The Mediterranean continues to play an important role as a central and strategic region between two continents; Europe and Africa. Through over 60 years of education, training, research, capacity building and political dialogue, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), an Intergovernmental Organisation created in 1962, has placed sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food systems at the heart of socio-economic development in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza, an Institute of the CIHEAM, has touched on some of the most strategic agro-food issues affecting the Mediterranean since it was founded in 1969.

The establishment of a CIHEAM institute in Spain was the initiative of Ramón Esteruelas who was also fundamental in setting up the CIHEAM organisation itself in 1962. Esteruelas was an international diplomat, agronomist, high ranking official in the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture. He held a long list of high level posts and recognitions in Spain and Aragón related to agriculture and research, amongst others.
The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (IAMZ) was established in 1969 and is one of the four Institutes of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), together with Bari in Italy, Montpellier in France and Chania in Greece. The Headquarters of the Organisation are based in Paris.

CIHEAM’s objectives are to develop cooperation between the countries of the Mediterranean through implementing a comprehensive training and education programme, promoting strategic research and cooperation in the areas of agro-food, fisheries and natural resources and to nourish political dialogue on these issues in the region. The strategic agenda of the CIHEAM (CAPMED 2025), aimed at implementing the United-Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is based on four domains of actions: (1) Protection of the planet by tackling waste of food, natural resources and knowledge, (2) Food security and nutrition by boosting sustainable agriculture and food, (3) Inclusive development by investing in new generations and fragile territories, (4) Crises and resilience by preventing risk and managing tensions.

During its 50 year history, the IAMZ has carried out a large number of activities. The themes and subjects covered by its work during this period are as relevant today for the Mediterranean (and globally) as they ever were.
International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

An intergovernmental organisation created in 1962 under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the OECD.

Mission: To develop cooperation between Mediterranean countries through post-graduate training, capacity building and research activities, technical assistance in the field of agriculture and natural resources and fostering political and institutional dialogue.

Member countries: Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

Governing Board: Directs the policies of the Centre. Composed of a representative of each member country, and representatives of the Council of Europe and the OECD. The FAO, the European Commission and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development participate as observers.

Advisory Committee: Members are eminent independent scientists that advise the Organisation in the definition of the Centre’s policies.

General Secretariat: Coordinates the activities of the Centre. Its headquarters are in Paris. It is composed of the Secretary General, the Directors of the Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes and the attached staff.

Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes: The Centre has four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes situated in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France) and Zaragoza (Spain).
Ramón Esteruelas proposes the creation of CIHEAM upon the approval of OEEC/OECD

Foundation of CIHEAM in Paris

First specialisation course on Horticulture

Arrival of the first student from the South of the Mediterranean

Establishment of the first research networks (small ruminants, pastures and forage crops, almonds and pistachio)

Specialisation course in collaboration with the OIV (Office International de la Vigne et du Vin)

First participation of the FAO in IAMZ activities

First specialisation course on Rural Planning

First Master in Plant Breeding and Seed Production

Arrival of the first student from Subsaharan Africa

Arrival of the first student from Asia

First specialisation course on Animal Husbandry

Creation of IAMZ, becoming the third Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of CIHEAM

Agreement to conduct activities of technical cooperation with GREMPA (Groupe de Recherches et d’Études Méditerranéen sur l’Amandier) on almond plant material

Launching of the first Master diplomas

First cooperation and development project with the European Economic Community

Introduction of the Master of Science Diploma awarding 120 credits

First edition of the Master in Agro-Food Marketing

First edition of the Master in Olive Growing and Oil Technology

First edition of the Master in Sustainable Fisheries Management

Agreement with CGIAR to organise courses on Plant Breeding with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Agreement with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO) concerning the organisation of the Master in Sustainable Fisheries Management

Recognition of equivalence of the IAMZ Master of Science to the official Spanish degree of Master

First edition of the Master in Animal Nutrition

First edition of the MABS summer programme

Approval of H2020 MedAID, one of IAMZ’s 25 research projects

First cooperation and development project with the European Economic Community

First edition of the Master in Agro-Food Marketing

First edition of the Master in Olive Growing and Oil Technology

First edition of the Erasmus Mundus-Edamus Master

Agreement with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO) concerning the organisation of the Master in Sustainable Fisheries Management

A story of success and cooperation
The CIHEAM Zaragoza Institute – IAMZ - is recognised as an international centre of reference for education having trained over 15,000 of the leaders of the Mediterranean agro-food system during the last 50 years. Its success has reached much further, training many agro-food professionals from Latin America and beyond. Former students either occupy or have occupied influential roles across both private and public sector activities in the agro-food and related areas of a wide number of countries.

In the last 50 years, IAMZ has developed an education portfolio of 8 International Agro-food Masters over a broad area of subjects: fisheries, aquaculture, rural development and environmental management, agro-food marketing, plant breeding, animal nutrition, olive production and animal breeding. A new International Master’s in water, irrigation systems and the environment will be launched in 2020 building on the previous Master on rural development and environmental management. During its 50 year history, IAMZ has created a wealth of knowledge on agricultural production, rural development, the environment and agro-food systems. The IAMZ plays a key capacity-building role in supporting development across the Mediterranean through facilitating the participation of some of the top students and professionals from southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, providing them with bursaries to participate in IAMZ MSc programmes and short courses.
IAMZ has organised over 400 short courses over the last 30 years, in a wide range of agricultural, food, fisheries and rural development areas ranging from water and irrigation, livestock production, aquaculture and fisheries, animal and plant diseases, plant breeding, climate change and agriculture and many more.

A Selection of IAMZ courses by theme

| Plant production and plant health | Emerging and quarantine diseases of Mediterranean fruit and vegetable crops. Breeding small grain cereal crops in a climate change scenario. Innovative horticulture and the environment. Breeding and agronomic improvements of grain legume crops. Genomic prediction and selection in plant breeding. |
| Food safety, technology and marketing | How to reach international food markets: experiences from the United States and Europe. Innovative packaging for fresh and lightly processed fruits and vegetables. Valorization of sheep and goat dairy products in the Mediterranean. Microcosms in cereal food/feed chains: prevention and control strategies to minimize contamination. Antimicrobial resistance and One Health: implications for agricultural systems, food safety and the environment. Food loss and waste reduction and management. |
| Water, irrigation and drought management | Water and energy in Mediterranean rural environments. Use of remote-sensing for irrigation management. Sustainable agriculture in rainfed systems. Restoration of degraded areas and monitoring of desertification processes. Technology. |
IAMZ short courses consist of up to 40 hours of the most relevant and leading advanced knowledge on each of the issues and have a fundamentally applied orientation, exploring technical aspects or particular methodologies in depth. Each class is delivered in small flexible groups of approximately 30 people through class work as well as field visits and practical activities. Classes are given in a combination of English, French or Spanish assisted by a full team of professional interpreters. IAMZ has trained over 12,000 advanced level students and a total of 4,000 participating lecturers, selected from amongst leading international experts, have travelled to Zaragoza to deliver these unique courses.
IAMZ has organised an extensive number of cooperation and capacity building activities, forming lasting cooperation networks amongst experts across the Mediterranean. It has set up three research and cooperation networks jointly with the FAO on important issues, such as sheep and goats, nut production and pasture & forage crops and numerous other Mediterranean networks on almonds, legumes and cereals, food safety, drought management, fruit production, fisheries and aquaculture. These are pioneer cooperation networks, set up or expanded from existing networks in the 1990s, bringing together leading expertise to exchange best practices and know-how in order to improve farming techniques.

**Hands-on training for agricultural and rural development practitioners from Algeria**

In 2018, a technical study visit was organised in Aragón on participatory rural development and providing commercial value to local agricultural and natural resources. The visit within the framework of the ENPARD (European Neighbourhood Programme on Agriculture and Rural Development) provided a practical training experience for 15 rural development experts from Algeria on LEADER type initiatives in areas such as olive and almond production and commercialisation, exploitation of rural tourism and natural resources, development of artisan activities, creating short supply chains for local produce and developing local animal breeds and local food produce.

A large number of capacity building activities to transfer know-how and agricultural practice to Mediterranean countries are also organised, including study tours, advice and training of professionals and experts. Examples include a series of 7 courses under the CGIAR Generation Challenge Programme - Integrated Breeding Platform on genetic diversity and advanced plant science to improve crops by adding value to breeding for drought-prone and harsh environments; an ICARDA funded training in innovative extension methods in order to increase technology adoption by Tunisian smallholders; and a hands-on training course for agricultural and rural development practitioners from Algeria.
The Institute has participated in or led over 15 European Union research projects over the last 20 years in important areas, such as rural development, animal production, water, drought and irrigation, forestry and Mediterranean aquaculture. Bringing a Mediterranean added value and perspective to many EU agricultural research projects, these activities have contributed to both building networks and supporting training across the Mediterranean.

MedAID aims to increase the overall competitiveness and sustainability of the Mediterranean marine aquaculture sector. IAMZ plays a key role as coordinator of this 7 million Euro project involving over 30 partners and is responsible for dissemination and training packages.

SIMRA seeks to advance understanding of social innovation and innovative governance in agriculture, forestry and rural development, and how to boost them, particularly in marginalised rural areas across Europe and the Mediterranean. Involving over 20 partners, IAMZ is responsible for dissemination, communication and training.

iSAGE Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe aims to make the European Sheep and Goat sectors more sustainable, competitive and resilient. With the participation of over 30 partners, IAMZ’s role is to ensure the active engagement of the sector in the project and carry out dissemination and training.
IAMZ has fostered the integration of key international, government, sectorial, industry and stakeholder organisations from the Mediterranean, Latin America and worldwide through facilitating the transfer of know-how, participation and engagement. The Institute has signed over 60 cooperation agreements over the last 30 years with a number of international, European and national organisations. The Institute has developed an international network of over 10,000 academics and experts in agriculture and food related areas. IAMZ has a wide global network of experts in practically every agro-food, fisheries and rural development area and is able to call on this rich network of experts in implementing its activities. Many of IAMZ’s activities have included cooperation with international organisations, such as the OECD, FAO, UN, WTO, EFSA, EC, ICARDA and EEAP.
IAMZ in figures

- 170 publications
- 15,000 students
- 141 nationalities among lecturers and students
- 60 agreements with national and international organisations
- 50 years of experience
- 40 research projects and networks
- 10,000 guest lecturers
- 6,700 scholarships
- 400 courses for professionals
- 8 international MSc programmes
CIHEAM plays a unifying role, bringing together two regions in a common goal to place agriculture at the heart of socio-economic development and cooperation in the Mediterranean. 50 years after Ramón Esteruelas led this initiative, a series of geopolitical developments have provided added impetus to agro-food cooperation and scientific diplomacy. There is an urgent need to speed up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to agriculture and rural development; contributing to food production targets, achieving quality and nutritional food, combating animal and plant diseases, developing people and regions and addressing migration challenges, to name but a few.
These are all areas where IAWZ-CIHEAM has a proven track record, for example through the implementation of its CAPMED 2025 Action Plan for the Mediterranean, and CIHEAM’s mandate has now seen itself re-invigorated out of the necessity to deal with some of these most urgent humanitarian and development challenges for the Mediterranean, Europe and Africa.

The Europe-Africa Task Force for rural development and the PRIMA research programme, amongst others, have borne witness to these challenges and their growing importance.

Strong cooperation and capacity building in agriculture and food will be at the centre of this dynamic relationship between both continents with the Mediterranean as the cement between the two. The Mediterranean countries and their specialised organisations, such as CIHEAM, have a long history of cooperation and know-how and are well positioned to reinforce this growing EU-Africa partnership.