



International research center strengthens commitment to Egypt's resource-poor farmers

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CAIRO, EGYPT. An international research for development organization which works with countries to raise their agricultural productivity through the application of cutting-edge science is consolidating its presence in Egypt with the opening of a second office in Cairo.

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) has worked with Egyptian partners for several decades, and this new investment - part of the Center's decentralization - will strengthen partnerships and enhance the delivery of new technologies and sustainable solutions to Egypt's resource-poor farmers.

Collaborative research activities will help to strengthen the resilience of Egypt's agricultural sector against multiple challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, and rising food import dependence. Outputs will include resilient and climate-smart varieties of strategic crops like faba bean and wheat, proven technologies that use water more productively, and sustainable land management practices.

"ICARDA has enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership with Egypt - stretching back to 1979," says ICARDA's Director General, Mr. Aly Abousabaa. "We are now building on this legacy to help strengthen the resilience of the country's agricultural sector and resource-poor farmers, enhancing their access to improved crop varieties and innovative technologies and solutions, which have the potential to raise productivity against a backdrop of rising temperatures and water scarcity."

ICARDA's enhanced presence in Egypt combines research and support functions. A research team will serve both ICARDA's Nile Valley and Red Sea Regional Program, which strategically aligns research activities with Sudan, Eritrea, and Yemen, and a new thematic research platform for sustainable intensification in irrigated systems. Support staff, including those from finance, communications and donor relations, will serve ICARDA's strategic priorities in Egypt and internationally.

"ICARDA's move to Egypt is a strategic choice complementing its research programs in other parts of the region," says Margret Thalwitz, ICARDA's Board Chair. "Egypt offers opportunities in water resource management unique to the dry areas and ICARDA wants to harness this knowledge in close collaboration with its Egyptian partners for the benefit of the country's farmers and far beyond."

Further collaboration with Egyptian partners like the Agricultural Research Center (ARC), the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, and the Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute (AGERI) will enhance the development and distribution of resilient strategic crop varieties like wheat, barley and faba bean; improve on-farm water and land productivity; and strengthen the performance of livestock and wheat-based production systems.

“We welcome ICARDA’s decision to expand its operations in Egypt,” says Dr. Mahmoud Medany, Director of ARC. “ICARDA’s strategic direction complements our own: prioritizing the development of new technologies and solutions that will help Egypt’s farmers prosper while strengthening their adaptation to climate change. We look forward to more collaborations and an even stronger partnership over the coming years.”

“We have worked with ICARDA for several decades,” says Egypt’s Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, H. E. Abdul Moneim El-Banna. “They are a reliable partner that uses cutting-edge science to develop the solutions that dryland countries need to raise their productivity sustainably. We are pleased that ICARDA is expanding its presence in Egypt and acknowledge our shared commitment to improving the livelihoods of resource-poor farmers.” **ENDS.**

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Opening Ceremony of ICARDA’s Maadi Office:

Media representatives are invited to attend the opening of ICARDA’s Maadi office on October 29, 2017 at 10.30 am. The address of the office is: 2 Port Said Street, Victoria Square, Degla Maadi, Ismail El-Shaar Building No. 2. The opening coincides with the 61st meeting of ICARDA’s Board of Trustees.

About ICARDA

Established in 1977, the International Center for Agriculture Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is a non-profit, CGIAR research center focusing on delivering innovative solutions for sustainable agricultural development in dry area countries of the developing world. It is headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon, with regional offices across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. ICARDA works in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector to develop scalable agricultural solutions that have a real impact on poverty reduction, food security and ecosystem health.

ICARDA and Egypt: a strategic and long-standing partnership

ICARDA’s partnership with Egypt dates from 1979 when, together with Sudan, it launched the Nile Valley Project, the Center’s first research initiative in the region. Today, Egypt forms the hub of ICARDA’s Nile Valley and Red Sea Regional Program, which strategically aligns activities with Sudan, Eritrea, and Yemen. Egypt is also a key player in ICARDA’s new decentralization strategy as a thematic research location for sustainable intensification in irrigated systems. Egypt is also a financially-contributing member of the CGIAR as a result of its collaboration with ICARDA.

Recent research impacts of the ICARDA-Egypt partnership include:

- Raised-bed planting - a practice that involves planting crops on ridges and applying irrigation water to the bottom of furrows – offers a more efficient and sustainable alternative to conventional irrigation techniques. ICARDA efforts in Al-Sharkia governorate have seen raised-bed planting applied to some 40,400 hectares (ha), and the technique has also been successfully incorporated into a nationwide campaign to raise wheat production across 22 governorates. By 2017 the area devoted to raised-bed sown wheat extended across some 125,000 ha – or 10% of the country’s total wheat area.
- A collaboration with Egypt’s Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute (AGERI) has successfully harnessed advanced biotechnology to develop resilient chickpea, faba bean and wheat varieties. The introduction of glyphosate treatment and partially resistant faba bean

varieties - Giza 843 and Misr 3 – in orobanche-infested areas brought yield increases of 256 kg/ha; reduced production costs by some 350 USD/ha; and increased net incomes by 550 USD/ha. Recently, Egypt's Agricultural Research Center (ARC) and ICARDA have released two additional varieties: Giza 1557, resistant to chocolate spot and recommended for the Nile Delta, and Giza 1813, a short duration variety that is resistant to orobanche and recommended for distribution in Upper Egypt.