

CIHEAM Bari,

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Legumes: Roots of Resilience

Across the Mediterranean, legumes - lentils, chickpeas, beans, fava, and peas - have long been staples of everyday diets, deeply rooted in local cultures and culinary traditions. Today, however, their relevance goes far beyond heritage. As climate change accelerates, soil fertility declines, and food prices rise, legumes offer practical, affordable, and time-tested responses to some of the region's most pressing challenges.

Legumes provide accessible, high-quality plant protein that supports healthier diets for diverse populations, while also contributing to environmental sustainability by improving long-term soil health. This dual role, nourishing people while regenerating the land, makes legumes essential building blocks of resilient and sustainable food systems, demonstrating how traditional crops can continue to guide modern agricultural solutions.

Research and innovation are unlocking the full potential of Mediterranean legumes, with advances in breeding, genetic selection, and processing improving yields, nutrition, and market opportunities. Anchored in agroecology, this progress places legumes at the core of climate-smart agriculture and circular-economy principles, restoring biodiversity and strengthening sustainable diets. Integrating legume value chains into territorial development enhances nutritional security, drives local economic growth, and stabilizes local communities.

CIHEAM Bari reaffirms its commitment to supporting the implementation of the **BEANS Action Plan 2026**. This Plan serves as a strategic roadmap, co-designed by a broad partnership of research institutions and private-sector actors to set common priorities for innovation and policy dialogue. Within the BEANS Meta Network, CIHEAM Bari plays a pivotal role in the Executive Committee, leveraging its long-standing expertise in international cooperation to strengthen the strategic capacity of central administrations in partner countries. Through targeted capacity-building actions, CIHEAM Bari aims to reinforce institutional frameworks, fostering open dialogue among partners, and aligning BEANS with the CIHEAM Strategic Plan 2030 and the broader Mediterranean agenda for food security and sustainability.

BEANS is more than a network; it is a community grounded in cooperation, shared responsibility, and mutual trust. Through the combined commitment of all its

members, legumes will continue to nourish people, restore soils, and strengthen the resilience of Mediterranean food systems.