



CIHEAM

International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

**4th meeting of the CIHEAM
member countries' Minister of Agriculture**

Beirut, 21 September 2002



FINAL DECLARATION

1. At the invitation of Mr Ali ABDALLAH, the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, the Ministers of Agriculture of the CIHEAM Member States, or their Representative, met in Beirut on Saturday 21 September 2002, the year in which CIHEAM celebrated its 40th anniversary.
2. The Ministers and the Heads of Delegation gave particular attention to the following themes:
 - a) agricultural relations in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the multilateral agricultural negotiations;
 - b) cooperation in the Mediterranean region in agronomic research and food quality.
 - c) the programme of pilot schemes on sustainable rural development in member countries to the South and the East of the Mediterranean;
 - d) the 40th anniversary of CIHEAM and the directions to be adopted for its future action.
3. As to **agricultural relations in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the multilateral agricultural negotiations**, the discussion highlighted the importance Ministers attached to the dialogue that had been established between them through their regular meetings on the main issues determining the future of agriculture in their countries.

The Ministers/Heads of Delegation noted the favourable developments at the close of the negotiations on association agreements with the European Union: at present, in addition to the accession candidate countries in the Mediterranean region, all the South and East Mediterranean countries, members of CIHEAM, had formalised their relations with the European Union and the plan for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, launched by the Declaration of Barcelona in November 1995 was gradually being realised and consolidated on the basis of new agreements. The Ministers/Heads of Delegation stressed that in this context regional integration must depend on relations between the Mediterranean partner countries, and more especially on SOUTH/SOUTH cooperation, which was an essential element in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and they felt that the Agadir Declaration, signed by Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt, represented a promising start and was likely to open up the process of regional cooperation to other countries in the South and the East of the Mediterranean.

Ministers/Heads of Delegation examined the problems associated with improving access to the Community market for agricultural produce from Mediterranean countries and agreed that the flow of imports needed to be governed by principles of complementarity and seasonality of the production.



In this way, Mediterranean third countries would be able to increase exports to the Community market and Community operators would be able to draw upon a wider range of products, which would therefore become more competitive on the world market.

They also felt that it was advisable to launch a review of the possible effects of the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union on the agricultural economies of the Mediterranean countries: the accession to the European Union of the Central European and Baltic countries could be seen as a market opportunity for agricultural produce from the Mediterranean third countries and the opportunity should be seized with the necessary preparations.

The studies and projects conducted at the Mediterranean Observatory should serve to improve understanding of the difficulties and benefits to be expected from the free-trade zone planned for 2010.

Work on harmonising acceptable support mechanisms in the agricultural sectors should also be continued.

4. The Ministers/Heads of delegation took note of the Final Declaration of the international seminar organised by CIHEAM in Algiers between 26 and 28 April 2002 on the theme ***“the Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and agri-food area in the face of globalisation”*** and approved this declaration, which contained valuable directions for the development of cooperation in the region.

In particular, and within the framework of an enhancement of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, they subscribed to the following directions:

- a) Making rural development a key concern and a central plank in the initiatives to be implemented within the Euro-Mediterranean framework.
- b) Fully incorporating agriculture and rural development into the MEDA programmes; this was an essential condition if balance was to be achieved in the process of opening up the economies of countries on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean.
- c) Adopting a coordinated approach to problems of common concern, such as the fight against desertification, the mobilisation and rational use of water and rural development; more generally, further incorporating all the factors linking the environment to the future of populations and rural zones into the dialogues and activities that went into the process of building an area of common prosperity.
- d) Implementing a training scheme for agricultural workers from Mediterranean third countries, which would enable them to obtain (mainly seasonal) employment with agricultural enterprises based in the European Union.

Charging specialised bodies with the task of devising programmes within the workers' countries of origin, providing for selection, training and coordination of supply and demand, in order to promote the right flow of seasonal agricultural workers. Such a move would benefit Community agriculture and the Mediterranean agricultural workers themselves and would meet the need for legality and transparency.

According to what had been announced in the speech of Dr. Ali ABDALLAH, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon about the threats that are preventing Lebanon from using its water resources and in view of the threats prevailing in the region as a result of the challenges entailed by conflicts over water, the CIHEAM member states



declare their firm rejection of transforming the issue of water resources into a source of tension in the region.

This member states call for the commitment to the relevant laws, customs and regulations already agreed upon.

5. As to the WTO **multilateral agricultural negotiations**, the Ministers/Heads of delegation recommended that European Union member countries and Mediterranean partner countries seek to coordinate their positions. The discussion on this point revealed the linkage between Euro-Mediterranean relations and the multilateral negotiations: the firmer and the more intense these relations were, the easier it would be to achieve convergence in negotiating positions in global fora.

In this connection, the representatives of the Southern countries pointed out that an approach on the part of the developed countries – particularly the members of the European Union – that took due account of the enormous imbalance between agriculture in countries to the South and East of the Mediterranean and European agriculture, represented the best way of ensuring a credible dialogue between the two shores.

The representatives of the European Union Member Countries insisted on the requirement to proceed with due precaution in the negotiations on liberalising market access for agricultural products and to obtain accurate information on the impact of possible concessions on domestic agricultural output.

They felt that work on identifying issues of common concern that would serve to bring countries of the North and the South together should continue.

The themes raised in this context were the promotion of the quality of Mediterranean agricultural products and also the expertise that was part of the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean region and determined the nature of the products themselves; equally, the subjects of protecting natural resources, food safety, designation of origin, employment in rural areas, the fight against poverty and the protection of farmers incomes should be given due consideration in the framework of the negotiations.

6. On the theme of **cooperation in the Mediterranean region in agronomic research and food quality**, the Ministers/Heads of delegation approved the directions that have emerged from the last regional or bilateral concertations which occurred since the Athens conference

The Ministers/Heads of delegation emphasised the crucial role of agronomic research for the development in the framework of the partnership to be established by research institutions in the Mediterranean region.

They invited CIHEAM, acting in cooperation with national agronomic research institutions, to offer to collaborate in **the establishment of a network of agronomic research institutions**, where those responsible for these institutions in the Mediterranean countries might regularly consult with each other on the strategic choices to be made in the interest of developing the region.

They also drew attention to the Final Declaration of the international seminar held in Algiers, already referred to in paragraph 4 above, which contained proposals that should be considered with a view to the **construction of a Euro-Mediterranean**



research area. This project should receive the support it needed, notably from the European Commission under the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

The Ministers/Heads of Delegation supported the proposal by Mr Giovanni ALEMANNI, Italy's Minister for Agriculture and Forestry Policies, that a specific European research programme on quality Mediterranean agriculture should be implemented with the participation of EU member and non-member countries in the Mediterranean region.

7. The Ministers/Heads of delegation took note of the work carried out on the **sustainable rural development projects** as a follow up to the conclusions of the Ministerial meetings held in Rabat (May 2000) and Athens (June 2001), and confirmed that they wanted this initial experimental programme to be pursued, with a view to seeing it gradually extended to all countries in the region. They noted, however, that the lack of financial resources that could be allocated to this operation meant that it was not possible to move ahead at the desired pace; they therefore insisted that these rural development initiatives be taken into consideration as part of the MEDA programme; the Mediterranean partner countries that were beneficiaries of the MEDA programme should take the necessary initiatives in this area with technical support from CIHEAM.

They called upon CIHEAM to bring together the officials responsible for problems of rural development in their ministries to devise the content of a "Mediterranean LEADER" programme, which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and subsequently put to the European Commission. This programme might constitute one of the significant components of the next MEDA programme.

Moreover, they underlined the necessity of a permanent concertation between the international organisations and other donors which are active in this sector with a view of assuring the necessary coherence in these interventions.

8. On the 40th anniversary of CIHEAM and the **directions to be adopted by CIHEAM for action in the Mediterranean region**, the Ministers/Heads of delegation had adopted a special resolution, which accompanied this final declaration.
9. The Ministers/Heads of delegation had agreed to hold their fifth meeting in the course of 2003 and had taken note of the invitation, for which they were extremely grateful, from the French Delegation – in the name of M. Hervé Gaymard, Minister of Agriculture of France - who had expressed the wish to host this meeting in his country.

The Ministers/Heads of Delegation responded favourably to the statement from Mr. Giovanni ALEMANNI, the Italian Minister of Agriculture, to the effect that he would be devoting the six-month period of Italy's Presidency of the European Union to issues arising from Mediterranean agriculture and fishing; in particular, he would be convening a Euro-Mediterranean conference on agriculture and fishing.

They congratulated Mr Ali ABDALLAH, the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, and all his collaborators on the effort that had gone into making this meeting a success.

They thanked CIHEAM for its contribution to the success of the meeting and for its efforts to maintain dialogue and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.