



Finding a solution in Doha might seem as impossible as growing vegetables in the desert. Good news then that, an hour away from the conference, environmental NGO Bellona is now serving up its first desert-grown cucumbers in an enormous - and enormously innovative - desert plantation.

Imagine if we could turn deserts into greenhouses that would help combat food insecurity and desertification – and even bind CO₂.

The idea sounds quite impossible, but the Norwegian Bellona Foundation has successfully accomplished a pilot project that makes the green dream come true.

"Sahara Forest Project is all about taking what we have enough of, like saltwater, CO₂, sunlight and deserts, to produce what we need more of - sustainably produced food, water and energy." Joakim Hauge, CEO of the Sahara Forest Project summarizes the basic idea of Bellona's venture.

The Sahara Forest Project was first presented at the United Nations climate negotiations, COP 15, in Copenhagen in 2009. People said that the project was too good to be true. Bellona Foundation replied that seeing is believing. In February this year, Bellona, in cooperation with fertilizer companies Yara and Qafco, started building the emission free pilot project in Qatar. Ten months later, the cucumbers have already grown big and green in the facility, which consists of 10 000 square meters of new innovative environmental technologies that have never been put together before.

One of the core technologies is based on sea water: when saltwater is evaporated into the air, it provides cooling and humidification that creates excellent growing conditions inside the greenhouses. Two other main components of the project are the use of concentrated solar

power for electricity and heat generation and technologies for desert revegetation.

Reportedly a big buzz in the hallways of the climate conference in Doha, the finalization of the pilot project is perfectly timed. As world leaders are working on ways to fight climate change, and the road to settling deals seems long, it only takes a one hour ride to see with own eyes that there are innovative and concrete solutions to be found outside the negotiation table.

Norwegian Minister of the Environment Bård Vegar Solhjell visited the site while in Doha and sported a big smile under his yellow helmet.

"One can only be impressed of people who have a good idea and manage to carry it out in the desert of Qatar. Time will tell if this could be a pilot project that shows the way or a brilliant idea that spreads around the world. The potential is very high," Solhjell stated.

In order to create more facilities like the one in Qatar, cooperation between large corporations and scientific experts is needed. The Sahara Forest Project aims to be good for the environment, development and business. At the moment the prospects for this are remarkably promising, making for some concrete hope in the vast climate desert.

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