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## 9th meeting of the CIHEAM Member Countries' Ministers of Agriculture

Valetta (Malta) –27<sup>th</sup> September, 2012

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### Press release

At the invitation of the Hon. George Pullicino MP, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs of the Republic of Malta, and in the presence of several high-level representatives of international institutions, the Ministers of Agriculture of the thirteen member countries of CIHEAM (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, intergovernmental organisation founded in 1962) will hold their ninth meeting in Valetta on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2012. Discussions will focus on **“Food Security and Pricing in the Mediterranean Countries”**.

The world today faces continuing concerns about high food prices and food security. The last two years have been marked by a continuation of the extreme swings in food prices seen since 2006. Price volatility is a feature that has been prevalent in actual agricultural markets, particularly in international markets. Recent food price pikes have provided a clear reminder that global food systems and national agricultural trade policies and rules are highly vulnerable to threats of excessive short-term price volatility and speculation on international markets.

Many Mediterranean countries depend on external markets and import increasing volumes of staple foods, particularly cereals. All forecast scenarios carried out by different institutions however suggest that many countries in the Mediterranean Area will be deficient in terms of available food per inhabitant. The region is a net importer of food making it vulnerable to the effect of volatile prices that have marked the recent global economic and financial crisis.

The impact of food price volatility can be viewed at both the macroeconomic and at the individual (producer and consumer) levels. High and volatile prices not only increase, but also deepen poverty and food insecurity. The impact of food price volatility falls heaviest on the poorest. Poor consumers find their access to nutritious food limited. Poor food producers face increased uncertainty that reduces their willingness to invest in increasing food production and reducing vulnerability. There is considerable heterogeneity across countries in terms of how increased price volatility could affect a given country. International food price volatility has an uneven impact on the Mediterranean countries. The food security impacts of international food price volatility can therefore be profound. It is a problem with social and political as well as economic dimensions and while its incidence is most pronounced in the southern Mediterranean countries the implications and consequences of this affect the whole of the Mediterranean region and beyond.

If the aim of a renewed Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is to work on projects which are capable to affect everyday life of the populations concerned (in a practical demonstration of solidarity) and to deal with subjects which are at the centre of regional concern, such as agriculture, rural development and food security, which should become main issues to be explored in the Euro-Mediterranean context. CIHEAM has no doubt that these challenges are at the core of political priorities in the Mediterranean Area. That's why the 9th Ministerial Meeting will be a great opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences about actions to be undertaken for improving food security and moving towards resilience and stability in a region where vulnerability to the impacts of international price volatility is especially high.

It should be noted that the first of these meetings of CIHEAM member countries' Ministers of Agriculture, informal fora for discussion on matters relating to agriculture, food and the environment, was held in Rome in 1999. Since then successive meetings have been in Rabat (2000), Athens (2001), Beirut (2002), Paris (2004), Cairo (2006), Zaragoza (2008) and Istanbul (2010).

# CIHEAM

*Founded in 1962 under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the OECD, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is an intergovernmental organisation comprising thirteen member countries from the Mediterranean Basin (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia et Türkiye).*

*CIHEAM is constituted of a General Secretariat (Paris) and four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier and Zaragoza).*

*In pursuing its three main complementary missions (post-graduate specialised education, cooperative research and facilitation of the regional debate), CIHEAM is a reference in its fields of activity: Mediterranean agriculture, food, fisheries and rural development.*

[www.ciheam.org](http://www.ciheam.org)



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