

PRESS RELEASE

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ICARDA and Iran to boost food and nutrition security

New cooperation agreement aims for 25% yield increase of wheat, barley, chickpea over one million hectares in Iran

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has signed a new initiative with the international research center, ICARDA, to boost production of wheat, barley and chickpea by 25% in four regions over the coming five years.

The Iran-funded initiative targets enhancing the yields and quality of cereal-based food production systems for the three crops on nearly one million hectares in the provinces of East Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Lorestan.

ICARDA and other CGIAR centers develop and share high-performing crop varieties that resist temperature extremes and diseases and can thrive in harsh environments, on poor soils and with scarce water resources.

Signed with Iran's Ministry of Agriculture this month, the agreement marks the next phase of the partnership established with Iran in 2014 in the collaborative program with CGIAR research centers – for technology transfer and genetic improvement of crop varieties, seed production and delivery, and capacity development.

Dr. Mahmoud Solh, Director General of ICARDA, says that the agreement opens a new phase of increased food security and support to rural development plans in Iran. "This project builds on the solid expertise of our Iranian colleagues. It is a good illustration of how cooperation between partner countries and the international research community can make a real difference to people's lives, and ultimately to national development," he said.

Two main rural development challenges faced by Iran are widespread harsh climatic and physical conditions, and the low productivity in the smallholder farming sector (World Bank 2014). Agriculture is a key source of income for more than 15 million people in the country's rural areas, though the sector's share of GDP has declined in the past two decades. According to FAO, the country's food security challenges include low self-sufficiency in major staple crops and inadequate access to food in remote communities on marginal lands.

Increasing farmers' access to sufficient, high-quality seed of wheat, barley and chickpea varieties that can thrive faced with heat, frost, drought and diseases, is vital for sustainable agriculture, improved food and nutritional security, and better livelihoods in Iran. Food insecurity currently affects 49% of households, 67% of children, and 65% of the elderly, according to a [Systematic Review](#) by the Ilam University of Medical Sciences in April 2016.

A study on the impacts of international research collaboration in wheat breeding (1994-2004) shows that nearly half of the world's wheat area is sown with varieties derived from breeding lines developed by two CGIAR research organisations, CIMMYT and ICARDA – providing countries with annual benefits of \$2-3 billion in enhanced productivity.

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About ICARDA

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is a 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. ICARDA is a member of the CGIAR. . www.icarda.org www.cgiar.org

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