



CIHEAM

International Centre for Advanced
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

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Speech of the CIHEAM Secretary General

Mr Cosimo Lacirignola

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Ministers,
Secretaries General and Directors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Thanks

On behalf of the whole CIHEAM Team, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the AFED Secretary General, Pr. Najib Saab, for the invitation today to this very important regional conference.

It's a pleasure for CIHEAM to take part in this event for the first time. I hope that the cooperation started in 2015 through the written contributions we made in the AFED New Report is paving the way for a long-term partnership between our Institutions.

Indeed, we are working for a more sustainable development in the Region. With a different mission, different tools, but with complementarities in terms of scopes and objectives.

CIHEAM

As some of you already know, CIHEAM is an intergovernmental organization promoting multilateral cooperation in agriculture, food, rural development and fisheries in the Mediterranean Region.

CIHEAM pursues this cooperation through complementary higher education, specialised training, networked applied research, development and technical assistance, scientific diplomacy and policy dialogue.



Our mission is to respond to the needs of our 13 Member countries facing the same challenges of better food security, of a stronger management of scarce natural resources and of greater human development.

5 Arab countries are now members of CIHEAM: Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. But we are also working with other Arab states and with several regional organizations, as ICARDA, and UN Agencies as the FAO.

Sustainable Food Systems

Agriculture, food and the environment – three words that have become virtually inseparable in a world of growing interdependencies, where everything is interconnected, accelerating and changing.

Food will always be a fundamental issue, because it is at the core of human activity. In a Mediterranean region where natural resources are under climate and population stress, agricultural production is increasingly having to contend with the requirement of quality, which societies in quest of accountability are demanding through changing consumption patterns and new expectations as to the food they eat.

If the health of both man and the planet is to be safeguarded, food production must be geared increasingly to meeting the dual requirement of food safety and environmental sustainability.

Integrated measures, meaning intersectoral policies, are urgently required: in agricultural production but also in food consumption and nutrition. Food Losses and Waste on one hand and Food-related chronic diseases on the other are becoming a very sensitive issue in our Region.



One of the important CIHEAM-FAO joint activities related to sustainable consumption and production is the Edition 2016 of our Mediterra Report *"Managing and Promoting the Mediterranean Resources: Waste Challenges and Innovation for Natural Resources, Food and Knowledge"* that will be published in June 2016. Avoiding all types of waste is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable consumption in the Mediterranean and Arab region.

We have to reduce the impacts of food production for a better sustainable development by "producing more with less". And we also have to manage the nutritional transitions by improving education and food culture among the young generations. These are two very huge challenges.

The sustainability of food consumption and production has emerged in recent years. Both the new Post-2015 Development Agenda established last September and the Milano Charter adopted during the Universal Exhibition that came to its end two weeks ago are important illustrations of this emerging acknowledgement of the strategic centrality of the Food Security Issue.

In that perspective, CIHEAM has been pleased to become one of the international organizations that are members of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC) within the Programme on Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) developed by FAO and UNEP.

The Mediterranean Diet

By bringing people closer to the land, the Mediterranean diet clearly shows that the food question must be analysed "from landscape to table", by examining all of the dynamics – political, social, cultural, economic and legal – of this vast topic.



This approach was at the core of the edition 2012 of our *Mediterra Report* devoted to the Mediterranean Diet for the regional development.

Although the existence of Mediterranean values or of a Mediterranean identity may be debatable, it is clear that the relationship with food, gastronomy and thus the land of the people of this region is a consistent link and one which is further strengthened by cultural attachment to the family, sharing and sociability. Food and the flavours of local fare are a language common to the peoples of the various countries on the Mediterranean shores: they are rarely indifferent to what is served on their plate.

Although this is true the world over, it is particularly the case in the Mediterranean region, precisely because Mediterranean foods have evolved there and have blended over time, producing the wide variety of cuisines we know today. This historical and intercultural dimension is one of the Mediterranean's greatest assets, which is reflected first and foremost in the dishes served. A mythology has thus gradually evolved around the Mediterranean diet – a term, it will be recalled, that is derived from the Greek "*diáita*", which denotes a localised lifestyle based on both behavioural and culinary patterns.

Having been recognised as a nutrition reference model by the World Health Organisation in 1994 and added to UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010, the Mediterranean Diet can also be regarded as a lever for changing the course of human and economic development in the countries of the region.



I take this opportunity to also mention that CIHEAM Chania, our Institute in Greece that has the necessary scientific and research expertise to undertake joint actions and initiatives to preserve and disseminate the values of the Mediterranean Diet, was tasked with the coordination of the Network of the seven Member Countries that subscribed to the Mediterranean Diet in the UNESCO's representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in May 2014.

It's obvious that Sustainable food consumption encompasses sustainable Diets. Preference should be given to diets that have low environmental impacts while providing the required amount of nutrients (including micronutrients) and energy for a healthy life and a sustainable lifestyle. Sustainable Diet means also sustainable food system in the local or regional context.

The Mediterranean Diet is one of the numerous sustainable dietary models. Maybe not the model for all the countries in the world, but most probably a suitable model for the Mediterranean and Arab countries.

Since 2010 CIHEAM has started an ambitious cooperation programme with the FAO on sustainable food consumption and production with a particular reference to food systems sustainability and sustainable diets in the Mediterranean area.

The Mediterranean diet is currently studied by CIHEAM and the FAO as a case study for the assessment of the sustainability of dietary patterns in the Mediterranean area.

- On the occasion of Expo Milan 2015, CIHEAM Bari, our Institute in Italy, launched the *MED DIET EXPO 2015 CALL* for the promotion and safeguarding of the Mediterranean Diet in the context of sustainable food systems.



- It also launched in collaboration with the International Foundation for the Mediterranean Diet (IFMeD) the *Med Diet 4.0*, an innovative tool highlighting the several benefits of the Mediterranean diet.

Human Security

Let me conclude by saying that People should remain the highest priority of the SDGs. It is thanks to the human ability to invent solutions and accumulate knowledge that we succeed in adapting to change. People themselves play a key role in finding solutions to overcome problems.

This is why the Post-2015 Agenda, in terms of food security, should include four main aspects: the economy, the environment, social affairs and also innovation. Ecosystems are essential but we cannot forget human development in parallel.

No doubt that we have to work on sustainable diets but we need to maintain our efforts in reducing hunger, poverty and all the difficulties of access to food for vulnerable populations.

CIHEAM has been historically engaged in the Mediterranean Diet recognition and promotion, but our Organisation is more than ever involved in agricultural production, food security and rural development in the Region.

Quality and Quantity: we cannot choose in front of so many geopolitical and socio-economic challenges in the broad Mediterranean Region. The development has to be sustainable but also inclusive.



If we want more stability and peace around the Mediterranean Area, agriculture, food, rural development and sustainable consumptions are essential. It's a geographical evidence but also historically inevitable.

We'll be able to implement this vision by creating more inter-institutional synergies but also more solidarities between the Southern European, North African and Middle Eastern Countries.

Thank you very much for your attention

The Panel

The Panelists are very prestigious experts in this field and I am sure that they will give you innovative approaches and analysis.

