

## Roundtable: 3rd cycle teaching and research

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# Roundtable: 3rd Cycle Teaching and Research

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In order to deal with the changing situation arising from their socio-economic evolution, countries of the Mediterranean region must develop a high-performance agriculture, oriented toward progress. Such an effort should be supported by combined training and research activities aimed at the accumulation of the know-how required for development. Such acquired knowledge will also provide guideposts for further research.

For agriculture to evolve, training is an essential prerequisite. In particular, higher education is responsible for training teachers and development engineers as well as future researchers. Hence a distinction must be drawn between:

- training through research, and
- training for research.

These measures are especially important because, in developing countries, it is first of all the engineers in each country who are called upon to select the proper techniques and to set up production systems adapted to the particular conditions prevailing in the various Mediterranean countries.

On the basis of the national reports, it is possible to delineate six groups of questions discussed at this roundtable.

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## Training through research

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### 1. What type of research?

Research is unquestionably a necessary requirement for higher education. It contributes to the continuing education of teacher/researchers and, in many countries, determines their careers. Research objectives include, in addition to the continuing education of instructors, the training of students and the development of the country's agriculture. These goals may be complementary in some cases, or they may be competitive.

While we must not neglect the basic research that generates applied research, it would be unwise to draw a line separating such research in Mediterranean countries. Training must work out a coherent rationale leading from science to practice, thereby reconciling concern for the scientific reputation of teachers-researchers with the objectives of the country's agricultural development. Research must be tailored to the specific problems faced by the Mediterranean region and aim at the highest possible level of quality. Certain topics are specific to the Mediterranean region, for example, adapted seed selection or dromedary research.

Certain lines of research seem to be more appropriate, in view of the capabilities of higher education. This is true of work toward compilation of a large body of information or of information of a synthetic character (biometrics, biotechnology).

## **2. Liaison between higher education and research bodies**

Depending on the country, research carried out by higher education is more or less integrated into the structure of national agronomic research. In some cases, higher education is the only echelon engaged in research, and good coordination exists among all parties involved in research. More often than not, however, such coordination is regrettably lacking, with more or less open competition interfering with the full effectiveness of the means brought into play.

Beyond all doubt, political structures are an important factor in the cohesiveness of research activities. This is particularly true with respect to the ministerial department responsible for higher agronomic education. A decisive role is likewise played by private funding of research.

Finally, the status of teachers/researchers can contribute to improved relations between higher educational institutions and specialized research bodies.

## **3. The place of research in the training program**

It makes sense to relate research to training activities in order to learn how to analyse research accomplishments with a critical eye, and to translate researchers' language into terms that the farmers can understand. Thus, in particular, the final dissertation should include, as far as possible, an in-depth bibliographic study and involve a period of practical training as part of a research team.

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## **Training for research**

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### **4. What the diploma means**

In many countries, a certain ambiguity prevails with regard to the role of studies toward the doctorate. This degree is required for jobs in the administration and especially in education. Such training should, however, be reserved exclusively

to future researchers and teachers/researchers. It is very difficult to motivate for research an individual who does not intend to engage in research in the course of his career.

### **5. The training process**

While periods of study at foreign universities are an indispensable part of good research training, it does not appear desirable to insist on two to four years of training in a foreign country where the students are more or less uprooted, and where they pursue research on topics that are not always of interest to their countries - and under conditions differing widely from those they will find in their future laboratories. Quite a few countries are trying to set up training on the spot with the help of industrialized countries. This solution lets the future researcher become gradually accustomed to his actual working conditions, while at the same time it contributes to development of the countries' research infrastructure. It is worthwhile to conduct research work in the countries concerned with the assistance of foreign professors, the future researcher being invited, in the course of his thesis work, to undergo two or three training periods of three to six months each in laboratories abroad - in different countries if possible.

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## **Improvement of relations between higher education and research**

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To meet the challenge of the 21st century in the realm of agriculture, it is important to develop research in the Mediterranean region, not only so as to upgrade this area, but also to contribute to solutions on a world scale.

Thus we should support such activities as seed selection adapted to conditions in the Mediterranean, or breeding of the dromedary, since a knowledge of this animal's physiology can contribute to biotechnological progress.

### **6. Roles of ICAMAS in the field of international cooperation**

ICAMAS action is called for in all the reports. The important role it can play is frequently underscored in the following areas:

- organization of international cooperation in the Mediterranean region, facilitating contacts and

cooperation among teams, an indispensable element in research at the world level. It also seems highly desirable to propose a distribution of tasks for greater research effectiveness, so that the various countries will not concentrate their assets on the same subjects;

- information by creating databanks, by proposing reference methodologies, and by organizing a Mediterranean documentation network;

- personnel training, implicit in the activities of the four institutes and the development of the M.S. degree;

- finalized research, adapted to specific Mediterranean problems, by taking inventory of the strong points exhibited by the various countries' research teams, and by introducing topics that will stimulate interest. The study of such topics will be coordinated by *ad hoc* groups of

international experts in furtherance of North-South relations.

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### Conclusion

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Rich in ideas and full of promise for the future, the debate has demonstrated that much work remains to be done. Among the problems that would appear to have priority, we should mention the coordination of terminologies and, more generally, dissemination of the results of studies undertaken by the member countries. ICAMAS activity can be particularly decisive in the latter context.

Nothing can be done, however, without the cooperation of people, and here it is willingness that is the crucial factor. In order to promote contacts, it would be worthwhile to establish Mediterranean summer universities.