



المملكة المغربية
+ⵍⵎⴰⵔⵉⴽⵉⵏ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ
Royaume du Maroc



وزارة الفلاحة والصيد البحري
والتنمية القروية والمياه والغابات
+ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ
+ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔⵓⵏⵉⵎⴰⵔ
Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche Maritime,
du Développement Rural et des Eaux et Forêts

12th MEETING OF MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FISHERIES CIHEAM MEMBER COUNTRIES

Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco) – 25 October 2024

Final Declaration

25 October 2024

**Mediterranean Approach to Food Sovereignty:
Concerns and Impacts on Sustainable Agrifood Systems**

At the invitation of H.E. Mr Ahmed EL BOUARI, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco, and Mrs Frida KRIFCA, President of the Governing Board of the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), the Ministers of Agriculture from the 13 CIHEAM member countries, or their representatives, met in Rabat on 25 October 2024 to discuss the development of sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems, food security and sovereignty in the context of the challenges faced by the Mediterranean.

Ministers and Heads of Delegations

RECALLING THAT

- At the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia, the Mediterranean basin is the cradle of great civilizations and a major centre of gravity in the Eurafrikan space, and that it has always been a favourable place for cultural and scientific exchanges;
- This basin has been an enabling environment for the development of emblematic livestock systems and agricultural crops (e.g. cereals, legumes, vines, olive and fruit trees).
- Mediterranean people share common characteristics, backgrounds, and values and form a distinct Mediterranean identity; they express the same aspirations and perspectives and face similar challenges, exacerbated by current geopolitical conflicts.

CONCERNED THAT

- The Mediterranean region is among the areas most affected by climate change, warming 20% faster than the global average, which presents challenges but also opportunities for innovation in agriculture, fisheries, and ecosystem management to enhance resilience to natural hazards;
- Water resources, though unevenly distributed and overexploited, can be managed more effectively through improved practices and technologies, especially as population growth amplifies the need for better access, quality, and management of these vital resources;
- As conflicts in the Middle East exacerbate hunger and food security challenges, particularly affecting rural and agricultural populations, it is crucial to strengthen the resilience of food and agricultural systems to support the most vulnerable populations, ensuring continued access to food supply chains as part of efforts for recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction;
- Addressing food loss and waste provides a significant opportunity to build more sustainable food systems. By reducing waste, we can enhance food security and nutrition, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, protect natural ecosystems, and better utilise the valuable resources invested in food production.

STRESSING THAT

- To meet growing food needs, many countries in the region largely depend on imports, making them sensitive to variations in international markets, and that strong agricultural policies are essential to guarantee the food security and nutrition of populations;
- The Mediterranean region presents a strong instability, compromising as a consequence development and peace;

- Despite initiatives undertaken, the reduction of food waste and food loss remains among the major challenges at each stage of the chain, from production to consumption;
- Women, especially in rural and coastal areas, constitute an important agricultural labour force but still face persistent challenges underlining the urgent need for more inclusive, gender-oriented policies;
- Youth represent an opportunity for the development of the region, although the high unemployment rate remains as an important challenge;
- The agriculture, livestock and fishing sectors struggle to attract new talents and inspire vocations, due to the demanding nature of the work and the associated low social status;
- The region is marked by nutritional imbalances with prevalence of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies for the most vulnerable populations, as well as quite a high proportion of the region's population is overweight, thus increasing the associated burden of non-communicable diseases.

RECALLING THAT

- a. Almost 30 years ago, the **Final Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Barcelona** (November 1995) established the need for a multilateral cooperation framework with the countries of the Mediterranean basin;
- b. **The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda** adopted by the United Nations recognizes the crucial role played by the agricultural sector in achieving several sustainable development goals;
- c. **The United Nations Food Systems Summit (2021), the subsequent Call to Action for Accelerated Transformation of Food Systems (July 2023)** and the recommendations of the **Summit Dialogues** in the Mediterranean region; in that framework the CIHEAM, a one of the main partners, notably

contributed to the establishment of the FAO-CIHEAM-UpM-Prima Foundation Platform for Sustainable Mediterranean Food Systems (SFSMED);

- d. The **COP28 UAE Declaration** on sustainable agriculture, resilient food systems and climate action;
- e. **The Matera Declaration on Food Security, Nutrition and Food Systems** (June 2021), where foreign and development ministers from the G20, UN agencies and other partners recognised that poverty reduction, food security and sustainable food systems are essential to end hunger encourage social cohesion and community development, reduce socio-economic inequalities between and within countries, develop human capital, advance gender equality and youth empowerment, and promote inclusive global economic growth and sustainable development;
- f. **The G7 Puglia Food System Initiative**, mentioned in the Puglia G7 Leaders Statement (June 2024) and calling for intensified efforts to overcome structural obstacles to food security and nutrition;
- g. **The European Union's "New Pact for the Mediterranean"** to build Mediterranean partnerships in areas of mutual interest and the appointment in September 2024, for the first time, of a Commissioner exclusively dedicated to Mediterranean issues;
- h. The **G7 Agriculture Ministers' Communiqué** (Siracusa, September 2024) and their commitment to make agriculture and food systems more productive, resilient and sustainable, to improve food security and nutrition.

CONSIDERING THAT

- Regional solidarity is essential to reduce inequalities;
- Food security in the region also depends on the stability of international agricultural markets, requiring vigilant regional coordination and the sharing of reliable information;

- Sustainable agriculture plays a vital role in mitigating climate change particularly as a sector capable of capturing carbon;
- The new European Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 addresses the agroecological transition in the case of EU countries;
- Preservation of fisheries and sustainable development of coastal areas require a concerted approach;
- Agriculture and fishing are crucial sources of opportunities in rural and coastal territories for Mediterranean youth and should be considered as promising sectors;
- Lifelong education and vocational training must be geared towards the regions's needs in terms of employment and skills, in order to promote the development of rural and coastal areas, but also to strengthen the skills and abilities of young people and women;
- It is essential to connect and adapt education and training programmes to the needs of the private sector to promote entrepreneurial skills and local placements, while stimulating public and private investments;
- It is necessary to promote multi-stakeholder ecosystems (research, universities, institutions, private companies, environment), capable of identifying local and global needs, reducing gaps between public and private entities, and creating new employment opportunities for younger generations.

AWARE THAT THE CIHEAM

- Promotes, since its establishment in 1962, **capacity building, training and educational programmes at various levels**; advanced and specialised courses, Masters and Master of Science programmes in the field of sustainable agri-food systems, including the fishing and forestry sectors, have been delivered to several thousands of individuals;

- Actively participates in the progress of **scientific research**, through numerous research projects funded by the European Union and by many other donors; sustaining various international Doctorate platforms; implementing programmes, networks and actions **through scientific diplomacy**;
- Plays a central role in **cooperation and regional development** by promoting synergies between public institutions, the private sector and civil society through field projects allowing the strengthening of the capacities of agricultural, fishing and livestock communities, the promotion of sustainable agricultural technologies, the facilitation of exchanges of good practices between Mediterranean countries, sustainable water management, resilience approaches to face climate change or support to women in socio-environmental transitions in rural areas, among others;
- Contributes to the **development of Mediterranean international relations** on essential themes in the fields of agriculture, food and the environment and **the perpetuation of a dialogue of trust**;
- Provides an appropriate framework for **examining developments in Mediterranean agri-food systems, raise awareness among stakeholders and conduct studies**, especially prospective ones, enabling us to adapt as best as possible to the profound structural and economic transformations underway;
- Helps to promote and lead **platforms for dialogue and strategic cooperation, enabling the sharing of data, expertise and knowledge** to meet the urgent and emerging needs of Mediterranean countries in terms of food security and sovereignty.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

considering the diversity and complexity of agrifood systems in the Mediterranean area and in agreement with the CIHEAM, after discussing national policies and actions to be taken in a concerted manner at the regional level to address the above-mentioned issues, made the following recommendations to: 1) CIHEAM countries, 2) International organisations active in the Mediterranean and 3) The CIHEAM;

RECOMMEND

- To strengthen the role and the initiatives of the CIHEAM in the Mediterranean, stimulating public and private financial contributions and or by supporting specific projects of common interest;
- To consider sustainable rural, agricultural and fisheries development as a priority in their growth strategies, especially for the role that these sectors play in contributing to food and nutrition security, to climate change adaptation and mitigation, to the resilience of territories, to revitalise fishing communities and in overall economic growth and consequently to strongly invest in the human capital of these sectors;
- To provide education and training courses that adequately respond to the socio-economic and environmental challenges of Mediterranean rural and coastal areas in order to contribute to feasible solutions in the areas of sustainable resource management, climate, biodiversity, agro-ecology, territorial development and entrepreneurship in the service of territories;
- To facilitate access to agricultural land and to other productive resources for youth and women in order to stimulate generational renewal and to diversify production structures;
- To implement measures which support and promote the transition towards food systems that are more resilient, sustainable, competitive, profitable, efficient, and inclusive;

- To promote innovative policies that drive changes in food consumption and production by allowing a more favourable "food environment";
- To support cooperation in the area of food research among the countries in the region aimed at establishing sustainable food systems.
- To promote actions aimed at the full recognition of CIHEAM diplomas in member countries.

REQUEST INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- To initiate joint projects in training, research, and technology transfer that enhance national capacities in these areas, by fostering greater synergies between programmes to facilitate the pooling of human and financial resources;
- To accelerate investments in sustainable agriculture and to reallocate urgently needed investments to the agricultural sector.
- To promote additional areas of collaborations in fields such as transboundary diseases, food traceability and quality control, gender equality and women empowerment, and technology transfer & innovation.

REQUEST THE CIHEAM

1. The Strengthening of Capacities and Resources:

1.1 Training and Capacity Building

- To continue to increasingly produce and share knowledge with and for member countries and make that knowledge more useful for sustainable development in CIHEAM countries;

- To address the growing demand for education by providing students with the necessary theoretical and practical foundation for Masters and Doctoral programmes. It is essential that the training courses provided take consideration of the interest of public and private entities in expertise developed through solution-oriented approaches. The CIHEAM should offer training that facilitates the emergence of new professional profiles, such as innovative managers, technology transfer agents, and trainers. These educational programmes should incorporate a hands-on learning approach, emphasising practical projects and coworking processes.
- To adapt its programmes to include green skills, digitization, new technologies, and AI, in line with the evolving socio-economic environments and professional demands. This evolution requires an integrative and multi-stakeholder approach, allowing for better communication and understanding among different actors.
- To provide a multicultural dialogue framework, ensuring that ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity remains a source of mutual enrichment. A proactive approach is necessary to promote the values of tolerance, respect, and coexistence, notably through workshops and training focused on humanistic projects for a diverse and united Mediterranean community.

1.2 Cooperation and Partnerships

- To promote the development of cooperation projects and programmes at national and regional levels to increase production and productivity of agriculture and fisheries for the benefit small-scale farmers and fishery operators, women and youth in the Mediterranean, providing them with knowledge and capacities for better contribution to the achievement of food security, more sustainable and resilient agriculture and fisheries, and the improvement of rural livelihoods.
- To continue sharing scientific and technical information, know-how and best practices through **corporate networking activities** on sustainable agri-food systems (**SFS-MED Platform**), innovation partnership (**MIP**), organic farming (**MOAN**), legumes (**Beans**), Mediterranean flora (**GenMedA**), **The**

Mediterranean Network on Greenhouse Gases in Agriculture, among others.

- To continue sharing geopolitical and strategic information among Member States. In alignment with the pronouncements of prior CIHEAM ministerial meetings, to fortify the wall of food security, the **MED-Amin Network**, a tool devoted to the cereal domain, aims to strengthen national early warning and response capacities, gather public and private stakeholders, formulate effective crisis strategies, and support a thorough strategic dialogue on agrifood sustainability, food security and crisis management.
- To encourage the active participation of rural and coastal communities in decision-making processes related to agricultural and climate transitions. The CIHEAM should support participatory approaches that integrate the voices of farmers, fishers, women, and youth in the design and implementation of climate resilience and food security strategies. By strengthening local governance capacities, the CIHEAM can help ensure that sustainable practices are adopted, and that solutions meet the needs of communities and enhance their resilience in the face of climate change challenges.

1.3 Resource Mobilization and Organisational Synergies

- To continue working to increase the resources of the CIHEAM by seeking new funding mechanisms and consolidating the organisational improvements made in recent years;
- To develop multi-stakeholder initiatives and projects, involving the private sector (including businesses, banking, and insurance), to finance essential transitions and support agricultural communities. These efforts should focus on building resilience around the water-food-climate nexus, ensuring long-term sustainability and addressing both adaptation and mitigation needs;
- To further build on the existing collaboration between CIHEAM institutes and the General Secretariat, leveraging past experiences and shared expertise to enhance synergies and maximise the overall impact across all areas of work.

2. The implementation of targeted actions in key sectors:

2.1 Research, Innovation and Network animation

- To facilitate information and research networks in the Mediterranean region with the aim of harnessing technical knowledge and expertise to contribute to knowledge base and promoting advanced research on agricultural markets, sustainable food systems, sustainable livestock and fisheries, forestry and crop production;
- To strengthen qualified research activities on specific issues related to the Mediterranean agri-food systems and related fields, focusing on solution-based approaches and results. Sustaining the CIHEAM in matching financial resources, supporting young students, promoting scientific diplomacy and empowering international relations and scientific partnerships.

2.2 Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems

- To pursue its committed efforts and initiatives within the FAO-CIHEAM-UpM and Prima Foundation on the SFSMED platform and the dialogues organised at transnational, national, and subnational levels of the UN FOOD SUMMIT, which have highlighted the challenges and strategic actions needed for a sustainable transition of Mediterranean agriculture and food systems;
- To address health, technical, and economic aspects of food security by increasing local production despite resource scarcity, and mitigating the effects of international food price volatility;
- Support changes in food behaviours by addressing the structural factors guiding food choices, while promoting consumer awareness and education; fostering the creation of enabling food environments to make an important contribution to the transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems.

2.3 Sustainable Management and Knowledge sharing in Natural Resources, Coastal Zones and Fisheries

- To support initiatives for better soil management, proper management of available water resources, and plant and animal biodiversity. It should continue to promote sustainable agricultural, forestry and fishing practices, reducing the impact of climate change while increasing the resilience of local communities.
- To continue and expand the work on the sustainable use and integrated management of water with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG2, and thus make a contribution to the United Nations Conference on water scheduled for 2026 and 2028 (resolution A/77/L.106);
- To produce, promote and share more knowledge and good practices for member countries, training activities, sharing technologies and technical documents; to disseminate project results, clear actionable guidelines, good practice guides, diseases list for aquatic animals in the region in order to attract young people, raise awareness and experience sharing and reinforce the cultural identity of local and coastal communities.

3. The bolstering of transversal and inclusive approaches:

3.1 Gender Integration perspective and Women's Empowerment

- To continue and enhance its efforts in integrating a gender perspective into all its programmes, by developing tailored education, training, and capacity-building initiatives that empower women and promote their active participation in agriculture, fisheries, and natural resource management.
- To conduct studies on the career trajectories of female graduates from its programmes, focusing on their integration into the labour market, wage equality, and barriers to career advancement. These studies will provide essential data to adjust existing training programmes and develop additional modules or workshops aimed at better preparing women for careers in science, research, and other professional sectors.

- To strengthen its partnerships with countries, international organisations and civil society to facilitate and sustain women, particularly those in rural and coastal areas, to a greater access to productive resources, including finance and other productive assets, and to leadership opportunities.

3.2 Youth participation and empowerment

- To promote young generations as agents of change in agriculture, fisheries, food systems and water management. Youth engagement is crucial to preserving traditional practices while fostering innovation. The CIHEAM should ensure that sustainable agriculture, water management and food production are seen as profitable, attractive, and viable career paths, contributing to food sovereignty, generational renewal and regional development.

3.3 Small and medium-sized farms

- The CIHEAM, in partnership with relevant organisations and institutions, should progressively develop initiatives to strengthen small and medium-sized farms and rural entrepreneurs through support for financing, agricultural insurance, collective action and technical assistance to adapt to new challenges, mainly climate change and technological evolutions.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Ministers and Heads of Delegations support CIHEAM initiatives in the fields of sustainable food systems and support young people and women to invest in sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and recognize the relevance of the work of this Organization devoted to specialised post-university education, training, knowledge transfer and professional placement in connections with enterprises and private entities.
- The CIHEAM Member States Ministers agree to bring these recommendations to the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of their respective countries so that they can be considered in international negotiations and political initiatives in which they are engaged, convinced that actions must be taken in favour of investment in agriculture, fishing and rural areas with a highlighted attention to the regional dimension of the Mediterranean.
- The Ministerial Delegations congratulate the Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco and all his collaborators for the efforts made to make this meeting a success.
- The Ministers of Agriculture of the CIHEAM countries express the warmest appreciation to the Center for the continued and tireless efforts and support for organising this very successful 12th Meeting.