



Investing in rural people

IFAD

Naoufel TELAHIGUE

Head of IFAD's Multi-Country Office for North Africa and Eastern European countries.
Country Director for Morocco, Armenia, Ukraine and Serbia.

Excellency Minister El Bouari, Minister of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests of the kingdom of Morocco.

Ministers and distinguished Delegations.

President of the Governing Board of CIHEAM.

Secretary General of CIHEAM.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

All protocol observed.

I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate Minister El Bouari for his appointment and wish him every success in leading the ministry. And wish to thank also Mr. Sadiki for the fruitful collaboration we had during his tenure.

It is a pleasure to be with you here today. We thank the kingdom of Morocco of the excellent organisation of this 12th meetings of the ministers of Agriculture of the CIHEAMs members countries.

On Behalf of IFAD's President Dr Alvaro Lario, allow me to extend IFAD's appreciation of your invitation.

As you know, rural people in the Mediterranean region are facing a myriad of challenges. These mainly include inflation and food security, climate change, natural disasters and youth unemployment.

Global political instability in recent years has resulted in rising food prices.

Inflation means everyday essentials are out of reach for many due to rates that have reached unprecedented levels leading to spiking commodity prices resulting in food insecurity.

Climate change is exacerbating an existing complex situation, making it even more difficult to produce food.

Across the Mediterranean basin, many countries are at the limit of their freshwater resources, which are vital to grow food. Water reservoirs are drying up and land is degraded by rising temperatures, dryness, and unsustainable agricultural and irrigation practices.

Natural disasters, like long episodes of drought, floods and earthquakes, are setting survivors back by years, while fragility in some countries of the region means many cannot access food and basic services.

Nearly a third of young people in the region are not in employment. And when unemployment is high, so too are the risks of instability and economic migration.

The Mediterranean region is important for IFAD. The fund has been investing in several countries of the region since 1978 supporting rural and agriculture development and conserving the environment and the natural resource base in the fragile ecosystems of the region including its drylands.

As the climate shifts, heatwaves, drought and seawater incursions are making it harder to cultivate in several countries of the region like the Egypt's fertile Nile delta for example where IFAD has invested in introducing new technologies, like aquaponics and sustainable irrigation methods so farmers can keep feeding the country.

Here in Morocco, IFAD has been partnering with the government for nearly 5 decades through 16 projects for a total financing of USD 1,7 billion which have reached about 3.6 million rural people. These investments have achieved substantial results and impact in terms of supporting rural communities and smallholder producers and their organisations in producing better and more sustainably.

A significant part of the investment went into rural infrastructure, sustainable and efficient water management, sustainable land and pasture management and employment creation for rural women and youth.

Since 2008, IFAD has centred its investment in the mountain areas of the country, known as the "Chateau d'eau du Maroc" to ensure that these key ecosystems continue to play their ecological and economic vital roles.

In many countries of the Mediterranean basin, we are tapping into traditional irrigation methods to deliver modern water management technologies and increase successful harvests amid erratic weather conditions. Investing in water harvesting and efficient irrigation technologies and digital solutions will equip the rural communities and smallholder farmers with the tools and means to face the growing challenges and withstand the effects of climate change.

IFAD is determined to optimize what we do by strategically linking programmes, like the Nexus on Water Food and Energy providing people access to finance, technology and good agricultural practices, we can increase the effectiveness and sustainability of our investments. This means working across the sectors that rural people depend on and creating opportunities for youth.

Moving forward, IFAD is committing to investing in rural prosperity and resilience for a food-secure future focusing on Investing in climate resilience and biodiversity, increasing engagement with the private sector and enhancing focus on fragile contexts. Globally, and for our 13th replenishment cycle (starting in January 2025) we aim at delivering a total investment of 10 billion dollars of which more than 45 % will be dedicated to climate financing.

We know that investments in rural people work — and we know the impacts can be long-lasting. We are pleased to note the alignment between our vision and the excellent work that CIHEAM is doing in terms of research, innovation, knowledge sharing, and network animation which is crucial and adds a significant contribution to the 2030 agenda and to the promotion of resilient agriculture and food systems.

I thank you for your kind attention.