



**CIHEAM**

International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

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**1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the CIHEAM  
member countries' Minister of Agriculture**

**Rome, 11 May 1999**

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## CHAIRMAN CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

1. At the invitation of Mr. Paolo De CASTRO, Minister of Agricultural Policies of Italy, acting in close collaboration with Mr. Lamberto DINI, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ministers of Agriculture of the member States of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies <sup>1</sup> or their Representatives, convened in Rome on Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

They were pleased to have met, prior to their meeting, with Professor Romano PRODI, Nominee President of the European Commission, who confirmed his interest towards the strengthening of the relations with the countries of the Mediterranean region, as a factor of stability, within the overall strategy concerning the relations between the European Union( EU) and the rest of the world.

2. Ministers and Heads of Delegations recognised that such an original composition of CIHEAM, of which their countries are full members, offered an appropriate framework for jointly undertaking a study of the evolution of the agricultural economies in the different countries, within the present stage of structural and institutional changes.

In this context, the wish that CIHEAM could gather all applicant countries of the Mediterranean shore was formulated.

They pointed out that the present meeting did not constitute a framework for negotiations to be regarded as an alternative to the official set-up, where Euro-Mediterranean relations should be handled institutionally; nevertheless, they emphasised that, through the level of its representatives, this meeting offered an exceptional opportunity for dialogue between agricultural decision and policy makers of countries representing the realities of Mediterranean agriculture in the perspective of strengthening this common framework which should lead to a full accomplishment of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They have underlined that this meeting was called with the aim of exercising a true Mediterranean solidarity as well as, for sharing a common approach for the next important deadlines including the forthcoming international negotiations.

3. The debate, in fact, highlighted the adaptive process to which undergoes agriculture, following the Uruguay Round, and the effects on this sector of globalisation and trade liberalisation; at a time where the launching by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of a new trade negotiating round is approaching and that will place the agricultural sector within the strategic negotiation items.

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<sup>1</sup> At present CIHEAM member countries are as follows: Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.



Aware that this phase might determine **the future of the Mediterranean agriculture**, Ministers and Heads of Delegations have expressed their firm belief to offer their contribution for the accomplishment of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, trusting that this common framework would require also a stronger co-operation in the agricultural sector. Based on this perspective, they estimated that it was necessary to identify those problems that rely as their responsibilities and that could hamper the process of partnership.

The identification of problems as well as, the reciprocal needs, should provide the capacity to **manage together**, within a true partnership, this transitional phase instead of creating further conflicts or passively face situations.

Some subjects have been emphasised in particular, through the debate, such as: the paradigm on the multifunctional role of agriculture, as well as, the aspects calling for a sustainable agriculture; the progress for implementing the guidelines already fixed by the Barcelona Declaration aiming at fostering diversification as well as complementarity of agricultural productions.

4. Discussions emphasised the manifest needs which Mediterranean partner countries face in their efforts to modernise their economies – in particular the agricultural sector. This structural effort, now being accomplished by these countries, deserves to be supported in terms of renewed solidarity; where International Institutions, the European Union and developed countries, are called up on to mobilise their resources, while also favourable perspectives are opening up for private investment as a buoyant investment climate is evolving, allowing private capital to freely circulate. The development of the agri-food industry, environmental policies, irrigation and rational use of available water as well as land reclamation, were mentioned as topics for a fruitful co-operation, together with the contribution that European member States, the EU and International organisations can make available to finance rural development policies being implemented in Mediterranean partner countries.

It has been also underlined the need to increased financial resources which are made available by the EU for partner Mediterranean countries, in order to contribute at the implementation of traditional co-operative programmes, as well as, at improving agricultural structures and foster rural development.

5. The role-played by agricultural higher education and research as development factors for agriculture and the agri-food industry in Mediterranean partner countries was also stressed.

In this context, the mission and activities of CIHEAM were highly appreciated and supported, along with the actions taken in line with the co-operation program co-financed by the EU, and currently being implemented through Regional Action Programs in partner countries.

The increasing value of the specific Mediterranean component in training activities, which are supported by CIHEAM through its four MAIs at Bari, Chania, Montpellier and Zaragoza, and the corresponding institutions in the Mediterranean countries was emphasised.

At the same time the importance of improving working methods was underlined, pertinently, to foster the use of new information and communication technologies.



With reference to active research networks in the Mediterranean region, Ministers and Head of Delegations called for a greater co-operation between the various institutions that have proven competencies in their field of activities. At the same time they stressed the importance of implementing projects that foster co-operation assessing, in particular, their real economic impact.

Ministers and Heads of Delegations were pleased to note the publication by CIHEAM of its first annual report "*Development and agri-food policies in the Mediterranean region*" which could serve as a reference document. This initiative will definitely continue to contribute at strengthening co-operation in agriculture within the Mediterranean region.

Furthermore, they have considered that CIHEAM should have still continued the development of its mission of following up on agricultural and agri-food policies, in order to become an accredited observatory of these policies for the Mediterranean region.

However, the idea of organising dialogue and concerted fora for agricultural producer's organisations of the Mediterranean region has been appreciated. It will constitute a matter of debate for the next meetings.

**6.** Ministers and Heads of Delegations underlined that the meeting in Rome paved the path for a constructive dialogue, which deserves to be continued in the future.

They agreed to present these concluding statements to the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of their respective countries, in order to acquaint them with the final results, which could be used in conducting the international negotiations.

They have expressed their thanks to Minister Paolo De CASTRO for this initiative, which gathered them together, and they agreed to meet on a regular base whenever it would have been considered necessary, and they have greeted the invitation formulated by the Moroccan Delegation to held the second ministerial meeting next year in Morocco.

At this end, they acknowledged that CIHEAM, based on its experience as a steering body for networks supporting decision making in the region, would serve as a think-tank body providing analysis aiming at fostering the dialogue.

In this context, they agreed that it should be formed an informal working group composed by representatives of the Ministers of Agriculture which would have the mandate of preparing future ministerial meetings and to follow-up on the agricultural policies of the region. This group will make reports to the Ministers and it will also keep informed CIHEAM Governing Board. CIHEAM could serve as its Secretariat.

It is understood that the whole output of these thinking and report activities should at the end be conveyed, in order to represent its agricultural side, to the **Euro-Mediterranean Conference**, which is the appropriate body for the implementing of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.