



**6th meeting of the CIHEAM
member countries' Minister of Agriculture**

Cairo, 2 December 2006

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministers of Agriculture of the 13 **CIHEAM** member countries, meeting in Cairo on 2 December 2006 under the auspices of His Excellency Dr Ahmed Nazif, the Prime Minister and the presidency of Mr Amin Abaza, the Egyptian Minister;

Considering that agriculture is a key strategic sector for the Mediterranean area and crucial to the construction of an area of peace and shared prosperity, which is the stated objective of the Barcelona process;

Considering that agriculture is an essential means of ensuring the territorial, social and economic equilibrium necessary for the sustainable development of the countries in the region;

Recognising that the construction of a sustainable future for the Mediterranean Region requires a common determination to work together to overcome challenges facing the region as a whole, realise its potential and develop existing assets that are distinct from those of other regions or blocks of regions;

Have focused their attention on three themes, considered to be of fundamental importance for the future of the region:

- 1 developments in Mediterranean trade in agricultural products
- 2 sustainable rural development policies in the Mediterranean Region
- 3 promotion of Mediterranean products on the basis of quality and regional identity.

At the close of their discussion, with a view to bringing about more concerted cooperation as a way of securing active and effective partnership between all countries in the region, in line with the goal of initiating a joint review on the future of Mediterranean agriculture, fixed at the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Strasbourg in September 2006 and now fulfilled, Ministers issued recommendations to

- the countries in the Mediterranean region,
- the international organisations working in the Mediterranean area, and
- CIHEAM, an instrument for cross-border cooperation in agriculture and food, serving all countries in the Mediterranean region:

as follows:

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN MEDITERRANEAN TRADE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

In the present context, characterised by negotiations on the liberalisation of Mediterranean trade and broader negotiations in the framework of the WTO, the potential of the Mediterranean Region and the specific qualities of its agriculture represent valuable assets, in so far that its agricultural sector can be organised and modernised in a spirit of cooperation between partners.

Ministers recommend:

1. That **all Mediterranean countries** recognise the importance of the domestic market as a factor in local and national development and take appropriate steps to ensure that local producers have access to it.

That ways be sought to improve trade and reestablish trade balance in the region through increased bilateral and regional cooperation in this field, and that, generally speaking, a more prominent place be given to trade in agricultural products and food security in the Mediterranean in the agendas of international forums. The implementation of the Rabat road map, intended to liberalise agricultural, food and fisheries products, is a priority in this respect.

2. That the **European Union** and all the Mediterranean countries work together to fulfil the objectives of the Barcelona process, not only by strengthening existing bilateral relations based on Association Agreements, but also by developing plurilateral relations, which will enable them to build a Euro-Mediterranean zone of shared prosperity
3. That steps be taken within the framework of the World Trade Organisation to highlight the common needs and interests of the Mediterranean countries, in particular the importance of maintaining agricultural economic activity, sustained and structured by national agricultural policies, and of promoting the specific qualities of Mediterranean products.
4. That **CIHEAM**, which includes six EU member countries and seven countries that have signed Association Agreements with the EU, pursue and enhance the efforts already made to promote concerted action and establish a forum for dialogue on the Mediterranean, as demonstrated by this regular forum of ministers, which is now meeting for the sixth time. That the Centre initiate, support or facilitate any forum or debate that sets out to increase Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in agriculture and food, whether North-South or South-South, in order to bring about a Mediterranean area characterised by greater solidarity. To this end ministers recommend that CIHEAM develop its Mediterranean observatory further, making it a source of knowledge for the region and a forum for discussion on developments in the Mediterranean Region.

II. RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Taking due note of the discussion involving a hundred Mediterranean experts brought together for the international seminar organised in Cairo in February 2006 on “Sustainable rural development policies in the Mediterranean countries in the context of the EU’s neighbourhood policies”, which highlighted the role to be taken by civil society in achieving sustainable, balanced territorial development,

Ministers recommend:

1. that countries in the region

- promote national sustainable rural development policies, drawn up according to the principle of shared, complementary responsibility between authorities (national and local) and all local players, especially those from civil society who are capable of taking responsibility for territorial development matters;
- promote tighter links between sustainable rural development policies and sectoral policies, notably agricultural policies, so that harmonious development in the context of globalisation and liberalisation of trade is guaranteed for all territories, whatever their strengths and weaknesses.

2. that all **international organisations** cooperating in the development of the region be reminded of the fundamental importance of local players and of their role in taking responsibility for local development matters.

that the **European Union be asked to** strengthen bilateral relations and pursue the multilateral work of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, seeking in the light of past experience (with the Leader, Interreg and other programmes) the most appropriate directions and instruments, notably the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), to support cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, and that it also be asked to give priority to agricultural and rural development in its neighbourhood policy.

3. that **CIHEAM**

- continue to support capacity building for local players through its training schemes and play an innovative role in the training of top national and local officials in the Mediterranean agricultural sector.
facilitate the networking of players in the field of sustainable rural development so that they can pool knowledge they have gained.
- establish a register of experiences in Mediterranean rural development on the Observatory website.

III. PROMOTION OF MEDITERRANEAN PRODUCTS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR QUALITY AND REGIONAL IDENTITY

The Mediterranean Region, with its rich heritage of highly diverse, locale-specific agricultural products, needs to be able to adapt to new trends arising from globalisation, while preserving its Mediterranean identity through its output and expertise and by promoting the recognised quality of its products.

For these reasons, the ministers meeting in Cairo recommend:

1. That **all Mediterranean countries**, with the support of international organisations, establish a Euro-Mediterranean agricultural research area so that they can make a joint assessment of the potential, priorities and requirements for the promotion of “Mediterranean quality” and develop expertise common to all countries in the region;

That in formulating their national agricultural policy they adopt the measures needed to promote local products and enable them to conquer domestic and foreign markets;

That they mobilise existing human resources and encourage Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in scientific and technical research into product quality.

That they combine forces to ensure that the most urgent phytosanitary problems (spread of harmful organisms and emerging diseases), given their socio-economic impact and destructive effect on the environment, are quickly taken into account when regional projects are developed.

2. That **the European Union** lend its support and experience to multilateral projects, notably within the framework of the European Food Safety Authority in Parma (Italy) and the bodies responsible for the quality and regional identity of agricultural products, so that particular attention may be paid to Mediterranean products.

3. That **CIHEAM** continue to mobilise the scientific and technical capabilities of the countries in the Mediterranean Basin and take appropriate initiatives, notably that of organising a Mediterranean forum in 2007 in Parma (Italy) on the quality of Mediterranean agricultural products and the promotion of local products.

That CIHEAM, while continuing to work on the construction of a Euro-Mediterranean agricultural research area, encourage the establishment of a network to identify common themes, language and methods relating to the promotion of Mediterranean product quality and offer suitable training to national and local officials. To this end CIHEAM will draw up a Mediterranean atlas of agricultural output and food products.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY MINISTERS TO CIHEAM

With a view to reinforcing and further expanding **CIHEAM**'s role as a special instrument for cooperation in the development of the agricultural and rural areas of the Mediterranean Region, the Ministers meeting in Cairo asked the Centre to:

- ▶ initiate, support or facilitate any forum or debate on food and agriculture intended to increase Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, whether North-South or South-South, with a view to creating a Mediterranean zone characterised by greater solidarity, notably in the field of agricultural research.
- ▶ organise a Mediterranean forum in 2007 in conjunction with the European Food Safety Authority to address the quality of Mediterranean agricultural products and the promotion of local products.
- ▶ facilitate the networking of rural development players so that they can pool knowledge they have gained; to that end make its Observatory a major source of knowledge and forum for discussion on regional change, and in particular establish a register of experience in Mediterranean rural development on the Observatory website.
- ▶ continue to support capacity building for local players through its training schemes, in particular playing an innovative role in the continuing training of top national and local officials.
- ▶ examine the proposal by His Excellency Minister Amin Abaza to put in place a MSc programme on agriculture in arid zones in cooperation with the competent Egyptian institutions.
- ▶ respond positively to the initiative by Her Excellency Ms Elena Espinosa to host the next Ministerial meeting in Spain in 2008.