



CIHEAM

**YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE FOOD
SYSTEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

**WATCH LETTER
ISSUE NUMBER 41**



**CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS
TO BE PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 2021**



THE WATCHLETTER

Devoted to major topics in the field of Mediterranean Agriculture, Food and Environment, the CIHEAM Watch Letter is published since 2007. While enabling the CIHEAM to gain widespread recognition, it disseminates studies and analyses on emerging agricultural and food issues targeting a broad and heterogeneous audience (policymakers, researchers, journalists, civil-society representatives, students etc.). The Watch Letter is aimed at feeding the debate on the Mediterranean and the broader global debate on food and agriculture. The CIHEAM Headquarters directs and manages this bilingual publication (English and French).



WATCH LETTER 41 BACKGROUND NOTE

The emergence of COVID-19 is an unprecedented challenge for Mediterranean countries. The multiple repercussions of the pandemic not only disrupt the life of societies, but also worsen existing tensions and widen disparities. They particularly threaten the most fragile populations such as rural communities and populations who depend on agriculture and fishing to make a living. These communities are also vulnerable to environmental crises and more exposed to poverty. This situation weighs upon the Mediterranean youth of these communities and their future, especially in areas of access to core services and infrastructure, training and employment. However, far from catastrophist approaches and miserabilist biases, this Mediterranean youth represents, through its dynamism and ingenuity, a real strength. For rural and agricultural worlds that have suffered too much neglect, an opportunity is given to us to construct narratives capable of giving meaning and of arousing the commitment of young Mediterranean people. Their potential in terms of value creation, literally and figuratively speaking, if it is properly invested, is in a position to contribute to meeting the challenges of the region, such as those weighing on food systems.

Strained Mediterranean food systems [1] : climate, pollution, migration, and unemployment...

The Mediterranean region has a number of (sad) records. A **“hot spot” of global warming [2]**, the Mediterranean is also marked by a rapid scarcity and / or degradation of natural resources including water and soils (salinization, contamination, desertification, etc.). Today, the Mediterranean rim is inhabited by more than half of the world population qualified as **“water poor”** while in fifty years, the Mediterranean basin has lost **8.3 billion hectares of arable land** under the effect of unsustainable practices or urbanisation. **[3]** Of the 854 million hectares that the Mediterranean represents, only **14% are suitable for agricultural production [4]** and this, in a context where **food demand** is increasing significantly. According to the forecasts of the World Bank, the region's population should reach **572 million by 2030, that is, as many mouths to feed**. Decline in agricultural land, pressure on resources and on production means acutely pose the question of **food security** in countries experiencing rapid demographic growth. They also have direct consequences on the **livelihood** of millions of small farmers and fishermen, increasingly supplanted by large producers, processors and agro-food distributors.

[1] A food system encompasses all the stages of keeping us fed: growing, harvesting, packing, processing, transforming, marketing, consuming and disposing of food. These stages are likely to affect human nutrition and health, natural environments or even economies. ([FAO](#))

[2] IPCC Reports identify the Mediterranean as one of the most responsive regions to climate change. [During the 20th century, air temperature in the Mediterranean basin was observed to have risen by 1.5°C to 4°C depending on the sub-region.](#)

[3] Peasant farming still remains a majority in the South and East of the Mediterranean. However, intensive irrigated agriculture intensive has grown considerably, to the detriment of the water resources of the territories. The irrigation necessary for agriculture makes it an activity that uses nearly 80% of the region's water resources.

[4] ZDRULI Pandi, [Land resources of the Mediterranean: status, pressures, trends and impacts on future regional development. Land Degradation & Development](#) (2014)

If open conflicts or latent tensions contribute to **intensify migration** that are sometimes unfortunately leads to human tragedies [5], strong disparities in the development between territories [6], environmental and climate degradations (drought, floods, crop pests etc.) or the gradual abandonment of family farming in favour of intensive agriculture are also mobility factors in the Mediterranean [7]. **In the absence of an alternative**, individuals, especially the youngest, are forced to emigrate to improve their living conditions [8]. Mobility is essential, even consubstantial with development, but it can also generate tensions when the host areas, be them rural or urban, are themselves already under pressure. [9]

Coastal territories are also threatened. The Mediterranean Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world. **The rich Mediterranean underwater flora and fauna** is seriously degrading under the effect of **plastic** pollution, poor **waste** management and **mass tourism**[10], while overfishing [11] and the appearance of invasive species (significant manifestation of global sea warming) threaten the future of its ecosystem. Food transition is another major challenge for Mediterranean countries. While **undernourishment** still plagues southern Mediterranean territories, countries in the region are increasingly faced with the scourge of **overweight** and **chronic diet-related diseases**.

Under the effects of **lifestyle changes and the globalisation of consumption patterns**, the eating habits of Mediterranean people have changed significantly, with negative consequences for the younger generations.[12] The traditional “**Mediterranean Diet**” considered to be the healthiest in the world, is less and less accessible to Mediterranean people. The largest increase in the number of obese children and adolescents can be observed in the Middle East and North Africa, while young Maltese and Greek people have the highest obesity rates, with respectively 11.3% and 16.7% of the population.[13]

Lastly, among the region’s records, we can mention that **youth unemployment** of both graduates and non-graduates. [14] Despite access to different levels of education (basic, intermediate and advanced), data from the World Bank, for instance, reveals that in Greece, 50% of young people are unemployed, 41% in Palestine, 35% in Algeria or even 34% in France. [15] The World Bank forecasts that **100 million young people could be unemployed in 2050 in North Africa and the Middle East**. Some would consider this a paradox as agriculture and fishing in their current form struggle to **recruit** and **retain young workers**, at a time when the food issue is resurfacing. Jobs in the fishing, agricultural and rural sectors **only attract few young people due to marked trends**: precarious, seasonal and / or informal[16] jobs that are considered hard, unproductive and ensuring low social status. At the same time, many young people lack the **skills, capital, credit and land** to create or access higher paying jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities in activities related to the agricultural sector.[17]

[5] According to the IOM, there has been more than 20,000 migrant deaths in the Mediterranean between 2014 and 2020. According to the European Border Control Agency Frontex, between January and November 2020, in addition to sub-Saharan Africans, an increasing number of North Africans took the risk of crossing the Mediterranean.

[6] [In 2015, the average income per capita in the South and East Mediterranean countries is 2.5 times lower than the average income in the EU Mediterranean countries.](#)

[7] [Une lecture de la crise migratoire : l'agriculture et le développement rural comme source de résilience dans les pays du Sud et de l'Est](#)

[de la Méditerranée](#) in Crisis and Resilience in the Mediterranean Watch Letter CIHEAM, 2016,

[8] According to the probabilities established by the 2018 edition of SOFA Migration, [Agriculture and Rural Development, the people that are most likely to migrate are generally in their twenties, and approaching their thirties.](#)

[9] CIHEAM. MediTERRA 2018. Migrations et développement rural inclusif en Méditerranée. Presses de Sciences Po, 2018

[10] [WWF, Out of the plastic trap, Saving the Mediterranean from plastic pollution](#)

[11] CIHEAM and FAO. [Mediterra 2016: Zero Waste in the Mediterranean. Natural Resources, Food and Knowledge](#), Presses de Sciences Po, 2016

[12] FAO-CIHEAM White Paper [“Mediterranean Food Consumption Patterns: Diet, environment, society, economy and health”](#) 2015

[13] [WHO 2017](#)

[14] The main factors explaining unemployment include limited job creation and a mismatch between the education system and the labour market (FEM, 2017).

[15] Enhancing Mediterranean Integration - CMI - World Bank

[16] According to the ILO, globally, [people living in rural areas are almost twice as likely to be employed in the informal economy as those in urban areas, and agriculture is the sector with the highest level of informal employment.](#)

[17] Castagnone Eleonora & Paola Termine, “Chapter 7 – Youth Migration from Rural Areas in the Mediterranean: socio-economic determinants, challenges and opportunities for targeted policies”, CIHEAM ed., Mediterra 2018. Migration and Inclusive Development in the Mediterranean. Presses de Sciences Po, 2018, pp. 143-163.

[18] In 2015, they represented about a quarter of the total population in the Maghreb countries as well as in Egypt. In Lebanon, this proportion is close to 30% ([MEDNC 2019](#))

Toward increased sustainability and inclusion?

Climate, pollution, health, unemployment...these multiple crisis factors lead us to **question the sustainability of our food systems** in the Mediterranean. If green, climate-resilient agriculture, the blue economy and sustainable fishing, short circuits, relocation or even food sovereignty are in turn put forward as possible solutions, they cannot be so without the **inclusion of young people**. Indeed, these transitions towards more sustainable models cannot correctly achieve their objectives **without initiatives targeting young people in Mediterranean countries** especially youth in rural and fishing communities. **As a large part of the Mediterranean population, young people, their energy and their potential are a source of hope. Their integration is an urgent priority.**[18] The creation of jobs and activities for young people in the agri-food sector sectors and in rural areas is built on partnership dynamics between public authorities, education and training institutions, civil society organizations; companies (large, industrial, SMEs/SMIs, start-ups...), investors (funds, banks...) or innovation and manufacturing laboratories which should be supported. Resolutely focused on the food systems of the future, **this publication aims to feed the debate on the place / role of youth in the development of new food paradigms** and new approaches **for creative and attractive rural and coastal areas**. The purpose is also to provide **position papers / policy briefs, reviews of works and good practices** that especially mobilise partnership dynamics (civil society, universities and research centres, companies, public authorities, investors etc.).



This publication, which wishes to give priority to the voice of young researchers, investors, entrepreneurs and activists from associations or trade unions, invites contributors to submit content on the following themes and sub-themes:

THEME 1: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Sub-theme 1.1: Access to education and training

Access for young people to diversified quality education and training, to become competent and experienced, is crucial to meet the challenges of the region, especially in rural areas where inequalities in development within social and educational infrastructures persist.

Suggested themes:

Education and training in rural and agricultural areas, gender inequalities, capacity building and training for sustainable job creation, budget and financial education, digitalisation and technological innovation, second chance schools, training for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), inclusive education, COVID-19 impacts, building positive narratives, changemakers and role models...

Sub-theme 1.2: The issue of employability

The challenges related to the professional integration of youth, whatever their level of education, reveal a discrepancy between the nature of the training provided and the demand of a constantly changing labour market. There is also a lack of information among young people about the world of work, the steps to take, or even a certain compartmentalisation of training, the private and public sectors.

Suggested themes:

Soft/hard skills, networks, multi-stakeholder dialogue and decompartmentalization, Public-private partnerships, attractiveness of professions, vocational retraining, access to information, COVID-19 impacts...

Sub-theme 1.3: Human capital human and mobility

Youth mobility is crucial for economies. Through their mobility, young people trained in the agro-food fields, natural resource management or energy transitions can meet the needs of other territories while enriching their professional and personal career.

Suggested themes:

Circular mobility, rural migration, urban / rural connectivity, the role of young people from diasporas, mobility of knowledge and skills, COVID-19 impacts...

Indicative questions:

- What mechanisms and partnerships (existing or to be developed) could facilitate employability of young graduates in rural, agricultural and coastal areas in the Mediterranean?
- What mechanisms and partnerships (existing or to be developed) could address the issue of youth unemployment in rural, agricultural and coastal areas in the Mediterranean?
- What mechanisms and partnerships (existing or to be developed) would make youth mobility an asset for food systems and sustainable development in the Mediterranean?

THEME 2: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

Entrepreneurship is a tool of growth when it generates income, creates jobs and provides solutions to development, environmental, social and societal issues. Intrinsically related to access to suitable training, in order to develop fully, youth entrepreneurship requires: entrepreneurs with specific capacities and skills, a favourable or even stimulating regulatory and financial framework, support from public and private sectors. Banks, investors, startup accelerators/incubators and community awareness and engagement play a crucial role in supporting project owners.

Suggested themes:

Access of young people to resources, social and solidarity economy, community awareness and engagement, investment and development banks, venture capital, investors, startup incubators and accelerators, corporate Social Responsibility, entrepreneurship and job creation in the blue economy, green agriculture, preservation of the “Mediterranean Diet”, agro-ecology, agro-tourism, innovations (tech, economic, social, frugal, reverse...), COVID-19 impacts, social and societal challenges...

Indicative questions:

- What mechanisms and partnerships (existing or to be developed) could facilitate youth entrepreneurship in agro-food systems?
- What roles can economic, social and technical innovation play in the emergence of rural entrepreneurship or in food systems?

THEME 3: REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

In order to promote growth that takes consideration of youth, they must be able to participate in decision-making processes and be fully integrated into all stages of project implementation. In the Mediterranean region, the share of youth in the population is very significant but young people are also those who have the least influence on development policies and initiatives. Under these conditions, their needs and aspirations are struggling to emerge.

Suggested themes:

Public policies, corporate / bank governance, water governance, leadership, participatory democracy, social cohesion and inclusion, youth unions, cooperative movements, civil society active in the agro-food sectors...

Indicative questions:

- What mechanisms and partnerships (existing or to be developed) could improve / facilitate youth participation in decision-making processes in Mediterranean agro-food systems, rural and coastal?
- What actions could be taken to mobilise and enhance the engagement of youth in rural areas and food systems?

Timeline & Technical details

17TH MARCH 2021
LAUNCH OF THE CALL FOR PAPERS

04TH MAY 2021
DEADLINE FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

MAY-AUGUST 2021
RECEPTION OF THE PAPERS AND EDITION

AUTUMN 2021
PUBLICATION OF WATCH LETTER 41

- **Languages** : English or French
- **Type of papers accepted:**

Policy brief – 2,000 - 2,500 words

Article - 2000-3000 words

Literature or critical review/ brief summary – 1,000 - 2,000 words

Promising projects or best practices presentation (a Word page)

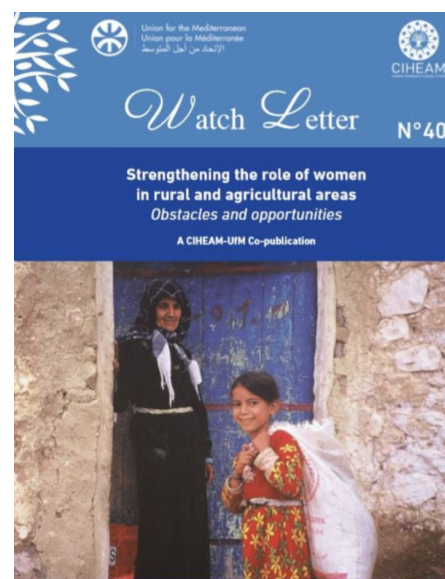
All contributions should be accompanied by a signature - please include your name, job title and/or institution (must be included in the article), a high quality - high definition **photo**, **a concise but evocative title**; **a brief bibliography / webography** (not more than 4-5 references)

Delivery - The contributions and paper must be sent via mail at watch.letter@ciheam.org

Watch Letter's Organization chart

- **Editorial Director** : Plácido Plaza (CIHEAM Secretary General)
- **Editorial Staff** : *Yasmine Seghirate El Guerrab* (CIHEAM, Communications Manager and focal point on gender and youth issues), *Audrey Petiot* (CIHEAM, Assistant), *Yosra El Hellal* (CIHEAM, Empowerment and socio-economic inclusion of youth)

PREVIOUS WATCH LETTERS (AVAILABLE ONLINE)



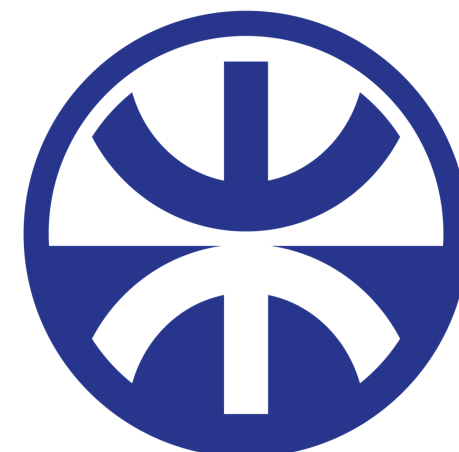
Watch Letter “[Strengthening the role of Women in rural and agricultural areas - obstacles and opportunities](#)”

- 2018 - Animal Health and Livestock, Mediterranean Perspectives
- 2016 - Crises and Resilience in the Mediterranean Agriculture and Climate Change: Impacts, adaptations and solutions Rural Innovations and Digital Revolution in Agriculture
- 2015 - Feeding Expo Milano with Mediterranean perspectives Invasive species in the Mediterranean: challenges and risks Agenda post 2015 and Mediterranean Futures Dairy Products in the Mediterranean
- 2014 - Land Issues in the Mediterranean Corporate Social Responsibility Food Waste and losses The Mediterranean Sea: Fisheries and beyond
- 2013 - Rural Development Mediterranean Forests Farmer's Trade Union EU CAP Reform and the Mediterranean
- 2012- Agri-Food Chain and Logistics Enhancing Research Education and Training Cereals Trade and Markets
- 2011 - Olive Growing Financing Agricultural and Rural Development Urban Agriculture Labelling Mediterranean Products

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الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



Established in 1962, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is a Mediterranean intergovernmental organisation composed of 13 Member States (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey). It operates through its 4 Institutes based in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France) and Zaragoza (Spain) and the Headquarters based in Paris.

As a key player in multilateral cooperation in the fields of sustainable agriculture and fisheries, food systems, coastal and rural development, its missions revolve around four main objectives :



Protection of the planet by combating all forms of waste: waste of natural resources, food waste and waste of knowledge and know-how;



Food and nutrition security by boosting sustainable agriculture and food systems;



Inclusive development by investing in new generations and fragile territories;



Prevention of crises by managing tensions and working for the resilience of communities.

The CIHEAM strives to achieve these objectives through education and capacity building, networked research, cooperation and technical assistance and political dialogue. Cooperation is essential for CIHEAM, which collaborates with more than 50 countries, several regional and intergovernmental organisations, and more than 600 universities and research centres.

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