

Mark Erjavec's Early Djibouti Engagement Now Aligns With FAO's Hand-in-Hand Agricultural Investment Initiative

Mark Erjavec's Djibouti initiative links U.S.–Africa investment, agriculture, and strategic development to drive food security and long-term partnership.

This is about more than agriculture — it's about building long-term partnerships where U.S. expertise and Djibouti's opportunity create shared value. — Mark Erjavec

Djibouti is once again entering the spotlight—not just as a military and logistics hub, but as an emerging agricultural and investment frontier at the center of major global policy shifts. And for those watching the country's development trajectory closely, the story didn't start yesterday—it began years ago when Minnesota entrepreneur Mark Erjavec was invited into Djibouti to help conceptualize an agriculture and infrastructure strategy long before the current wave of international attention.

Today, as Djibouti accelerates its economic diversification through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Hand-in-Hand Initiative, and as the country actively seeks private partners for agri-food, sustainable infrastructure, technology, and value-chain development, the groundwork laid by Erjavec's early engagement now looks increasingly prescient.

A Region of Strategic Importance — and Renewed Opportunity

Despite being only the size of New Jersey, Djibouti hosts at least eight foreign military bases—from the U.S., Japan, France, and more—because it controls the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a chokepoint where 10–12% of global trade flows toward the Red Sea and Suez Canal. Camp Lemonnier, the only permanent U.S. base in Africa, anchors American, European, and African interests.

What is now changing—and what makes 2025 especially significant—is the shift from purely military strategy to economic and agricultural strategy. Djibouti is signaling that food security, agri-tech, and private-sector partnerships are now formally integrated into its national development plans.

Earlier this year, the FAO and Djibouti co-hosted a major agribusiness and investment forum that officially launched the Hand-in-Hand strategy for the country. The government is now actively seeking partnerships that enhance food production, build climate-resilient agricultural ecosystems, and modernize logistics infrastructure.

Where Mark Erjavec Enters the Story

In 2019, the Star Tribune reported on the emergence of a U.S.-Djibouti development partnership that brought together Minnesota investors, architects, and agricultural operators—including Mark Erjavec, who was introduced as the agricultural lead through Agro Fund One.

"We are literally trying to farm in a place where farming hasn't been done," Erjavec told the Star Tribune. — Star Tribune, Dec. 9, 2019

During the 2019–2020 development period, Erjavec and his organizations worked to develop the foundational infrastructure and operational framework required for large-scale international agricultural projects.

Positioned for the New Phase

Erjavec continues to develop agricultural initiatives through Marvella Farms, Agro Fund One, and related platforms, publishing his development vision at <http://markerjavecdjibouti.com/>.

Looking Forward

For investors and policymakers, the earliest modern U.S.-led agricultural strategy in Djibouti documented in 2019 now serves as the foundation for the next phase of growth and partnership.