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International Center for Advanced
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) in the Mediterranean: accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda in the context of the COVID-19 recovery

Thursday, 3 December 2020,

Plácido Plaza Lopez, CIHEAM Secretary-General's speech

" Ladies, Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues and participants,

Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to thank Jamie Morrison, Director of the Food Systems and Food Security division at the FAO, for moderating our session, as well as Isidro González, Deputy Secretary General of the UfM, and Máximo Torero, Chief Economist at the FAO, for their distinguished collaboration in this important event and for the underlying initiative.

I also thank the ONE PLANET network for providing us with the opportunity to draw attention to specific features of the Mediterranean during the 3rd World Conference of the United Nations Sustainable Systems Programme, which kept its promises both in terms of the themes developed and the quality of the interventions.

The title of this side-event echoes like a challenge in the Mediterranean. A Challenge that I would like to address here with the partners that are present and with those who are listening to us. You already know that the Mediterranean has been faced with severe crises, that this region is grappling with serious environmental, economic or societal threats.

The COVID19 crisis that plunged our region into an unprecedented situation that revealed many dysfunctions in our lifestyles and in our production and consumption patterns.



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In many ways, this crisis mirrors the inequalities that remain in the Mediterranean: between countries, between regions within countries, between economic sectors. They have affected them in different ways and with different intensities but women and men living in rural areas, whose' economic activity is based on land and sea natural resources management, have been particularly and severely impacted.

We have to remain hopeful. The Mediterranean is above all about people weaving links and constantly trying, through history and crisis, to project themselves in a common destiny.

As we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process and the CIHEAM will soon celebrate 60 years at the service of his member countries in the fields agriculture and fisheries, food security and the development of rural and coastal areas, I want to see a good omen in this coincidence of dates with the launching of our joint Mediterranean platform for sustainable food systems.

We are all aware of the need to support and accompany the changes in our food systems towards more sustainability, responsibility and equity especially in the context of this COVID19 health crisis, that has already derived in other crises, including food ones.

We believe that these challenges should be faced in the framework of a multi-stakeholder approach involving our institutional partners, the civil society -so present and active on the ground- and with private companies that play, and will continue to play, a key role.

These are the reasons why, today, we engage in co-developing with the FAO and the UfM a **Sustainable Food Systems Platform for the Mediterranean*** which work plan will aim at supporting the countries of the region to meet their food security needs and at contributing to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals in the Mediterranean.



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We hope that, as a collaborative multi-stakeholder initiative including all interested actors, the SFS-MED Platform will be able to play a central role in strengthening regional collaborations and interregional dialogue on both Mediterranean shores in order to rethink the future of food systems and initiate collective actions.

The implementation of this idea, that sparked more than a year ago in Palermo during the International Forum on "Strategies for More Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean" organized by CIHEAM-Bari should allow us to reconnect with our sometimes-forgotten territories, regions and high-quality local products.

It will enhance existing partnerships to overcome together the agricultural, rural and food challenges facing the region by engaging in more innovative and inclusive production and consumption systems.

I hope that its implementation will also contribute to trigger our Mediterranean youth's interest in the region's cultural and historical heritage including its unique "Mediterranean diet".

Thank you once again for this opportunity to contribute to the shaping of a better world. I wish you an excellent work."

***The SFS-MED Platform is a multi-stakeholder initiative for sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean, currently being supported as a collaborative effort by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). This initiative is an affiliated project of the UN One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme and aims at accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean region.**



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