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The contribution of ICAMAS to agricultural research in the Mediterranean region

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The International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (ICAMAS) was created to improve the qualifications of professional staff in Mediterranean countries working in agriculture and rural development. It is thus obvious that while the "research function" is certainly important, it is not an end in itself but must contribute to our overall goal of supporting the development of these countries.

As the creation of ICAMAS was meant to improve cooperation between Mediterranean countries, research programs of the Centre and its Institutes must give priority to activities likely to promote such initiatives (research networks, comparative studies, overall analyses of the Mediterranean region).

This preoccupation was reinforced over the past few years when the expansion of ICAMAS to southern Mediterranean countries enabled it to become a special vehicle for North-South dialogue in this region.

ICAMAS scientific policy is developed under the authority of its Board and with the support of its Scientific Advisory Council that provides valuable advice on the directions of our programs.

Such programs are implemented at two levels:

- through the Mediterranean Agronomic institutes (MAI) that make up ICAMAS, and

- through the Secretariat General of ICAMAS.

I - Scientific activities of ICAMAS Institutes

These activities are designed to meet two objectives.

The first corresponds to that of any higher education institution, that is, research work that constitutes the essential activity of its staff. The Institutes' own teachers as well as outside professors that are invited for significant lengths of time (even sabbatical years) naturally undertake research activities designed to improve their knowledge and thus their courses.

Institute trainees also participate in such activities through Master of Science theses which are prepared under the supervision of MAI professors, often in collaboration with their home university or institution.

Under certain conditions, trainees who have spent their first year in one of the ICAMAS Institutes can do their second year research in an outside institution. This reflects the fundamental cooperative policy of ICAMAS.

The second on-going objective of our Institutes, which makes them unique compared to national

institutions, is linked to their status of being part of an international institution. This leads ICAMAS Institutes to not only welcome other teachers-researchers and trainees from the different member countries to their centres, but especially to design their research programs to respond to the needs of these countries and to organize their activities in a cooperative manner.

The research programs of each Institute are defined each year through a consultation process involving their officials and the ICAMAS Secretariat General before being approved by the Board of Directors.

The different Institutes have their own research specialities that reflect their history, their potential and their assigned orientations. Thus the Bari-MAI specializes in irrigation problems while the Montpellier-MAI is oriented towards agro-food and rural socio-economy. This specialization does not exclude collaboration, far from it. To take the example of the two Institutes just cited, the socio-economic problems of irrigation are being jointly studied by both Montpellier and Bari. In the same way, the specialization of the Saragossa-MAI in animal production, plant selection and rural planning is slated for collaboration with both Montpellier and the new Institute located in Chania whose activities are oriented towards the study of greenhouse crops and forestry.

Beyond such relations, the ICAMAS Institutes are expected to undertake development missions with the different research institutions of member countries. In some countries, this takes the form of bilateral programs such as that which associates the Water Research Centre in Cairo with the Bari-MAI. Generally speaking, however, this takes place through research networks bringing together several centres and teams in the Mediterranean region.

Such research network activities are essential for the success of our programs and are thus strongly encouraged by the Secretariat General.

The different networks, which reflect the Institutes' own programs, vary according to the major activities of each one.

Bari-MAI:

- use of briny water (in collaboration with AGRIMED)
- complementary irrigation for major crops

- creation of a data bank of irrigation projects.

Montpellier-MAI:

- comparative family farming (RAFAC)
- economics and geopolitics of the trade in cereals and oil-protein crops in the Mediterranean region - EGECOM (in collaboration with INRA)
- intensification of cereal farming system by incorporating livestock (with INRA and ICARDA)
- socio-economic aspects of irrigation (with Bari-MAI and AGRIMED)
- goat raising (FAO-AGRIMED sub-network).

Saragossa-MAI:

- almonds (GREMPA)
- forage value tables
- ovine races
- selection of cereals and leguminous grains (with the EEC and ICARDA)
- rabbits.

As we can see, several of these networks extend beyond ICAMAS and have been established in agreement with other international institutions (FAO, EEC) or in collaboration with them, notably for the AGRIMED program.

II - Scientific activity of the Secretariat General

Above and beyond its responsibilities for coordinating the activities of the institutes, and notably its support of the development of research networks, the Secretariat General tries to play an animation and communication role with the national research bodies of the member countries and with other international institutions that it liaises with.

A good example is the development program linking Yugoslavia, the European Community and ICAMAS. As part of the EEC's on-going relations with other Mediterranean countries, an agreement was reached between Brussels and Yugoslavia, with ICAMAS being responsible for its implementation within its field of competence. Each year a committee brings together the three partners to provide an update on the implementation of this program and to decide on activities to be done for the following year.

This example shows that ICAMAS can play an even more efficient role when its activities are

part of a well defined development program accepted by its member countries.

Mediterranean countries need to develop their agriculture and to make progress in this direction they must have access to efficient techniques that are appropriate to their ecological, economic and social conditions. Most of them, however, have only limited scientific means. There are many reasons for this: the size of their country, budgetary problems of the national government, limited number of trained researchers, inadequate laboratory equipment, and isolation from the international scientific community. Furthermore, the special problems faced by Mediterranean agriculture are not suited to the transfer of techniques that have been developed in other more advanced countries. If Irish agriculture can use British farming techniques, Tunisia finds very few techniques adapted to its problems in northern Europe. This severely restricts the potential for technology transfer.

ICAMAS believes that significant valorization of the overall efforts of national research teams could be achieved by facilitating contacts and collaboration. We know that scientific progress results from mutual cooperation and contact. But we must also note that, for financial and political reasons, contacts between Mediterranean researchers is inadequate and this can explain the lower efficiency of researchers who work in our 12 countries.

It should be clear that ICAMAS has no ambition to become the 13th scientific power of our Mediterranean community. It has neither the desire - nor the means - to take the place of programs of the scientific institutions of its member countries. It does have the ambition, however, to facilitate contacts and to enable different national teams having similar concerns to keep each other informed on their projects, methods and results. This cooperation should improve their own efficiency and facilitate joint research and publication activities. Experience with such an approach has shown its worth within the European Community; ICAMAS wants to extend this approach to the Mediterranean region where the need is even greater.

Similar steps have been taken by other international organizations. When they concern subjects of interest to Mediterranean researchers, ICAMAS prefers to contribute accordingly rather

than to create parallel or competitive systems of its own.

Here are two examples of this policy:

The FAO animates the *Silva Mediterranea* group. Some member countries of ICAMAS have financial problems sending their experts to these meetings so ICAMAS has accepted to assume this burden. It thus participates in this way in the elaboration of the *Silva Mediterranea* programs and will organize a seminar on forestry problems in conjunction with this FAO group.

As part of its mandate for coordinating agricultural research (Article 41 of the Treaty of Rome) the EEC created the Committee of Mediterranean Agriculture (AGRIMED). This committee defined a certain number of research subjects which involve the relevant experts of the 12 members of the EEC. Most of these subjects, however, also interest researchers in Mediterranean countries that are not members of the EEC (Yugoslavia, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco). Rather than creating another group bringing together the experts of these countries around the same subjects, it appeared logical to the EEC and ICAMAS to bring these experts together in the same network. This has the double advantage of avoiding the loss of time of the experts who belong to both groups and of enriching the discussions by bringing in different points of view.

There are also cases where it is ICAMAS that takes the initiative (for example, the almond research network) that can be extended to other organizations.

Scientific activity is not limited to the creation or functioning of networks. It also takes place through the organization of Mediterranean seminars which can constitute the departure point for intra-Mediterranean cooperation through networks or which can enable evaluations to be made of the activities of existing networks.

Among the recent seminars organized or being held are:

- **Alep pine**, Tunisia, 1985
- **Pig breeding**, Belgrade, 1986
- **Cotton in the Mediterranean and the Middle East**, Montpellier, 1986.

- **Poultry farming in the Mediterranean**, Belgrade, 1987
- **The use of saltwater for irrigation**, Cairo, 1987
- **The economics of olive growing**, Tunis, 1987
- **Camel Digestion**, Ouargla, 1988.

Scientific activity must also include a publications policy. For this, ICAMAS is fortunate in publishing *Options Méditerranéennes*. Initially conceived as a periodical publication, *Options Méditerranéennes* has provided the means to publish the research activities of ICAMAS: proceedings, analyses of the work of the networks, research program results. Among the most recent publications have been the proceedings of seminars organized with GREMPA (Almond Network) 1984-1985; *Pin d'Alep and Pin Brutia in Mediterranean silviculture*, 1986; *Cereals and cereal products in the Mediterranean region*, 1986.

It is also in *Options Méditerranéennes* that these proceedings on *Agricultural Research in Countries of the Mediterranean Region* have been published. They were preceded by the proceedings on *Agricultural Training in Countries of the Mediterranean Region*.

Beyond its own publications, ICAMAS welcomes collaboration with other publications supporting Mediterranean agricultural research activities. Plans are being made, for example, to help fund a journal on Mediterranean forestry.

This ambition to work towards the establishment of a Mediterranean scientific community is not designed to form a closed club or to create a movement that might threaten others. To the contrary, we think that the Mediterranean region can once again become a centre for a certain scientific culture, as was the case in the past, and when a satisfactory level is reached it could cooperate (in the real sense of this term) with the international scientific community. Experience shows that in scientific relations, as in other areas, you can only expect to benefit if you have contributed.