

## Editorial

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2015 is a crucial year as several major international events placing issues related to agriculture, food and rural affairs at the heart of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will take place. These goals are part of the new Post-2015 Global Sustainable Development Agenda that will be adopted in September 2015 at the General Assembly of the United Nations. This Agenda constitutes one of the main frameworks for international cooperation during the next 15 years.

Taking place from May to October 2015, the Milan Expo entitled "Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life" is mobilising both Italian authorities and society and is expected to be another highlight of this year. The Milan Universal Exhibition provides an important opportunity to discuss common solutions to the challenge of global food security. This year, the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP21) will also be held in Paris in December. Agriculture will have its rightful place as various French ministers, convinced of the interdependency between agricultural diplomacy and climate negotiations have emphasised its importance. Moreover, agriculture will also play an important role during the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum that will be held from 12 to 17 April in South Korea. Launched by the United Nations, 2015 is also the International Year of Soils where the essential role of agriculture in soil conservation will be highlighted. Issues related to natural resources, climate change, agricultural production, inclusive growth (social and territorial) and food security (necessary basis for human security) will therefore be at the heart of an eventful 2015 that is also intended to find solutions for a more sustainable development.

Milano Expo 2015's theme "*Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life*" - addressing food security and nutrition, sustainability, poverty reduction, development and cooperation - is at the heart of the United Nations' founding principles to combat hunger and poverty, and represents a prime opportunity for creating dialogue and building understanding with stakeholders and policymakers. Though there exists a definition recognised at the UN level, food security is a concept without operational definition. Since indicators inform action, considerable efforts in current research aim at enhancing food insecurity measurement for implementing diagnosis and response. Policy-makers need to know how many people are at risk, who and where they are, and how to reach them.

As global attention revolves around food security, new opportunities arise to further develop its measurement. For this purpose, major investments and efforts have been made in developing appropriate indicators and data. Given food security's multifaceted aetiology there is no simple single indicator that could be consistently applied, for instance, to both identify food insecurity and assess its prevalence and intensity. The search for new indicators for food security is a critical step. Furthermore, it is necessary to support this research through innovative actions in the fields of agriculture, food, economy, nutrition, health, development, etc. In particular, agricultural innovation and the improvement of performance and productivity are essential to meet the challenges and current global issues (climate change, increasing global population...). But it is not enough. Incomes and access to food have proven to be the major determinants of food insecurity in the world. Food quality, nutrition, health and care are also crucial when addressing food security.



It is of utmost importance to address sustainable development with more synergy and by considering the interdependence between economy, society and the environment, its three components. Preserving the planet is essential and this is not debatable. However, the generation of wealth and its equitable distribution is just as important. It would be a serious mistake to give priority only to the environmental component in the Post-2015 development agenda. Too related to the concerns of rich countries, such a possibility would indeed ignore the most pressing and urgent human needs. People should remain the highest priority of the SDGs. It is thanks to the human ability to invent solutions and accumulate knowledge that we succeed in adapting to change. People themselves play a key role in finding solutions to overcome the problem of underdevelopment. This positive reading of the state of the planet is not intended to fight the pessimistic situation. It is resolutely focused on human ingenuity and its capacity to reverse trends, to create and find tailored local solutions, and to meet global challenges.

This is a plea proposed for a Post-2015 Agenda that would include four main aspects: the economy, the environment, social affairs and also innovation. For many years, innovation has been closely related to sustainable development and it is now high time to position it more clearly. We define "innovation" in two ways. Firstly, it is the human ability to create change, advance science, feed knowledge and bring about historical turning points that enable to achieve giant leaps for mankind. Secondly, the implementation of the SDGs must consider the cultural, economic, social and geographic characteristics of the different societies at local level. Innovation for development is necessarily local and distinctive. We cannot wave a magic wand. We must adapt to the realities of the regions in order to efficiently link knowledge with the practices, needs, and constraints of the context in which the action must give tangible results for the local population. Each region must therefore develop its own model (or models!), at its own pace with its actors, its difficulties and its history.

This proposal for a sustainable development based on the above-mentioned four complementary aspects supports people and future generations. The issue of food security gives this proposal a concrete meaning. How could SDGs be indeed totally disconnected from the issue of employment and the people's daily security? This is no easy task as meeting such a challenge depends on the people's will, on the public policies that will be implemented, and on the future involvement of young people. Regarding agriculture, the time for questioning whether to produce better or whether to produce more has passed since a global consensus has been reached on the urgent need to reconcile the two approaches in a common movement. New agricultural models and diversification of rural economies could be effective to mitigate unemployment in countries where agriculture can remain a source of employment and income and where other sectors cannot absorb all potential labour. Feeding 9 billion people in 2050 with a faceless agriculture would involve serious social and economic consequences.

However, fostering socio-economic development models able to provide rural population with a decent life (requiring a clear support of family farming), would certainly alleviate rural exodus towards cities and its negative impact. It is therefore geopolitically important to promote agricultural and rural development strategies that do not sacrifice human factors for environmental preservation. Let us make ourselves clear: by saying this, we neither ignore nor deny the environmental emergency. We are simply suggesting that human beings should be given first priority in discussions on sustainable development and food security. We should not forget that the main purpose of agriculture is to feed people and that sustainable agriculture implies preserving the natural resources so that the future generation can be fed too (in that way, environmental and social aspects are not in contradiction but have to be addressed with different time scales in mind).

In this perspective, waste reduction is a determining factor. Across the world, including Europe, people should better manage natural resources, decrease the waste of water, arable land, soils, and biodiversity. In their daily lives, people will have to reduce waste resulting from the loss of agricultural products during harvest, transportation, storage and consumption. These individual actions will certainly contribute to reducing and limiting collective food insecurity. Nevertheless, we should also fight against the waste of knowledge. In agriculture, this is a crucial issue. Traditional skills deserve greater attention and locally found solutions should be better and more broadly disseminated thanks to modern communication technology. Thus, knowledge should be promoted. Experiences, and ideas should be increasingly shared. The circular economy of knowledge is incredibly powerful. Innovation is not only the creation of "unprecedented actions", but above all, it is the power of federating energies and intelligence put at the service of common goals such as SDGs.

CIHEAM is convinced that agriculture and food security are two key elements for sustainable development and stability across the Mediterranean and across the world. After years of awareness, 2015 is the year which should give way to action taking up responsibility for global changes. This is an important opportunity for CIHEAM to put forward and consolidate the efforts it has been deploying since 1962 in favor of agriculture, fishing, rural development and food security in the Mediterranean. On 28 November 2014, at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Agriculture organized by the Italian authorities as part of their Presidency of the Council of the European Union, countries stressed the role of knowledge sharing. Thus, they focused on the needs of a better Euro-Mediterranean dialogue in agriculture and the importance of international cooperation in addressing food security challenges. Finally, delegations wanted to focus in particular on the role of sharing experiences, enhancement of good practice and innovation to adapt to climate change and economic and environmental transformations that undermine food security in some countries. It was one of the main objectives of the French programme established in the perspective of Expo Milano 2015 and developed by "Feeding knowledge" project to enhance scientific diplomacy in Agriculture between Mediterranean countries and to create a Euro-Mediterranean Centre of Knowledge for Food Security.

CIHEAM Watch Letter n°32 grasps the evolution, the dynamics and the trends of innovative indicators of Food Security in the Mediterranean countries. It focuses in particular on the initiatives and good practices of assessment, innovative methodologies and interest of policy-makers. It also analyses the sustainability of food value chains and projects to adapt agriculture to climate change. Exploring innovative indicators and initiatives for sustainable food security in a broad perspective is addressed through nutritional, socioeconomic, environmental, and innovation challenges, at the level of global governance as well as at the local level. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the 51 authors and to all those who have contributed to this new Watch Letter composed of 18 relevant articles.

