



Ministry of Agriculture

*Under the Patronage and  
in the Presence of  
H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani  
Minister of Agriculture of  
Lebanon*



**CIHEAM**

International Center for Advanced  
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

# **CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar in Lebanon**

*Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agrifood Systems:  
Linking Education to Job Opportunities and Sector  
Priorities*

*24-25 September 2025, Beirut, Lebanon*

## **AGENDA**



**CIHEAM  
BARI**



**CIHEAM  
CHANIA**



**CIHEAM  
MONTPELLIER**



**CIHEAM  
ZARAGOZA**

## **Background**

Lebanon's agrifood systems are at a critical juncture. With the country moving forward in its recovery and agricultural transformation, youth engagement and capacity development are central to shaping a more sustainable and resilient sector. The International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) has played a pivotal role in training, research, and innovation for Lebanese students and professionals for more than four decades. Hundreds of alumni have graduated from CIHEAM's institutes in Bari, Montpellier, Zaragoza, and Chania, bringing back valuable expertise that continues to contribute to Lebanon's agrifood development.

This event, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with CIHEAM, aims to consolidate this legacy and invest in the future. It will serve as a platform to reconnect alumni, highlight their contributions, and foster forward-looking dialogues linking education, employment opportunities, and sectoral priorities. This initiative also aligns with CIHEAM's 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, making it a symbolic occasion to reflect on past achievements while charting a vision for the future of youth in Mediterranean agriculture. To respond to these pressing needs, the Ministry of Agriculture, in close partnership with the CIHEAM General Secretariat and Institutes, is organizing the CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar, in Beirut, on September 24, 2025.

## **Objectives**

The seminar, under the theme *"Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agrifood Systems: Linking Education to Job Opportunities and Sector Priorities,"* will serve as a platform to consolidate the Lebanese CIHEAM alumni network and to showcase CIHEAM's long-standing contribution to Lebanon's agricultural development and youth empowerment across the Mediterranean. It will spotlight the role of Lebanese youth as agents of change in building climate-resilient, inclusive, and innovative agrifood systems. The program will encourage dialogue on leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship, feature alumni success stories, and explore opportunities for investment in youth, research, and innovation. The seminar will also promote synergies between CIHEAM and Lebanese institutions to foster new programs, academic exchanges, and collaborative research.

## **Expected Outcomes**

In partnership, the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon and CIHEAM aim to mobilize alumni, support youth-led agricultural transformation, and jointly advance the implementation of the CIHEAM 2030 Strategic Plan, notably through the strengthening and valorization of an active Alumni Network. The seminar will celebrate alumni achievements, re-engage them with national priorities, and foster sustainable networking across generations to promote collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge transfer in priority areas for Lebanon's agricultural and rural development. In the short term, it will generate momentum and practical guidance for alumni-driven initiatives; in the medium term, it will consolidate a Lebanese Alumni Network serving as a platform for exchange and partnerships; and in the long term, this Network may evolve into a formal Alumni Chapter, ensuring sustained engagement, reinforcing intergenerational ties, and positioning CIHEAM and its alumni as a lasting legacy of knowledge, expertise, and innovation contributing to Lebanon's resilience and rural transformation.

## **Participants**

The meeting will bring together Lebanese alumni of CIHEAM's four Institutes, the President of the Governing Board & Secretary General, Directors and Researchers of the four CIHEAM Institutes, alongside the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture and relevant public institutions. Representatives from academia, research bodies, the private sector, experts, international organizations, civil society, and the media will also be present, together with CIHEAM's current students and potential applicants from Lebanon. Diplomats representing CIHEAM Member Countries are invited to join the event.

## Panels Description

The seminar includes four roundtable panels, each dedicated to key themes reflecting Lebanon's agrifood priorities, regional opportunities, and the contributions of CIHEAM alumni.

### ***Panel 1: Bridging the Skills Gap: Education and Training for Future Agrifood Systems Transformation***

This panel will focus on the skills and competencies required for the next generation of agrifood jobs in Lebanon and the wider Mediterranean. It will address the mismatch between educational outcomes and market needs, emphasizing the role of CIHEAM in updating curricula and fostering stronger partnerships between universities, technical and vocational education providers, and the private sector. Discussions will also highlight pathways to strengthen youth employability and prepare them to lead the transition to sustainable agrifood systems.

### ***Panel 2: Harnessing Innovation and AI to Drive Youth Entrepreneurship in Agrifood sectors***

The second panel will examine how innovation, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence can empower young entrepreneurs and strengthen cooperative development in Lebanon. It will present success stories of youth-led agritech initiatives and explore how incubators, accelerators, and financial institutions can provide opportunities for scaling up. The panel will also highlight the importance of building digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills among young professionals to create sustainable agribusinesses.

### ***Panel 3: Catalyzing Research and Innovation for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Agriculture***

This panel will emphasize the importance of aligning agricultural research with Lebanon's most pressing challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, food safety, and agroecological transformation. It will also explore opportunities for strengthening research cooperation between CIHEAM Institutes and Lebanese institutions through joint projects, collaborative networks, and shared platforms. Discussions will address barriers to translating research into policy and field-level solutions and will focus on building innovation ecosystems that actively involve youth and rural communities.

### ***Panel 4 : The Alumni Voice: Inspiring Journeys, Collective Impact, and Future Engagement***

The final panel will give the floor to CIHEAM alumni to share their professional journeys, reflect on the role of CIHEAM in shaping their careers, and exchange views on how to build stronger collective engagement including through an Alumni Network. Discussions will also highlight success networking stories from Lebanese academia.

### ***Closing Session***

The day will conclude with a wrap-up and closing session that will synthesize the recommendations from all panels, identify follow-up actions, and capture alumni commitments for future engagement with CIHEAM and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture.

<b>Wednesday 24 September</b> <b>International Seminar - Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agrifood Systems: Linking Education to Job Opportunities and Sector Priorities</b>	
Time	Session
8.30	<b>Registration</b>
9.00 -10.30	<b>Opening &amp; Key notes Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms. Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé, Senior Adviser-MoA, CIHEAM VP &amp; Delegate of Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Teodoro Miano, Secretary General, CIHEAM</li> <li>Dr. Frida Krifca, President, CIHEAM Governing Board</li> </ul> </li> <li>H.E Dr. Kamal Shehadi, The Lebanese Minister of Information Technology &amp; Artificial Intelligence  <b>Innovation and Technology for Agri Food Systems Transformation</b></li> <li>H.E Dr. Nizar Hani, The Lebanese Minister of Agriculture  <b>Challenges and Opportunities of the Agrifood Sector in Lebanon</b></li> </ul> <p>Master of Ceremony: Ms. Abir Abulkhoudoud, M&amp;E Expert, Ministry of Agriculture</p>
10.30-10.45	<b>Refreshments &amp; Coffee</b>
	<b>Group Photo</b>
10.45 -12.00	<b><u>Panel 1: Bridging the Skills Gap: Education and Training for Future Agrifood Systems transformation</u></b>  Moderator: Dr. Teodoro Miano, Secretary General, CIHEAM, France Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Nadine Nassif, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Lebanese University</li> <li>Mr. Raphael Debbane, Chairman, Debbane Saikali Group Holding, Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim, Professor, USEK University (and Rapporteur)</li> <li>Mr. Elie Massoud, Head, Agriculture &amp; Agro-Industries Department, CCIAB- Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Maya Al Hajj Latouf, ME Business Development &amp; Sustainable Director-IDOM</li> </ul> <b>Discussion/Q&amp;A</b>
12:00 -13:15	<b><u>Panel 2: Harnessing Innovation and AI to Drive Youth Entrepreneurship in Agrifood Sectors</u></b>  Moderator: Dr. Raul Compes, Director CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engineer Mr. Louis Lahoud, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Samar Azzi, Professor, USEK, Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Nasser Yassin, Policy Scientist, Former Minister of Environment, Lebanon</li> <li>Dr. Chariton Kalaitzidis, Professor, CIHEAM Chania, Greece (and Rapporteur)</li> <li>Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh, Managing Partner, FERMENDOM, France &amp; Lebanon</li> <li>Mrs. Theresa EL Chahrouk El Maalouf, Program Officer-Berytech, Lebanon</li> </ul> <b>Discussion/Q&amp;A</b>
13.15-14.15	<b>Lunch Break</b>

14.15-15.30	<p><b><u>Panel 3: Catalyzing Research and Innovation for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Agriculture</u></b></p> <p><i>Moderator: Dr. Thierry Dupeuble, Director CIHEAM Montpellier, France</i></p> <p><i>Panelists:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Chadi Abdallah, Secretary General, CNRS, Lebanon</li> <li>- Dr. Nahla Hwalla, Professor, American University of Beirut, Lebanon</li> <li>- Ms. Nadine Khoury, The Quinta Group, Lebanon</li> <li>- Dr. George Mitri, Director, Land &amp; Natural Resources Program, University of Balamand, Lebanon</li> <li>- Dr. Daniel El Chami, Sustainable Strategy Director, TIMAC AGRO Int., France (and Rapporteur)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Discussion/Q&amp;A</u></b></p>
15.30- 16.45	<p><b><u>Panel 4: The Alumni Voice: Inspiring Journeys, Collective Impact, and Future Engagement</u></b></p> <p><i>Moderator: Dr. Biagio Di Terlizzi, Director CIHEAM Bari, Italy</i></p> <p><i>Panelists:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Michel Afram, Director General, LARI, Lebanon</li> <li>- Dr. Wadih Skaff, Director ESIAM - USJ, Lebanon</li> <li>- Dr. Kanj Hamade, International Development Consultant</li> <li>- Dr. Dani Fadel, President, Lebanese Cannabis Regulatory Board, Lebanon</li> <li>- Mr. Paul Skayem, KFW Development Bank - Beirut, Lebanon</li> <li>- Ms. Yara El Zoghbi, Agricultural engineer and plant breeder, Lebanon</li> </ul> <p><i>Rapporteur: Ms. Virginia Lachana, CIHEAM, France</i></p> <p><b><u>Discussion/Q&amp;A</u></b></p>
16.45-17.30	<p><b><u>Rapporteurs Wrap-Up and Closing</u></b> - Opportunities for new collaboration, alumni mobilization, and joint research, training and development agendas between Lebanon and CIHEAM</p> <p><b><u>Moderators:</u></b> Ms. Wafaa El Dikah, CIHEAM GB-Delegate of Lebanon &amp; Dr. Maurizio Raeli, CIHEAM GB-Delegate of Italy</p> <p><b><u>Panel Rapporteurs:</u></b> Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim (Panel 1), Dr. Chariton Kalaitzidis (Panel 2), Dr. Daniel El Chami (Panel 3), Ms. Virginia Lachana (Panel 4)</p>
17.30 – 18.00	<b><u>Networking</u></b>

Thursday 25 September (8:30-17:00)

**Visit to El Shouf Cedars Reserve and Beit El Dine**

**Participants: CIHEAM Delegation and other interested participants**

**Language :** *The working language of the Seminar will be English*



**Meeting Venue :** [Radisson Blu Hotel- Verdun, Beirut, Lebanon](#)

**Address:** Rachid Karami Street

**Phone:** + 961 177 1100

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### Key Contacts

#### In Lebanon

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