

PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2030

1. PRIORITIES BY FIELD OF ACTIVITY

1.1 Education and professional empowerment

Academic educational plans are generally oriented towards a unidirectional approach, that is, the direct transfer of knowledge and information to a relatively homogeneous cohort of students, usually coming from secondary schools. Many existing exceptions take into account the professional experience of the professor and/or the experience of private entities, if any, which provide insights into the applicative aspects of the discipline (*private-public connections*).

In view of the changing socio-economic and working environments, professional mobility, the demand for professional skills, including green skills, digitisation, new technologies and IA, and the need to identify new technical figures, several additional factors should be added to complete and update the overall picture.

In fact, today, the educational programmes as well as the research world expect an integrative approach to enable different worlds to communicate and understand each other. The evolution of this model is rapidly leading to a multi-stakeholder approach in almost all the fields of human knowledge.

The presence of public institutions and authorities together with local and global private entities in the fields of knowledge enrich the theoretical framework and have direct consequences on more adequate analyses, accurate elaborations and clear vision of the main trends of issues generated by the surrounding environments. Education methodologies are therefore evolving towards a multidimensional and combined vision where challenges are shared through co-planning and co-programming activities in order to achieve solution-based objectives and results.

The involvement of various actors in the construction of a modern educational and professional plan clearly contributes to various goals: i) multidimensional analyses of occurring problems; ii) sharing of skills and experiences among individuals with different backgrounds; iii) needs to mediate between appropriate languages and definitions; iii) analysis and definition of specific challenges; iv) planning appropriate Technology Readiness Levels and output calibrations; v) creating new professional figures and job profiles especially investing in youth.

Title recognition (national level)

The recognition of the educational plans of CIHEAM is a complex issue involving various levels of competence and a fundamental difficulty in harmonising procedures, agreements and legal value of the degrees. The national laws of the country where

the Institutes are located impose several conditions and constraints which render the programmes generally competing with the national and international universities.

The CIHEAM is therefore frequently faced with the problem that diplomas and Masters are often recognized internationally but not fully recognized at national level.

Title recognition (international level)

A second but not less important issue concerns the recognition of CIHEAM diplomas by other countries. And this is related, to a certain extent, to the previous paragraph on national recognition . The adoption and application of European laws and regulations by other countries in the region is a key issue. This progressive transformation is creating a new situation and additional educational constraints.

Complementarity and competitiveness

Since the CIHEAM was founded, many higher education establishments have developed in the member countries, offering high-quality research and training. The challenge is therefore to ensure complementarity with existing offers and to be more competitive by offering unique, tailor-made formulas to meet the needs expressed by the member states. At present, this offer is very strong, targeted and interesting for the Mediterranean. However, it is entirely supported by the grants awarded by the institutes to incoming students. This situation represents an advantage for our system, but at the same time a disadvantage linked to the non-uniformity of course recognition.

Without calling into question the education model of the CIHEAM and values which distinguish us from other educational structures and which gives meaning to our cooperative action, it is appropriate to question the attractiveness of our training courses, and their usefulness for our member countries. The needs of these countries have evolved so much and excellent quality offers are becoming increasingly available elsewhere.

The evolution of educational programs

The demography of the countries in the Mediterranean and the background education of the individuals moving across the region have dramatically changed in the last decade. Therefore, our student population has changed. At the same time, the methodology, the models and the mechanisms of education should follow the temporal changes, trying to re-establish the appeal and the interest of the students but also respecting the increased changes in needs and demands in the Mediterranean basin. It is important that CIHEAM educational programs evolve and develop more rapidly, following the evolution of our socio-economic and new global educational trends. Innovative, interactive and interdisciplinary teaching models

should be explored and taught in particular through bottom-up oriented systems, involving progressively the various stakeholders in co-planning, co-designing and releasing the courses.

CIHEAM's educational and training offerings are currently under revision in close collaboration with the CIHEAM Advisory Committee, with the objective of evolving master's programs, strengthening doctoral and research activities, and adapting professional and continuing education courses. A new analytical methodology is being developed to propose innovative models that respond to expressed needs and anticipate solutions to emerging challenges.

1.2 Producing and sharing knowledge and data: research and networks

National and international research projects are increasing in number and quality, with a diversification of topics and a broadening of the range of skills and competencies. Several new countries and institutions have become involved as partners (e.g. the European Union's Horizon projects).

The classic model of connecting research and private enterprise is showing limited usefulness in producing measures of growth and empowerment for local or regional Mediterranean communities. A new multi-stakeholder working environment, in which diverse approaches, backgrounds and experiences can be shared and solution-based procedures and actions can be actively planned, is envisaged. Participatory planning can be adapted to education, training, scientific research, cooperation programmes and policy development.

Through numerous projects, the CIHEAM has developed this approach within the framework of 'living laboratories' (livinglabs), for which the institutes have acquired recognised know-how in the creation and animation. This expertise must be promoted and capitalised on an ongoing basis.

The CIHEAM's statutes and the legitimacy and credibility it has acquired give it a privileged position to ensure the thematic networking of players from countries whose institutional cooperation may otherwise be hampered by complex geopolitical and diplomatic contexts. Several of the networks created and run by the CIHEAM have demonstrated this capacity over time, in the service of particularly topical issues and challenges: food security and crisis prevention with the MED-Amin network; development of organic farming with the MOAN network; development of agro-ecological practices with the MEDAE network; on the sustainability of food systems (SFS MED), the plant genetics (GenMedA), greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture, as well as innovations (MIP) etc.

Thanks to its strong presence not only in the public sphere (ministries and public establishments) but also in the private sector (private companies and the social and solidarity economy) and civil society (NGOs), the CIHEAM has been able to build up networks with a diverse membership and real vitality as a result of over 60 years of training researchers and players in agricultural and rural development in the Mediterranean. They enable members from all the countries of the organisation to participate and can be directed, depending on the situation, towards the most important issues of the moment.

These two key assets of the CIHEAM should help and encourage the creation and running of future networks that the Mediterranean may need.

1.3 Expertise and cooperation projects

More than many teaching and research institutions, to which the CIHEAM and its institutes are spontaneously assimilated, the organisation also has very strong expertise in development cooperation in many fields. This expertise is nurtured by research activities and, as in the case of the networks mentioned above, also draws on the skills of former graduates, who are invaluable resources when it comes to setting up project teams.

One of the challenges for the future is to make better use of the complementary skills built up at each institute and in the General Secretariat in calls for applications issued by national and international agricultural and rural development funding bodies. This has already been achieved in the field of calls for research projects, and must be extended to development cooperation projects, by organising the necessary consultation and pooling of resources between the institutes and the General Secretariat to identify strategic calls for projects for the CIHEAM, in particular to consolidate its institutional recognition as a major player in cooperation in the Mediterranean.

This objective must not, however, prejudice the autonomy of each institute in responding to calls for projects that are strategic in terms of its specific institutional and political context.

A CIHEAM cooperation strategy will be drawn up, taking into account the experience of projects carried out to date, identified needs and requests received from Member States and other international organisations.

2. TRANSVERSAL PRIORITIES

2.1 Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

The CIHEAM is committed to making non-discrimination, gender equality and strengthening the role of women in food systems a strategic priority. Gender Equality Plans (GEP) at the General Secretariat and in the Institutes have been defined together with initiatives and programmes to study the still underestimated contribution of women to agri-food systems.

In the Mediterranean, this situation is particularly crucial at a time when agriculture and rural activities are gradually becoming more feminised as a result of various factors (male migration, low pay, etc.) and tensions that are worsening in a context of polycrises (health, economic, environmental and climatic etc.). At the same time, inequalities between women and men remain significant and in recent years we have seen a decline in their rights, often motivated by political or ideological considerations.

A CIHEAM Policy for gender equality and women empowerment will be developed and presented to the Governing Board. This policy will be part of the global review and updating of the regulations and internal procedures already launched following the internal control approach. The CIHEAM plans to provide mandatory training on the subject for staff and students, and to build a project at corporate level capable of mobilising existing skills in the Institutes and involving possible institutional and financial partners.

2.2 Youth Empowerment

The investment of the CIHEAM in the younger generation is an absolute priority. It is estimated that nearly 60% of the population of the Mediterranean basin is aged under 35 and in some countries in southern Europe, the Maghreb and the Middle East, which are part of our Member States, youth unemployment rates are among the highest in the world (Libya 51%, Palestine and Jordan 40%; Tunisia 37%, Greece and Algeria 30%). The CIHEAM is today a recognized international institution with a very large number of educational plans, often developed in collaboration with international universities and research centres, a very solid variety of research projects in partnership with hundreds of entities, and numerous cooperation programmes in more than 20 countries in Africa, Middle East, Asia and Europe, funded by national cooperation agencies (German, British, Swiss, Italian, etc.) and several international donors.

Furthermore, several actions and activities of the CIHEAM take place in countries that are not members of the organisation, even though they share part of the coastal

area or overlook the Mediterranean. The CIHEAM is also active in countries that are not Mediterranean *stricto sensu* but are strongly related to the region.

The CIHEAM brings together a limited number of countries even at the regional scale. Consequently, the CIHEAM does not play a role as important as it could, despite a very broad capacity in education, science, cooperation and strong human resources.

The tremendous interest that thousands of students, trainees, and experts have demonstrated towards the CIHEAM should definitely consist in a growing interest in several countries which have accompanied the history of the CIHEAM over these past decades. The CIHEAM should engage in systematic networking and a political initiative aimed at continuous and progressive enlargement of the community, characterised by a clear sign of inclusion, progressive involvement and bilateral or multilateral cooperation. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of our member countries, together with the Ministries of Agriculture, of Water, Supply and Environment should take these aspects into consideration in order to launch a solid and continuous action in a collaborative effort to share and plan common solutions in the Mediterranean Region.

3. TOOLS AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION

3.1. Data access

The CIHEAM must organise a thorough collection, consolidation and analysis of all management data, including those concerning our core mission, higher education, at all levels of our courses programmes including the PhD programmes in order to have

The demand for education is still very high and growing. The CIHEAM is able to provide students with the necessary theoretical and applied background to pursue MSc or PhD programmes thanks to its extensive networks and connections. It is important to consider that the real professional positioning of young people on the job market is fuelled by the growing interest of public and especially private entities for expertise at academic or research level that are developed on solution-based approaches.

New professional profiles, such as innovative managers and brokers, technology transfer officers, trainers, and others, are becoming extremely important. Their educational programmes can also be oriented to reach these professional profiles by using a learning-by-doing approach, re-designing the training course toward solution-based challenges, and working on co-working projects and processes.

The CIHEAM must also take into account the multicultural space it provides for these young people and ensure that ethnic, cultural or even religious diversity remains a source of mutual enrichment. At a time when certain conflicts or ideological divisions are exacerbating in the Mediterranean region, the CIHEAM must adopt a proactive approach to promote values of tolerance, respect and living together. Workshops and training courses can therefore be envisaged to promote humanist ideas and projects for a diverse and united Mediterranean community.

3.2 CIHEAM Community Enlargement

a clear vision of the themes, flow, organisation, students and courses data, professors and experts, and to produce useful indicators for the evolution of the educational mission of the CIHEAM. Many member countries of the Governing Board have requested this

In our plan, once the data have been collected and managed in a consolidated digital system (see after “Technological platforms”), a CIHEAM officer will endorse this work in connection with the people in charge of educational plans in each of the Institutes. Involving technical working groups could be a first step in structuring a corporate methodology, starting with IT systems and setting up an education working group. Data processing and reporting will help us to implement and maintain a comprehensive Internal control system.

3.3 The SFS-MED Platform with a “country and regional oriented vision”

The CIHEAM is firmly engaged in the relaunching of the Platform both in terms of stakeholder and community participation, and in terms of enriching the tools and the financial means necessary to provide further impetus to achieving the SDGs in Mediterranean countries, by revisiting the concepts generated by the declaration of the Matera G20 meeting.

The SFS-MED Platform is a very useful and versatile tool to attract international institutions and country authorities, environment for sharing, discussion and exchanges in terms of food policies and regulatory aspects, use and management of natural resources, food production, transformation of food and non food products, food consumption, maintaining favourable conditions for business development, promoting trade and international relations, ensuring sustainable approaches to the social, economical and environmental solutions.

Enriching and empowering of the SFS-MED multi-stakeholder community will ensure a more dynamic environment for sharing and defining appropriate indicators and parameters necessary to describe real impacts and implications of the evolution of each specific domain of the framework model

3.4 Evolution of the working groups

The working groups need to be merged and redirected towards a holistic vision in line with the theoretical framework of Sustainable Food Systems. Several working groups are active at corporate level, both devoted to thematic actions and to technical and administrative issues. The thematic working groups (and to some extent, the administrative ones) are conceptually part of the Sustainable Food Systems framework.

The CIHEAM will bring together all the results generated in the last years and develop them into a permanent and shared heritage of knowledge, events and publications. At the same time, these outputs will continuously feed the SFS-MED multi-stakeholder platform, a stimulating working framework and a lever for greater visibility, partnerships and future cooperation projects.

3.5 Additional Projects and Funding to support new initiatives

Since its establishment, the activities and programmes of the CIHEAM have been based on contributions from Member States. These contributions have been very variable, depending on the financial crisis, national decisions and currency fluctuations. A large part of these contributions is needed to run the General Secretariat activities and to produce all the corporate actions defined by our Statutes. The financial space available for innovative actions is therefore limited, and the capacity of the CIHEAM to promote activities and to launch new programs for the benefit of institutions is low and insufficient with respect to the international scenarios and the potential contribution to the regional major issues.

Hence, it is extremely important to relaunch at the CIHEAM HQ, a project planning process for innovative initiatives with the aim of establishing further contacts with funding agencies and financial institutions, in agreement with the Institutes. The first step consists of training internal staff in project planning, writing and management (Project Cycle Management).

3.6 Technological platforms

In the era of data-driven management, the CIHEAM must strive towards further integration of the relevant data produced or processed in each establishment at least for the main management pillars. Today, this is a crucial lever for the development of the Center in terms of efficiency, transparency and accountability.

A summary of the Data strategy can be resumed in the following steps:

- Field of application: select the process to be consolidated (education, financial resources, human resources, communication, cooperation and projects management);
- Data ownership: establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Data Mapping: Identify the datasets involved in the field of application and their availability in each institute; data cleansing and merging: establish data cleansing and merging flows and their integration in the official extranet of the CIHEAM;
- Indicators and analysis: establish indicators and an analysis methodology for each process (information modelling).

For the overall strategy duration, the existing Policy of the CIHEAM (for information security and personal data protection) will be observed and reinforced, as threats in cyberspace are continuously increasing.

The implementation of such integrated systems appears as a must if our ambitions should become reality to foster the launch of corporate actions and improve administrative management in line with the Pillar assessment procedure.

3.7 Administrative structuring for the Pillar assessment

Taking into account the elapsed time and the resources used by the CIHEAM since 2015 to follow the accreditation procedure in the indirect management of the EU budget, it is now time to request a pre-audit report from an accredited and external auditor.

Furthermore, and independently of the accreditation procedure mentioned above, the CIHEAM entities should improve in the consolidation of the management process to harmonise the application of the General Regulation decided by the Governing Board and ensure its compliance as a unique organisation. It is propaedeutic to face the Pillar assessment as well.

In particular, risk management and the process approach must be implemented jointly in the management of our institutes, and we must engage in a cycle of continuous improvement based on shared indicators. This will meet the requirements of the implementation of an internal control system already required by our Financial Regulation and strictly related to the most important pillar of the EU accreditation process. Transparency, accountability, efficiency, security and ethics will drive the cycle of the continuous measurement and improvement of the overall elements of our joint management.

Structural internal communication can help all CIHEAM officials to understand the importance of each individual in achieving the major targets and goals. The review and update of internal regulations and procedures is an essential part of the application of the internal control standards. The work of the technical working

groups will be necessary to start this process, as well as a multi-level and inclusive action, targeting the above-mentioned goals: Transparency, accountability, efficiency, security and ethics.

3.8 Editorial and communication issues

If the CIHEAM has long been a prolific producer of both academic and general public content, today, its editorial involvement appears diluted in the face of an ever richer and faster-changing supply. Competition is increasingly tough in terms of publication and the ongoing digital revolutions have completely changed the production and dissemination of knowledge.

While the General Secretariat and the Institutes are currently moving forward in a dispersed manner in terms of publication, it is time to take account of the changes at work in order to define common priorities and methods to demonstrate its added value. Thanks to the strategic themes, the geographical space that it covers, the multidisciplinary skills that it can mobilise and its 60 years of field expertise through its publication and institutional communication, the CIHEAM can position itself as a leader in the knowledge of Mediterranean agricultural and food system; providing diverse stakeholders with analysis and strategic advice for transitions towards greater sustainability, resilience and equity.

Particular attention must be given to the needs of Member States, particularly on emerging themes and in cooperation with national experts and young researchers. As such, the role of the GB and the CAB is essential in identifying priority research themes in the countries concerned. Scientific publications, reports, policy papers, popularisation or advocacy work: all the activities produced by the CIHEAM must also serve as keys to understanding the Mediterranean agricultural world and food systems, especially for the younger generations.