective land and collective land within irrigated perimeters. In dealings with the Ministry of Interior, communities are represented by *nouab,* who are the representatives of an ethnic collectivity in dealings with the tutelary authority (IWGIA 2022; Sakhraji and Terrass 2025).

Agricultural policy has increased pressure on this land. Generation Green provides for mobilising 1 million hectares of collective land for investment, around half of all collective agricultural land (Equal Times 2025). The Ministry of Agriculture presents

[13] A dahir is a royal decree.

this mobilisation as the means of creating a new generation of young agricultural entrepreneurs, with the land offered to young people and to right-holders (Ministère de l'Agriculture n.d.b). According to the ADA, the PMV placed around 112,000 hectares of state agricultural land in 1,575 PPP projects by 2018, with planned investment of 22.3 billion dirhams (around US$2.4 billion). It reports that 720 of these projects went to small-scale farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs, but does not break down the area allocated to each group (ADA n.d.b).

Patronage and favouritism in land allocation

Evidence of favouritism is clearest in the transfer of collective land and the reallocation of state land.

Transfers of collective land to outsiders are approved by a tutelary council (*conseil de tutelle*) within the ministry. Around Taroudant, Sakhraji and Terrass (2025) document long-term leases and sales of collective land to agri-food, real estate and international firms, which they describe as a legal form of land grabbing.[14] Directorate of Rural Affairs data from 2011, cited by the authors, show around 700 hectares of collective land leased each year for investment projects and around 3,000 hectares a year sold to real estate investors. These areas are small relative to the roughly 15 million hectares of collective land nationally (Jkaoua 2011); the concern lies less in their scale than in how transfers are decided. Before transfer, the land is held by the community, whose members have usage rights rather than ownership. Revenue from leases and sales is paid into accounts held for each community and managed by the Ministry of Interior's directorate of rural affairs, which needs the tutelary council's approval to spend it, mainly on development projects for the community, or to distribute it to right-holders (Jkaoua 2011). Decisions on which land is transferred, to whom and on what terms rest with this single body, and information on these transactions is not published (Sakhraji and Terrass 2025). This combination of concentrated discretion and opacity exposes the allocation of collective land to favouritism. Biya's (2024) fieldwork in Mehdia (Kénitra province) describes successive transfers of collective land to real estate companies without compensating development projects for the community. The study identifies two groups of beneficiaries: notables described as "servants of the state", and incoming domestic and foreign capital. BTI 2026 cites a similar case, the expropriation

[14] The International Land Coalition's Tirana Declaration (2011) defines land grabbing as: acquisitions or concessions that violate human rights, particularly the equal rights of women; not based on the free, prior and informed consent of the affected land users; not based on a thorough assessment of their social, economic and environmental impacts; avoid transparent contracts with clear commitments on activities, employment and benefit sharing; or are not based on effective democratic planning and meaningful participation (International Land Coalition 2011).

of tribal (collective) land for a luxury real estate development without fair compensation (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026).

State land belongs to the private domain of the state. Since the mid-2000s, former public agricultural land has been reallocated to PPPs, a process now run by the ADA, and some of it has gone to large agricultural investors (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 649). In the Saïss plain, a 2006 decree allowed the sale of former agrarian reform cooperative land, and by 2014, around 30% of former cooperative members had sold or leased all their land (Ameur et al. 2017). A 1,375-hectare former state farm was leased to two major investors through a PPP (Ameur et al. 2017). Access depended on connections. Former cooperative members competed with investors who had more financial means and stronger ties to the administration, which gave those investors better access to grants and state subsidies (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 653). By 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture had concessioned 7,250 hectares of former parastatal land in the Saïss to private investors, with investment plans that included new boreholes, even though the basin agency had stopped issuing borehole permits because of groundwater overdraft (Faysse et al. 2012).

Discretion over state land is not confined to agriculture. In 2016, it emerged that plots of state land in an upmarket area of Rabat had been sold to senior officials and politicians at 350 dirhams per square metre (around US$36), while the press reported that land on the same road sold for around 5,000 dirhams per square metre, more than 14 times as much (Le360 2016). The ministries of interior and finance defended the sales as lawful under a 1995 decree reserving the land for “servants of the state”, but the decree could not be found in the official bulletin and its prices had never been updated (Le Desk 2016; Médias24 2016).

Land is becoming concentrated in fewer, larger holdings. The number of farms fell from 1.9 million to 1.6 million between the 1974 and 2016 censuses, while the agricultural area grew (Mengoub et al. 2026). Houdret and Amichi (2022: 652) report, citing earlier studies, that the PMV triggered further land concentration and higher land prices. Overall, the evidence points to land policy that has favoured well-connected investors rather than to individual bribery.

Weak accountability for land revenue and compensation

Weak accountability over who benefits from land transactions, and over the revenue they generate, creates opportunities for misappropriation. The literature points to several accountability gaps in the land sector, two of which concern land revenue directly: opacity over transactions and revenue, and discretion over who is compensated.

The first is opacity over transactions on collective and state land, and over the revenue from their sale or lease. During fieldwork around Taroudant, Sakhraji and Terrass (2025) were denied access to official data on the census of right-holders and on transfer and compensation procedures, which officials of the provincial directorate of rural affairs in Taroudant described as sensitive. The management of state land is similarly opaque. In its 2015 annual report, published in 2017, the Cour des comptes valued the state's private domain at around 1.7 million hectares and 567 billion dirhams (around US$57 billion at the time). It found that no law defines that domain, that there is no land policy and no instruments to value or protect it, and that only about half of it was registered (Agence Ecofin 2017). These are management weaknesses rather than findings of corruption, but they make transactions and revenue from state land difficult to trace.

The second gap concerns discretion over who is compensated, which has weighed most heavily on women. Customary rules excluded women from compensation when collective land was sold or leased. Under the 1919 *dahir*, women were excluded from usufruct[15] unless widowed with a son, and a 1965 amendment left this unchanged (Biya 2024). This gave rise to the *soulaliyate* women's movement from 2007 and to litigation before the administrative courts (Sakhraji and Terrass 2025). Comparative research by Transparency International and the Equal Rights Trust shows that corruption and discrimination interact to deny land rights to marginalised groups, including women (Barnes 2024).

Rather than change the law, the Ministry of Interior issued a series of administrative circulars between 2009 and 2014. These gave women an equal right to compensation when collective land is sold or leased, extended the same right to allocations of land rather than money and allowed women to be appointed as community representatives. A community whose list of beneficiaries leaves women out cannot receive compensation. Around 21,000 women received a share of 153 million dirhams (around US$18 million) in 2012 (Biya 2024). Biya found, however, that the reform rested on instructions that the ministry could withdraw at any time and that officials applied them unevenly from region to region. Who received land revenue therefore depended on administrative discretion rather than on enforceable rights. BTI 2026 reports that women held 34% of titles in a recent privatisation pilot supported by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). A 2026 decree requires prior, economically justified approval by the supervisory authority for major transactions and gives community members a right of access to management documents. Its implementation has not yet been assessed (North Africa Post 2026).

[15] A usufruct is a legal right that allows a person to use another person's property and collect its income or profits without actually owning it.

Agricultural subsidies and investment

This section examines how agricultural subsidies are allocated and the corruption risks that arise in three areas: favouritism and elite capture, fraud and bribery, and capture of subsidy policy. The PMV introduced subsidies for farmers and agricultural investors through the FDA for drip irrigation, well drilling, machinery, greenhouses, plantations and processing units, and the PMV as a whole mobilised around 150 billion dirhams (around US$16 billion) in public and private investment (World Bank 2017; de Souza et al. 2025). Drip irrigation equipment was subsidised at 80–100% of installation costs, and in some cases new wells were also subsidised (Del Vecchio and Barone 2018). The ADA reports that the sector attracted 104 billion dirhams (around US$11 billion) of investment between 2008 and 2018, 40% of it public. It also reports that FDA incentives rose by 112% over the period and that drip irrigation expanded from 128,000 to 542,000 hectares (ADA n.d.b). It presents the 63 aggregation projects, covering 55,000 farmers, 80% of whom farm less than five hectares, as evidence of inclusion (ADA n.d.b). These figures are self-reported and have not been independently verified. The Generation Green strategy commits to bringing 400,000 households into an agricultural middle class, stabilising a further 690,000 there and creating employment for 350,000 young people (Ministère de l'Agriculture n.d.b), which makes the distribution of subsidies a test of the strategy's own objectives.

Favouritism and elite capture of subsidies

Field research consistently finds subsidies captured by better-off actors. The World Bank observed that PMV-era investment "has been limited and concentrated with large players", partly because public incentives were not adapted to smaller enterprises (World Bank 2017). In the Saïss plain, investment costs for fruit plantations "were often heavily subsidized by the state and easily accessible for investors who have an extensive social network" (Ameur et al. 2017). Investors who had newly acquired land in the area obtained state subsidies by using their social capital, while former cooperative members lacked the means to use them (Ameur et al. 2017). In the Tadla irrigation scheme, state redistribution mechanisms appear to "particularly favour large farm holdings, which use more (subsidized) water and obtain most of the subsidies, for example, to convert to drip irrigation" (Kuper et al. 2012: 52).

In the El Guerdane PPP in the Souss, the list of beneficiaries favoured owners of large plots (Houdret 2012). In 2004, the 30-year concession was awarded to Omnium Nord Africain, whose main shareholder was the royal family. The Fonds Hassan II pour le Développement Économique et Social, a royal fund financed largely from privatisation proceeds, which administers public funds without parliamentary control, met 42% of the US$80 million investment. Local water users had no say in approving or implementing the project, contrary to the participatory principles of

water law 10-95 (Houdret 2012). Wehrey and Bonney (2025) report that large-scale landowners benefited from sizeable subsidies for well-digging equipment, while exploiting weak oversight to dig wells illegally. They also describe a "hydraulic lobby" of government-connected landowners that, according to economist Najib Akesbi, influences policy in government agencies, parliament and local institutions. BTI 2026 concludes that agribusiness elites have benefited from the PMV while rural and marginalised communities bear its environmental costs (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2026). In the Middle Drâa, drip irrigation subsidies reached investors farming watermelon on collective land, but not oasis smallholders with fragmented plots, whom equipment suppliers declined to serve (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022).

Fraud, bribery and misuse of subsidy funds

The Cour des comptes' review of the FDA for 2008–2013 identified control weaknesses that create openings for fraud and bribery (Médias24 2015):

- The FDA's technical committee did not meet regularly, and several ministry entities intervened in the subsidy process under informal arrangements.
- The FDA one-stop shops (*guichets uniques*) at the regional and provincial directorates, where farmers apply for subsidies, kept no system to record and follow up applicants' complaints and some officials lacked the technical profile to examine files and carry out site checks.
- Subsidies were paid for investments whose eligibility had not been verified, prior approval was granted on incomplete documents and site checks did not adequately verify applicants' declarations.
- Partners in PPPs on state agricultural land who had not honoured their commitments to the state continued to receive subsidies because no mechanism existed to prevent this, as did beneficiaries who had not repaid sums subject to recovery orders.

Recent cases show these weaknesses being exploited through fraud, bribery and the diversion of subsidised inputs:

- Fraud in livestock subsidies (2025): a livestock census found fictitious beneficiary lists and claims for non-existent herds. Some claimants rented sheep for about 150 dirhams (around US$16) a head, collected the per-head subsidy of 750 dirhams (around US$80) and returned the animals. Opposition deputies accused the national association of sheep and goat breeders (ANOC), which receives 30% of the subsidy envelope, of inflating herd figures. The minister replied that ANOC's accounts are audited annually by the Cour des comptes and other financial control bodies (Le360 2025a).

- Diversion of input subsidies (2026): in March 2026, the minister launched an in-depth inspection following complaints from Larache smallholders and was reported to entrust it to the ministry's inspection générale. Intermediaries using front names with no land or farming activity bought subsidised fertiliser at around 10 dirhams (around US$1) a sack and resold it at margins of up to 40 dirhams (around US$4). The ministry indicated that files could be referred to the courts and that fertiliser and feed subsidy mechanisms would be redesigned (Le360 2026).
- Bribery in drip-irrigation subsidies: in Faija (Middle Drâa), local authorities allegedly receive bribes from drip-irrigation providers to speed up access to subsidies (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2025). The source reports this as an allegation by interviewees and does not identify which authority.

Capture of subsidy policy

The subsidies for importing live sheep and cattle, introduced in October 2022 to curb red meat prices, raised concerns about the capture of subsidy policy. The opposition, and Le360 citing the Ministry of Economy and Finance, put the total cost at 13.3 billion dirhams (around US$1.4 billion), whereas the Ministry of Agriculture reported 437 million dirhams (around US$47 million) in direct subsidies paid to 156 importers for 875,000 animals (L'Opinion 2025; Le360 2025b). Istiqlal's secretary general, himself a minister in the coalition, criticised importers' margins that were not passed on to consumers (Le360 2025b). The opposition failed to secure a parliamentary commission of inquiry, and a planned censure motion lapsed in May 2025 when one opposition party withdrew (Le360 2025c). No independent audit of the scheme has been published.

As noted above, agricultural entrepreneurs gain influence over grant decisions through chambers of agriculture and water user associations (Houdret and Amichi 2022: 654). Kchikech et al. (2024) document a comparable dynamic at the local level in the Middle Atlas Mountains region where irrigation and marketing cooperatives control access to shared boreholes and to collectively negotiated prices. Community members accused the leaders of groundwater and marketing cooperatives of opaque management, clientelism and appointing relatives to key posts until the leaders were voted out between 2015 and 2023 (Kchikech et al. 2024). A similar pattern appears in the Settat irrigation perimeter where members of a water user association created on the authorities' instructions suspected its leaders of taking project money, and the association's president was pursuing a parliamentary career (Mayaux and Massot 2019). Membership of these bodies is therefore both a route to public resources and, in some cases, a step towards elected office.

Water and irrigation sectors

Irrigation consumes up to 88% of mobilised water in Morocco, one of the world's most water-stressed countries (EcoActu 2022). Irrigated agriculture produces around 45% of agricultural value added and 75% of agricultural exports on about 19% of usable agricultural area (Cour des comptes 2023). Groundwater now underpins much of it. In the Saïss plain, 91% of irrigated land relied on groundwater by 2012, and the confined aquifer dropped by 90 metres over 40 years (Ameur et al. 2017). In the Tadla large-scale irrigation scheme, developed from the 1930s and covering around 100,000 hectares, more than 8,300 wells and tubewells were in use by around 2010, and farmers had begun drawing on deep confined aquifers theoretically reserved for drinking water (Kuper et al. 2012: 48–51). State support for the scheme, including subsidies for converting to drip irrigation, has mainly benefited large farms (Kuper et al. 2012: 52), an example of the elite capture of subsidies discussed in the previous section.

State policy enabled this expansion. After the droughts of the early 1980s, the government waived well authorisation and subsidised private irrigation investment (Doukkali 2005). Doukkali (2005) identified groundwater regulation as a serious gap in Morocco's otherwise "remarkable" water reforms. He attributed the failure to complete pricing reform to political costs overriding resource costs.

Tolerated rule breaking and clientelist water governance

Houdret and Amichi (2022: 651) find that authorities tolerate illegal practices, including unauthorised drilling, informal land leasing and irrigation expansion in protected zones, to maintain social peace, that is, to avoid protest and unrest among rural populations who depend on farming. Officials from the ministries of agriculture and interior reportedly advised water authorities not to press users who failed to pay fees or extracted water illegally. Officials in the Middle Drâa similarly confirmed that enforcement is constrained by social and political costs (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022).

Mayaux (2026) examines how these tolerated practices operate around a single large project. The Saïss "safeguard" project, announced in 2010 and still under construction in 2026, will transfer 125 million m³ of water a year from the M'Dez dam to the plain at an estimated cost of 5.8 billion dirhams (around US$620 million), co-financed by the EBRD and the Green Climate Fund. It is designed to reach only part of the plain: on the ministry's own figures, about 40% of irrigators (2,850 of 7,300) will receive water, and rain-fed farmers, who are the majority, are excluded by design. If water is allocated in proportion to the area each farm currently irrigates with groundwater, around 40 farms would receive more than half of the project's

water, the largest share going to the king's farm. The Secretary of State for Agriculture described the project's main objective as protecting private investment in the region. Because the project confers a scarce and valuable entitlement on a minority of farmers and could channel a disproportionate share of public water to a few large farms, including the king's, the procedure for deciding who subscribes is exposed to favouritism, bribery and capture (Mayaux 2026).

Mayaux (2026) argues that the Ministry of Agriculture's formal pledge to use impartial, criteria-based selection was accompanied by two other, informal promises. The first was a clientelist promise made by local notables with Ministry of Interior connections. In one commune, farmers close to an influential local family, including the mayor and successive members of parliament, were contacted directly to subscribe. Several said that their entire landholding, including unirrigated land, had been registered as eligible without the field measurements applied to others, and no public notice of selection procedures was posted at the caïdat. The second was a promise of non-enforcement by moqadems and sheikhs who allowed ineligible farmers to subscribe to avoid protest and assured farmers that their wells would continue operating unchecked. Mayaux (2026) notes that the water police (police des eaux), the sworn officials of the river basin agencies empowered to inspect wells and record offences (Le360 2022), had still not been seriously implemented despite being created under the 1995 water law, making both informal promises credible.

Bribery in well drilling and enforcement

In Chtouka (Souss-Massa), more than 18 field conversations in a study based on 45 interviews linked groundwater control to corrupt practices (Houdret and Heinz 2022). One farmer reported paying 10,000 dirhams (around US$1,000) to local authorities in advance to drill a well at night, describing the payment as "obligatory". Drilling companies charged more for unlicensed wells (800 against 500 dirhams, or around US$80 against US$50, per metre) and managed the payments on farmers' behalf. Another farmer said that "if you don't give *backsheesh*, you stay at home". A local elected official described controls that were initially enforced and later "adapted", and implied that under-the-table payments explained the change. An interviewee who repeatedly reported illegal drilling said seized equipment reappeared in the field the next day.

Houdret and Heinz (2022) conclude that the rules are applied selectively according to users' social connections or ability to pay bribes. They argue that the aquifer

contract,[16] by ignoring existing power asymmetries, created new opportunities for corruption under the cover of a formal agreement.

Field research in the Middle Drâa reports similar practices (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022; 2025). A Faija farmer explained that he drilled without a permit "because you need to give money to people as part of the procedure", adding that "sometimes we pay bribes and sometimes we call people we know" in the administration (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022). A later study reports allegations that local authorities take bribes from well drillers to allow drilling without permits (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2025). In the Saïss project, one farmer was offered the chance to subscribe after the official deadline in return for a fee, and a moqadem advised another to install a pump quickly in order to qualify (Mayaux 2026). In the Saïss plain, a manager at the Sebou basin agency estimated that only 40% of wells were authorised, and the agency is officially aware of only 30–40% of existing abstraction points (Del Vecchio and Barone 2018). Nationally, Wehrey and Bonney (2025) report that around 90% of Morocco's 372,000 wells are unauthorised, which leaves abstraction unmonitored.

Regulatory design and enforcement gaps

Policy design reinforces these practices. In the Middle Drâa, applicants for drip irrigation subsidies do not need a drilling permit, only proof of an existing well with water, which lets farmers bypass the basin agency when it refuses drilling authorisation (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022). Some tribes require members to farm land before issuing land-use certificates, which the state then requires before granting subsidies or drilling permits, creating a further incentive to drill illegally (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022). A 2022 provincial decision limiting watermelon cultivation in Faija remained weakly enforced (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2025).

Capacity is also weak. Government interviewees in the Middle Drâa attributed the lack of control over abstraction partly to limited staff and resources to enforce regulation in remote areas (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al. 2022). Del Vecchio and Barone (2018) find that water police officers, who are mostly sworn officials of the basin agencies, spend little of their time on enforcement. A Sebou agency manager described control as "the weak point in the chain", citing logistical problems and a lack of resources, and in the Oum Er-Rbia agency, groundwater conservation took up less than 5% of a single staff member's workload.

The water use fee paid to basin agencies is set at 0.02 dirhams (around US$0.002) per m³ for agricultural users. According to the OECD, it is not collected at all from private and small-scale users, who account for over 60% of irrigated area, and 240–

[16] An aquifer contract is a negotiated agreement between state agencies and water users on the management of a groundwater aquifer, as in Chtouka (Souss-Massa).

254 million dirhams (around US$24–26 million) of revenue is foregone each year. The OECD recommends strengthening the basin agencies' powers to enforce collection (OECD 2024). Policy correction came late. Irrigation subsidies for watermelon, avocado and citrus were discontinued only in 2022, five years after protests over drinking water shortages in Zagora (Wehrey and Bonney 2025). An early retirement programme in 2005 left agricultural and water administrations short of qualified staff (Houdret and Amichi 2022). The Cour des comptes found irrigation water priced below distribution cost, ORMVA maintenance spending persistently below estimated needs and 644 million dirhams (around US$66 million) of uncollected water fees in 2017 (Cour des comptes 2023). Ameur et al. (2017) conclude that those most responsible for groundwater depletion (investors and lessees were responsible for more than 85% of abstraction in their study area) are the least affected by it and the most encouraged by the state.

Legal and institutional anti-corruption framework

Legal framework

International conventions and initiatives

Morocco is a signatory of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and ratified the convention in 2007 (UNCAC Coalition n.d.).

In 2022, Morocco also ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates 2022). The country is a full member of Interpol and a member of the FATF regional body, the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF). Its most recent mutual evaluation was in 2019. Morocco was placed on the FATF list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring in February 2021 and removed from it in February 2023 (FATF 2021; FATF 2023).

In 2011, Marrakech hosted the fourth session of the conference of the states parties to UNCAC, which adopted the Marrakech declaration on the prevention of corruption (UNODC 2011). Morocco is not party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention (OECD 2024).

Domestic legal framework

The 2011 constitution provides the foundation of the current anti-corruption legal framework, making good governance and measures to counter corruption constitutional principles and allowed for the creation of the INPPLC (OECD 2026b). Morocco's national anti-corruption strategy was adopted in December 2015 and ran until 2025. Its implementation was formally launched in May 2016 with the signature of a contractual framework covering ten programmes and 239 projects, and it set the objective of raising Morocco's Corruption Perceptions Index score to 60 out of 100 by 2025 (Maroc.ma 2015; Challenge 2016).

The national anti-corruption commission (CNAC), created in 2017 and chaired by the head of government, was established to monitor implementation of the anti-corruption strategy (OECD 2026b). As noted above, Morocco scored 39 out of 100 on the 2025 CPI, well short of the strategy's target and below its 2018 score of 43. The monitoring reports on the 2015–2025 strategy stopped in 2022. In December 2025,

the INPPLC presented a new national anti-corruption strategy for 2025–2030, which prioritises prevention and includes a digital reporting platform, a national corruption barometer and the regular publication of complaint data (Le Matin 2025a; 2025b).

Articles 248–256 of the penal code criminalise active and passive bribery of public officials (Kingdom of Morocco 1962). Decree 2-22-431 of 2023 reformed public procurement, introducing weighted award criteria, a procurement observatory and a complaints committee (World Bank 2023a). The 2018 access to information law requires requesters to bear copying and dispatch costs (El-Rayes 2024). A draft law to protect public officials who report corruption in public administrations has been awaiting adoption since 2019. Protection against reprisals remains insufficient, and whistleblowers must prove that they acted in good faith; if they cannot, they may face criminal penalties (Sadek 2019; GIDE 2024; OECD 2024). Senior officials must declare assets, and all ministers and 99% of MPs filed declarations for 2018–2023 (OECD 2026b). However, declarations are not public, there is no centralised electronic database, and no data are published on follow-ups or sanctions (OECD 2026b). The Cour des comptes' verification focuses on whether declarations were filed rather than on their content (OECD 2024).

In August 2024, the Moroccan government council approved bill 03.23, which amends law 22.01 on criminal procedure. The law entered into force on 8 December 2025 (Médias24 2025). Its Articles 3 and 7 introduce new provisions that limit the role of both the public prosecutor and associations in crimes involving public funds. Prosecutors can no longer open investigations into such crimes on their own initiative, the *procureur général* at the Court of Cassation must request them, on referral from oversight bodies and institutions designated by law, such as the INPPLC and the General Inspectorate of Finance (Le Matin 2025c). As a result, CSOs can no longer initiate legal action against offences involving public funds, including embezzlement by elected officials (Al-Ashraf 2024). This has generated significant criticism, with Al-Ashraf (2024) arguing that it will undermine the ability of civil society to hold officials to account. Before the introduction of this bill, some organisations had initiated legal action against civil servants and elected officials, which had, for instance, resulted in the arrest of a former minister in the municipal council of Fqih Bensaleh after a complaint was made by the Moroccan Association for the Protection of Public Funds, who cited violations of the public procurement code (Al-Ashraf 2024). The law could limit civil society's role to only condemning corruption and advocating for accountability without being able to launch judicial action. Transparency Maroc argues that Articles 3 and 7 of the adopted law breach the constitution and the anti-corruption conventions Morocco has ratified (Transparency Maroc 2026). The amendments have also drawn criticism from opposition parties in parliament (Le Matin 2025d) and from constitutional bodies, including the INPPLC (Le360 2025d).

Several recourse mechanisms are specific to the sectors reviewed in this paper, although evidence on their use is limited:

- Collective land: law 62-17 recognises men and women as equal members of ethnic collectivities. In 2023 the court of cassation confirmed this equality and held that decisions of the tutelary council can be challenged before the administrative courts, relying on Article 118 of the 2011 constitution (Yabiladi 2023). Law 64-17 gives the provincial tutelary council power to rule on appeals concerning beneficiary lists for collective land in irrigated perimeters (Le Matin 2019).
- Water: law 36-15 empowers the water police to access wells and boreholes and to record infractions (Le360 2022). Using the public water domain without prior authorisation or concession is an offence punishable by administrative sanctions, such as withdrawal of authorisation, and by fines or imprisonment (ABHT 2023). As noted above, the water police has not been seriously implemented (Mayaux 2026).
- Subsidies and programmes: no dedicated appeal mechanism against FDA subsidy decisions was identified, and the Cour des comptes found that the one-stop shops kept no complaints system (Médias24 2015). The ADA operates an online complaints service, and its anti-fraud manual provides for the receipt and assessment of complaints (Médias24 2015; ADA n.d.c). The grant rates and eligibility criteria are published, but awards are recorded only in an internal database of the Ministry of Agriculture (World Bank 2017), and no public list of beneficiaries or amounts could be found for this Helpdesk Answer. The Green Generation strategy foresees grievance procedures for youth projects, whose application the Inspection Générale des Finances (IGF) audits (World Bank 2020).
- Procurement and public funds: bidders on ORMVA and DPA works contracts can use the complaints committee established by decree 2-22-431 (World Bank 2023a). Budgetary and financial discipline proceedings before the Cour des comptes can hold public managers individually accountable (Cour des comptes n.d.b).

Anti-corruption, oversight and enforcement institutions

The INPPLC is an independent constitutional body, established under Articles 36 and 167 of the 2011 constitution. It proposes and assesses anti-corruption policy, receives complaints and, under law 46-19 of 2021, can investigate suspected corruption through its own investigators, who became operational in 2025 (Le Matin 2025a). The INPPLC became fully operational only in 2022 (OECD 2024). The CNAC, by contrast, is a government body that steers the ministries' implementation of the national strategy. The INPPLC's 2023 report found that implementation of the

strategy was weakened by declining engagement from sectoral officials and by gaps in coordination (INPPLC 2024). The 2015–2025 strategy's action plan lacked outcome indicators and baselines, and monitoring reports were published only up to 2022 (OECD 2026b). Transparency Maroc suspended its participation in the CNAC in 2025, citing a lack of political will and the head of government's failure to convene it (Transparency Maroc 2025). The successor strategy for 2025–2030 was drawn up by the INPPLC rather than the government (Le Matin 2025b).

The Cour des comptes and its regional courts audit public establishments, including the ORMVA and ADA, as well as special accounts such as the FDA. Their reports remain the most consistent public source of evidence on governance weaknesses in agricultural spending, and their financial discipline jurisdiction can impose accountability for violations of public expenditure and procurement rules (Médias24 2015; Cour des comptes 2023; Cour des comptes n.d.a; n.d.b). The ministerial inspectorates and the IGF are discussed in the sub-section on oversight and control of agricultural programmes below. The public prosecutor's office and the Ministry of Justice handle prosecution. The Ministry of Justice runs a hotline for citizens to report corruption. Between January and August 2020, it received 9,550 calls, 90% of which were inquiries about cases already in trial rather than new reports, and 39 cases went to court that year (USDOS 2021).

Oversight and control of agricultural programmes

This sub-section examines the bodies that inspect, audit and control agricultural programmes, including the inspection générale de l'agriculture (IGA), the inspection générale des finances (IGF), the ADA and the ministry's territorial bodies in preventing corruption. It also includes the ORMVA because of their central role in irrigation investment and procurement. The evidence below comes primarily from Moroccan official sources, World Bank programme documents, Cour des comptes findings and press reporting.

Inspection générale de l'agriculture (IGA)

Decree 2-11-112 of 23 June 2011 governs all ministerial inspectorates. It gives them responsibility for control, inspection, support to ethics, audit and evaluation, and for coordinating with the médiateur, the Cour des comptes, the IGF and the national anti-corruption authority. Each inspectorate reports directly to its minister (Ministère de la Transition Numérique et de la Réforme de l'Administration n.d.). This reporting line limits the IGA's independence from the officials whose programmes it inspects. A 2022 review found that the audit and evaluation functions

of ministerial inspectorates had not yet been rolled out across all ministries (La Vie Éco 2022).

Two roles in agriculture are documented:

- Donor verification: under the World Bank's US$200 million strengthening agri-food value chains programme, which began in 2018, the IGA was the designated verification entity for all disbursement linked results. It reviewed reports prepared by the programme unit and carried out site inspections and in-depth reviews of a random sample of FDA supported investment projects and beneficiary enterprises (World Bank 2017). The IGA was assigned the same independent verification function for disbursement linked results 1–9 under the US$487 million Green Generation programme-for-results for 2021–2025 (World Bank 2020). This is a results verification role that can test reported achievements and detect irregularities in subsidised projects. However, no verification reports are public, and no source reviewed states whether irregularities were found or acted upon.
- Reported inquiry: in March 2026, the minister launched an in-depth inspection into the diversion of subsidised fertiliser and seed. A source in his office told the press that he intended to entrust it to the IGA, with possible referral of files to the courts (Le360 2026). The IGA's involvement in the inquiry is therefore reported, not confirmed. The inquiry responded to complaints from farmers rather than arising from routine controls. No outcome had been reported at the time of writing.

By contrast, when fraud allegations over livestock subsidies were raised in parliament in July 2025, the minister pointed to annual audits by the Cour des comptes and other financial control bodies, and no IGA inquiry was reported (Le360 2025a). No published IGA report, annual activity report or statistics on referrals were identified.

Inspection générale des finances (IGF)

The IGF was established by a *dahir* of 14 April 1960 under the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It may audit public accountants, authorising officers, public establishments and any body receiving public funds, and has around 160 inspectors (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances n.d.). Since 2018 it has also prepared performance audits accompanying the budget settlement law (EcoActu 2019). Its mandate therefore covers the ministry, the FDA, the ADA and the ORMVA.

The documented agricultural role of the IGF is as financial auditor of donor-financed programmes. Under the strengthening agri-food value chains programme, it audited expenditure by the ministry and the national food safety agency, including an opinion on the procurement system (World Bank 2017). Under the Green Generation programme-for-results, its annual audit remit extends to expenditure by the ministry, ADA, INRA, IAV, ONSSA, Morocco Foodex and ONCA, and explicitly includes an

opinion on the procurement system. The programme also requires the IGF to examine compliance with beneficiary selection and grievance procedures for youth projects (World Bank 2020). The IGF is also the designated auditor of World Bank financed oasis projects implemented by the National Agency for the Development of Oasis Zones and the Argan Tree (World Bank 2024). These arrangements show recurring sectoral audit activity, but IGF reports are not public and no agriculture specific investigation into the livestock import subsidies was identified in English or French language sources.

Agence pour le développement agricole (ADA)

No documented corruption case involving the ADA was found. The evidence concerns the integrity arrangements, transparency and monitoring of the programmes it oversees. The Cour des comptes found that PPP partners on state land who had breached their commitments continued to receive subsidies (Médias24 2015). Its later review of agricultural aggregation found no mechanism for tracking key performance indicators such as production, yields and marketed output. Joint evaluations by the ADA and the DRA had covered only around 2% of 56,473 participating farmers, and interprofessional organisations were insufficiently involved in designing the frameworks for some value chains (Cour des comptes n.d.a). Aggregation data collected by the ADA was also not interoperable with other ministry systems and was not publicly accessible (World Bank 2017). These are control and monitoring weaknesses, not findings of corruption, but they reduce the capacity to identify favouritism, non-performance or misuse of support.

The ADA has nevertheless adopted a sector-specific integrity mechanism. Its manual of procedures for investigations and sanctions to curb corruption and fraud assigns prevention and investigation responsibilities, provides for the receipt and assessment of complaints, includes safeguards concerning whistleblowers and conflicts of interest, and sets integrity, independence and impartiality requirements for investigations. The responsible unit is the ADA's internal audit and management control service (ADA n.d.c). The manual documents a formal capacity to prevent and investigate wrongdoing; no public activity data or case outcomes were found with which to assess its implementation.

Regional and provincial directorates (DRA/DPA)

The DRA and DPA are where farmers meet the state over subsidies, which makes them the most likely point of petty corruption risk. The Cour des comptes' findings on the one-stop shops they host apply directly (Médias24 2015):

- There was no system to record complaints.

- Staff lacked the technical profiles needed to examine files and carry out site checks.
- Processing delays averaged 73 working days against a 28-day standard for farm machinery.
- Applicants' declarations were not adequately verified.

The Larache fertiliser case shows diversion occurring in provincial distribution of input subsidies (Le360 2026). In the Settat irrigation perimeter, the DPA co-supervised works with a water user association formed on the authorities' orders within a centrally designed project. The DPA was aware at the outset that the association lacked the technical capacity to manage it. Members' suspicions that leaders were "taking the money" illustrate how weak transparency undermines the legitimacy of such local bodies (Mayaux and Massot 2019). The extent to which Generation Green's more decentralised model strengthens accountability at this level has not been evaluated (de Souza et al. 2025).

The Saïss project shows both the control capacity and the limits of the ministry's local services (Mayaux 2026). The provincial project office and local agricultural advisory centres used satellite imagery and unannounced field inspections, conducted jointly with Ministry of Interior agents, to detect false declarations about irrigated area. Some applicants were found to be located outside the project area, to have dry wells or to grow unirrigated cereals. These checks were not applied uniformly. Farmers close to local notables reported being registered without measurement, and street level Ministry of Interior agents allowed ineligible farmers to subscribe. The case suggests that the risk lies less in the ministry's technical capacity to verify than in the ability of local political networks to override its procedures.

Regional agricultural development offices (ORMVA)

Because the ORMVA are autonomous public bodies responsible for major irrigation infrastructure, they are important procurement and financial control actors. Cour des comptes judgement no. 43/2010 arose from a management audit of an ORMVA and pursued its director under budgetary and financial discipline rules. The court found that concluding a contract with clauses different from those in the tender specifications violated public expenditure rules and the principles of competition and access to public procurement. It also treated the award of works contracts before the legal status of the relevant land had been regularised as a financial violation (Cour des comptes n.d.b). This is the clearest source reviewed showing external oversight producing individual accountability in the agricultural sector. The case is older and does not establish current prevalence, but it demonstrates that ORMVA procurement is subject to enforceable controls.

On balance, the formal architecture is extensive: ministerial inspection and results verification, IGF financial and procurement audit, ADA investigation procedures, territorial checks by DRA/DPA, and external audit and financial discipline by the Cour des comptes. Public sources show that these bodies perform real control functions, rather than existing only on paper. They also reveal important weaknesses, including thin publication of IGA and IGF outputs, limited programme monitoring and the selective application of local checks. The available evidence therefore supports describing a layered oversight system with uneven transparency and implementation; it does not establish that the system has reduced corruption in agriculture.

References

ABHT (Agence du Bassin Hydraulique du Tensift). 2023. La police de l'eau.

Acciona. 2025. ACCIONA Signs Financing for Casablanca Desalination Plant. 8 May.

ADA. No date a. Les fondements de la Stratégie Plan Maroc Vert.

ADA. No date b. Principales réalisations du Plan Maroc Vert.

ADA. No date c. Manuel de procédures d'enquêtes et de sanctions dans le cadre de la lutte contre la corruption et la fraude.

Afrobarometer. 2025. Résumé des résultats: Enquête d'Afrobarometer Round 10 au Maroc, 2024. Compiled by Global for Survey and Consulting.

Agence Ecofin. 2017. Maroc : la Cour des comptes épingle les dysfonctionnements de la gestion du domaine de l'Etat. 26 April.

Al Jazeera. 2026. Monarchy-aligned PAM Leads in Morocco Election Provisional Results. 24 September.

Al-Ashraf, H. 2024. Morocco's New Restrictions on Civil Society: a Setback for Anti-Corruption Efforts. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Ameur, F., Kuper, M., Lejars, C. and Dugué, P. 2017. Prosper, Survive or Exit: Contrasted Fortunes of Farmers in the Groundwater Economy in the Saiss plain (Morocco). Agricultural Water Management 191: 207–217.

Arab Reform Initiative. 2025. Gen Z 212 Earthquake: Youth Shaking Morocco's Politics. 16 October.

Barnes, S. 2024. This Beautiful Land: Corruption, Discrimination and Land Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa. Berlin: Transparency International and Equal Rights Trust.

Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2024. BTI 2024 Country Report: Morocco.

Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2026. BTI 2026 Country Report: Morocco. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Biya, K. 2024. Gender and Inequality of Collective Land Ownership in Morocco: the Case of Soulaliyate Women in the Gharb. Journal of Social Sciences (Laghouat) 18(1): 19–32.

Braun, E. and Moens, B. 2023. Inside Morocco's Efforts to Corrupt the European Parliament. Politico.

Challenge. 2016. Ce que prévoit la Stratégie nationale de lutte contre la corruption.

Chtatou, M. 2019. Co-opting Politics in Morocco. Fikra Forum.

Cour des comptes (Maroc). 2023. Programme d'extension de l'irrigation. [Chapter of the 2018 annual report].

Cour des comptes (Maroc). No date a. Rapport annuel de la Cour des comptes au titre de l'année 2021: Principaux axes.

Cour des comptes (Maroc). No date b. Recueil des arrêts rendus par la Chambre de discipline budgétaire et financière: Arrêt no. 43/2010/Ch.D.B.F du 6 mai 2010, affaire relative à un Office régional de mise en valeur agricole.

Courrier International. 2024. Opération "mains propres" au Parlement marocain. 24 July.

de Souza, P.M., Zeghmane, A. et al. 2025. Morocco's Agrifood Transformation: a Regional Model for Sustainable Agricultural Development. Outlook on Agriculture 54(4): 373–386.

Del Vecchio, K. and Barone, S. 2018. Has Morocco's Groundwater Policy Changed? Lessons from the Institutional Approach. Water Alternatives 11(3): 638–662.

Doukkali, M.R. 2005. Water Institutional Reforms in Morocco. Water Policy 7: 71–88.

EcoActu. 2019. L'audit de performance, nouvelle mission de l'IGF.

EcoActu. 2022. Gestion de l'eau : insuffisances, incohérences… sous la loupe de la Cour des comptes.

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2025. Democracy Index 2024: What's Wrong with Representative Democracy? London: Economist Intelligence Unit.

El-Rayes, S.N. 2024. Morocco Faces Barriers to Effective Implementation of the Right to Information Law. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Equal Times. 2025. The Forced Privatisation of Tribal Lands in Morocco Continues Unabated.

FATF. 2021. Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring – February 2021.

FATF. 2023. Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring – 24 February 2023.

Faysse, N., El Amrani, M., El Aydi, S. and Lahlou, A. 2012. Formulation and Implementation of Policies to Deal with Groundwater Overuse in Morocco: Which Supporting Coalitions? Irrigation and Drainage 61(S1): 126–134.

France 24. 2025a. Gen Z Anti-Corruption Protests Sweep Morocco for Ninth Night. 5 October.

France 24. 2025b. Morocco Sees Eighth Straight Day of Protests Organised by Online Gen Z Group. 5 October.

GIDE. 2024. Focus on Obligations of Moroccan Companies in Compliance.

HCP (Haut-Commissariat au Plan). 2026. Situation du marché du travail au Maroc au deuxième trimestre de 2026 (enquête EMO2026). 3 August.

Hespress English. 2026. Mansouri announces four-party coalition to form Morocco's next government. 12 October.

Hind, A. 2020. The King, Religion, the State, and Civil Society in Morocco. Maecenata Institut.

Houdret, A. 2012. The Water Connection: Irrigation, Water Grabbing and Politics in Southern Morocco. Water Alternatives 5(2): 284–303.

Houdret, A. and Amichi, H. 2022. The Rural Social Contract in Morocco and Algeria: Reshaping through Economic Liberalisation

and New Rules and Practices. Journal of North African Studies 27(4): 641–662.

Houdret, A. and Bonnet, S. 2016. Le premier partenariat public-privé pour l'irrigation au Maroc : durable pour tous? Cahiers Agricultures 25(2): 25001.

Houdret, A. and Heinz, R. 2022. Groundwater Governance through Institutional Bricolage? Participation in Morocco's Chtouka Aquifer Contract. Water International 47(4): 565–582.

Ibriz, S. 2024. Corruption dans les marchés publics du ministère de la Santé : la justice a tranché. Médias24, 2 October.

INPPLC. 2024. Annual Report 2023: Executive summary.

International Land Coalition. 2011. Tirana Declaration: Securing Land Access for the Poor in Times of Intensified Natural Resources Competition. Rome: International Land Coalition.

IWGIA. 2022. The Indigenous World 2022: Morocco.

Jkaoua, A. 2011. Management of the Collective Lands in Morocco. Paper presented at FIG Working Week 2011, Marrakech, 18–22 May.

Kchikech, Z., Bouzidi, Z. and Faysse, N. 2024. More Collectives, Less Differences: Unveiling Unexpected Social Changes in a Groundwater Economy in the Middle Atlas, Morocco. Water Alternatives 17(1): 73–93.

Kingdom of Morocco. 1962. Code pénal. Dahir no. 1-59-413 of 26 November 1962, as amended.

Klitgaard, R. 1988. Controlling Corruption. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kukutschka, R.M.B. and Vrushi, J. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer Middle East and North Africa 2019: Citizens' views and experiences of corruption. Berlin: Transparency International.

Kuper, M., Hammani, A., Chohin, A., Garin, P. and Saaf, M. 2012. When Groundwater Takes over: Linking 40 Years of Agricultural and Groundwater Dynamics in a Large-Scale Irrigation Scheme in Morocco. Irrigation and Drainage 61(S1): 45–53.

L'Opinion. 2025. Audit des subventions du bétail : au Parlement, un bras de fer silencieux entre majorité et opposition.

La Vie Éco. 2022. Projets et investissements publics : qui contrôle quoi ? 22 December.

Le Desk. 2016. Le décret de 1995 ne réserve pas les terrains de Rabat aux "serviteurs de l'État". 26 July.

Le Desk. 2022. Corruption dans les marchés publics de la Santé : 31 personnes présentées au procureur. 30 March.

Le Desk. 2024. Fraudes dans les marchés de la Santé: la Cour d'appel de Casablanca rend son verdict. 30 September.

Le Matin. 2019. Un nouveau cadre juridique pour les terres collectives. 3 April.

Le Matin. 2025a. Lutte anti-corruption : bientôt une plateforme digitale de signalement et un corps d'enquêteurs dédié. 9 November.

Le Matin. 2025b. Lutte contre la corruption : changement d'échelle en perspective. 9 December.

Le Matin. 2025c. Code de procédure pénale : ce qui change pour le ministère public. 23 November.

Le Matin. 2025d. Procédure pénale : la polémique s'accentue malgré l'adoption de la réforme. 21 May.

Le360. 2016. Affaire Laftit: ces «serviteurs de l'Etat» qui auraient bénéficié des lots de terrain à des prix avantageux. 26 July.

Le360. 2022. Infractions, procès-verbaux, sanctions… Voici comment la police de l'eau investit le terrain. 13 August.

Le360. 2024. Soupçons de conflit d'intérêts : Akhannouch répond aux critiques de l'opposition. 16 December.

Le360. 2025a. Subventions à l'élevage : des listes fictives de bénéficiaires, des cheptels inexistants et des pratiques frauduleuses. 15 July.

Le360. 2025b. Un fiasco signé Akhannouch : subventions à l'importation de viandes rouges, le récit d'un scandale d'État. 9 April.

Le360. 2025c. Scandale des subventions à l'importation de viandes rouges : avec le retrait de l'USFP, la motion de censure devient caduque. 16 May.

Le360. 2025d. Code de la procédure pénale : l'Instance de lutte contre la corruption présente des recommandations. 23 April.

Le360. 2026. Subventions agricoles : le ministre de l'Agriculture lance une enquête pour traquer les fraudeurs. 12 March.

Machloukh, A. 2020. Détournement de fonds CNSS: les accusés condamnés à rembourser 31,9 milliards dhs. L'Opinion.

MAP (Maghreb Arabe Presse). 2022. Secteur de la santé: enquête judiciaire pour soupçons de fraude dans des marchés publics. SNRT News, 30 March.

Maroc.ma. 2015. Adoption du projet de la stratégie nationale de lutte contre la corruption. 28 December.

Maroc.ma. 2026. Les élections législatives du 23 septembre en chiffres. 21 September.

Mayaux, P.-L. 2026. Governing by Promises: Water Scarcity and Rural Hegemony in Morocco. Critical Policy Studies.

Mayaux, P.-L. and Massot, A. 2019. Entre décharge participative et État développeur : des élites rurales marocaines en quête de légitimité. Revue Gouvernance 16(1): 84–109.

Médias24. 2015. La Cour des comptes critique le Fonds de développement agricole. 3 April [reporting the Cour des comptes annual report covering 2008–2013].

Médias24. 2016. Cessions de terrains domaniaux : ce que l'on sait. 25 July.

Médias24. 2024a. Le Maroc stagne au 97e rang de l'indice mondial de la perception de la corruption en 2023. 31 January.

Médias24. 2024b. Instance anti-corruption : seulement 85 plaintes en 2023, la plupart irrecevables. 8 October.

Médias24. 2025. Procédure pénale : ce qui change pour les citoyens. 9 December.

Médias24. 2026. Emploi : 193.000 emplois créés en 2025. 3 February.

Mengoub, F.E., Tsakok, I. and Serghini Idrissi, H. 2026. Transformation of Agriculture in Morocco. In Oxford Handbook of the Moroccan Economy, chapter 30. Oxford University Press.

Middle East Eye. 2024. Maroc: la corruption « menace la stabilité » du pays, selon Transparency International. 31 January.

Ministère de l'Agriculture (Maroc). No date a. Organisation: Offices Régionaux de Mise en Valeur Agricole.

Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche Maritime, du Développement Rural et des Eaux et Forêts (Maroc). No date b. Génération Green 2020-2030.

Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances (Maroc). No date. L'Inspection Générale des Finances.

Ministère de la Transition Numérique et de la Réforme de l'Administration. No date. Institutions de contrôle et d'inspection.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates. 2022. AU: Morocco Ratifies Several Treaties Enshrining Royal Vision of Joint African action. 18 April.

MIPA (Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis). 2022. Fighting Corruption and Promoting Integrity: Transparency Prospects.

Mo Ibrahim Foundation. 2024. 2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance: Morocco Country Profile.

Morocco World News. 2026. RNI Officially Elects Mohamed Chaouki As New Party Leader. 8 February.

North Africa Post. 2026. Morocco Tightens Governance of Collective Lands with Landmark Decree. 30 March.

OECD. 2003. Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service: OECD Guidelines and Country Experiences. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD. 2017. Preventing Policy Capture: Integrity in Public Decision Making. OECD Public Governance Reviews. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD. 2024. OECD Economic Surveys: Morocco 2024. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD. 2025. OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2025 Issue 2: Morocco Country Note.

OECD. 2026a. OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2026 Issue 1: Morocco Country Note.

OECD. 2026b. Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2026: Morocco Country Note. Paris: OECD Publishing.

PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). 2021. Observation of the Parliamentary Elections in Morocco (8 September 2021). Doc. 15400, 25 November.

Pring, C. and Vrushi, J. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer Africa 2019. Transparency International.

Reuters. 2023. Morocco's Competition Regulator Fines Fuel Companies $180 Million.

Sadek, G. 2019. Morocco: Draft law Introduced to Protect Whistle-Blowers. Library of Congress.

Sakhraji, A. and Terrass, E. 2025. Agrarian Reforms, Urbanisation, and Communities' Resistance to the Grabbing of Collective Land: The Case of Ahl Taroudant tribe. Social Sciences & Humanities Open 12: 101890.

Sanz, J.C. 2024. The Pablo Escobar of the Sahara Reveals Corruption within Morocco's Ruling Class. El País.

Sater, J. 2017. Patronage and Democratic Citizenship in Morocco.

Silva-Novoa Sánchez, L.M., Berger, E., Mahjoubi, I., Förster, O., Bossenbroek, L. and Schilling, J. 2025. What Groundwater Governance Challenges and Opportunities Arise in Arid Regions? Lessons from the Middle Drâa Valley, Morocco. Sustainable Water Resources Management 11: 42.

Silva-Novoa Sánchez, L.M., Bossenbroek, L., Schilling, J. and Berger, E. 2022. Governance and Sustainability Challenges in the Water Policy of Morocco 1995–2020: Insights from the Middle Draa Valley. Water 14(18): 2932.

TelQuel. 2016. Affaire CNSS: l'ancien DG Rafik Haddaoui condamné à quatre ans de prison avec sursis. 15 July.

TelQuel. 2024. Marché du dessalement d'eau: Akhannouch à nouveau dans le viseur du PJD. 18 December.

Transparency International. 2025. Corruption Perceptions Index 2025: Morocco.

Transparency International. 2026. CPI 2025: Stronger Institutions, Freer Civic Space Needed in the Middle East and North Africa. 10 February.

Transparency Maroc. 2025. Communiqué : Transparency Maroc gèle sa participation à la Commission Nationale Anti-Corruption. 28 January.

Transparency Maroc. 2026. Communiqué relatif à l'indice de perception de la corruption de 2025 : Le Maroc s'englue dans la corruption. 10 February.

UNCAC Coalition. No date. Morocco.

UNODC. 2011. Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption At Its Fourth Session, Held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 24 to 28 October 2011. Vienna: UNODC.

USDOS (US Department of State). 2021. 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Morocco. Washington, DC: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Wehrey, F. and Bonney, A. 2025. Beyond the Green Transition: Governance and Climate Vulnerability in Morocco. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 6 March.

World Bank. 2017. Program Appraisal Document: Strengthening Agri-Food Value Chains Program-for-Results (P158346). Report 121787-MA.

World Bank. 2020. Program Appraisal Document: Morocco Green Generation

Program-for-Results (P170419). Report PAD3800.

World Bank. 2023a. Program appraisal document: Water Security and Resilience Program (Morocco).

World Bank. 2023b. Enterprise Surveys: Morocco 2023 Country Profile. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. 2024. Morocco Sustainable Oasis Ecosystems Management Project: Project Appraisal Document.

World Bank. 2026. Official exchange rate (LCU per US$, period average): Morocco. World Development Indicators. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank Group. 2024. Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Yabiladi. 2020. Casablanca Court: Thousands of Recovery Cases Handled At Once Without Summoning Debtors. 6 March.

Yabiladi. 2023. Maroc : La Cour de cassation reconnaît l'égalité dans le droit à l'usufruit pour les Soulaliyates. 16 February.

Zarhloule, Y. 2025. Understanding Morocco's GenZ Uprising. Carnegie Middle East Center.

Disclaimer

All views in this text are the author(s)', and may differ from the U4 partner agencies' policies.

Creative commons

This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0

International licence (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)



Corruption erodes sustainable and inclusive development. It is both a political and technical challenge. The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre (U4) works to understand and counter corruption worldwide.

U4 is part of the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), an independent development research institute in Norway.

www.u4.no

u4@cmi.no

U4 partner agencies

German Corporation for International Cooperation – GIZ

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – BMZ

Global Affairs Canada

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark / Danish International Development Assistance – Danida

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – Norad

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – Sida

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – SDC

UK Aid – Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office