



CIHEAM

International Centre for Advanced
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

Rural Women's economic empowerment in the MENA Region Conference

Brussels, 16 June 2016

Statement of the CIHEAM Secretary General

Mr Cosimo Lacirignola

Distinguished Director General

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2

Let me first express my most sincere gratitude to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and more particularly to the Director General, Mr. Giampaolo Cantini, for the strong support given to the CIHEAM in order to promote multilateral dialogue and scientific diplomacy in the Mediterranean.

We do appreciate the confidence of the Italian authorities in our capabilities to play a strategic role in this Region, thanks to our four Institutes. One of them, based in Bari, in Italy, has been involved in the women empowerment issue since many years.

Gender equality is mainstreamed all through the activities of CIHEAM. Women are strong scholarship receivers and attendants to our master and specialized courses as well as beneficiaries of our development programs.

Recognizing the importance of their active role in community development, we are also boosting women's participation in management of natural resources and execution of development programs through activation of research networks and capacity building activities, like the new program called "GEMAISA" or thanks to the network entitled "GEMNET" launched in 2012. I

So, CIHEAM is working at the improvement of social and economic status of rural women, who are unfortunately among the most vulnerable groups in the Mediterranean countries, through vocational training and improvement of their employability. We are building developing tools for the inclusion of women in governance of food and agricultural policies.



Let me briefly explain the reasons CIHEAM is putting the women issues at the core of its mission.

Vulnerable groups are less able to anticipate, resist and recover from shocks and disasters. They are not only more likely to suffer from food insecurity and poverty but also to be marginalized in development projects and growth processes. Inclusive development must ensure that all the populations marginalised for geographical or social reasons are included in the development process.

When women and men do not enjoy the same opportunities in the sectors of society, including economic participation and decision making, and when the different aspirations and needs of women and men are not equally valued and favoured, gender equality become a central issue in the perspective of vulnerable groups' inclusion.

The current situation of social and political upheavals in the Mediterranean Basin invites us to reflect upon the potential leverages for a better development in the region. The improvement of living conditions is one of the major demands of these populations who are faced with a multidimensional insecurity that plunges them into vulnerability. Agricultural and rural worlds have to be promoted as strategic issues for economic growth and political stability.

Above all, human security is about access to food, employment and knowledge access. Rebelliousness, radicalisation, and migration are the results of an unacceptable living conditions. We should recognise that the primary needs of Mediterranean populations are focused on issues such as food security, employment and better living conditions in rural areas. If the issues are not addressed in the coming years, the Post-2015 Development agenda in the region will proof to be obsolete and the strategic Mediterranean space could become ungovernable.



With our new Strategic Agenda 2025, divided into 15 thematic priorities, 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;
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. The GEMAISA Program will be therefore a very important tool to foster gender capacity-building in some targeted countries as Egypt, Lebanon or Tunisia.

Let me conclude by saying that 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 problems.

And Women in the Mediterranean Region are most probably the main persons able to develop a greater sustainable food system in respecting natural resources and traditional know-how but also in creating added-value and innovation.

Thank you very much.

