



**Frida KRIFCA**

President of the CIHEAM's Governing Board

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*Dear Excellency Minister, Ahmed El BOUARI  
Dear Ministers of Agriculture of the CIHEAM member countries  
Heads of the Ministerial Delegations,  
Heads of the International Organizations,  
Honourable Delegates of the CIHEAM Governing Board,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> CIHEAM ministerial meeting here in Rabat!

We would like to extend a big thank you to the Minister for hosting the ministerial.

Special congratulations are in order to the new Minister, El Bouari for his appointment and I would like to assure him of our commitment to supporting the future endeavours of the ministry of agriculture: We are certainly eager to collaborate and assist in addressing the challenges and tasks that his new mandate will present.

We had our last ministerial meeting 8 years ago, in 2016 in Tirana, Albania.

It took longer than we wished, to get back together in this 12<sup>th</sup> ministerial meeting of CIHEAM - and i like to acknowledge the effort of the team of the Minister of Morocco, the teams of the delegations here present and also my team at Ciheam, for their tireless commitment of these past few months to make this meeting a success.

We have meticulously prepared for the Ministerial Meeting, by facilitating in-depth discussions on pressing concerns but also formulating concrete action plans to address them.

## **Dear Ministers, Dear Heads of Delegations,**

Situated at the nexus of Europe, Africa, and Asia, - the Mediterranean basin, has fostered the rise of remarkable civilizations and holds a pivotal position within the Eurafrican sphere, serving as a longstanding hub for cultural and scientific interchange.

This region has provided fertile ground for the cultivation of iconic agricultural crops and livestock systems, including cereals, legumes, vines, olives, and diverse variety of plants and food products.

The people of the Mediterranean, sharing common traits, histories, and values, have a distinct Mediterranean identity.

They hold unified aspirations and perspectives while confronting shared challenges, which are further intensified by prevailing geopolitical complexities.

The current level of international conflict has a devastating impact on the Mediterranean communities, significantly disrupting agricultural production, processing and access to the food systems. This disruption exacerbates food insecurity, diminishes the resilience of these communities, and heightens the risk of hunger.

CIHEAM is concerned and has been actively demonstrating its commitment to international dialogue, playing an important role in promoting and inspiring young generations to access the wonderful world of knowledge in agriculture.

CIHEAM is FULLY committed to knowledge generation and dissemination for sustainable development within its member countries.

This commitment includes:

- i) expanding educational opportunities through Master's and Doctoral programs, equipping students with updated practical skills and capacities aligned with the evolving needs of both public and private sectors;
- ii) integrating green skills, digitalization, and new technologies into its programs, fostering a multi-stakeholder approach for enhanced communication and understanding; and
- iii) sustaining multicultural dialogue, promoting tolerance and respect for a diverse and unified Mediterranean community.

CIHEAM is dedicated to fostering cooperative projects and programs that enhance agricultural and fisheries productivity in the Mediterranean region, prioritizing the needs of small-scale farmers, fishery operators, women, and youth, empowering them with knowledge and skills to improve food security, build resilience in agriculture and fisheries, and enhance rural livelihoods.

CIHEAM facilitates the exchange of scientific and technical expertise through established networks focused on sustainable agri-food systems, innovation partnerships, organic farming, specific agricultural sectors, and climate change mitigation.

Furthermore, CIHEAM promotes geopolitical and strategic information sharing among member states, to strengthen food security and crisis response capacities.

More transversally, CIHEAM is dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women across its programs - including tailored education, training, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance women's skills and knowledge in agriculture, fisheries, and natural resources management. By fostering partnerships with governments, international organizations, and civil society, CIHEAM enables an environment where women, especially those in rural and coastal areas, have equal access to leadership opportunities and productive resources.

CIHEAM recognizes the importance of engaging and empowering young generations in agriculture, fisheries, and water management. Education must go beyond technical skills. It must also foster a spirit of creativity and entrepreneurship.

Through continued targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, and knowledge-sharing platforms, CIHEAM equips young individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed to build viable career paths to become agents of change and contribute to a secure and sustainable future in our dear Mediterranean.

Lastly, we are confident that the Ministers of Agriculture of CIHEAM member countries **will endorse CIHEAM's initiatives** to promoting sustainable food systems and empowering youth and women to invest in sustainable agriculture and fisheries; **they will acknowledge the significance and the value of CIHEAM's specialized** post-university education, training, knowledge transfer, and collaborations with enterprises; and **advocate these recommendations within their respective governments** for more investment in agriculture, fishing, and rural areas throughout the Mediterranean region.

Thank you all for your contribution and I wish you a very productive day full of insightful discussions.