



**CIHEAM**

International Centre for Advanced  
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

# **Revitalizing the Mediterranean Diet**

**World Conference**

*Milano, 8 July 2016*

**Statement of the CIHEAM Secretary General**

Mr Cosimo Lacirignola



***Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues,***

Let me first congratulate all the institutions and persons that have been involved for the organization of this very valuable World Conference on the Mediterranean Diet, and most particularly the IFMED, the European Federation of Nutrition Societies, the Italian Ministry of Health and the local authorities of Lombardia.

**The CIHEAM is very pleased to hold in Milano this first World Congress devoted to the Mediterranean Diet.**

Indeed, in this city, last year, we launched the "*MED DIET EXPO 2015 CALL: Time to Act Now*", to raise awareness towards more sustainable Mediterranean food systems through concrete actions that can contribute to the improvement of the Mediterranean Diet as a model of sustainable food.

The Mediterranean diet in fact, seen as a driver for the improvement of sustainable food consumption and production in the Mediterranean, can make an important contribution to this purpose as it is used as a case study by CIHEAM and FAO to assess the sustainability of diets and consumption trends in the Mediterranean in the context of improvement of sustainable food systems.

**In the Mediterranean region, nutrition and quality of diets are becoming problematic as it deteriorates with changing eating habits.**

The Mediterranean diet is losing ground at a time when its virtues are recognised worldwide. This diet raises major questions concerning nutrition, product quality, food, health and care behaviours, research and innovation, the construction of a food model, and also the preservation of biodiversity and natural resources.

Moreover, the issue has a political facet, as discussing the Mediterranean diet also entails launching a debate on social responsibility in production, retailing and consumption, but also to promote preventive nutrition for human health, to question how food chains are organised, to explore both the commercial opportunities and the legal risks, to scrutinise the globalisation of trade and to debate public action in the food domain (education, local authorities, regulations, taxes and prices, urban planning).

**Since the Ministerial Conference of CIHEAM Member States in Athens of June 2001, CIHEAM has launched activities to promote the Mediterranean Diet as leverage of sustainable agricultural and rural development.**

After investigations and discussions that lead to the Conference, we reached the consideration that the Mediterranean diet is more than a reference nutritional model and healthy dietary pattern, but also as an expression of the cultures, traditions and lifestyle of the Mediterranean peoples and a model that holds environmental, socio-cultural and economic benefits.

**The Mediterranean Diet confers a name to a Mediterranean dynamic cultural complex, which is in permanent movement, with many potential scales of interpretation, from the landscape to the table, and which has been taking shape and evolving for thousands of years.**

The Mediterranean Diet, as common patrimony of the Mediterranean people, may play a fundamental role in consolidating their identity but also exists as a source of identity in itself and as thus a factor of inclusion and dialogue, as well as of knowledge and personal development. All of these can only live on the collective conviction and ambition of the Mediterranean peoples. More than ever, today we have to be actors and not passive observers. This means being creative practitioners, educators, communicators, ambassadors !



**In that perspective, the CIHEAM is therefore acting for the Mediterranean Diet since many years.**

In 2011, the Mediterranean Diet was identified by CIHEAM and FAO as a joint case study for characterization and assessment of the sustainability of dietary patterns in different agro-ecological zones. Through a series of international workshops and meetings a methodological approach with indicators was developed, which was later tested on some Mediterranean territories.

During these years the capacity of all the Mediterranean Countries to implement project researches on the subject has been strengthened, in many training activities, programs or publications (as the Edition 2012 of our Regional Report *Mediterra*).

Then, knowledge produced has been widely shared through institutional networks, as the one on Protection of the Mediterranean Diet, coordinated by CIHEAM, in the frame of the inclusion of the Mediterranean Diet in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2010.

We have also contribute with FAO and IFMED to the development of the Mediterranean Diet 4.0 framework in order to highlight the four sustainable benefits of such a model.

**More recently, the CIHEAM Board endorsed a new Strategic Agenda for 2025, divided into 15 thematic priorities, in which you will find the Mediterranean Diet among them.**

With this new Strategic Agenda 2025, CIHEAM strives to meet the 4 following challenges in the Mediterranean Region:

1. Struggling against “triple waste” (Knowledge-Natural Resources-Food);
2. Boosting sustainable agriculture and food (*in which there is the enhancement of the Mediterranean diet*);
3. Investing in new generations and fragile territories;
4. Preventing risks and managing tensions.

**By tackling these challenges in the coming years, we will contribute to human security, inclusive development and sustainability of resources in the Mediterranean.**

This is my conviction but let me also conclude by mentioning that we’ll have a very important Ministerial meeting in Tirana on September 22.

At the end of that ministerial meeting, our goal is to reach a final declaration able to adopt the CIHEAM Action Plan for the Mediterranean (CAPMED2025) that will include both the Strategic Agenda and its 15 thematic priorities in order to reinforce the CIHEAM Activities on these issues, but also a set of regional and innovative flagship initiatives.



One flagship initiative would be the Mediterranean Compact for Sustainable Agriculture and Food, pulling different international, regional and local stakeholders for the implementation of concrete projects and investments related to the natural resource management, the sustainability of the agro-food value chain, the food quality and safety and the nutrition security.

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This Mediterranean Compact initiative will involve the private sector by encouraging the development of corporate social responsibility approaches clearly oriented to the Mediterranean Diet Model and Lifestyle.

***Thank you very much.***

