



## ***ICARDA and CIHEAM's New Strategic Partnership: Sharing knowledge for sustainable livelihoods in MENA countries***

### **Press release**

Beirut, Lebanon, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015



***This morning, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Area (ICARDA) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) have renewed their strategic partnership in ten major fields in the agricultural sector, including adaptation to climate change, inclusive growth and empowerment of youth, women and smallholders in rural areas.***

The ICARDA Director General Dr. Mahmoud Solh and the CIHEAM Secretary General Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen dialogue and activities in the development of human resources, research and information systems in a very strategic moment for the Mediterranean and West Asian regions, which are presently marked by security crises, unemployment in rural areas, natural resources scarcity and climate change. The MOU provides a solid foundation for enhanced cooperation and greater coordination of mutual efforts in development programs, synergic scientific and technical cooperation in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) region and beyond.

"We are convinced that improving links between knowledge sharing and capacity building in the agricultural sector is answering important needs of Mediterranean and West Asian countries" said Dr Solh, ICARDA's Director General during the signing ceremony. "Conflict in the Middle East forces people to flee and so does drought, which is destroying crops and livelihoods. We must invest in science and knowledge exchange for sustainable agricultural development to enhance food security and improve livelihoods", he added.

Dry areas in North Africa and the Middle East are getting hotter and drier, and droughts are becoming more intense and frequent. Syria and Jordan are predicted to lose 30% of their fertile land to desertification if measures are not urgently taken to combat desertification and land degradation. The Arab region as a whole already has the most significant food deficit in the world.



**ICARDA Director General Dr. Mahmoud Solh and the CIHEAM Secretary General Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola**



*"We waste time and precious knowledge when we work in isolation" said Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola, CIHEAM's Secretary General. "Regarding the challenges our region has to face, the urgency of reinforcing knowledge sharing systems, for the support of inclusive and sustainable development close to people and local needs in rural areas, is becoming obvious. We are convinced that this partnership will complement our mutual work and enhance locale initiatives and best practices in rural development."*

ICARDA and CIHEAM's cooperation will also be linked to ensure food security and resilience of agricultural systems against crises. Long term objectives refer to the Post-2015 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **About ICARDA**

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a member of the CGIAR Consortium, is the global agricultural research organization working with countries in the world's dry and marginal areas to deliver sustainable systems solutions that increase productivity, improve rural nutrition, and strengthen national food security.

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#### **About CIHEAM**

Founded in 1962, CIHEAM is an intergovernmental organization composed of 13 Mediterranean member states. CIHEAM promotes multilateral cooperation in the Mediterranean in the fields of agriculture, food, fishery and rural territories, aiming to respond to the needs of the States and of the agro-food actors. CIHEAM pursues this cooperation mission through specialized training, networked research, scientific diplomacy and political partnership.

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