



Communiqué by Mr Plácido Plaza, Secretary-General of the CIHEAM

“More than ever, agricultural cooperation, rural development and investment in human capital are a priority in the Mediterranean”

In addition to the health and financial crisis caused by the new coronavirus (**COVID-19**), there are the risks related to **food, social and economic crises** that are likely to worsen the situation in the most fragile regions of the world that are already faced with climatic shocks, the depletion of natural resources and poverty.

At the crossroads between the African, Asian and European continents, the Mediterranean is one of the epicentres of this new pandemic. It is suffering significant casualties and the socio-economical repercussions are likely to be colossal.

This situation will have a great impact on millions of households, particularly those making a living in the omnipresent informal sector in cities but also in rural agglomerations. **The most vulnerable groups including small farmers, pastoralists and fishermen** could be faced with reduced access to their land, livestock or fishing tools, with important consequences on the demand and supply of food products. They will also face difficulties in accessing markets to sell their products or buy seeds or other basic goods.

With a **deficit in access to essential goods and services** such as hospital equipment, water that is crucial for disinfection, or even the Internet to keep informed of the evolution of the pandemic and protection measures, the situation of rural and agricultural areas, that already suffer from isolation, can worsen considerably.

“It is time to review development models and strengthen the cooperation”

As a major Mediterranean actor in the fields of training, research, agricultural cooperation, rural development and regional dialogue since 1962, the CIHEAM is fully aware of the extent to which the future of the region relies on the capacity of countries to strengthen their cooperation in priority areas that are today revealed by the pandemic.

The priority areas of the CIHEAM and the fight against pandemics are closely related:

- Ensuring **food and nutritional security**
- **Investing in human capital** (including training and capacity building) for more resilient societies
- Strengthening **Mediterranean dialogue**

Indeed, the end of the COVID-19 crises and confinement will in no way mean the end of the other crises.

This will be the time to review development models and strengthen cooperation, in favour of a Mediterranean based on resilient and united food systems.



**CONTRIBUTE TO FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL
SECURITY THROUGH
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

There is no health without food and without agriculture

Agriculture and food are at the core of the resilience of our systems. Through the training courses it provides, the capacity building initiatives it develops and the technical assistance it provides at territorial level, the CIHEAM contributes to supporting more sustainable, more innovative and more inclusive food systems. For decades, the CIHEAM has considered [agro-ecology](#) and [small-scale fishing](#) as levers for local development and multi-stakeholder dialogue.

The CIHEAM also contributes to food and nutritional security through [animal health](#) that is a crucial issue in the context of the COVID-19 and management of epidemics, zoonoses and emerging diseases. As a reminder, livestock remains one of the main means of subsistence for many households and helps to combat poverty. The CIHEAM has invested resources to preserve and modernise [agro-pastoralism](#), a rich and ancestral tradition in the Mediterranean.

More than ever, today, the **"ONE HEALTH"** concept takes on its full meaning. Human health, animal health and ecosystem health are **ONE**. An agriculture that is good for land and its inhabitants is possible and within our reach. This approach has led the CIHEAM to set up the first [Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network](#) (MOAN). This was the core of the message delivered at the Palermo Forum on ["Strategies for](#)

[More Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean](#)" which called for the revitalisation of the [Mediterranean diet](#) and traditional diets.

Learn more about CIHEAM's contribution to mitigation and prevention of [climate change, invasive species](#) and to the [sustainable management of natural resources](#) such as water and soil

Food systems are exposed to the instabilities of food markets

The 2008 crisis had demonstrated the extreme sensitivity of markets and the vulnerability to food shocks of several importing countries. In order to help increase the transparency of agricultural commodity markets so as to limit excessive commodity price volatility and encourage the coordination of national market policies, the CIHEAM has set up the [MED-Amin Network](#).

With the pandemic and its effects in the medium and longer terms, this Network will be quite useful for the collecting and sharing of strategic data but also for preserving the trust of its Member States through meetings, exchange of experiences and good practices and joint work on the monitoring of Mediterranean cereal markets.

As elsewhere, in the Mediterranean, farmers, fishermen and operators of the agricultural and food production sectors are as resource persons that are as important, in the short-term, as health personnel. Acting in favour of these agricultural professions, the CIHEAM will continue to support these vital professions for our societies and to promote Mediterranean products.



**STRONGER AND MORE RESILIENT
MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES THROUGH
INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL**

Quality inclusive education and adequate training courses

Producing more and better with fewer resources is the difficult food equation to be solved in the Mediterranean. In order to meet this major challenge, the CIHEAM provides training to students, young researchers and professional through various devices ([Masters, training courses](#) tailored to the needs of

development, [Summer Schools](#) but also coaching and training on leadership, decision-making and the spirit of initiative). The CIHEAM trains those who, tomorrow, will provide solutions to develop more efficient, more resilient, more attractive agriculture and above all, an agriculture that is more in line with the demands of Mediterranean societies.

The CIHEAM is an agent of cooperation, research and agricultural and food dialogue at the service of the Mediterranean. It supports initiatives able to contribute and formulate solutions to food and environmental crises, through the Doctoral Platform for young PhD students that it animates or the organisation of [Fora for Young Mediterranean Doctoral Students](#) during which participants share their research outcomes, experiences and good practices.

The CIHEAM supports [field research through the allocation of grants](#) and strives to bring research as close as possible to the needs of rural and coastal areas and vice-versa. It also maintains relations with several local authorities of the two Mediterranean Shores.

Knowledge mobility

The COVID-19 pandemic makes it abundantly clear that **access to knowledge and information for sustainable development** and actions to be implemented to address the food, socio-economic and environmental challenges in the Mediterranean is one of the fundamental elements of resilience. Through its networks and open platforms, the CIHEAM provides [free access to its scientific productions](#) and [publications](#), thus contributing to the mobility of knowledge. Moreover, since its foundation by the OECD and the Council of Europe, more than 40,000 people mainly coming from the Mediterranean, have been trained in its Institutes. For almost sixty years, within the CIHEAM, the mobility of knowledge and know-how is first of all achieved through the mobility of students and researchers.

Sustainable employment in agro-food value chains and rural areas

This pandemic will have more intense socio-economic repercussions resulting in aggravated inequalities in countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean shores that are already marked by unemployment, especially among the younger generations. During this period, it is, therefore, all the more important that rural and agricultural areas benefit from the necessary investments to maintain and successively upgrade their economic ecosystems.

The CIHEAM contributes to this objective through its capacity-building projects for local communities and training courses for young people focusing on the setting up of companies and revolving around entrepreneurship. Through the training it provides and its support devices in the field of future professions, the green economy and agriculture, the blue economy and fishing, it mobilises new technologies, technical and social innovations to contribute to the reduction of inequalities of development that lead to [rural migration and, ultimately, fuel migration crises](#).

Learn more about the PhD and young researchers forums [MEDFORUM 2016](#): Food Security and Rural Development; [MEDFORUM 2018](#): SDGs and CAPMED; [MEDFORUM 2021](#): Arid Land and Agro-Food Systems. Learn more about the [FIELD RESEARCH INITIATIVE](#).



CONSOLIDATING MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Regional integration

The COVID-19 pandemic shows how market globalisation has increased our vulnerability to crises. Food produced at the other end of the world ends up in our plates at a high environmental cost even though it can also be provided by farmers of the region. **Mediterranean integration** would be beneficial for the regions of both Mediterranean shores. The CIHEAM has been carrying this message for years, particularly during its [ministerial meetings](#) that are successively organised in each of its 13 Member States.

Consolidating Mediterranean dialogue and multilateral cooperation

The scale of the COVID-19 and its extent have led the CIHEAM to continue its actions for an inclusive, balanced and open development of the region. It will **enhance its partnerships initiated with cooperation and development actors** including the ministries of its member countries, regional and international organisations, the academic and research worlds and private companies for the pooling of resources and the promotion of common initiatives aimed at reducing the negative effects of COVID-19 on food security in the region.

These initiatives include training and job creation with high social and environmental value, the exploitation of the potential of digital technologies and the design of intelligent solutions to the challenges related to unemployment, particularly in agriculture, the blue economy and the agro-tourism sector that will be strongly affected.

With a long history, the CIHEAM is ready to fully play its role in the actions of solidarity and development targeting Mediterranean rural and coastal populations that this COVID-19 pandemic is making more necessary than ever.