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**9TH MEETING OF THE MINISTERS
FOR FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES of
THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF CIHEAM**

Valetta, 27 September 2012

FINAL DECLARATION

At the invitation of the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs of Malta, the Ministers of Agriculture, or their representatives, of the 13 member states of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), met in Valletta on 27 September, 2012, the year in which CIHEAM celebrates its 50th anniversary since its inception.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation wish to emphasize the importance of this intergovernmental organization and acknowledge its contribution to education, research and cooperation in the Mediterranean;

The Ministers and the Heads of Delegation

- aware that the original configuration of CIHEAM offers an appropriate framework for the identification of mutual interests in agriculture and rural development, food security and the sustainable management of natural resources at a time when the Mediterranean region is witnessing a period of political, social, economic and environmental transition;
- considering that, for the stability of CIHEAM Nations, agriculture and food are strategic issues for the prosperity and for the daily well-being of the population, and that all forms of sustainable agriculture are necessary to meet the challenge of global food security, without overlooking the contributions of the aquaculture and forestry sectors;
- aware that the requirements of food security in the Mediterranean must be seen in a context of multiple challenges (geographical constraints including water and land scarcity, demographic growth and urbanisation, climatic changes and environmental threats) and calls for more multilateral cooperation and regional solidarity among Mediterranean countries to face these challenges, as has been analyzed in the numerous studies conducted by CIHEAM (i.a. Mediterra reports) and recommended at previous meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture of the 13 member states;
- considering the observations made, the different recommendations submitted, and the overall measures deliberated in particular on food security and the struggle against the volatility of agricultural commodities prices in international fora, particularly within the FAO, (Rome summit - November 2009), the G8 (Aquila summit - July 2009) and the G20 (Cannes summit - November 2011), and more recently at the 5+5 Dialogue in the western Mediterranean (Algiers Seminar - February 2012) and United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called 'Rio+20' (Rio de Janeiro summit - June 2012);
- aware of the trend for the prices of basic commodities to increase and that the dependence of the majority of the Mediterranean countries on the international markets could intensify in the future, and that trade and exchanges through partnership will contribute to guarantee regular supplies;

- taking cognizance of the discussions which took place in Malta, on the 25th and 26th September 2012 during the International Seminar on the Sustainability of Agro-alimentary Systems in the Mediterranean, organized by CIHEAM with the collaboration of the Maltese authorities, and underlining the role of the Mediterranean diet as a driver of sustainable food systems within the strategies of regional development and on that of traditional local products, since quantitative food security must also be complemented by qualitative approaches ;

Dedicated their deliberations on joint actions to consider "food security and food price volatility within the countries of the Mediterranean", convinced that this topic is central to the key political, economic, social and ecological policy issues of the region.

At the end of their debates, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation submitted recommendations to: (i) Mediterranean countries: (ii) to international organizations operating in the Mediterranean region (iii) and to CIHEAM.

It is for Mediterranean countries to

- 1) (i) Implement national agricultural and rural development policies as well as ecologically and socially responsible food strategies, in order to reinforce food security for their citizens, /while supporting agricultural producers (ii) Encourage a more inclusive growth on their territories - notably in remote regions while stimulating local governance, (iii) Pursue adaptation efforts for climate change in agriculture, (iv) Develop innovative public-private financing and risk -management tools in agriculture and (v) Place agriculture among the main political priorities while fostering public opinion on the strategic role of this sector for the future ;
- 2) Recognize in these policies the essential role of
 - Small-scale farmers, providing consistent support to these groups' activities, while strengthening their access to local, national and regional markets, providing them with mechanisms to meet production and income risks and developing employment strategies capable of making agricultural jobs and the rural economy more attractive; and
 - Women and young farmers in the same manner
- 3) Share the concerns, information and the national experiences concerning food security in order to progressively elaborate concrete and sustainable regional projects; and relying on these inputs towards Mediterranean cooperation and research networks to formulate such concerted initiatives and to disseminate the expertise so acquired at regional level, this through projects related to sustainable rural development, to the development and promotion of quality products and the coordination of agricultural research on topics such as water stress resistant plant species and water resources management;
- 4) Develop agricultural and logistical complementary opportunities among the Mediterranean countries on the level of commercial exchanges, to foster growth in investments in infrastructure and transport and promote further joint ventures, while noting that efforts against inefficiency and wastage contribute towards re-enforcing food security.

- 5) Contribute to the development of a market information system of the Mediterranean countries, linked to AMIS, in close collaboration with the G20 monitoring panel, as a way to share sound information in order to help prevent price volatility in agricultural markets.
- 6) Contribute to back CIHEAM, an organisation that since its creation in 1962 has made every effort in building up human capacity, support scientific research and the development of Mediterranean relationships on the essential themes of agriculture, food and the environment, and to reinforce this unique multilateral cooperation instrument while projecting its actions toward the large regional issues and upcoming challenges, notably the improving of food security;

To the International and Regional Organizations that the

- 1) European Union may pursue, within the setting of its neighbourhood policies, cooperation in the Mediterranean area while attributing an important place to agricultural and rural development contained in the new ENPARD programme.
- 2) European Union could strengthen the CIHEAM mission in the Mediterranean, also through the use of delegated cooperation tools foreseen for international organisations.
- 3) Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean supports the projects concerning food security considering its vocation to promote Euro-Mediterranean multilateral actions, identifying initiatives in this sector which affects the daily lives of the population and constitutes an area for solidarity.
- 4) Different international institutions responsible for cooperation in the Mediterranean or for food security, may, by allying themselves with CIHEAM, synergise training and research programmes, for development projects and sustainable management of natural resources pooling together regional human and financial resources and tackling food tensions, while involving the private sector, foundations and non-Mediterranean countries anxious to play a role in the stability and the development of the Mediterranean region.
- 5) International Organizations give its support to the implementation of the recommendations formulated during the International Seminar on the Sustainability of Agro-alimentary Systems in the Mediterranean, the findings of which are annexed to the present declaration.

To CIHEAM that it

- 1) Consolidates and strengthen the experience of half a century of existence while adapting to new regional realities and cultivating the organization's mission for Mediterranean cooperation and knowledge-sharing, intercultural dialogue and training within the frameworks of tomorrow ;

- 2) Continues its mission of observation, education and cooperation while developing its activities on food security at all levels (local, national, regional), and endeavours to propose innovative educational courses and so contribute to the strengthening of institutional capacities, thus establishing new guidelines adapted to the requirements of the region, while exploring new fields of expertise to promote a holistic vision of agriculture and food;
- 3) Support Mediterranean countries in the development of a market information system of the Mediterranean countries, linked to AMIS, in close collaboration with the G20 monitoring panel in collaboration with FAO, and to make use of its expertise and specialisation to reinforce the capacity building of the countries.;
- 4) Sustains the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean network on food security bringing together civil servants, experts, entrepreneurs and producer organizations of the countries wishing to adhere to this programme, share knowledge, promote common actions at a regional level and form a group of regular contacts in this field
- 5) Commit to work for small-scale farmers, as recommended above, in connection with the High Level Panel of Experts (HPLE) on food security and nutrition that has been created to advise the FAO's Committee on World Food Security (CFS);
- 6) Sustains sharing and exchange of good practices on producer organizations and risk management;
- 7) Pursues its committed action, comprising the improvement of responsible management for natural resources in the region, notably water in the domain of irrigation, an essential pillar of food security strategies for training, research and development aid to member countries;
- 8) Contribute to innovation in agriculture and agrifood sectors to reinforce job or added-value creation in rural areas.

Conclusions

- At the end of their meetings, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegation acknowledged that the topics on food security and the struggle against price-volatility, bio-economy and innovation in the agro-food sector, as well as on, [but also the preservation of water, soil and biodiversity, the promotion of the Mediterranean diet and an efficient food chain,] deserve attention at all times. They demand coordinated answers at a political, commercial and logistical level which a Euro-Mediterranean multilateral context can facilitate.
- On these topics and in a context in which many Mediterranean countries are suffering different crises, the ministers and Heads of Delegation acknowledged the efforts made by the Centre in the last decades and voiced their hope for CIHEAM to reinforce its capabilities and keep up its good work for many years to come.

- The Ministers and Heads of Delegation agreed to bring the present recommendations to the attention of the Foreign Ministers of their respective countries so that they can take them into account in international negotiations and in political initiatives in which they are involved.
 - Following the invitation of the Hon. Rachid Benaïssa, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Algeria., the Ministers and Heads of Delegation agreed to hold their tenth meeting in 2014 in Algeria.
 - They congratulated the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs of Malta, and all his collaborators, for the efforts accomplished towards the success of the present meeting.
 - They thanked CIHEAM for its contribution to the success of the meeting, and expressed their full appreciation for this organization that dedicates its daily activities to foster a long-lasting Mediterranean solidarity.
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Conclusions of the International Seminar “The Sustainability of Food Systems in the Mediterranean Area”

25-26 September 2012

Malta

CIHEAM with the technical cooperation of FAO (Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division) and in partnership with MOAN has organized the International Seminar on “The Sustainability of Food Systems in the Mediterranean Area”, held in Malta, from 25 to 26 September 2012. This document summarises the main issues and makes proposals for actions to be implemented in the Mediterranean basin and highlights concrete projects that can be funded in the coming years.

The main objective of this Seminar, beyond the intrinsic value of the exchanges that took place among the participants (about 70 Euro-Mediterranean experts, senior officials of ministries and international organizations, researchers, etc.), was to provide an innovative approach to reconcile food and nutrition security with sustainability including the use of resources while ensuring the protection of the environment, the adaptation of production systems to climate change, social enhancement and conservation of the Mediterranean diet cultural heritage.

To this end, the participants hope that the recommendations of the seminar will be brought to the attention of the Ministers of Agriculture of the 13 CIHEAM member countries, during their 9th meeting on 27 September 2012.

The participants have also emphasized the importance of the role played by CIHEAM, a privileged space for exchanges and analyses aimed at developing cooperation in the Mediterranean basin, a role that has been confirmed and strengthened in the year 2012 by the 50th anniversary of its establishment.

The participants focused their consultations in two separate sessions:

1. Food Systems and Mediterranean Sustainable Diets: the Mediterranean Diet as a pilot study
2. Organic and Quality Schemes: Sustainability challenges and prospects in the Mediterranean Region

Context

The participants in the Seminar have made the following observations about the evolution of food systems in the Mediterranean countries:

- Current food consumption and production patterns are not sustainable in the Mediterranean basin due to biodiversity loss, degradation of natural resources, pesticide contamination, climate change, high energy and water consumption, dietary patterns and eating habits changes and high dependency on imports as well as poverty and vulnerability of many rural and urban Mediterranean communities, and particularly the erosion of the Mediterranean diet;
- Currently, in the Mediterranean basin, we have multiple burdens of malnutrition - undernourishment, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity - due to recent and dramatic shift in dietary patterns. The trends of diet-related diseases (e.g. overweight, obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and certain cancers) are alarming, highlighting the inadequacy of the present food systems and dietary patterns. According to WHO (NCD Country Profiles, 2011), overweight and obesity rates in Mediterranean countries continue to rise;
- The protective effect on health of a good adherence to a Mediterranean-type diet has been repeatedly evidenced by scientific and medical studies since the 1960's pioneer Seven countries study;
- Consequently, urgent measures are needed to promote and disseminate the global concept of «sustainable diets¹».

¹ "...Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources." FAO/Bioversity International (2010). Biodiversity and Sustainable Diets - United Against Hunger. Report of a scientific symposium; 3-5 November 2010, Rome.

For instance, recent scenarios built to model future sustainable agriculture and food consumption acknowledge the necessary changes towards integrated and agro-ecological systems of production as well as a change in the consumption pattern with a higher plant/animal food ratio;

- In 2012 the European Commission has presented to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, «Innovation for sustainable growth: a bioeconomy for Europe», which, among other things, envisages activities to spread information among consumers about food products adopting a scientific approach (highlighting the benefits of nutrition, methods of production and sustainability of the environment) and to promote a healthy and sustainable lifestyle;
- In 2008, at the 26th FAO Regional Conference for Europe, it was recommended to promote local and traditional food products as an essential way for realizing food sovereignty and biodiverse and resilient food production. Several member nations urged FAO to direct more efforts towards market access and consumer awareness of high value traditional products, acknowledging that traditional agriculture practices are often the only farming methods possible in difficult agro-climatic areas. Several delegations agreed that “organic” was a quality designation important for consumers and significant for sustainable agriculture and environment, and countries needed FAO support in establishing a regulatory framework for implementing and protecting this designation. Many delegations highlighted the Mediterranean Diet being rich in biodiversity and nutritionally healthy. Indeed, the promotion of the Mediterranean Diet could play a beneficial role in the development of sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean region.
- The traditional and tradition-based innovative food products are a good way to give value to local biosystems, economies and communities and to improve sustainable development;
- Sustainable rural development, organic agriculture and geographical indications were mentioned specifically in the First Conference of Ministers of Agriculture held in Venice in 2003 within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Organic farming and geographical indications are also mentioned together in various international strategic documents concerning Mediterranean region. Furthermore, development agencies, national governments, private operators and NGOs, working on individual and institutional capacity building for the sustainability of agrofood system, are increasingly taking account the many potential synergies between food quality schemes and certification.

The participants also reflected that the «traditional Mediterranean Diet», recognized by UNESCO as an intangible heritage of humanity in 2010², should be considered as a model of sustainable diet in the Mediterranean basin, and able to contribute to the sustainability of the agro-food systems around the Mediterranean and to the valorisation of quality products.

As a result of these observations, the participants to the seminar felt that the attention of the Ministers of Agriculture of the 13 member countries of CIHEAM, who will meet on 27 September 2012, should be drawn particularly on the increasingly unsustainable situation of food systems around the Mediterranean affecting a large proportion of citizens who currently reside in the Southern and Northern Mediterranean, and on methods and strategies to be adopted to reverse this negative trend.

Proposals for an action program

The participants agreed that actions to be undertaken in order to change this situation are urgent and represent the conditions to permanently modify the observed processes and to develop and implement new strategies for achieving sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean. They relate in particular to:

- The previous statements made by the CIHEAM's countries Ministers of agriculture in 2008 and 2010, summarized by their final declaration in (Istanbul, May 8, 2010), reporting that it is necessary to: *"...Work to promote a healthy and sustainable regional food production system following the standards of the Mediterranean diet that foster the spirit of conviviality and favour consumption of local and seasonal products, particularly by encouraging regional networks to support public decisions for the protection, promotion and marketing of Mediterranean products and the development of environmentally sound agricultural production systems..."*.
- The need to reconcile food and nutrition security and sustainable use of resources while ensuring the local food demand and the protection of the environment, and resilience of production systems to climate change and their contribution to its mitigation;
- The sustainability of Mediterranean food systems , which represents an important area of thinking and action for governments and international organisations should replace the short-term approaches . In this context, the use of certification and quality assurance measures (geographical indications, organic agriculture, PDO, etc.) is a very effective means of adding value to products in local and international markets.

² « ... derives from the Greek word "diaita" – way of living – it is a social practice based on "know-how, knowledge, and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table and that concern, in the Mediterranean basin, cultures, harvest, fishery, conservation, preparation, cooking and, in particular, the way of consuming » UNESCO, 2010.

Activities to be developed

Session I **Food Systems and Mediterranean Sustainable Diets:** **The Mediterranean Diet as a pilot study** *with technical collaboration of FAO*

Activities must envisage the implementation, in the 13 member countries of CIHEAM and also member States of FAO, of a pilot project to develop "**Guidelines for improving the sustainability of diets and food consumption patterns in the Mediterranean area**". The Mediterranean diet, in its various national forms, will be used as a model to describe, understand and improve the sustainability of current diets and food systems.

In order to assess this sustainability, specific indicators should be identified and further developed to be applied to the different 13 CIHEAM's member countries. These indicators will be used, in a first step, to characterize the current production and consumption systems in the various Mediterranean countries and, in a second step, to identify the changes needed to achieve both production systems and consumption patterns with noticeably better sustainability and resilience. Measures to protect and improve the Mediterranean diet are expected. Scenarios will be constructed through modelling various options. This will form the basis to formulate recommendations for cross-sectoral policy instruments allowing the improvement of the sustainability of Mediterranean food systems and food consumption patterns.

A previous technical workshop and an international seminar gathered 51 experts in CIHEAM-MAI in Bari in 2011 to launch a first exchange on the necessary indicators to be implemented for that purpose. This Task Force already raised a first list of possible and relevant indicators in four domains, environment and natural resources; economy; society and culture; nutrition, health and lifestyle. An action plan was also proposed.

These indicators could also be used to assess the sustainability of diets in other parts of the world.

Session II **Organic and Quality Schemes: Sustainability challenges and prospects** **in the Mediterranean Region** *in partnership with MOAN*

Concerning quality schemes for agricultural products and foods it is suggested to:

- foster cross-border exchange and public-private permanent dialogue through the strengthening of specific **Network initiatives** focussing on

quality schemes and labels (e.g. organic agriculture and local identity products) with promising export potential and significant positive implications for the development of local communities and territories;

- establish a cross-border, intergovernmental **Mediterranean Gateway** on quality schemes as well as enhancing bioeconomy through:
 - i) facilitating continued access to up-to-date information on food quality rules, standards and practices changes;
 - ii) providing technical assistance and capacity building to institutional and corporate actors;
 - iii) supporting the design of adequate policies for the integration of Mediterranean small and medium producers and processors into global food quality supply chains;
 - iv) promoting equivalence and local ownership of food quality standards and schemes;
 - v) furthering synergies and complementarities between quality schemes;
 - vi) linking research and enterprising (and clusters) to enhance innovation in agro-food.