



The project helps people find the means to tackle the problem of sand encroachment rather than doing the job for them. People who plant and irrigate their own trees and stabilise their own dunes value and protect what they have achieved. Project staff are local people, familiar with the problems of the area, well trained, and with appropriate skills. They understand farmers' problems and perceptions but have gathered a more thorough grasp of the sand encroachment issue. Thus they can provide a support service to any community wishing to take action. The project won a United Nations Environment Programme "Saving the Drylands" award in 1996.

### **Sustainability and Participation in Sand Dune Stabilisation**

The technical background of the agricultural engineers and foresters responsible for sand-dune stabilisation programmes does not encourage consideration of their social implications. Foresters in Africa have until very recently been trained purely in the technical aspects of forest and plantation management in what are assumed to be state-owned forest reserves. Agricultural engineers in Africa are accustomed to treat ero-

IN SUDAN, LONG-TERM REFORESTATION PROGRAMMES HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED IN ZONES WHERE THE RAINFALL IS ADEQUATE. ACACIA TREES IN IDD EL FURSAN PROVINCE.

sion control in topographically defined catchment areas. Forest management and erosion control plans are designed by trained professionals on the basis of technical considerations. But project managers, frequently with technical backgrounds, have begun to learn from the social science disciplines that the underlying causes of these problems are very often more social or economic than technical, and that sustainable solutions may not be simply a matter of the best engineering design.

Projects must respond to local needs and priorities and ensure that all social groups, including women, are heard and involved at all stages. Projects only succeed when local communities feel that they own and control them. The development of local skills, capacities, and management institutions is usually more important than the immediate

