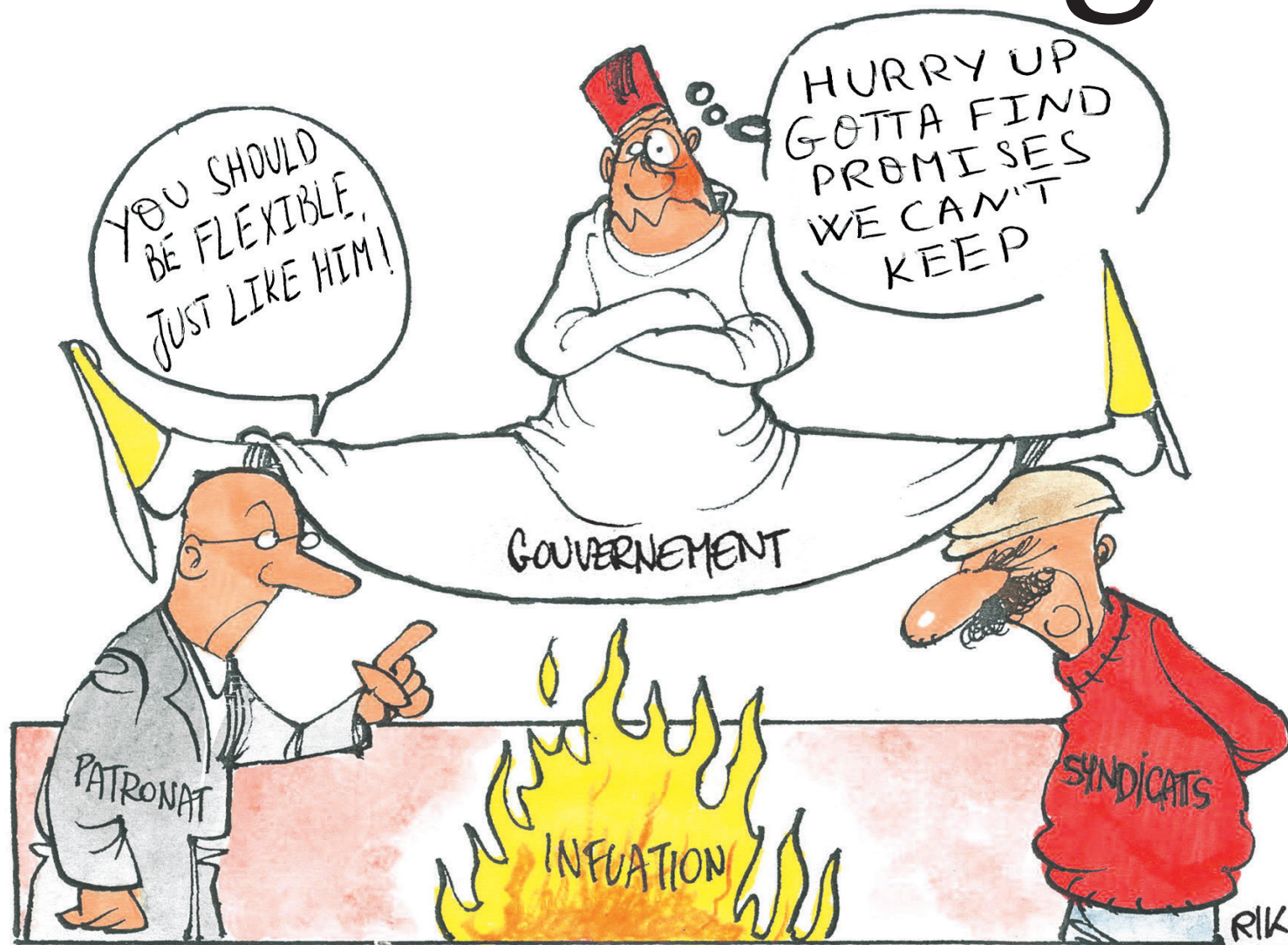


Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE



Social dialogue Pressure surges



Education/Public Support: Correcting anomalies



Clean electricity: Morocco ranked 2nd in Africa

A water map being prepared



The most popular products from the Moroccan regions

EDITORIAL

Deaf

Meriem OUDGHIRI

CATTLE of contention tossed about by fake news, consumer prices that continue to soar, open letters, and crisis meetings that follow one another... it is an eventful Ramadan that we are experiencing this year. From all this life-size commotion, two words stand out that remain essential: communication and information. Without them, nothing works. Without them, the fiercest rumors take hold of public opinion. Without them, one cannot move forward. Without them, one creates chaos and the unthinkable. One ends up enclosing the citizens in a world of infantilization and unrest, unworthy of their culture and their wisdom. Admittedly, human nature adores tales and rumors, yet it is easy to keep that fun while protecting people from gullibility... by informing, informing, and informing again, but also by listening (attentively) to professionals and to the men and women in the street and their

everyday problems. The “nudge” derived from behavioral sciences, is a full-fledged school in the multiple communication strategies. This concept was developed by Nobel Prize winner in economics, Richard Thaler. Subsequently, David Cameron, then Barack Obama adopted it by endowing their respective administrations with a “Nudge Unit” to propose using the lessons of behavioral economics in order to improve and support public actions. The Moroccan Ministry of Finance created a “Nudge Unit” last November as part of the Blue Economy program. Thus, populations bathing in a clear environment are encouraged to “make the right decisions” and are able to better seize opportunities for themselves and for the community. The ultimate goal is to make people understand things as they are and to understand each other, so as to avoid continuing to turn a deaf ear to everything around us. □

Weekly highlights

Education/Public Support: Correcting anomalies

CHAKIB Benmoussa seized the opportunity of question time at the House of Representatives to take stock of the social support programs that are within the remit of his department. The Minister of Education wants to increase the number of beneficiaries, particularly children from poor and destitute families, while linking these programs to the targeting operation based on the Unified Social Register. The aim is to improve the services provided and the financial allowances, especially in a context of soaring prices. In this regard, the Minister noted that the 2022-2026 roadmap emphasizes the development of the social support system, through the establishment of a system to ensure the quality of the support provided, which includes the definition of the required standards and the granting of a quality label to the actors. The idea is also to establish a model of territorial governance of social support for an integrated management of these services. Moreover, the Minister listed several measures aimed at establishing these programs.



■ The royal “1 million school-bags” initiative

The overall cost of this operation amounts to 549 million dirhams (USD 54 million) for this school year. The number of beneficiaries in the current academic season has reached about 4.718 million, i.e. an increase of almost 3% over the previous year. In this total, the rural world represents 62% of the beneficiaries. In terms of education levels, primary education comes first with 83% of the total. In this context, the Ministry endeavored to strengthen

the process of prior coordination with the services of the Interior Ministry and of the INDH (National Initiative for Human Development) to decide on the estimated number of beneficiaries, which resulted into the signing of public procurements in advance in order to avoid delays in the receipt and distribution of school kits.

■ The Tayssir program of financial transfers conditional on the schooling of children

The total annual cost of these transfers is estimated at 2.598 billion Dirhams (USD 260 million) for this academic year. According to forecasts, these transfers will benefit nearly 2.357 million students - 48% of whom are girls - during this school year. This represents nearly 1.685 million beneficiary families. To speed up these operations, the Ministry is working on improving the services of this program, by simplifying the procedures through digitalisation, by reducing payment times, and by improving the conditions of payment for these subsidies. An agreement has been signed for the outsourcing of the program to the National Pensions and Insurance Fund (CNRA) under management by the Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG). The financial transfer operation for the current academic year was to begin on Thursday, April 20, 2023. This operation will be carried out by bank transfer for people with a bank account, and from Tuesday, April 25 for the rest of the beneficiaries who will have to withdraw their money from community counters. □

Mohamed CHAOU

Clean electricity: Morocco ranked 2nd in Africa

A record! Clean (i.e. renewable and nuclear) electricity sources reached 39% of the world's electricity in 2022. Even better, wind and solar represent 12% of this production. This is what emerges from the latest report by the British think tank Ember entitled “Global Electricity Review 2023”, published recently. These two clean energies accounted for around 5% of global production in 2015, and less than 2% in 2010. This breakthrough heralds the beginning of the end of the fossil age. Moreover, the experts of the think tank underline it in their study, saying “We are entering the age of clean energy”. By 2030, wind and solar are expected to grow to 41% of global electricity generation, up from 10% in 2021. This challenge hinges on countries' commitments to further adopt renewable energy. Experts predict a fall in fossil fuel production, propelled by the accelerated use of wind and solar power. According to Ember, the use of fossil fuels could start to decline as early as this



The Noor Ouarzazate complex is the first solar project developed as part of the Moroccan energy strategy which aims to increase the share of renewable energies in the national electricity mix to more than 52% by 2030

year. Initially, a slight decline of 0.3% could be recorded in 2023. Bigger drops will follow in 2024.

Then, what is it that explains this reversal in the countries' energy policy? “Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the gradual closure of Moscow's gas pipelines, and the subsequent price spikes, have prompted governments to rethink their energy

policies to speed up their transition to decarbonized sources”, explain experts in this study, based on electricity sector data from 78 countries. The survey reveals that more than 60 countries produce more than 10% of their energy from wind and solar. The European Union leads the pack with 22% of electricity from renewable sources. Denmark produced the

largest share of wind and solar energy in electricity production with 60.8% of the total energy. Lithuania and Luxembourg follow with 48.4 and 46.6% respectively. In North America, the United States produces 15%. For its part, Canada lags behind with 7%. In Africa, Morocco (with 17%) ranks second behind Namibia (25%). Morocco is in a good position since it is above the world average (12%). As a reminder, it was in 2009 that the Kingdom set up an ambitious energy plan. Morocco is committed to increasing the share of renewable energies in its electricity mix to 52% by 2030, i.e. 20% solar energy, 20% wind energy, and 12% hydraulic energy. To achieve this goal, major investments have been made, in particular the construction of the largest solar power plant in the world, namely the Noor Ouarzazate complex. Kenya occupies the third place with a production of clean electricity from wind and solar power standing at 16%. □

Khadija SKALLI

Social dialogue: Pressure surges

MEETINGS between the Head of Government and the social partners are continuing. After the UMT and UGTM workers unions, a meeting was scheduled with the CGEM employers' union on Tuesday April 18 and with the CDT workers union on Thursday April 20. This year, employers find themselves in a rather special situation. The duo made up of Chakib Alj and Mehdi Tazi, respectively President and Vice-President General of CGEM, are preparing the elections at the head of the confederation and are running for a second term. This round of discussions constitutes for them a new test on the ability of employers to win new measures, even promises from the Government, especially since some of the measures validated last year and included in the agreement signed with the unions and the government did not come into being. This is the case in particular of the law on strikes and the amendment of the Labor Code, two important pieces of legislation which should for the first one put order in strikes and for the second operate an upgrade of the legislation work.

This upgrading of the law is necessary in order to take into account, among other things, the transformations that the world of labor is experiencing with the development of new forms of employment as well



Trade unions and the employers' association criticize the Government for the delay in activating several measures provided for in the social agreement signed on April 30, 2022

as the flexibility of employment, the latter being close to the heart of business leaders. In any case, the employers consider that this flexibility of employment could contribute to a decline in unemployment. This flexibility should provide companies with the tools for a better balance between supply and demand and would take into account the fluctuations of the market and the economic situation. The employers' confederation has always advocated responsible flexibility in the service of competitiveness and employment without managing to convince the workers unions who fear "dismissals and job insecurity".

The new round of social dialogue takes place in a complicated situation, namely high inflation resulting in a decline in purchasing power. Moreover, most trade unions are asking again for a general increase in wages, or even pegging of wages to inflation. "On April 30, 2022, we signed an agreement with the Government. This document provides for measures, many of which have not been implemented. This is particularly the case with the general increase in wages and the overhaul of the income tax grid", declared to L'Economiste Khalid Alami Hourir, Secretary General of the CDT union,

who proposes to the Government "to activate direct aid as was done during the Covid period, while waiting for the targeting system to be in place". The trade union organization, which had called for a strike in the civil service to take place on Tuesday, April 18, criticizes the Government for the delay in activating the National Charter for Social Dialogue and wants more transparency concerning the issue of retirement. "It is unthinkable to align oneself with the proposal of a research firm", added Alami Hourir. Anyway, negotiations promise to be quite intense. □

Khadija MASMOUDI

A water map being prepared

SOARING food prices have laid bare the difficulties in mobilizing water resources in the face of the effects of climate change. During the first weekly session of question time in the House of Councilors, Nizar Baraka, Minister of Equipment and Water, was asked about what has been done in this area.

The Minister underlined that a "significant rate of integrated water resources development plans for the various river basins have been approved", which, according to him, makes it possible to have a better visibility of the current situation of water and of the agricultural, industrial, and drinking water needs until 2050.

Baraka recalled the measures rolled out by the Department of Agriculture to encourage the use of irrigation methods that limit waste. It is within this framework that more than



Nizar Baraka announced that 372,000 wells have been listed in the different regions of the country. Of this total, 90% are not authorized. According to the Minister, 12,800 wells have been closed and 23,667 others will also be closed.

700,000 hectares have been converted to drip irrigation. The goal is to reach 1 million hectares by 2030. The idea is also that crops be reviewed at the regional level, according to the

water capacities of each territory, in order to avoid problems of soil salinity, making land unsuitable for any agricultural activity.

Another problem that is regularly

pointed out is that of the anarchic wells which constitute a major source of waste of these resources. Baraka said that 372,000 wells have been listed in the different regions. Of this total, 90% are not authorized. The Minister announced that 12,800 wells have been closed and 23,667 others will also be closed.

The well drilling authorization procedure will also be reviewed. The Minister of Equipment and Water has announced that his department will adopt a novel approach in this area. He underlined, for example, that a one-stop-shop system will be put in place to monitor and examine applications related to the use of the public water domain, as well as to obtain the necessary authorizations within a reasonable time period, not exceeding 2 months. □

Mohamed Ali MRABI

Weekly highlights

The most popular products from the Moroccan regions



THE range of labeled Moroccan local products includes more than forty products that are specific to a Moroccan territory. Their taste qualities, sizes, color, nutritional, and/or therapeutic value make them safe bets, often imitated but never identical to the original product. With these invaluable assets, Morocco has opted for a quality labeling strategy for its local products. This approach has been adopted as the main focus for the development of agricultural products (fruits & vegetables, condiments, spices, herbs, oils, honey, aromatic and medicinal plants, and other byproducts, etc.). This labeling policy is also a marker of authenticity and traceability that provides distinctive signs of origin and quality. It is a way to protect the authenticity of unique varieties against imitation or usurpation, to enhance them, and promote them for export. In total, the Moroccan terroir has around forty products with a quality label, including 30 geographical indications, five designations of origin in addition to other agricultural labels. The products with a quality label all come from the exclusive Moroccan terroir, in all regions and territories of the country. The products with very strong national and international brand awareness, include, in particular, precious olive and argan oils, fresh and dried fruits (clementine, apple, pomegranate, dates, and almonds), or even aromatic and medicinal plants as well as their derivatives (rosemary, rose, and saffron). Added to this are products of animal origin (honey, cheese, camel milk, and red meats). In addition,



tion to the directory and detailed inventory of a series of products, quality labeling has several challenges: First, it is a tool for promoting the great diversity and promoting the quality of local products and know-how of local people. Secondly, a quality label makes it possible to accelerate the development of rural areas, social



DSOQs: Distinctive Signs of Origin and Quality

THE labeling of agricultural products is governed by Law No. 25-06, relating to the Distinctive Signs of Origin and Quality (DSOQs) for foodstuffs and agricultural and fishery products, a law enacted by "Dahir" (Royal Decree) number 1-08-56 of May 23, 2008. This law

inclusion, and the improvement of farmers' incomes. Finally, a quality label is a means of promoting agriculture in rural areas that is capable of protecting biodiversity and natural resources as well as the preservation of gastronomic, craft, and cultural heritage. Obviously, quality labeling guarantees more commercial and marketing opportunities for the products concerned, both on the domestic and export markets. In Morocco, there are three distinctive signs used. First, the agricultural label allows the recognition of a product that has a set of specific qualities and characteristics. Generally, the product in ques-



tion has a high level of quality, superior to that of similar products from which it differs in particular because of its production and manufacturing conditions and, where applicable, its geographical origin. Secondly, there is the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). This denomination makes it possible to identify a product as originating from a terroir, region, or locality, when a quality, a reputation, or any other specific characteristic of said product can be attributed essentially to this geographical origin and when that production and/or processing and/or preparation take place in the defined geographical area. Third, the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) provides information on the geographical name of a region, a specific place or, in certain exceptional cases, a country, used to designate a product which originates there and whose quality, reputation, or all other characteristics are due exclusively or essentially to the original geographical environment, which provides information on precise human and natural factors, or even production, processing, and development conditions that are specific to a precise geographical context, to a soil, to a territory, a terroir... that is like no other. □

Amin RBOUB