

Press release



ICARDA and CIHEAM's New Strategic Partnership: Sharing knowledge for improving livelihoods in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries

Beirut, Lebanon, November 18, 2015

Yesterday, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) have renewed their strategic institutional relationship in 10 major fields, including adaptation to climate change, inclusive growth and empowerment of youth, women and smallholders in rural territories.

The ICARDA Director General, Dr. Mahmoud Solh and the CIHEAM Secretary General, Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen dialogue and activities in the development of human resources, research and information systems in a very strategic moment for the Mediterranean and West Asian regions, which is marked by security crises, unemployment amongst vulnerable groups in rural areas, natural resources scarcity and climate change.

The MOU provides a solid foundation for enhanced cooperation and greater coordination of mutual efforts in development programs, synergic scientific and technical cooperation in the MENA region and beyond.

"We are convinced that improving links between knowledge sharing and capacity building in the agricultural sector is answering important needs of Mediterranean and West Asian countries" said Dr. Solh during the signing ceremony. "Conflict in the Middle East forces people to flee and so does drought, destroying crops and livelihoods. We must invest in science and knowledge exchange for sustainable agriculture", he added.

Dry areas in North Africa and the Middle East are getting hotter and drier, and droughts are becoming more intense and frequent. Syria and Jordan are predicted to lose 30% of their fertile land to desertification if measures are not urgently taken to combat desertification and land degradation. The Arab region as a whole already has the most significant food deficit in the world.

"We waste time and precious knowledge when we work in isolation" said Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola, CIHEAM's Secretary General. "Regarding the challenges our region has to face, it becomes urgent to

reinforce knowledge sharing systems to support inclusive and sustainable development close to people and local needs, especially in the rural areas. We are convinced that this partnership will complement our mutual work and enhance locale initiatives and best practices.”

ICARDA and CIHEAM’s cooperation will be also partly linked to ensure Food Security and Resilience of agricultural systems against crises. Long term objectives refer to Agenda Post-2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals for which a regional Mediterranean dimension should be integrated.

About ICARDA

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a member of the CGIAR Consortium, is the global agricultural research organization working with countries in the world’s dry and marginal areas to deliver sustainable systems solutions that increase productivity, improve rural nutrition, and strengthen national food security. www.icarda.org

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About CIHEAM

Founded in 1962, CIHEAM is an intergovernmental organization composed of 13 Mediterranean member states. CIHEAM promotes multilateral cooperation in the Mediterranean in the fields of agriculture, food, fishery and rural territories, aiming to respond to the needs of the States and of the agro-food actors. CIHEAM pursues this cooperation mission through specialized training, networked research, scientific diplomacy and political partnership. www.ciheam.org

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