



VII meeting of the Ministers of agriculture and fisheries of CIHEAM member countries. Final declarations

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VII MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES OF CIHEAM MEMBER COUNTRIES

FINAL DECLARATIONS

- 1 Agriculture and Fisheries are essential sectors for social and economic development in Mediterranean countries. Therefore, they are key activities for the cooperation in the region, especially taking into account the shared and centuries-old cultural background. An appropriate approach, based on the rational planning of the farming environment, the conservation of fisheries resources and of other elements such as soil, water and biodiversity, as well as food quality and safety, enables efficient and sustainable development to be accomplished.
- 2 The Mediterranean Basin faces many environmental challenges. The development of agriculture and other economic sectors implies the increasing intensive use of water, at the same time that there are uncertainties about the availability of water resources for the future. The fisheries resources and the coastal and marine environments in the Mediterranean are threatened by overexploitation, pollution and the impact of a wide range of activities on this environment.
- 3 Therefore, those initiatives that favour responsible agriculture and fisheries –from an environmental standpoint– should be promoted, to contribute to sustainable development in the Mediterranean Basin and safeguard the material and intangible values and qualities that characterize and identify its agricultural landscape, its coasts or its sea. The future of the agro-food and fisheries sectors involves maintaining a balance between competitiveness and sustainability. Within this context, the implementation of the principles of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, adopted by the riparian countries and the EU Commission –revised in 2005– is especially interesting, for the enhancement of policies pursuing sustainable agriculture, fisheries and the rural environment.
- 4 In a context marked by the gradual opening of the agro-food trade, issues linked to quality, marketing and health standards have grown in importance, especially as regards emblematic agro-food products of the Mediterranean diet, which have intrinsic healthy and organoleptic properties that have to be preserved and strengthened. If convergent regulations concerning food quality and safety are not adopted, trade of agricultural and fisheries products may be hindered.

MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF FISHERIES RESOURCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

- 5 Fisheries resources in the Mediterranean Basin are the base of an economic and cultural fabric made up of a large number of firms –often small in size– which play a fundamental social role in the areas where these activities are pursued. The diversity of species and the sustainability of the fisheries in the Mediterranean are threatened by overexploitation of stocks, pollution, invasion of foreign species and degradation of the marine environment. These problems are shared by all Mediterranean countries and their solution necessarily implies a common response that takes into account the inherent particularities related to geomorphologic, sociologic and cultural aspects of each country.
- 6 For this reason, joint efforts are needed in order to undertake actions aimed at conserving marine resources, exchanging experiences in regulations that assure sustainable fishing, improving the participation of the sector in policy-making processes, in building scientific capacity and fostering the active participation of scientists to the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, as well as sharing and homogenizing statistics about the state of the fisheries resources.

- 7 Aquaculture guarantees a stable supply of quality fisheries products and strengthens the socio-economic network of the fishing regions. Countries from the Mediterranean region pay special attention to the sustainable development of this sector, thus paying attention to the environmental risks also involved in aquaculture activities. The growth of the aquaculture and fisheries sectors, as well as of other sectors, requires an integrated management approach for the coastal areas.
- 8 In the interests of promoting cooperation in these areas, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of CIHEAM member countries have adopted the following RECOMMENDATIONS:
- CIHEAM member countries shall promote cooperation with the aim of improving the management of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean. For this, knowledge about the assessment of fishery stocks and management actions for sustainable exploitation shall be reinforced, attempting to incorporate criteria such as the ecosystems approach and the precautionary approach. Experiences in the creation and conservation of protected marine reserves shall be shared.
 - It is especially important to carry on making progress in the scientific basis for sustainable fisheries management which may set the basis for further harmonization of fisheries regulations. The CIHEAM will work to cooperate to develop a comparative analysis of the legislations governing the management of the fisheries sector, fishing and aquaculture, in an attempt to incorporate assessment criteria such as the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach. CIHEAM member countries, with the support of the Centre, shall reinforce cooperation aimed at harmonizing the legislations on the exploitation of fisheries resources, as well as the convergence of aspects related to marketing, mainly of small pelagics, and quality and safety of products from capture fisheries and aquaculture. Likewise, fish consumption shall be promoted and shall be included as part of healthy eating habits, as one of the pillars of the Mediterranean Diet.
 - Fisheries policies should be based on the analysis of objective and reliable data. CIHEAM member countries –in collaboration with other international institutions, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the FAO and the EU and UNEP/MAP– shall stimulate actions aimed at reliable fisheries statistics systems in member countries and at developing scientific common tools for the compilation and analysis of data, as well as at building capacity in fisheries science and at fostering scientists participation in relevant scientific fora.
 - It is necessary to improve knowledge about the relationship between aquaculture and the marine environment, so that the development of this sector can yield products of high quality at the same time as avoiding environmental impacts. CIHEAM member countries shall promote the exchange of information on sustainable production techniques, which may enable aquaculture to be diversified towards quality products that satisfy both current and future demands for fishing and aquaculture products, assuring at the same time the quality level of the Mediterranean Diet.
 - The CIHEAM, through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes, shall promote educational activities for Mediterranean experts in fisheries and aquaculture and shall support cooperative research. Education in this field implies the participation of experts, with common knowledge and methods and from very diverse disciplines, and should cover both the technical dimension as well as socio-economic and cultural aspects related to the Mediterranean Diet. For this, partnerships between CIHEAM and educational and research institutions from member countries shall be encouraged.
 - The European Union member countries invite the European Commission to take into consideration the Mediterranean area within the VII Framework Programme on R&D related to marine resources.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

- 9 The geographical characteristics and weather conditions of Mediterranean countries to a large extent make the development of agriculture conditional to the availability of water resources for irrigation. The impetus to the development of sustainable and competitive irrigation agriculture is an element that enables agriculture productivity to be increased, boosting food quality and safety and leading to the development of the economy and of the industrial sector. Irrigation plays a very important social role in the rural environment.
- 10 Water is not a mere means of agriculture production, but an element necessary for human and economic development in general. Access to quality drinking water is a priority that should be guaranteed.
- 11 Water resource policies and agriculture policies should be consistent. Production under irrigation could be oriented to the production of specialized crops targeted at the export markets, or to the production of stable products targeted at domestic consumption and food quality and safety. Both approaches generate negative and positive externalities, which should be taken into account when designing the corresponding policies. These policies will take into consideration the safeguard and promotion of Mediterranean Diet products, as well as their related environmental and landscape qualities.
- 12 Water is a scarce resource, therefore improving management efficiency in Mediterranean agriculture implies considering without delay policies aimed not only at extending the supply of this resource –including the use of alternative sources– but at an approach focused on controlling demand and modernizing infrastructures. Likewise, it is not possible to implement a suitable irrigation policy without the active involvement of users and their associations. The development of irrigation could be boosted if private investment and training of users are encouraged.
- 13 The expansion of irrigation is limited due to the availability of water resources and to environmental impacts. The inappropriate use of water for irrigation may lead to the deterioration of soils, to salinity problems, or to the overexploitation of aquifers and desertization.
- 14 The exchange of information and the coordination of cooperation mechanisms in these fields are fundamental tools for the development of national irrigation policies, adapted to the specific economic, social and geographical conditions of each country.
- 15 In this sense, it will also be fundamental to incorporate to these policies forecasts derived from studies on climate change and its effects on the water resources of the region.
- 16 For this reason, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of CIHEAM member countries have adopted the following RECOMMENDATIONS:
 - CIHEAM shall promote the exchange of capabilities related to information, research and development of water management and irrigation technologies, that will permit the sharing of experiences about the modernization of irrigable areas, and for improving water use for agriculture, as well as the performance of water user associations.
 - The CIHEAM Observatory will compile information about the specific situation of each country, which will help assessing the most suitable water and irrigation management technologies and policies in each context. The Mediterranean Basin bears witness of a unique culture and is a paradigmatic example of clever and sustainable use and of intelligent management of water resources. The Observatory will also pay special attention to these assets, documenting all cases and integrating them when possible into the new irrigation policies.
 - CIHEAM activities shall be intensified to train specialists in water management and in the administration of irrigation and water use systems. For this reason, the coordination of the educational programmes of each Mediterranean Agronomic Institute shall be encouraged as well as the collaboration between CIHEAM and member countries' Administrations and Education Centres in charge of educational and research programmes related to water resources for agriculture.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17 The evolution of prices for agricultural commodities, mainly cereals, is especially relevant for food safety and for the future of the agro-food sector, both in producing countries as well as in importing countries. For this reason, it is interesting that Mediterranean countries should study the temporary and structural determining factors that determine prices for agricultural raw materials.
- 18 Because of its history and its geographical situation, the Mediterranean Basin has a long-standing tradition of producing and integrating a wide range of nutritious, appetizing and healthy food products. The unique characteristics of the products from the Basin together with the way they are combined, prepared as well as the eating habits have shaped a unique dietary pattern over centuries which has led the Mediterranean Diet to be recognized by the WHO and the FAO as a quality, healthy and sustainable food model. The Mediterranean diet represents an amazing living cultural asset which is still spread and shared throughout all countries from the Mediterranean Basin. It also represents an important economic and social potential at the same time as a legitimate and extremely important sign of authenticity, quality and health. The promotion of the Mediterranean Diet in the international sphere may enable healthy consumption habits to be extended, promoting balanced and nutritious eating habits.
- 19 The Ministers of agriculture take note of the project of a Union of the Mediterranean, whose added-value could be found in the political impetus it should be given to the concrete cooperation around the Mediterranean and the mobilisation of stakeholders of neighbouring countries. This should come as a complement to existing processes and institutions. They underline the importance of reinforcing cooperation in agriculture between the two shores of the Mediterranean, and the role of the CIHEAM as a precursor in this regard.
- 20 For this reason, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of CIHEAM member countries have adopted the following RECOMMENDATIONS:
- An ad-hoc Working Team will be set up within the CIHEAM in order to analyse the situation of the markets for agricultural raw materials and to conduct a strategic study of the sector. This working team shall analyse the cereal market project –among others– which is currently being undertaken by the Secretary General. The strategic study will be used as the basis for discussion in the next meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of CIHEAM member countries.
 - As we are united and identified by this outstanding intangible cultural legacy and because of its social, territorial, environmental, landscape, economic, productive and health strategic importance, CIHEAM member countries support the proposal launched to recognize the Mediterranean Diet as UNESCO's Human Intangible Cultural Heritage.
 - A Working Group will be created, with support of CIHEAM, in which countries will participate on a voluntary basis, alongside the European Union and international organizations, with the purpose of examining the possibilities of a common reflection on aspects of relevance in agriculture and fisheries, conferring special attention to the Mediterranean Diet, Rural Development, the Scarcity of Water Resources, the Climate Change and Scientific Research in these issues.

Considering the progress made within the Process of Barcelona and on the basis of the Declaration of Rome in December 2007, this Group will pay special attention to the initiatives that may be taken within the framework of the project for the Union for the Mediterranean.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of Türkiye, Mr. Mehmet Mehdi EKER has, during his address to the 7th Ministerial meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries of CIHEAM's member countries, proposed Istanbul as place for the 8th Ministerial meeting.

Saragossa, 4 February 2008