



CIHEAM

International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

**3rd meeting of the CIHEAM
member countries' Minister of Agriculture**

Athens, 1st June 2001



FINAL DECLARATION

1. The Ministers of Agriculture of the Member States of CIHEAM, or their representatives, met in Athens on Friday 1st June 2001 at the invitation of Mr Yorgos ANOMERITIS, the Greek Minister of Agriculture. The Ministers of Agriculture/Heads of delegation were welcomed before the meeting began by Mr Constantinos SIMITIS, the Prime Minister of Greece, who stressed the importance attached by the Greek government to the strengthening of cooperative links with countries in the Mediterranean region, as part of a dynamic and mutually supportive Euro-Mediterranean partnership.
2. The Ministers and Heads of delegations gave particular attention to the following subjects:
 - a) agricultural relations in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the Euro-Mediterranean agricultural negotiations;
 - b) cooperation in the Mediterranean region on the promotion of sustainable agriculture and the development of the Mediterranean diet;
 - c) the establishment of a pilot programme of measures to promote sustainable rural development in member countries to the South and the East of the Mediterranean;
 - d) the establishment of the CIHEAM Mediterranean Observatory.
3. As for **agricultural relations in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the multilateral agricultural negotiations**, the discussion highlighted the need to give a more prominent place to the agricultural dimension in the official conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean conferences that are part of the Barcelona process. While on the one hand, the representatives of the countries to the South and the East of the Mediterranean underlined the importance of wider access to the European market for their agricultural produce, the representatives of the European countries pointed out that a gradual approach giving preference to the region as a whole – already provided for under the Euro-Mediterranean partnership agreements – should be upheld by all of them in multilateral agricultural negotiations, so that the risks inherent in the general liberalisation of trade might be avoided in the case of exports of agricultural produce from the southern Mediterranean countries.

The discussion nevertheless highlighted a certain rapprochement regarding the need to define a common approach in multilateral negotiations that took account of the fragility of Mediterranean agriculture and the need to maintain – indeed to improve – the social and economic conditions of the populations whose livelihood depended on a form of agriculture that was increasingly respectful of the environment.



The question of **the multi-functional nature of agriculture** was taken into consideration in this connection. While on the one hand it had been emphasised that the specific character and the multifunctional role of agriculture – in developed or developing countries – should be upheld in international fora, it had been pointed out on the other hand that the protection of the different functions associated with this notion (social, economic, alimentary, environmental, and those associated with food production) called for a financial effort on the part of the developing countries which they were unable to assume at the present time. These countries, whose budgets were frequently burdened with heavy charges, notably the servicing of foreign debts, could not indeed finance the supporting measures needed to develop their agriculture.

The idea has been put forward by some delegations to establish solidarity between developed and developing countries; under the form of a fund made up of contributions from the developed countries, from which allocations would be made to the developing countries to finance those aspects connected to the multifunctionality.

4. As for cooperation in the Mediterranean region over **sustainable agriculture and the development of the Mediterranean diet**, the Ministers and Heads of delegation supported the initiative of the Greek Minister of Agriculture that sought to promote the virtues of the Mediterranean diet, since this might constitute a dynamic, forward looking measure for Mediterranean agriculture in general, on the national as well as on the international markets.

They recognised that issues such as quality control and food safety in agriculture, covering as well the processed food and marketing, common standards, certification and designation of products originating from one or more countries, and the promotion of these products in the international market in order to increase exports warranted particular attention and, taken together, might constitute the **Mediterranean platform** which all members should present and uphold at forthcoming multilateral and Euro-Mediterranean agricultural negotiations.

The Ministers and Heads of delegation took due note of the results of the work by the Mediterranean conference on cooperation in agronomic research, held in Athens on 1st and 2 December 2000, and welcomed the work on developing competence in conducting analyses and giving advice on public policy, notably through **a Mediterranean research and information-sharing network**, which should mobilise – with CIHEAM - agronomic research institutions in the Mediterranean and European. In this scenario, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in agronomic research assumed decisive importance for the future of sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean Region. The Ministers and Heads of delegation invited the European Commission to help establishing a **Mediterranean scientific area**, in which the scientific institutions of European Union member countries should act in synergy with their counterparts in the Mediterranean partner countries.



They were eagerly awaiting the second Mediterranean conference on cooperation in agronomic research, due to be held in Cairo before the end of 2001, and they encouraged initiatives already being taken with a view to enhancing cooperation in this field.

5. As for the establishment of a **pilot programme of measures to promote sustainable rural development in member countries in the South and the East of the Mediterranean**, the Ministers and Heads of delegation approved the work programme drawn up within the framework of CIHEAM.

They expressed the wish that the funding needed to bring about this programme of pilot measures might be provided by donor countries, particularly members of both the European Union and of CIHEAM, who might use funds specially created for cooperation in the Mediterranean region, and by international institutions active in the region, such as the World Bank, FIDA, etc.

The first phase of the programme involved taking action in a limited number of zones in countries to the South and the East of the Mediterranean, which would be linked together and would cooperate with other zones situated in countries to the North, to be selected from the zones benefiting from the cross-border cooperation part of the European Leader programme. The ultimate goal of this experiment was to set up a **Mediterranean rural development programme** as quickly as possible, and with the cooperation of the European Union; this programme would have the same features as the European Union Leader programme and might therefore become the "**MEDITERRANEAN LEADER**" programme.

The Ministers and Heads of delegation insisted on having this objective set forth in the conclusions of a forthcoming Euro-Mediterranean conference, so that the rural dimension might be properly incorporated into the MEDA programmes (present and future) of the European Union.

6. As for the establishment of the **Mediterranean Observatory** by CIHEAM, the Ministers and Heads of delegation took due note of the work carried out by CIHEAM under the mandate given to it. They congratulated CIHEAM on the work undertaken to ensure the annual publication of the Report "Development and agri-food policy in the Mediterranean region", which was now the main instrument for following up agricultural, agri-food and rural development policy in the Mediterranean region.

The Ministers and Heads of delegation encouraged CIHEAM in the initiative, which aimed to establish a source of information and documentation containing the greatest possible amount of strategic data for the future of the Mediterranean region; this data was to be derived from CIHEAM's four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes and the research networks they organised, the RAPs set up as part of the cooperation programme jointly financed by the European Commission, partner institutions in the Mediterranean countries and other institutions active in the region. An instrument of this kind – **the Mediterranean Observatory** – should provide for the sharing and updating of a whole series of basic information, it should allow studies and research work to be carried out, it might be used to organise discussions (fora) and it would mean that information circulated and remained relevant and appropriate to the needs of decision makers. The Ministers and Heads of delegation invited donor countries, the European Commission, and the



institutions active in the region to cooperate with CIHEAM to ensure that the necessary funding was available for implementing an operation of this kind.

7. The Ministers and Heads of delegations confirmed their own commitment to these periodic meetings held within the framework of CIHEAM, the composition of which permits to the countries to hold a frank and fruitful dialogue – without the constraints of formal negotiations – on major issues concerning their agricultures and on relations between them.

In order to ensure the necessary continuity in the follow-up to their meetings, they felt that the role of the preparatory Group, which meets between ministerial meetings, should be enhanced and that it should provide a permanent link with CIHEAM, so that all relevant information and documentation might be collected and evaluated.

8. The Ministers and Heads of delegations agreed to hold their fourth meeting in the course of 2002, which, following the invitation of Mr. Ali ABDALLAH, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, will take place in this country. They have also taken due note that the French delegation pointed out the availability of France to host , in 2003, the fifth meeting of Ministers of Agriculture of the CIHEAM member countries.

They congratulated Mr Yorgos ANOMERITIS, the Greek Minister of Agriculture and all his assistants for the work that had been done to make this meeting a success, and expressed their gratitude to Mr Constantinos SIMITIS, Prime Minister of Greece, who met them and confirmed Greece's commitment to cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

They thanked CIHEAM for the contribution it had made to the success of the meeting and expressed their support to this organisation, which devoted all of its energies to establishing genuine **Mediterranean solidarity**.