



7th meeting of the CIHEAM Member Countries' Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries

Zaragoza (Spain) – 4th February, 2008

Press release

At the invitation of Ms Elena Espinosa, the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in the presence of Mr Joe Borg, the European Commissioner responsible for fisheries, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of the member countries of CIHEAM (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies) will hold their seventh meeting in Zaragoza on 4 February 2008. Discussion will focus on:

- sustainable management of water resources and agricultural production in the Mediterranean Basin;
- management and preservation of fish stocks in the Mediterranean.

The choice of these two themes reflects the many complex challenges presented by water and fisheries resources management in all Mediterranean countries. It is also dictated by a common determination to do what is needed to make exploitation of resources efficient and sustainable and thereby ensure that populations enjoy greater food security and safety and farmers and fishermen receive adequate incomes.

It needs to be borne in mind that fresh water, a resource used for numerous purposes, is in increasingly short supply. Moreover, its uncontrolled use in agriculture leads to soil degradation and can even hasten desertification. More serious problems are already looming, due in particular to the negative impact of climate change on the availability of the resource itself and the identity of Mediterranean crops.

Fish stocks in the Mediterranean Basin, and everywhere else for that matter, are increasingly threatened by a range of developments, notably the overexploitation and degradation of the marine environment, which is particularly bad for the socio-economic condition of fishermen and their families.

However, it is still possible to counter these problems through education, research and cooperation. In accordance with its vocation and mandate, CIHEAM applies itself to them by offering a variety of courses in its four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes, including that of Zaragoza, disseminating information through its Observatory and making optimum use of the close cooperative links it has forged with member countries' national education and research institutions since its founding in 1962. It is counting on this meeting to open up new areas for reflection, so that member countries can work together to identify directions and priorities for future cooperation on management of water and fisheries resources, which are major factors in Mediterranean food safety and security.

It should be noted that the first of these meetings of CIHEAM member countries' Ministers of Agriculture, informal forums for discussion of matters relating to agriculture, food and the environment, was held in Rome in 1999. Since then there have been meetings in Rabat (2000), Athens (2001), Beirut (2002), Paris (2004) and Cairo (2006).

CIHEAM

CIHEAM was founded at the joint initiative of the OECD and the Council of Europe on 21 May 1962.

It is an intergovernmental organisation with thirteen member countries from the Mediterranean Basin (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey).

CIHEAM's establishments comprise a General Secretariat in Paris and four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier and Zaragoza).

In pursuing its three central missions (education, research and cooperation) CIHEAM has gradually established itself as an authority in its fields of activity: Mediterranean agriculture, food and rural development.

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