



**INTERNATIONAL
OLIVE
COUNCIL**

COI / IOC

Jaime LILLO

Executive Director

*Madam President of the CIHEAM's Governing Board,
Excellency the Minister of Agriculture of Morocco,
Distinguished Ministers,
Heads of Delegation,
Representatives of International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the International Olive Council, allow me to begin by congratulating the Minister of Agriculture of Morocco for his new appointment and to express our sincere gratitude for the excellent organization and warm hospitality extended to us during this meeting.

I would also like to commend the President, Ms. Krifca, and the Secretary General, Mr. Miano, for the successful resumption of this vital international dialogue. The International Olive Council is an intergovernmental organization established 65 years ago under the auspices of the United Nations to promote the cultivation of olive trees, enhance the quality of olive products, and facilitate trade in table olives and olive oil.

Our organization comprises 40 member countries, including the European Union and a majority of the Mediterranean countries represented here today. When discussing sustainable agri-food systems in the Mediterranean region, the olive tree and olive oil are central to the conversation. The olive sector not only provides employment opportunities and fosters economic growth in rural areas of the Mediterranean, but it also serves as a crucial barrier against desertification, protects our soils, and creates opportunities for biodiversity.

The olive tree is arguably one of the most resilient crops, well-equipped to face the challenges of adapting to climate change. With over 11 million hectares cultivated, olive groves act as a domesticated Mediterranean forest, contributing significantly to carbon

sequestration. Therefore, the olive sector is not only a key element in mitigating climate change, but it also plays a vital role in addressing food security challenges.

Olive trees provide a sustainable and healthy source of calories to nourish a growing population. We are proud to collaborate with CIHEAM and its Institutes in fostering research to find solutions to these challenges, transfer knowledge, and build capacity within the olive sector. Our aim is to support the sector in overcoming these challenges and contributing to the improvement of human and planetary health.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to CIHEAM and the Minister of Agriculture of Morocco for organizing this meeting. I also extend a warm invitation to all of you to join us in celebrating World Olive Day, recognized by UNESCO, on November 21st. We plan to commemorate this day in collaboration with CIHEAM in Madrid.

Thank you for your kind attention.