

24-25 SEPTEMBER 2025

BEIRUT - LEBANON



REPORT

CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar

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





Mrs. Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé
*Vice-President & Delegate of Lebanon
to the CIHEAM Governing Board*



Mr. Teodoro Miano
*Secretary General of the
CIHEAM*

Cultivating Collaboration, Harvesting Resilience: The CIHEAM Alumni, a Force for change

*From Beirut to the Mediterranean: Empowering Youth &
Innovation for Sustainable Agri-Food Systems*

Beirut, a Living Symbol of Mediterranean Cooperation

The First International Seminar of Lebanese Alumni of CIHEAM's four Institutes, held in Beirut on 24 September 2025, was more than a reunion. It was a milestone in Mediterranean cooperation, where generations of CIHEAM graduates came together to exchange ideas, renew their commitment, and shape a shared vision for sustainable agri-food systems.

Lebanon, a long-standing and active member of the CIHEAM community, once again demonstrated its ability to inspire collective action. Under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani, Minister of Agriculture, the event brought together over a hundred alumni, policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and educators, united by a shared commitment to shape the future of agri-food systems in Lebanon and beyond. The Ministry of Agriculture's active partnership and the leadership of its alumni reaffirmed Lebanon's central role in advancing Mediterranean cooperation and promoting agrifood innovation.

Investing in Youth, Building the Future

At the heart of this gathering stood a clear conviction: the future of Mediterranean agriculture depends on its youth. The theme, "Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Linking Education to Job Opportunities and Sector Priorities" echoed across every session.

The participants illustrated how new generations are reimagining agriculture, combining ancestral know-how with smart technologies, precision farming, and renewable energy. Their energy and innovation breathe new life into rural communities, transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and sustainability.

This seminar reaffirmed that education and employment are not separate paths but two dimensions of a single vision: to empower Mediterranean youth as creators of solutions and agents of change. This vision aligns with CIHEAM's long-standing mission to nurture the next generation of Mediterranean professionals through education, applied research, and capacity development.

From Learning to Lasting Impact

The CIHEAM Alumni Network embodies this vision. It is not merely a directory of graduates; it is a dynamic ecosystem of cooperation, connecting individuals across borders, professions, and generations.

Through this network, CIHEAM strengthens its capacity to bridge training with real-world impact: fostering entrepreneurship, supporting innovation, and linking local challenges to regional opportunities. The launch of the Lebanese Chapter of the CIHEAM Alumni Network in Beirut marked a decisive step in this collective endeavor, creating a tangible space for engagement in Lebanon and beyond.

This chapter will serve as a platform for collaboration, mentorship, and lifelong learning, a space where expertise is shared, partnerships are built, and new initiatives emerge for Lebanon and the Mediterranean region.

Synergies for a Sustainable Mediterranean

Building on the momentum of alumni collaboration, the seminar's technical panels translated this vision into actionable pathways for policy, research, and innovation. The panels addressed the key priorities of the agri-food sector: climate resilience, water management, value chains, and the integration of innovation into national strategies. Together, they laid the foundation for concrete partnerships among CIHEAM, Lebanese institutions, and the private sector, fostering joint research projects, innovation hubs, and knowledge exchange platforms that address regional development priorities.

The exchanges highlighted the essential role of human capital as the driving force behind food security and sustainability. When knowledge meets purpose and cooperation meets creativity, the Mediterranean becomes a laboratory of innovation and solidarity, translating ideas into tangible solutions for the region.

A Shared Commitment to Hope and Action

Beirut reminded us that every challenge carries within it the seeds of renewal. The CIHEAM community, inspired by the courage and perseverance of Lebanon, renews its commitment to youth and to the Mediterranean ideal of shared progress.

The CIHEAM Alumni are not only graduates, they are ambassadors of cooperation, builders of resilience, and drivers of transformation. By cultivating collaboration and harvesting resilience, they continue to sow the seeds of a sustainable and united Mediterranean future.



OFFICIAL SPEECH



H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani
Lebanese Minister of Agriculture

Challenges and Opportunities of the Agrifood Sector in Lebanon

Key Messages

Youth at the Heart of Lebanon's Agrifood Transformation

H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, called for a national renewal of Lebanon's agrifood sector grounded in the energy, creativity, and commitment of its youth.

The Minister underlined that the theme "Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agrifood Systems" perfectly reflects Lebanon's current priorities, as the country seeks to modernize agriculture, enhance rural livelihoods, and build resilience amid crises.

"Lebanon's agriculture is more than an economic sector. It is the heartbeat of our rural areas, the anchor that keeps families on their land, and the shield that safeguards our food sovereignty"

A Sector Facing Challenges and Opportunities

Minister Hani acknowledged that Lebanese agriculture stands at a crossroads. It is deeply affected by climate change, economic and financial fragility, and the regional consequences of conflict.

"The very difficulties we face also carry seeds of opportunity"

Lebanon, he said, retains unique strengths: fertile land, biodiversity, a resilient farming community, and a committed diaspora. These assets must be mobilized to transition toward a modern, technology-driven, and sustainable agrifood system capable of providing dignified livelihoods, ensuring food safety, and opening new markets for Lebanese products.

Youth as Agents of Transformation

At the heart of this transformation lies the younger generation. The Minister emphasized that fewer than 10% of young people under 35 currently work in agriculture, a figure that must rise if the sector is to thrive.

Young people bring digital skills, renewable energy innovations, and entrepreneurial drive that can redefine agriculture as a “career of choice, not of last resort.”

“The future of agriculture and food systems lies in the hands of young people. They are not only tomorrow’s leaders, they are already today’s innovators”

Partnerships for a Resilient Future

Minister Hani expressed deep gratitude to CIHEAM, which since 1992 has trained more than 1,500 Lebanese students, strengthened research partnerships, and supported farmers and cooperatives nationwide.

He reaffirmed Lebanon’s determination to deepen this collaboration through:

- Expanded academic exchanges and scholarships;
- Joint research on water, energy, agroecology, and food safety;
- Development projects for farmers and cooperatives;
- And the creation of a Lebanese Alumni Network as a platform for mentoring and innovation.

A Call for Shared Responsibility

The Minister stressed that unlocking the potential of youth requires a collective ecosystem of support:

- Universities must modernize curricula and bridge education with employment;
- The private sector must open spaces for youth through internships and entrepreneurship;
- Research institutions must foster innovation;
- And public authorities must create enabling policies and investment frameworks.

He concluded with a call to urge collective commitment to turn Lebanon's agrifood sector into a driver of sustainable growth:

“Let us invest in youth. Let us transform our food systems. And let us build together a resilient and sustainable future for Lebanon and the Mediterranean”



OFFICIAL SPEECH



H.E. Dr. Kamal Shehadi,
*Lebanese Minister of the Displaced and Minister of
State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence*

Innovation and Technology for Agri-Food Systems Transformation

Key Messages

Harnessing Technology for Lebanon's Sustainable Development

H.E. Dr. Kamal Shehadi, Minister of the Displaced and Minister of State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence, emphasized the critical role of technology and artificial intelligence in advancing sustainable development, particularly in productive sectors such as agriculture.

“Lebanon has strong human capital capable of transforming challenges into opportunities through innovation and digital transformation”

Dr. Shehadi highlighted the potential of digital solutions to modernize agriculture, improve public services, and create new economic opportunities.

A Ministry Action Plan for Digital Transformation

Dr. Shehadi presented the action plan of the Ministry of Technology and Artificial Intelligence, which focuses on:

- Building an integrated digital infrastructure linking ministries and public institutions;
- Improving services for citizens;
- Supporting the growth of the digital economy;
- Creating new job opportunities for youth.

“Digital transformation is not just a technological challenge, it is a pathway to inclusive growth, efficiency, and resilience for Lebanon”

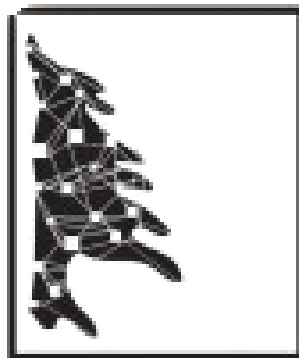
Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

The Minister underscored the importance of cooperation among Mediterranean countries and with research and educational institutions like CIHEAM. Such partnerships are essential to exchange expertise, strengthen technical capacities, and advance knowledge-driven innovation.

Public–Private Partnerships for Food Security and Growth

Dr. Shehadi called for enhanced public–private partnerships to develop digital solutions that support food security, strengthen productive sectors, and promote sustainable economic growth.

“Together, through innovation, collaboration, and investment in our youth, we can build a resilient and technologically empowered future for Lebanon’s agrifood systems”



مكتب وزير الدولة لشؤون
تكنولوجيا المعلومات
والذكاء الاصطناعي

OFFICIAL SPEECH



Mrs. Frida Krifca

President of the CIHEAM Governing Board

Placing Youth and Innovation at the Core of Lebanon's Agrifood Future

Key Messages

At the opening Ms Frida Krifca emphasized that youth, skills, and innovation must be placed at the heart of Lebanon's agrifood transformation. This vision, she underlined, is essential to the recovery of rural territories, the revitalization of value chains, and the renewal of trust in public institutions.

"Youth, skills, and innovation must be placed at the very heart of Lebanon's agrifood transformation."

Investing in Human Capital

Ms Krifca celebrated the long-standing cooperation between CIHEAM and Lebanon, noting that hundreds of Lebanese professionals have been trained in CIHEAM Institutes over the past four decades.

The Lebanese Alumni community stands as a living testimony to the enduring impact of education, training, and Mediterranean cooperation. She called on all partners to keep human capital investment at the centre of the country's agrifood recovery, ensuring that learning translates into tangible opportunities for youth and rural development.

"This proud community of Lebanese Alumni is proof of the relevance of Mediterranean cooperation and of how investment in human capital yields results that endure through crises and transitions."

Linking Knowledge to Action

Highlighting the resilience of Lebanese agriculture, Ms Krifca stressed that innovation already exists at community level, through solar irrigation, efficient resource use, and local cooperation.

She encouraged stakeholders to consolidate and scale up these initiatives through coherent public policies, adequate financing, and stronger connections between education, research, and employment.

Strengthening Mediterranean Cooperation

Ms Krifca reaffirmed CIHEAM's commitment to Lebanon within a wider Mediterranean framework built on trust, partnership, and shared learning.

“We do not promise quick fixes. We promise seriousness, attentive listening, and continuity.”

She emphasized that Lebanon's experience mirrors that of many Mediterranean countries facing common challenges of water scarcity, food safety, and agroecological transition, and that CIHEAM's added value lies in its ability to bring continuity, comparative experience, and credible evaluation to cooperation efforts.

She concluded with a call to collective action:

“Together, let us turn intention into action: connect education to professions, nurture innovation, and give Lebanese youth the means to act.”



CIHEAM

INTRODUCTION

Connecting Generations for a stronger Mediterranean Agrifood Future

A Milestone for CIHEAM and Lebanon Cooperation

The CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar, held in Beirut on 24–25 September 2025, marked a milestone in the enduring partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM).

Under the theme “Investing in Youth for Sustainable Agrifood Systems: Linking Education to Job Opportunities and Sector Priorities”, the event gathered Lebanese alumni from CIHEAM’s four Institutes (Bari, Montpellier, Zaragoza, and Chania) together with public officials, academics, private sector representatives, civil society actors, and international partners.

The seminar also benefited from the active participation of institutional, academic, NGO, official, and project stakeholders, whose contributions enriched discussions and strengthened collaborative networks.

Celebrating more than four decades of CIHEAM’s engagement in Lebanon, this high-level gathering highlighted the pivotal role of youth as key drivers of innovation and resilience in the Mediterranean agrifood sector.

Over this period, CIHEAM has trained hundreds of Lebanese students and professionals, offering advanced education in Mediterranean agriculture and rural development. Alumni have brought home expertise that continues to shape Lebanon’s agrifood landscape, supporting policy, entrepreneurship, and community initiatives.

Coinciding with CIHEAM’s 63rd anniversary, the event reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to Mediterranean youth empowerment, scientific cooperation, and sustainable development, while strengthening ties between generations of alumni.

A Diverse and Engaged Community of Participants

The Seminar gathered a diverse group of participants reflecting the richness of Lebanon’s agrifood community and the spirit of Mediterranean Cooperation. Attendees included Lebanese Alumni from CIHEAM’s four Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier, Zaragoza), alongside students, professionals, academics and policymakers.

The event brought together The President of the CIHEAM Governing Board, the Secretary General, the Vice President and Delegate of the organisation as well as the Directors of the Four Institutes. Their presence underscored the organization’s commitment to fostering intergenerational exchange and strengthening ties across the Mediterranean agrifood community.

Ministry participants were prominently represented by the Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon and the Minister of Information Technology & Artificial Intelligence, together with senior officials from both ministries. Their active engagement highlighted the strong institutional support and strategic partnership between CIHEAM and the Lebanese government, reinforcing the seminar's role as a platform for dialogue, policy alignment, and collaborative action in the agrifood and innovation sectors.

Experts from academia, research institutions, the private sector, and international organizations contributed their perspectives, while members of civil society and the media actively participated in discussions.

Diplomats from CIHEAM Member Countries were also in attendance, reaffirming the shared commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and solidarity across the Mediterranean.

Context and Rationale: Investing in Human Capital amid challenges

Organized amid Lebanon's ongoing socio-economic challenges, the seminar responded to the urgent need to create opportunities for young professionals in the agrifood sector, one of the country's most vital for stability and growth.

Lebanon's agrifood systems are at a critical juncture. The country's recovery and agricultural transformation depend on a new generation equipped with the skills and opportunities to innovate.

By linking education, research, and employment, it highlighted how skilled youth can drive agrifood transformation and rural revitalization, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Mediterranean vision for sustainable food systems.

CIHEAM Strategic Dialogue: Strengthening Cooperation in Lebanon Beirut, 23 September 2025

In the margin of the CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar, CIHEAM met with key Lebanese stakeholders to advance partnerships and dialogue.

High-Level Political Meetings

The CIHEAM delegation, led by its President along with the Secretary General and the Lebanese Delegate, met with the **Prime Minister of Lebanon, Mr Nawaf Salam**, and the **Minister of Agriculture, Mr Nizar Hani** to outline a roadmap on agricultural innovation, rural development, and the strengthening of value chains.



Academic Partnership & Training

As part of these exchanges, CIHEAM Delegation met with the **President of the Lebanese University, Professor Bassam Badranand** and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Lebanese University to promote joint training programs, collaborative research, and academic exchanges in support of stakeholders across the agricultural sector.

For further information: [Read the Press Release](#)

Youth at the Heart of Resilient Food Systems

Discussions underscored the central role of Youth as agents of change, bringing innovation, entrepreneurship, and new technologies to agriculture. The event strengthened intergenerational connections and interactions among CIHEAM alumni, inspiring collective action to build more inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

Alignment with the Ministry of Agriculture's Strategy and National Priorities

The Seminar also reflected the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture's strategic priorities, highlighting its commitments to modernizing and strengthening the agrifood sector. Key focus areas include:

- Strengthening agrifood value chains and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to enhance competitiveness and resilience;
- Promoting youth employment and women empowerment as essential drivers of innovation and inclusive growth;
- Advancing innovation, digital agriculture, and climate resilience to modernize practices, increase productivity and adapt to environmental challenges;
- Encouraging regional cooperation through CIHEAM and Mediterranean networks to foster exchange and collaborative solutions to shared challenges.

By aligning the seminar discussions with these priorities, the event reinforced the Ministry's vision of connecting education, research and employment to sustainably transform Lebanon's agrifood Systems.

A platform for Mediterranean Cooperation

Beyond the national scope, the seminar reinforced regional solidarity and cooperation through CIHEAM's alumni network. By sharing experiences and good practices, participants highlighted how cross-Mediterranean collaboration can strengthen resilience to climate change, food insecurity, and population movements, while promoting inclusive and sustainable development across the region.

Moving forward: from ideas to Action

This seminar was therefore designed as both a celebration and an investment in the future: an opportunity to reconnect alumni, highlight their contributions, and open new pathways linking education to employment and research to policy.

The seminar stood as both a celebration and a call to action, affirming that investing in youth, innovation, and cooperation is key to shaping the future of sustainable agrifood systems in Lebanon and across the Mediterranean.

Action-Oriented

CIHEAM Working Session with the Minister of Agriculture - Beirut, 23 September 2025



A working session with the **Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Nizar Hani**, was held to advance partnerships in training, applied research, and value chain development, turning dialogue into action.



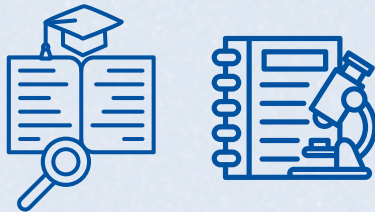
Seeds of Mediterranean Partnership Key Data on CIHEAM & Lebanon



From early academic ties to strategic agricultural collaboration

Lebanon joined CIHEAM in 1994, but cooperation dates back to the early 1970's

Early engagement laid the foundation for **education, research, & agricultural collaboration**



Key Historical institutional partner
Faculty of Agronomy, Lebanese University



CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni Impact

4000+ Lebanese participants in CIHEAM Masters & training programs



Alumni working across: **policy, public administration, research, NGOs, agribusiness**



Act as **key influencers** shaping policy & **rural development.**

Strengthened Presence & Joint Action in Lebanon

CIHEAM's presence is strengthened through CIHEAM Bari and CIHEAM Montpellier Offices in Lebanon, combining **capacity-building** with collaborative workshops, research, & support for **food security, climate adaptation, & youth engagement in agriculture.**

OBJECTIVES & GOALS

Investing in Youth, Empowering Agri-Food Futures

Objectives and Strategic goals of the Seminar

The CIHEAM Lebanese ALumni International Seminar was designed not only as a celebration of past achievements but as a forward looking platform to harness the potential of Youth, alumni expertise and Mediterranean cooperation in transforming Lebanon's agrifood systems. By linking education, research and employment, the seminar set out to catalyze tangible impact across the sector.

1 Strengthening the Alumni Network



A core objective of the Seminar was to formalize and consolidate the Lebanese CIHEAM Alumni Network, fostering sustained engagement, collaboration and mentorship among generations of graduates. By creating structured avenues for communication and cooperation, the network aims to support joint initiatives that address Lebanon's agrifood challenges.

2 Showcase CIHEAM's impact



The seminar highlighted CIHEAM's enduring role in agricultural development, youth empowerment and Mediterranean cooperation. Through success stories and panel discussions, it underscored how alumni contribute to policy innovation, entrepreneurship, community and rural development

3 Catalyzing Dialogue on Innovation and Leadership



The event served as a platform to encourage dialogue on leadership, entrepreneurship and innovative approaches in agrifood systems. Participants explored how emerging technologies, digitalization and creative business can accelerate youth-led initiatives, strengthen value chains and enhance resilience to socio-economic and environmental challenges.

4 Identifying Investment Opportunities



A strategic goal of the seminar was to map and promote new investment opportunities in youth, research, and agrifood innovation. By bringing together stakeholders from government, academia, the private sector and international partners, the seminar sought to align resources and expertise to support transformative projects and capacity building initiatives.

5 Reinforcing Institutional Cooperation



The seminar strengthened collaboration/interaction between CIHEAM and Lebanese Institutions by exploring joint academic and research programmes. This partnership ensures that initiatives in education, training and innovation are aligned with national priorities, including climate resilience, digital agriculture/transformation and inclusive growth in rural and coastal communities.

Expected outcomes and Long Term Vision

The Ministry of Agriculture and CIHEAM committed to jointly advancing youth-led agricultural transformation.

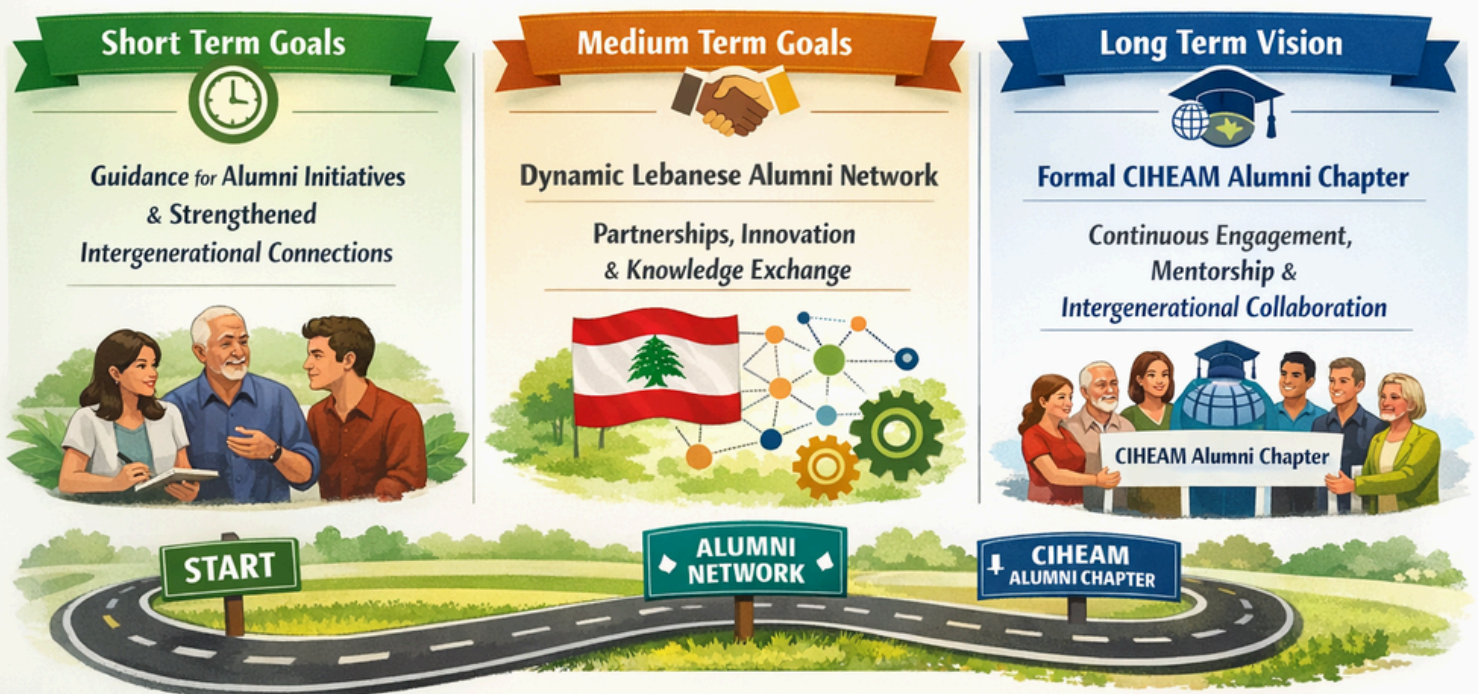
In the **short term**, the seminar **generated guidance for alumni-driven initiatives** and reinforced **intergenerational connections**.

In the **medium term**, it aimed to consolidate a dynamic **Lebanese Alumni Network**, fostering partnerships, innovation and knowledge exchange across the Agrifood sector.

In the **long term**, this initiative is expected to evolve into a **formal CIHEAM Alumni Chapter**, ensuring continuous engagement, mentorship and intergenerational collaboration.

Expected Outcomes & Long Term Vision

The Ministry of Agriculture and CIHEAM committed to jointly advancing youth-led agricultural transformation.



Building a Sustainable Future for Agrifood.

PANELS OVERVIEW

Four Dynamic Panels tackling Lebanon's Agri-Food Priorities

The seminar was structured around four focused discussions, each addressing Lebanon's agrifood challenges and opportunities, exploring key aspects of the country's agrifood systems transformation while showcasing alumni expertise and regional cooperation.

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

This panel explored how education and vocational training can better respond to the evolving needs of agrifood markets. It highlighted the need for stronger links between universities, technical schools, and the private sector, while emphasizing competency-based education and employability pathways for youth in sustainable agriculture.

Panel 2 **Harnessing Innovation and AI to Drive Youth Entrepreneurship in Agrifood Sectors**

Panel 2 examined the transformative role of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and agritech in empowering young entrepreneurs. Success stories illustrated how innovation ecosystems, incubators, and access to finance can help scale agrifood startups and promote digital literacy among rural youth.

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

This session focused on aligning agricultural research with Lebanon's climate and environmental priorities. Panelists called for joint projects and academic partnerships between CIHEAM and Lebanese institutions, particularly in areas such as climate adaptation, water management, and agroecological innovation.

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

The final session gave the floor to Lebanese alumni to share their professional experiences and reflect on how CIHEAM shaped their careers. The discussion emphasized collective engagement, intergenerational mentorship, and the vision for a sustainable Alumni Network to enhance cooperation between Lebanon and CIHEAM.

Closing Session

The day concluded with a wrap-up and closing session that synthesized the recommendations from all panels, identified follow-up actions, and captured alumni commitments for future engagement with CIHEAM and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE FOUR PANELS

Four Dynamic Panels tackling Lebanon's Agri-Food Priorities

Human Capital and Skills Gap

Across the four panels of the CIHEAM-Lebanese Alumni discussions, participants conveyed a shared and consistent message: Lebanon has strong human capital and significant potential in the agrifood sector, but progress depends on narrowing the persistent gap between academic training and real field needs. Although universities produce capable graduates, many still find themselves unprepared for the practical, technical, and institutional challenges that farmers, companies, and public bodies face on the ground. The panels agreed that the country needs professionals who combine solid technical knowledge with transversal abilities such as critical thinking, communication, digital skills, sustainability awareness, and the capacity to work across disciplines. The full report of the four panels is provided in Annex 1.

From Classroom to Farm: Making Education Practical

A recurring theme was the need to make education more practical, collaborative, and aligned with the needs of the agrifood system. This includes co-designed curricula involving the private sector and public institutions, meaningful internships, “living labs”, and early exposure to emerging tools such as AI, robotics, and traceability systems. Participants also stressed the importance of completing and enforcing key national legislation on food safety, pesticides, forestry, and environmental protection, as a necessary foundation for any real transformation of the sector.

Innovation as a Driving Force

Innovation emerged as one of Lebanon's strengths. The panels highlighted several Lebanese entrepreneurial initiatives that have translated creativity and scientific knowledge into practical solutions: biodegradable edible coatings, AI-based quarry monitoring, precision-agriculture drones, new food products developed through university incubators, and the digitisation of farm processes. These examples demonstrate the potential that already exists, while also revealing the need for more support mechanisms such as financial tools, risk-sharing, and stronger collaboration between universities and companies. Retaining talent and encouraging MSc and PhD graduates to return with viable projects were identified as strategic needs.

Climate Resilience and Evidence-Driven Policy

Climate resilience and research-to-policy translation were also central topics. Agriculture, being highly vulnerable to climate change, requires transdisciplinary thinking and better use of scientific evidence in policy-making. The panels presented concrete examples: redesigned greenhouses, innovative irrigation systems in the Bekaa, remote sensing for land and water management, systems combining sensors and solar energy, and environmental mapping such as fire-risk assessments. However, limited data availability, institutional fragmentation, and a culture of competition continue to restrict the impact of research on national agricultural and environmental strategies.

The CIHEAM Alumni Impact

The Alumni Panel added an important human dimension. Many alumni described their CIHEAM experience as transformative: academically rigorous, professionally decisive, and personally enriching. The “CIHEAM bonus card,” the strong and enduring alumni network that opens doors across countries and institutions, was repeatedly mentioned. Alumni emphasised their willingness to act as mentors, to support young professionals, and to contribute to Lebanon’s development even when based abroad. They called for a visible and trusted Alumni Platform capable of fostering collaboration, strengthening CIHEAM’s presence in Lebanon, attracting partnerships, and reflecting the organisation’s long-standing involvement in the country.

Pathway to a Resilient Agrifood System

Overall, the panels converged around a shared conclusion: modernising Lebanon’s agrifood sector requires practical and forward-looking education, stronger connections between research and policy, support for entrepreneurship, coordinated action among institutions, and the activation of a dynamic CIHEAM Alumni Network. Together, these elements can help build a more resilient, innovative, and inclusive agrifood system, one that corresponds to Lebanon’s potential and contributes to its long-term development.

To explore the detailed findings and recommendations of the four panels, please consult the full session report [here](#).



STATEMENT



Mr. Maurizio Raeli

Delegate of Italy to CIHEAM Governing Board

Wrap up and Closing Remarks

From Dialogue to Legacy: Building the CIHEAM Alumni Network Together

Key Messages

A New Chapter Begins in Beirut

Dr. Raeli expressed his honor to moderate the closing session of the seminar, held in a spirit of friendship and shared responsibility. He underlined that the gathering was not only a celebration of alumni achievements, but the opening of a new collective chapter rooted in hope, commitment, and shared vision.

“Today, we are not only celebrating our alumni. We are opening a new page in our common journey, a page written with hope, commitment, and vision.”

Recalling Lebanon’s culture of hospitality, he added with warmth that every meaningful journey in the country begins with connection and generosity:

“In Lebanon, every important journey starts with good company, a bit of passion, a good cup of coffee, and a warm Merhaba.”

Lebanon as the Launchpad of a Mediterranean Vision

Dr. Raeli emphasized the strategic importance of establishing a CIHEAM Alumni Network, beginning with the Lebanese Chapter. Lebanon, he noted, embodies resilience, creativity, and intellectual dynamism, making it the ideal starting point for an initiative that can expand across the Mediterranean region.

“From Beirut, this seed can grow into a Mediterranean tree, deeply rooted in our values and spreading its branches across the region.”

Referring symbolically to the national emblem, he concluded:

“Hopefully, as strong as the famous Lebanese cedar.”

A Win-Win Partnership for CIHEAM and Its Alumni

The Alumni Network was presented as a mutually beneficial platform. For CIHEAM, it ensures continued engagement with its graduates, professionals whose careers, leadership, and achievements strengthen the institution’s Mediterranean mission. For alumni, it offers opportunities to reconnect, exchange ideas, and contribute actively to Lebanon’s national priorities and to regional agrifood challenges.

“This is serious work, but also the joy of reconnecting with old friends and building new synergies.”

From Momentum to Legacy

Dr. Raeli outlined a clear timeline for the initiative:

- In the **short term**, the seminar provides momentum and guidance for alumni-led initiatives.
- In the **medium term**, the Lebanese Network can consolidate into a dynamic platform for exchange and partnerships.
- In the **long term**, a formal Alumni Chapter will stand as a lasting bridge of knowledge, skills, and innovation.

Closing the Dialogue, Continuing the Commitment

He concluded by thanking the Rapporteurs of the four panels for synthesizing the rich debates of the day, and by reaffirming the collective responsibility to transform dialogue into action.

“Thank you all, you make our job easier. But above all, you make this network possible.”



CIHEAM

CULTURAL AND FIELD VISIT

Exploring the Shouf Cedars Reserve and Beit Eddine Palace

From Biodiversity Conservation to Cultural Heritage: A Journey through Lebanon's living Landscapes

An immersive Second Day in the Heart of the Shouf

On Thursday 25 September 2025, the second day of the Seminar, a field trip to the Shouf was organised, as a part of the Seminar and under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture. The CIHEAM delegation, including the President and Vice President of the Governing Board, the Secretary General, Directors of CIHEAM Institutes, international experts, and Lebanese alumni from the four CIHEAM Institutes, was warmly welcomed at the Shouf Biosphere Reserve.

Sustainability in Action: Learning from the Reserve's initiatives

The visit began at the Reserve's Park House, where an institutional presentation introduced participants to ongoing conservation, forest restoration, and community development programmes. The composting unit provided a concrete example of the circular economy at work, transforming organic waste into natural fertilizers for rural communities and illustrating how sustainable practices can generate local benefits.

Walking among Cedars: Experiencing Biodiversity Firsthand

During the guided forest walk through the Maasser Cedar Forest, specialists shared insights on the area's biodiversity, sustainable forest management challenges, and the importance of the cedar ecosystem as both a national symbol and a key environmental asset. The experience vividly demonstrated the positive impact of conservation programmes on ecological balance and climate resilience.

Sustainability in Action: Learning from the Reserve's initiatives

The visit began at the Reserve's Park House, where an institutional presentation introduced participants to ongoing conservation, forest restoration, and community development programmes. The composting unit provided a concrete example of the circular economy at work, transforming organic waste into natural fertilizers for rural communities and illustrating how sustainable practices can generate local benefits.



Reserve's Guiding Principles for a Sustainable Future

Sustainable Agriculture

Promoting water conservation, soil restoration, and productive landscapes.

Rural Development

Supporting and Empowering local communities through capacity building and economic opportunities.

Research & Monitoring

Conducting scientific studies to inform conservation and management strategies.

Environmental Awareness & Ecotourism

Engaging the public in conservation efforts and promoting responsible tourism.

The Reserve's mission emphasizes inclusive management, long-term planning, landscape restoration, stakeholder engagement, and the use of science and innovation to achieve effective conservation outcomes. Its work also promotes biodiversity protection, cultural heritage, community development, and climate resilience.



From Nature to Culture: A visit to Beit Eddine Palace

In the Afternoon, participants visited the 19th century Beit Eddine Palace, immersing themselves in Lebanon's rich historical and cultural heritage. This visit/stop offered a moment to reflect on the deep connections between cultural identity, territorial development and environmental stewardship.



A shared Commitment to the Mediterranean

Through these integrated approaches, the Shouf Cedars Reserve exemplifies how environmental integrity, social equity, and economic sustainability can converge. This inspiring day strengthened alumni connections while celebrating Lebanon's remarkable natural and cultural wealth, reaffirming CIHEAM's commitment to fostering sustainable development across the Mediterranean region.

SHOUF BIOSPHERE RESERVE

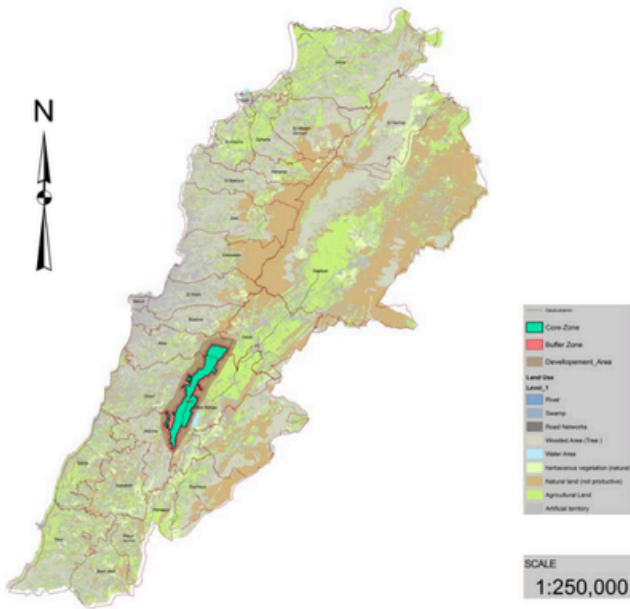


SHOUF BIOSPHERE RESERVE
محمية الشوف المحيط الحيوي

Key information

Location & Size

Lebanon's largest nature reserve, covering approximately 550 km² (5% of Lebanon's total area)



Established

1996, designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2005



For further information, please visit the [website of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve](#)

Recognition



In 2018, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) added the Shouf Biosphere Reserve to its Green List, acknowledging its exemplary management practices

Biodiversity



Hosts over 500 plant species, 32 mammal species & 200 Bird species. Recognized as an Important Bird Area

Cedars



Home to the iconic Cedrus Libani, including ancient trees over 3500 years old, symbolizing Lebanon's natural & cultural heritage



CONCLUSION

From Inspiration to Action - Empowering the Next Generation

Building on Shared Achievements

The CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni Seminar in Beirut marked an important step in strengthening the long-standing partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon and the CIHEAM. It succeeded in reconnecting generations of Professionals, reaffirming the value of scientific cooperation, and emphasizing youth as a driving force for the future of sustainable agrifood systems in Lebanon and the wider Mediterranean.

Sustaining Momentum Through Joint Actions

Looking ahead, the Ministry of Agriculture and CIHEAM will jointly coordinate the follow up to ensure that the outcomes of the Seminar are translated into concrete actions. A key priority will be the consolidation of the Lebanese CIHEAM Alumni Network and the establishment of dedicated communication channels to facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing and visibility of Alumni Initiatives.

From ideas to Initiatives

The partners will work together to support the implementation of proposed initiatives, including youth mentoring programmes, entrepreneurship schemes and the creation of an Innovation Hub dedicated to agrifood transformation and rural development. These actions aim to foster practical learning opportunities and enhance the employability of young professionals in the sector.

Strengthening Academic & Institutional Partnerships

The Follow up will also include closer collaboration with Lebanese Universities and research institutions. Building on existing initiatives/examples, such as partnerships between CIHEAM Zaragoza and the Lebanese University, and ongoing cooperation with CIHEAM Montpellier and CIHEAM Bari, the objective is to expand academic exchanges, joint training activities, and applied research initiatives that address national and regional agrifood priorities.

Empowering Students & Emerging Leaders

In parallel, CIHEAM and the Ministry will encourage and support student-led and youth-driven initiatives, including thematic projects, internships, associations, and regional exchanges that nurture creativity, leadership and commitment to sustainable agriculture. These activities, alongside alumni mentoring and innovation programmes, will help young people to take an active role in shaping the agrifood systems of tomorrow.

A shared Commitment for the Future

Through these coordinated efforts, the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon and CIHEAM reaffirm their shared vision: investing in youth, knowledge and cooperation as pillars of a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood sector in Lebanon and across the Mediterranean.

Annex - Detailed Agenda

Day 1 - Wednesday 24 September 2025

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

Opening & Key notes Session

Opening remarks:

- **Ms. Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé**, Senior Adviser-MoA, CIHEAM VP & Delegate of Lebanon
- **Dr. Teodoro Miano**, Secretary General, CIHEAM
- **Dr. Frida Krifca**, President, CIHEAM Governing Board
- **H.E. Dr. Kamal Shehadi**, The Lebanese Minister of Information Technology & Artificial Intelligence - Innovation and Technology for Agri Food Systems Transformation
- **H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani**, The Lebanese Minister of Agriculture - Challenges and Opportunities of the Agrifood Sector in Lebanon

Master of Ceremony: Ms. Abir Abulkhoudoud, M&E Expert, Ministry of Agriculture

Panel 1: Bridging the Skills Gap: Education and Training for Future Agrifood Systems transformation

Moderator: **Dr. Teodoro Miano**, Secretary General, CIHEAM, France

Panelists:

- **Dr. Nadine Nassif**, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Lebanese University
- **Mr. Raphael Debbane**, Chairman, Debbane Saikali Group Holding, Lebanon
- **Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim**, Professor, USEK University (and Rapporteur)
- **Mr. Elie Massoud**, Head, Agriculture & Agro-Industries Department, CCIAB- Lebanon
- **Dr. Maya Al Hajj Latouf**, ME Business Development & Sustainable Director-IDOM

Discussion/Q&A

Panel 2: Harnessing Innovation and AI to Drive Youth Entrepreneurship in Agrifood Sectors

Moderator: **Dr. Raul Compes**, Director CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain

Panelists:

- **Engineer Mr. Louis Lahoud**, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon
- **Dr. Samar Azzi**, Professor, USEK, Lebanon
- **Dr. Nasser Yassin**, Policy Scientist, Former Minister of Environment, Lebanon
- **Dr. Chariton Kalaitzidis**, Professor, CIHEAM Chania, Greece (and Rapporteur)
- **Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh**, Managing Partner, FERMENDOM, France & Lebanon
- **Mrs. Theresa EL Chahrouk El Maalouf**, Program Officer-Berytech, Lebanon

Discussion/Q&A

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

Moderator: **Dr. Thierry Dupeuble**, Director CIHEAM Montpellier, France

Panelists:

- **Dr. Chadi Abdallah**, Secretary General, CNRS, Lebanon
- **Dr. Nahla Hwalla**, Professor, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- **Ms. Nadine Khoury**, The Quinta Group, Lebanon
- **Dr. George Mitri**, Director, Land & Natural Resources Program, University of Balamand, Lebanon
- **Dr. Daniel El Chami**, Sustainable Strategy Director, TIMAC AGRO Int., France (and Rapporteur)

Discussion/Q&A

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

Moderator: **Dr. Biagio Di Terlizzi**, Director CIHEAM Bari, Italy

Panelists:

- **Dr. Elia Choueiri**, Researcher, LARI
- **Dr. Wadih Skaff**, Director ESIAM - USJ, Lebanon
- **Dr. Kanj Hamade**, International Development Consultant
- **Dr. Dani Fadel**, President, Lebanese Cannabis Regulatory Board, Lebanon
- **Mr. Paul Skayem**, KFW Development Bank - Beirut, Lebanon
- **Ms. Yara El Zoghbi**, Agricultural engineer and plant breeder, Lebanon

Rapporteur: **Ms. Virginia Lachana**, CIHEAM, Headquarters Paris

Discussion/Q&A

Rapporteurs Wrap-Up and Closing: Opportunities for new collaboration, alumni mobilization, and joint research, training and development agendas between Lebanon and CIHEAM

Moderators: **Ms. Wafaa El Dikah**, CIHEAM GB-Delegate of Lebanon & **Dr. Maurizio Raeli**, CIHEAM GB-Delegate of Italy

Panel Rapporteurs: **Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim** (Panel 1), **Dr. Chariton Kalaitzidis** (Panel 2), **Dr. Daniel El Chami** (Panel 3), **Ms. Virginia Lachana** (Panel 4)

[Day 2- Thursday 25 September 2025](#)

Field Visit to El Shouf Cedars Reserve and Beit El Dine

Annex - List of participants to the event

CIHEAM LEBANESE ALUMNI

Lebanese Alumni Driving Change at the CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar

Lebanese Alumni of the CIHEAM Agronomic Institutes are a vibrant force for Mediterranean cooperation and agricultural innovation. Having trained at CIHEAM Bari, CIHEAM Chania, CIHEAM Montpellier, and CIHEAM Zaragoza, they actively took part in the CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar, demonstrating the concrete impact and dedication of the Lebanese academic Community in strengthening Mediterranean agri-food systems.

Abdullatif Jaroudi
Antonella Karam
Celesty Kiwan
Charbel Fakhr
Christelle Youssef Elias
Claudine Sebaaly
Daniel El Chami
Eddy Sawaya
Elia Choueiri
Emile El Asmar
Fadi Abou Fayad
Farid El Ammouri
Fatima Habib Diya
Fatima kteish
Ihab Mohsen Jomaa
Jana Daher
Zeina Elie Kary



Jessica Paul Ghanem
Joelle Jabre
Josephine semaan
Kanj Hamade
Malak Tleis
Maria El Murr
Maroun Bou Matar
Maroun El Moujabber
Mohamad Hashem
Mohamad Zohbi
Monique El Haddad Saadeh
Nabil Elie Chebib
Nada Hechmeh
Nadine Othman
Najlaa Choufani
Nawal Mhanna
Zeinab Sweidan

Annex - List of participants to the event



Nisrine karam
Oussama Atallah
Paul Skayem
Peter Moubarak
Racil charara
Randa Massaad
Reem Yazbeck
Salim Fares
Sreen Bou Zein Eldeen
Somaya Naser El Deen
Tony Zouein
Vanessa Elias Lahoud
Victoria Dawalibi
Wissam Hourani
Yara Ibrahim



Dany Lichaa El Khoury
Elie Hajj Moussa
Georges Akl
Imad Riad Ammoun
Marc Saad
Maya El Hajj Latouf
Mountaha Youssef
Nadine Haddad
Yara El Zoghby

Annex - List of participants to the event



Jeanine Gabriel
Josepha El Chami
Katy El Sitt
Malak Kanj
Mireille Georges Jazi

Mirna Atwi
Nicole Nicolas Ghossain
Ramy Boujawdeh
Yolla Ghorra

Alice El Chidiac
Angela Hayek
Dani Fadel
Elias El Chami
Elie Saliba
Emile Salame
Fadia Kamel
Fady Asmar
George Mitri
Hoda khatoun



Malak Hazimeh
Rebecca Liane
Rim Ahmad Mahfouz
Sabine Kassem

Salem Darwich
Theresa El Chahrouk El Maalouf
Tony Hajjar

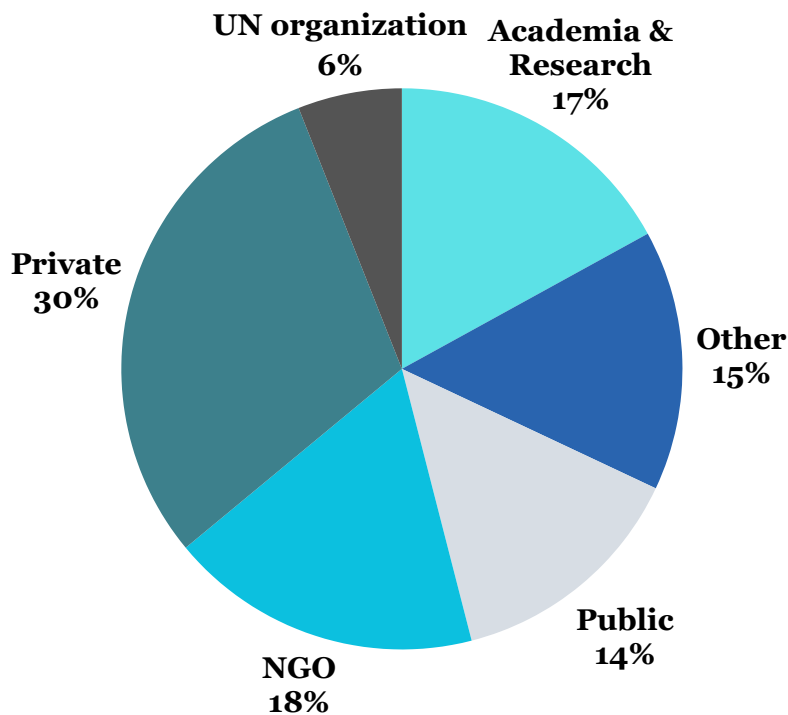
Adele Elias
Amir Dib Al Karsifi
Carlos Aldib
Elissa Al Kallassi
Elissa Choucair
Fatima Abbas Makki
Fatima Abou Abbass
Fatima Naser Eldine



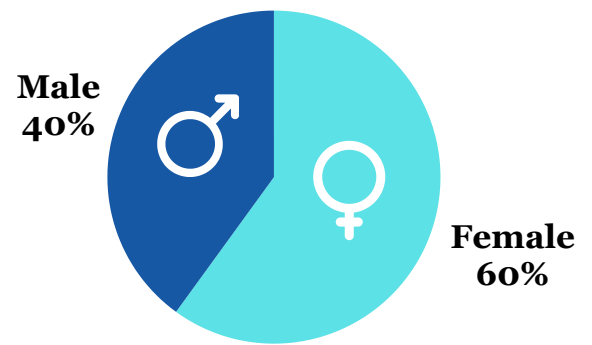
PROFILES & FIGURES

Nearly 100 CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni took part in the International Seminar

ALUMNI BY PROFESSIONAL SECTOR



ALUMNI BY GENDER



ALUMNI BY CIHEAM INSTITUTES



 [View the complete document here.](#)

Annex - List of participants to the event

CIHEAM DELEGATION



Teodoro Miano	<i>Secretary General of the CIHEAM</i>
Frida Krifca	<i>President - CIHEAM Governing Board</i>
Maurizio Raeli	<i>Delegate of Italy - CIHEAM Governing Board</i>
Biagio Di Terlizzi	<i>Director of CIHEAM Bari</i>
Thierry Dupeuble	<i>Director of CIHEAM Montpellier</i>
Raúl Compes Lopez	<i>Director of CIHEAM Zaragoza</i>
Chariton Kalaitzidis	<i>CIHEAM Chania</i>
Mouin Hamzé	<i>CIHEAM</i>
Maroun El Moujabber	<i>CIHEAM Bari</i>
Olimpia Antonelli	<i>CIHEAM Bari</i>
Ramzi Belkhodja	<i>CIHEAM Zaragoza</i>
Virginia Lachana	<i>CIHEAM Headquarter</i>
Gianluca Manganelli	<i>CIHEAM Headquarter</i>
Yasmine Seghirate	<i>CIHEAM Headquarter</i>
Audrey Petiot	<i>CIHEAM Headquarter</i>

Annex - List of participants to the event

SPEAKERS & RAPPORTEURS

Nizar Hani

Kamal Shehadi

Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé

Maurizio Raeli

Kanj Hamade

Daniel El Chami

Raphaël Debbané

Chadi Abdallah

Elie Massoud

Nahla Hwalla

Maya Al-Hajj Lattouf

Nadine Khoury

Nadine Nassif

George Mitri

Chariton Kalaitzidis

Virginia Lachana

Louis Lahoud

Michel Antoine Afram

Theresa El Chahrouk El Maalouf

Wadih Skaff

Ramy Boujawdeh

Paul Skayem

Nasser Yassin

Yara El Zoghby

Samar Azzi

Dani Fadel

Lara Hanna-Wakim

Annex - List of participants to the event

OFFICIALS, PARTNERS & INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Nizar Hani *Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Kamal Shehadi *Minister of Information Technology & Artificial Intelligence of Lebanon*

Lina Assi *Ministry of Industry*

Fabrizio Marcelli *Ambassador of Italy*

Jesús Santos Aguado *Ambassador of Spain*

Hala Abdallah *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Sonia Abiad *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Khalil Akl *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Sonia Elabiad *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Sawsan Hamze *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Raymond Khoury *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Chadi Mohanna *Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon*

Annex - List of participants to the event

OFFICIALS, PARTNERS & INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Alberto Dragotta *CIHEAM Bari*

Lamis Chalak *Lebanese University*

Nabil Haddad *Lebanese University*

Nadim Farajallah *LAU*

Etienne Careme *FAO*

Dario Mancinelli *AICS Beirut*

Antoine Harfouche *UNITUS*

Matthew Hollingworth *WFP*

Dana Hruby *UN*

Jose Antonio Naya Villaverde *ICU*

Ali Saraeb *CARE International*

Jean-Philippe Dop *CARE International*

Rita Sfeir *CARE International*

Melody Tamer *World Bank*

Rose Bechara *World Bank*

Annex - List of participants to the event

THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé - Seminar Coordinator

Vice President & Delegate of Lebanon to the CIHEAM Governing Board

Teodoro Miano

Secretary General of CIHEAM

Abir Abul Khoudoud

MoA

Hanan Sammoury

MoA

Audrey Petiot

CIHEAM

SUPPORTING TEAM MoA



Youssra Abou Ali

Jana Zaarour

Ali Shaddad

Mazen Halawani

Farida Hajj Chehadeh

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Opening & Key notes Session

H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani

He has served as Lebanon's Minister of Agriculture since February 2025. He previously directed the Shouf Biosphere Reserve for 15 years, Lebanon's largest nature reserve. He has advised Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture on its "30x30 Vision Roadmap for Protected Areas." Between 2014 and 2020, he was Senior Environmental Specialist at the Lebanese Ministry of Environment. Dr. Hani is Vice Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas for North Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. Holder of a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Food Sciences, he has received international awards including UNESCO's Michel Batisse Award and Italy's Order of the Star, and is recognized for advancing sustainable resource governance.

H.E. Dr. Kamal Shehadi

He has served as Lebanon's Minister of State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence since February 2025. He is a leader in telecommunications and digital industries across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. He is Partner at THX Ventures and advisor to several technology companies. From 2010 to 2023, he was Chief Legal & Regulatory Officer and later Chief Strategy Officer (International) at e& Group. He previously chaired Lebanon's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and the GSMA Policy Group. He has advised the World Bank on privatization and infrastructure projects and serves on the Board of the Lebanese American University. A Harvard and Columbia graduate, he is a published author on public finance and governance.

Ms. Frida Krifca

She is President of the CIHEAM Governing Board. From 2021 to 2023, she served as Albania's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, overseeing a sector employing one-third of the population and driving record export growth. Her career spans 24 years in international development, financial services, and agricultural policy reform. She previously held leadership roles with USAID/FSVC and Albania's Agriculture and Rural Development Agency. A Fulbright Scholar, she holds an MBA from the University of Akron and completed executive training at Harvard. She is recognized for her strategic leadership in agriculture and rural development.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Mr. Teodoro Miano

He has served as Secretary General of CIHEAM in Paris since March 2023. He is Full Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at the University of Bari Aldo Moro and former Vice Rector for International Relations. With over 35 years of academic and professional experience, he has contributed to Mediterranean and global discussions on agriculture, food systems, and sustainability. He has held leading roles in professional associations, including President of the Italian Society of Agricultural Chemistry and the International Humic Substances Society. His collaboration with CIHEAM began in 1996, and he later became Member and Vice President of the Governing Board.

Ms. Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé

She is Senior Adviser for Policy & Cooperation at the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture. She is Lebanon's Delegate to CIHEAM and Vice President of its Governing Board since 2023. In 2024, she was elected Member of the FAO Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters for the Near East Region. She has authored over 30 publications and strategies on agrifood systems, rural development, and gender equality. She played a key role in establishing the Arab Forum for Rural Advisory Services and serves on its Advisory Committee. From 2013 to 2016, she worked with UN-ESCWA, UN Women, and the League of Arab States. Formerly Lebanon's first female Minister (2004), she holds degrees from AUB and pursued training in Europe.

Ms. Abir Abulkhoudoud (*Master of Ceremony*)

She holds a Master's degree in Agricultural Extension and Development and a Bachelor's in Agricultural Engineering from the American University of Beirut. She also has certifications in Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Management and is pursuing an Associate Diploma in Strategic Research Design. With over 15 years of experience, she has worked in rural advisory services, agribusiness, value chain development, agricultural policy, food security, and technical and vocational education. For the past ten years, she has served as Project Manager with UN agencies, implementing donor-funded initiatives and leading multidisciplinary teams across Lebanon and the wider MENA region.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Panel 1

Bridging the Skills Gap: Education and Training for Future Agrifood Systems transformation

Mr. Teodoro Miano (*Moderator*)

He has served as Secretary General of CIHEAM in Paris since March 2023. He is Full Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at the University of Bari Aldo Moro and former Vice Rector for International Relations. With over 35 years of academic and professional experience, he has contributed to Mediterranean and global discussions on agriculture, food systems, and sustainability. He has held leading roles in professional associations, including President of the Italian Society of Agricultural Chemistry. His collaboration with CIHEAM began in 1996 through teaching, research, and cooperation initiatives. He later became Member and Vice President of the CIHEAM Governing Board before his current appointment.

Ms. Lara Hanna-Wakim (*and Rapporteur*)

She is an accomplished academic and international leader in food science. She was Director of the Continuing Learning Center at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) and previously Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences. She is the first MENA scientist elected Fellow of the International Academy of Food Science and Technology. She holds leadership roles with IUFoST, Codex Committee, Duke University's AIEA, and UNEP's Faith for Earth Coalition. She is Vice President of GCHERA and Co-Chair of the IUFoST Food Security Taskforce. Recognized as a Women Leader by the Lebanese Parliament, she actively promotes food justice and education reform.

Mr. Raphaël Debbané

He is Chairman of Debbané Saikali Family Holding, active in agribusiness, telecommunications, industrial insulation, and wine production. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture and chairs its Agricultural Committee. He also sits on the Boards of the International Chamber of Commerce Lebanon and bilateral business councils. An Honorary Member of the Advisory Board at AUB's Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, he presides over the Debbané Foundation and curates the Debbané Palace Museum in Saida. He has been a long-standing member of Rotary International and former Honorary Consul of Italy.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Mr. Elie Massoud

He is Head of the Agriculture and Agro-Industries Department and Coordinator of the Agriculture Committee at the Federation of Lebanese Chambers. He has extensive experience in business development, agricultural value chains, and cooperative support. Elie has led initiatives to improve finance, market access, and competitiveness for Lebanese producers, SMEs, and exporters. He supervises business plans, feasibility studies, and trade promotion activities at local and international levels. His work emphasizes quality, sustainability, and the global positioning of Lebanese agricultural products.

Ms. Maya Al-Hajj Lattouf

She is a PhD Agricultural Engineer from the Polytechnic University of Madrid, with an MSc from CIHEAM-IAMZ. With over 25 years of experience, she specializes in agriculture, sustainability, and engineering consultancies. Early in her career, she led organic farming projects for Spain and Portugal's Ministries of Agriculture. Since 2007, she has worked at IDOM on major water, agriculture, and sanitation projects across Europe, MENA, and Latin America. She directed business development for IDOM's Infrastructure Division in the MENA region until 2023. She is currently Partner and Corporate ME Business Development & Sustainability Director at IDOM.

Ms. Nadine Nassif

She is an Agricultural Engineer with advanced degrees in Agri-Food Sciences, Law, and Sustainable Agriculture. She earned her Ph.D. from the National Agronomic Institute Paris-Grignon, focusing on marine chemical pollution and regulatory approaches. She bridges science and law to develop methodologies integrating analytical chemistry into environmental regulation. She headed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources at the Lebanese University and pioneered environmental law teaching in Lebanon. Awarded a Fulbright fellowship, she conducted research at Northeastern University on GIS applications in environmental crimes.



Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Panel 2

Harnessing Innovation and AI to Drive Youth Entrepreneurship in Agrifood Sectors

Mr. Raúl Compés López (*Moderator*)

He is Director of CIHEAM Zaragoza and an Agricultural Engineer with a Ph.D. from the Polytechnic University of Valencia. His work spans teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and technical assistance in agri-food economics and policy. He served as President of the Spanish Association of Agricultural Economics and consultant for CAF-Latin American Development Bank. He is Vice President of the European Association of Wine Economists and Academic Coordinator of the Wine Technology Platform. His research covers wine, citrus, trade agreements, climate change, sustainability, and ethics.

Mr. Chariton Kalaitzidis (*and Rapporteur*)

He is an Agricultural Engineer specializing in remote sensing for environmental applications. Holding an MSc and Ph.D. in vegetation monitoring, he joined CIHEAM Chania in 2007 and became Research and Studies Coordinator in 2012. He teaches Remote Sensing, GIS, and Precision Agriculture in the MSc in Geoinformation. Dr. Kalaitzidis contributes to Erasmus+ projects, short courses, and summer schools. His research focuses on vegetation monitoring, crop yield assessment, land use analysis, drone-based livestock monitoring, and AI applications in geospatial data.

Mr. Louis Lahoud

He has served as Lebanon's Director General of Agriculture since 2003. He holds a Master's degree in Diplomacy, Strategic Negotiations, and International Relations, and a Diploma in Agricultural Engineering. His work focuses on agricultural economics, rural development, and policy strategies. He lectures at Lebanese University and Antonine University on agricultural and epidemiological topics. Eng. Lahoud represents Lebanon in numerous international agricultural organizations and forums, advancing agricultural policy, development, and international cooperation.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Ms. Theresa El Chahrouk El Maalouf

She is Program Officer at Berytech, supporting over 65 startups in the agri-food sector. She holds a degree in Agricultural Engineering from the Lebanese University and a Master's in Agricultural and Territorial Management from CIHEAM–IAMM. Her work focuses on sustainable agriculture, rural development, and climate change adaptation. She conducted field research in Mauritania on agroecology and farmers' resilience. At Berytech, she helps entrepreneurs scale sustainable agribusiness solutions, emphasizing innovation, market opportunities, and resilience for Lebanon's agri-food ecosystem.

Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh

He is Managing Partner at Fermendom, a consultancy in environmental engineering, circularity, and agrifood systems. Formerly COO of Berytech, he has supported startups and agri-food innovation in Lebanon and the region. With over 25 years of experience, he has led initiatives for young professional empowerment and economic growth. Earlier, he worked with multinationals in GCC countries and Canada. AUB and CIHEAM Chania graduate, he combines expertise in agriculture, economics, and management, while managing his own sustainable farm and advocating for education, sustainability, and circular systems.

Mr. Nasser Yassin

Dr. Nasser Yassin is a policy scientist, educator, and former government minister. He held a tenured professorship at the American University of Beirut, chairing Health Management and Policy and directing research at the Issam Fares Institute. He founded the AUB Crisis Observatory and the AUB4Refugees Initiative. As Lebanon's Minister of Environment (2021–2025), he drove reforms in governance and community engagement. During the 2023 Gaza War and South Lebanon conflict, he coordinated national emergency response. He has advised UN agencies and Gulf governments on strategy, policy, and crisis management.

Mr. Samar Azzi

She is Associate Professor in Agriculture and Food Engineering at USEK, where she joined in 2008. She is Head of Department and Chair of the Green Committee. She coordinates and consults on various agricultural projects and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses. She earned a B.Eng. in Agriculture from USEK and a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from AgroParisTech, with a thesis on wine and chemical composition. She holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education from Chester University. Her research focuses on food and wine composition, analysis, and sustainability projects.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Panel 3

Catalyzing Research and Innovation for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Agriculture

Mr. Thierry Dupeuble (*Moderator*)

He is a Doctor in Economics, specializing in public policies supporting sustainable agriculture and rural development. He has supported development projects in organic and sustainable agriculture, farm processing, rural tourism, and professional training for farmers. Most of his experience is within the French Ministry of Agriculture, particularly on agroecological transition. Since 2021, he has been Director of CIHEAM Montpellier, overseeing training, research, and international cooperation initiatives in sustainable agriculture.

Mr. Daniel El Chami (*and Rapporteur*)

He is Sustainability Strategy, Development, and Innovation Director, guiding organizations toward responsible innovation. He focuses on aligning positive impact, performance, and long-term organizational viability. His career spans prestigious organizations with a transdisciplinary and global perspective. He integrates research, innovation, and collaboration at all levels. His work emphasizes proactive challenge anticipation, efficiency, long-term value, and organizational resilience. Committed to sustainable transformation, he drives strategies that shape the future today.

Mr. Chadi Abdallah

He is Director of Research and Secretary General of CNRS-L, Lebanon. A geologist by training, he holds a Ph.D. in Natural Resources from Paris VI University and completed postdoctoral work in Radar Interferometry. Former Director of Lebanon's National Center for Natural Hazards, he leads projects on natural hazards, water management, and resource governance. He chairs the Arab Science and Technology Advisory Group for Disaster Risk Reduction under UNDRR. He has authored 80+ peer-reviewed publications, focusing on early warning systems, environmental modeling, and decision-support tools.

Ms. Nahla Hwalla

She is Professor of Human Nutrition at the American University of Beirut and served as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences for 11 years. She established the region's first Food Security program, pioneering research on sustainable diets. Founder and former President of the Lebanese Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, she has published over 150 scientific articles. She is a Fellow of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences and a member of CIHEAM's Ethics Committee. She was recently elected President of Lebanon's first Order of Dieticians.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Ms. Nadine Khoury

She is COO of The Quinta Group, driving the growth of its Greenhouses and Seeds businesses. She spearheaded initiatives such as Agriland and Agri Grow and contributed to creating Elysee WISE, heading Business Development. Her leadership positioned The Quinta Group as Lebanon's first socially responsible agricultural company aligned with the SDGs. AUB graduate with executive training at ESA, she serves on multiple boards including FAFS at AUB and LBDA. She is also a founding member and former President of QOOT Cluster, Lebanon's first agri-food innovation cluster.

Mr. George Mitri

He is Professor of Environmental Sciences and Director of the Land and Natural Resources Program at the University of Balamand. With over 23 years of experience, he specializes in Earth observation, climate risk assessment, wildfire and drought management, and land degradation. He has led projects funded by national and international organizations and authored over 100 peer-reviewed articles. Beyond academia, he advises international organizations on sustainability, policy, and climate adaptation, supporting curriculum development and capacity-building in line with development priorities.



Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Panel 4

The Alumni Voice: Inspiring Journeys, Collective Impact, and Future Engagement

Mr. Biagio Di Terlizzi (*Moderator*)

He is Director of CIHEAM Bari. An agronomist by training, he has dedicated over three decades to sustainable development and international cooperation in agriculture. Serving CIHEAM Bari since 1987, he held roles including Deputy Director and Head of Planning and Cooperation. He has led numerous training, research, and technical assistance initiatives. His expertise spans project management for key international donors and leading teams on country-specific and regional projects across the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond.

Ms. Virginia Lachana (*Rapporteur*)

She is an economist with expertise in education coordination, CSR, and institutional management. At CIHEAM, she coordinates academic programs, educational activities, and leads the Educational Working Group. She plays a key role in strategic development, curriculum, technological platforms, campus life, academic regulations, and alumni engagement. She holds a degree in Business Administration from Athens University of Economics and Business, a Master's in Business Economics from CIHEAM Chania, and a Master's in CSR from Paris Dauphine University. She is fluent in Greek, French, English, and proficient in Italian, Spanish, and Russian.

Mr. Michel Antoine Afram

He has served as Director General of LARI since 2002, leading agricultural research and innovation in Lebanon. He is Chairman of ICARDA's Board of Trustees and Vice President of Confremo. Former Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at Saint Joseph University, he has taught at USEK and Lebanese University. His expertise spans agronomy, agricultural policies, rural economy, plant production, and environmental management. He has received multiple international awards and actively participates in national and international scientific and agricultural committees, advancing Mediterranean research and cooperation.

Mr. Wadiah Skaff

He is an Agricultural Engineer holding a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry from AgroParisTech. Since 2014, he has been associate professor and researcher at Saint Joseph University of Beirut, directing ESIA and ESIAM schools. An expert in chemometrics, he uses infrared spectroscopy for quality control of olive oil, honey, wine, dairy, and chocolate. His work also analyzes trace elements in food matrices and develops solutions for water scarcity and pollution. He teaches, conducts research, and supervises projects linking food quality, technology, and environmental sustainability.

Annex - Short biographies of the Speakers

Mr. Paul Skayem

He is Portfolio Coordinator at KfW, the German Development Bank, managing infrastructure and development projects in Lebanon and Syria. A CIHEAM Bari graduate, he began his career with NGOs in water, agriculture, and livelihoods. Over two decades, he led projects funded by the EU, BMZ, and USAID across the Middle East and Africa. He promotes alumni achievements and academic collaboration in Lebanon. His work emphasizes sustainable development, regional resilience, and inclusive growth, while balancing professional life with family and community engagement.

Ms. Yara El Zoghby

She is an agricultural engineer specializing in plant genetics, genomics, and breeding. She holds Master's degrees in Plant Genetics from the University of Lleida and CIHEAM Zaragoza, and in Plant Production and Biotechnology. She earned a Bachelor's in Agricultural Engineering from the Lebanese University. Yara has worked with ICARDA on molecular characterization of Lebanese wheat and has experience in agribusiness, seed technology, and vineyard management. Her research focuses on genetic transformation and enhancing plant diversity in Lebanon and the region.

Mr. Dani Fadel

He is President of Lebanon's Regulatory Authority for Medical and Industrial Cannabis, overseeing national regulation. He leads initiatives on cultivation, processing, and export under Law 178/2020. He holds a Ph.D., three postdoctoral degrees, and certification in nanotechnology. His expertise spans medicinal plants, biotechnology, pharmacognosy, and cannabis-related industries. He shapes Lebanon's national cannabis strategy, advancing innovation, international collaboration, and sustainable agricultural development, promoting Lebanon as a regional leader in the emerging sector.

Mr. Kanj Hamade

He is an economic development consultant and academic based in Beirut and Athens, with over 20 years of expertise. His work focuses on agriculture, food security, sustainable livelihoods, labor markets, and rural development across NENA countries. He has advised UN agencies, international donors, NGOs, and research institutions on evaluations and evidence-based programming. Dr. Hamade holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Bologna, is a CIHEAM Bari alumnus, and an active contributor to its academic and professional networks.

Acknowledgment



We warmly thank all **participants, alumni, and partners** whose engagement and insights contributed to the success of the CIHEAM Lebanese Alumni International Seminar. Your collaboration made this event a meaningful platform for exchange and dialogue.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the **Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon** and **CIHEAM** for co-organizing the seminar and supporting its objectives. We are especially grateful to **H.E. Dr. Nizar Hani**, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, whose initiative and commitment made this event possible.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to **Mrs. Wafaa El Dikah Hamzé**, Delegate of Lebanon to the CIHEAM Governing Board and Coordinator of the event, for her remarkable dedication and leadership throughout the organization of the seminar.

We further acknowledge the valuable contributions of the **President of the CIHEAM Governing Board**, the **Secretary General of CIHEAM**, and the **Directors of the four CIHEAM Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier, Zaragoza)**, whose continuous engagement strengthens Mediterranean cooperation in agriculture and food systems.

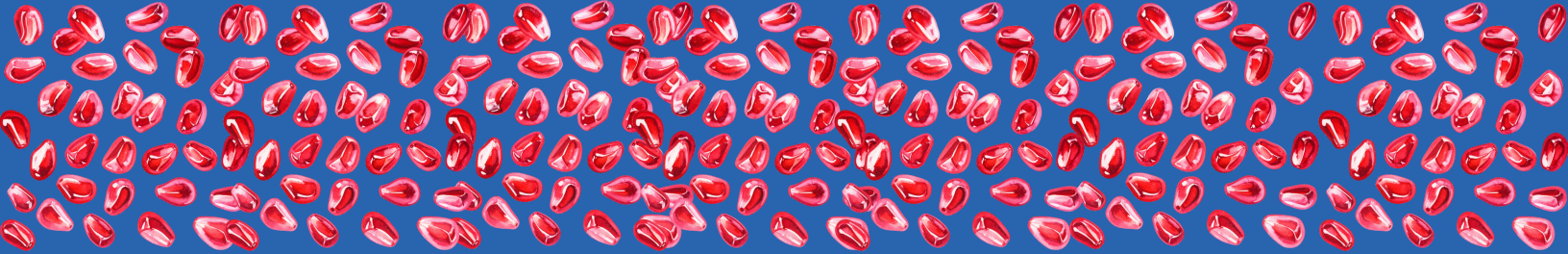
We would also like to express our special appreciation to **Mr. Maurizio Raeli**, Delegate of Italy to the CIHEAM Governing Board, for his active participation and valuable contribution to the seminar's discussions and exchanges.

Our gratitude extends to the **moderators, speakers, and panelists** for sharing their expertise and fostering inspiring discussions, as well as to the organizers, staff from the Ministry and CIHEAM, whose commitment ensured the smooth running of the seminar.

We are thankful to the **Shouf Biosphere Reserve team** for their warm welcome and generous support during the visit, and to all supporting institutions, media partners, and communication teams for helping to share the seminar's outcomes and highlights.

Finally, we extend special thanks to the **volunteers and technical teams** for their invaluable assistance throughout the sessions.

Your collective efforts have made this seminar a memorable and impactful experience for the entire CIHEAM community.



GO FURTHER: ACCESS EVENT DATA & RESOURCES



*Data on CIHEAM Alumni
Profile & current
employment and Graduate
highlights: [here](#).*



*Photo Gallery
Highlights and moments
from the seminar available
[here](#).*



*Scan this QR Code to access
all resources in one place*



CIHEAM

*CIHEAM Website: News &
upcoming events can be
viewed [here](#).*



*Press Releases:
[Click here to read more](#)*

Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon - Web & Social Media



www.agriculture.gov.lb



Connect with the MoA



CIHEAM
International Center for Advanced
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies



CIHEAM Headquarters
11 Rue Newton
75116 Paris

www.ciheam.org