

## CIHEAM's action in the new Euro-Mediterranean context

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# CIHEAM's action in the new Euro-Mediterranean context

**Enzo Chioccioli**

Secretary General of CIHEAM (France)

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Mr President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The day that we have just spent together—the first day of our seminar—has been rich in exchanges and very promising. We can already affirm that the theme chosen for this seminar, marking the start of the activities of the new co-operation programme agreed between CIHEAM and the European Commission and covering the coming four years, has revealed all the density of the problems to be explored, the comparisons to be made and the strategies to be defined. The essential part of what we are seeking is awareness of the changes that must be made to the systems and content of advanced training in agriculture in the countries in the Mediterranean basin, so that they can meet the unavoidable challenges raised by the evolution of international relations in the region, the evolution of the economy and of society in the general sense.

At the present stage in the work of the seminar, we can perhaps perceive with more clarity the architecture and logic on which our work is based.

A range of communications was presented this morning—from the opening speech by our President, talks by the Ministers of Agriculture of Italy and Turkey to the scenarios described by Mr Brahimi in north-south relations and by Mr Dubois in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership project undertaken by the European Union in concertation with Mediterranean partner countries, the 'cultural revolution' resulting from new information technology discussed by Mr Saussois, the lines of reflection for future action by CIHEAM suggested by Mr Hervieu and the hopes and fears of Mediterranean farmers represented by Mr Avolio. These different contributions show the direction that will be taken by history as a whole and with which we must compare our training structures and working methods.

This is how the contributions presented in the second part of the seminar and the more dialectic papers to be presented tomorrow should make it possible, as a conclusion, to isolate the orientations for defining the new content of advanced training in agriculture and the agri-food industry in relation to the specific needs of the countries in the Mediterranean region.

CIHEAM is—more than anybody else—interested in taking up challenges in the management of knowledge. It is aware that its reason for existence lies in training and the promotion of research with its four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes at Bari, Chania, Montpellier and Saragossa in close co-operation with agricultural training and research institutes of partner countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

CIHEAM is an original intergovernmental organisation with a long history of devotion to the development of higher education and agronomic research. Set up in 1962 at the initiative of 7 countries in southern Europe, members of the former OEEC, which had observed a certain difference between their agriculture and that of the other members of OEEC in northern Europe and the United States, CIHEAM gradually

opened up towards the other countries in the Mediterranean region. Now covering 13 Mediterranean states, but with a regional mission and activities centred on the training of senior agricultural and agri-food industry managers, the vocation of CIHEAM is that of grouping all the countries in the Mediterranean region.

CIHEAM is of course well aware that this vocation runs up against the political blocks that still characterise relations with some countries in the region, preventing it from being the institution that is truly representative of the whole of the region in the fields entrusted to it. Nevertheless, we consider that we should use realism, caution and also determination to continue our efforts to seek new member countries in the Mediterranean region. We are certain that our position as representative at international instances will be all the stronger if we are broadly representative of the whole of the Mediterranean basin.

This is why we believed in the prospects opened by the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995, which set up the basis for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership and we, as CIHEAM, have made and wish to continue to make a contribution to this ambitious project.

The new co-operation project that we have set up with the European Commission is designed with the aim of decentralising in partner countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean the responsibility for co-operation activities in training and research. New co-operation will be hinged on four regional development programmes (RDPs) in Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt but open to other member countries. They will be centred on training and research activities responding to the specific features of Mediterranean agriculture. The general themes chosen for the four RDPs cover:

- ☐ the management of renewable natural resources,
- ☐ agricultural and food policies,
- ☐ rainfed agriculture,
- ☐ management of water resources.

CIHEAM's four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes, in collaboration with the corresponding institutions in the countries in which the RDPs are located, will use their resources and specialisations to provide support for the execution of these regionalised co-operation actions.

The originality of our contribution to the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership resides in the decentralisation to the partner countries of training and research activities and management responsibilities. With the constant backing of the resources of our institutes, CIHEAM helps future senior agriculture and food managers from the region to prepare to face a transition that is already calling into question the institutional and market structures within which they are accustomed to operate.

In its work, CIHEAM is called upon to provide advanced **complementary training** in agronomy and to promote **co-operative research** in agriculture. This means providing training and promoting research that form added value with regard to the advanced training received by the beneficiaries in the academic and scientific institutions in their own countries. How to provide this added value is the subject of our reflection during this seminar.

This is a question raised at CIHEAM at its foundation and which has since always continued to receive attention. The work of the scientific consultative committee—a permanent body within CIHEAM—has developed around this question and the holding of the present seminar marks CIHEAM's own determination to call into question its training and research facilities and render them appropriate to respond to the requirements of ongoing economic, social, institutional and scientific changes.

I would like to mention a few examples of illustrations of these considerations:

**a.** With regard to the **long courses** provided by the MAIs, **re-examination of the disciplines** taught is performed at regular intervals by the scientific committees of each institute supervised by the CIHEAM Consultative Scientific Committee. The Board of CIHEAM was recently informed of the changes made at

MAI Bari in the crop protection and irrigation courses, in which new objectives have been set, in particular for the long courses

- ❑ **in crop protection:** integrated protection of Mediterranean fruit crops, registration and quarantine, relations between production and protection,
- ❑ and **irrigation:** agronomic and environmental aspects, sustainable management of land and water.

Likewise, changes have been made recently at MAI Saragossa in some of the basic teaching provided by the institute and at MAI Chania, where the scale of the change in the training and research programmes and the strengthening of its hosting and scientific infrastructure were recently strongly appreciated by our Consultative Scientific Committee.

**b.** A second example of the structural readaptation of our training and research facilities is the new **work plan** that received final approval from the Board of Directors of CIHEAM last year for the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute in Montpellier.

The reform was based on strategic reflection emerging from rigorous analysis of new training requirements. The four major thematic fields proposed correspond to four main challenges encountered by actors operating in agrifood economies, in the management of the territories making up the Mediterranean area and in the development of the companies that work there:

1. rural societies and development engineering,
2. Mediterranean agriculture and natural resources management,
3. Farm management and management of food enterprises,
4. State, market, civil society and regulation.

In addition, a great effort in the modernisation of infrastructure is also in progress in parallel with the promotion of the use of new communication technology. The concern to make information and training accessible and to facilitate exchange is considered as a priority theme within the framework of the new work plan and the efforts in progress aim at the future creation of a Mediterranean Media Centre as the support for a **future university without walls in the Mediterranean**, to which all the CIHEAM Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes can contribute, together with the other active scientific institutions in the region.

**c.** A last example of our institution's **observation** of training requirements in the Mediterranean region is the survey performed by CIHEAM itself with a view to the present seminar on requirements and the adaptation to demand of post-graduate agrifood training.

This survey started with the initiative taken by MAI Bari to question its former trainees—meeting at a seminar in Beirut in December 1997—about their professional positions in relation to the training received, in particular at the Institute itself.

It was decided to broaden the survey and include all the CIHEAM Agronomic Institutes, and I am grateful to their directors for having supported and personally contributed to this research. Special thanks go to Miguel Valls, Director of the Saragossa institute, who assembled all the survey data, processed the results and drew up a synthesis available for our seminar.

I shall just include a reminder of the conclusions, after mentioning that the questionnaire was sent to 197 senior managers in 20 countries which collaborate in the training and research activities of the CIHEAM institutes. Replies were received in 36% of the cases. The answers made it possible to identify several significant orientations—taking into account of course the inherent limits of the sample and the small percentage of returns—concerning the general context of training and the demand.

With regard to the general context, it would appear that the evolution of the agricultural sector will be strongly marked by the globalisation of the economy and the taking into account of environmental condi-

tions (sustainability, contamination, etc.). Technological change, shortage of water and quality requirements are the most important of another set of factors affecting the change.

The agrifood economy will be affected above all by the liberalisation of markets and hence the increase in competition, by the importance awarded to product quality and to health considerations and by the development of the agrifood industry.

The rural world will change, marked by rural exodus, a decrease in the agricultural use of land and the diversification of occupations in rural areas. Environmental considerations will be determinant in development projects.

With regard to the demand for training, development agents, heads of farming enterprises, technical managers and researchers in the SEM countries are professionals who would appear to request the most training.

*The organisations most demanding training appear to be:*

- ☐ enterprises, for their marketing sector; in the SEM countries as well for their production sector;
- ☐ professional training centres, especially in the SEM countries;
- ☐ the technical departments of public administrations.

*The following fields would seem to have the greatest training requirements:*

- ☐ those related to the management of natural resources and the environment,
- ☐ those related to agrifood industries and marketing.

Requests for training in crop and animal production will be oriented more towards production techniques than fundamental sciences.

Specialised training leading to diplomas is considered to be more necessary than multidisciplinary, non-diploma training.

Professional reorientation and technical refresher courses are preferred to conceptual updates.

*Future demand will be greater for:*

- ☐ specialised courses of at least 400 hours,
- ☐ short courses compatible with work and 2-week full-time courses,
- ☐ periods with companies or at research centres,
- ☐ distance training is less requested. Courses with video/CD ROM support are preferred to other procedures.

The seminar as a whole and in particular our Consultative Scientific Committee—represented by its former Chairman, Professor Firdawcy—will be called up to draw up a synthesis of our work and—represented by the current Chairman, Professor Flamant—will draw the conclusions of this seminar for CIHEAM. It will also appraise the results of this survey and check that the results correspond with the general orientations emerging from the seminar.

My aim is to inform seminar participants of CIHEAM's firm desire to continue its activities at the service of the Mediterranean region under the best possible conditions and with full knowledge of the changes marking the region and that have an undoubted impact on training requirements.

The continuation of our activities is of course dependent on the support that CIHEAM receives from the member-countries of the organisation and from the international organisations that co-operate with us in the region, and especially the European Commission.

I would like to thank the representatives of the governments of CIHEAM member-countries, and especially the representatives of Turkey, who hosted us and helped us throughout the preparation of this seminar, and the representatives of European and international institutions. We should like to say how grateful we are for the encouragement that they give us and for their recognition of our action in the region.

