

## General report synthesis of the workshops challenges for the management of knowledge on the eve of the third millenium

Firdawcy M.L.

in

Dupuy B. (ed.).

Advanced training for agricultural and food managers in the countries of the Mediterranean area

Montpellier : CIHEAM

Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 36(2)

1999

pages 141-146

Article available on line / Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://om.ciheam.org/article.php?IDPDF=C1000597>

To cite this article / Pour citer cet article

Firdawcy M.L. **General report synthesis of the workshops challenges for the management of knowledge on the eve of the third millenium.** In : Dupuy B. (ed.). *Advanced training for agricultural and food managers in the countries of the Mediterranean area*. Montpellier : CIHEAM, 1999. p. 141-146 (Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 36(2))



<http://www.ciheam.org/>  
<http://om.ciheam.org/>

# General report

## Synthesis of the workshops

### Challenges for the management of knowledge on the eve of the third millennium

**Mohamed Larbi Firdawcy**  
Professor, IAV Hassan II (Morocco)

---

In the meeting held in Salonika, the board, after a proposal by the Secretary General, agreed to the holding in 1998 of a seminar on the '*evolution of the advanced training systems in agriculture in the countries of the Mediterranean area*'. The initial title changed during the preparatory phase and became '**Advanced training of agricultural and food managers in the countries of the Mediterranean area – Challenges to the management of knowledge on the eve of the third millennium**'.

We used the architecture adopted by the *ad hoc* group to appraise the extent of achievement of the objectives and tasks assigned.

## I – The preparatory phase

### 1. The objectives of the seminar

The theme of the seminar was chosen for its obvious importance for an institute such as CIHEAM, whose major activity is the training of managers with a view to the development of sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean region.

CIHEAM held a seminar on agricultural training in Rabat in 1988. This included an inventory and analysis of the training available in the region, leading to three major conclusions:

- ☐ two training systems co-existed, one on an Anglo-Saxon pattern and the other using the formula of the French engineering schools;
- ☐ continuing training of agricultural and food managers was lacking or weak;
- ☐ CIHEAM is potentially a melting pot for reflection on Mediterranean agriculture and its progress.

Today, 10 years later, it is interesting to consider the role and position of agricultural training in a fast-changing Mediterranean world and, rather than starting from the existing *supply* of training throughout the region, reflection should be focused more on *requirements* and demand. What are agronomists for? What profiles should they have for what outlets?

This seminar is thus in the general context of the economic changes related to the impact of the globalisation of markets, the opening up of trade and the changes induced in the agricultural sector in the countries of the region: structural adjustment, WTO, CAP, development of the market economy and the emergence of the private sector. This results in new human resources requirements to ensure the best conditions for addressing international competitiveness, and especially with regard to the continuing training of managers.

It also supports the recent collective, participatory effort in the drawing up and adoption of a work plan at the Montpellier institute covering its mission and its medium-term programme and adds momentum to

the dynamics of the revision of the training proposed by the centre. Are not some courses sometimes out of phase with the new economic conditions? The seminar will thus help to specify the position and role the CIHEAM as a whole should develop in the coming years (to 2010), in post-graduate training in agriculture.

## 2. The themes to be discussed

As was said at the meeting in Salonika, the seminar must not repeat the description of the training systems in agriculture and agro-economics. It is assumed that they are known.

The approach is less static than that of the Rabat seminar. It is appropriate on the eve of the third millennium to use as the starting point for reflection an analysis of the training *requirements* of persons capable of adapting to new conditions, capable of mastering new technical process and knowledge in order to develop sustainable agriculture that respects the vital needs of future generations.

Taking into account the development of master's degree and doctorate levels at numerous academic institutions around the Mediterranean, communications and discussion should be more specifically centred on *post-university* training. This consists of *professional training* (business management, company strategy, farm management, etc.) and *doctoral training*, the new teaching methods to be used and the support role that CIHEAM can play at this level.

In the light of present changes and the new working conditions conferred by new knowledge communication technology, it would be interesting to hold within the framework of the seminar a workshop on *the contribution of new technology* as a means of teaching and its use in continuing training and refresher courses for managers. It would cover distance training, the development of multimedia resource centres, etc.

Stress should also be laid on aspects of co-operation in this field between the different training systems. The necessary links should be available to enhance broader interpenetration between institutions in the north and the south, with the forming of network teams and teacher hosting and exchange and to significantly develop the possibilities of training placements not only at research and teaching establishments but also in the business world.

## 3. The participants

The participants and the public targeted at such an event are not only the *academics*—teachers and researchers—who are the main players in training, but also *users*, that is to say politicians, decision makers, national and local administrations (economic, research and technology sectors, etc.), professional agricultural organisations, heads of agrifood and enterprises and farms and representatives of various aspects of the *professional world*, including that of environmental conservation, international bodies and organisations, etc.

These participants are representative of the broadest ensemble of countries in the region, both north and south of the Mediterranean.

## 4. Organisation

The preparation of this seminar required the convening of an *ad hoc group* consisting of a small number of experts in the field. They drew up:

- ☐ the two and a half day seminar programme and the working methods: plenary session and specialised workshops. Time must be allowed for discussion after the introduction of each theme and one or two round tables possibly included;
- ☐ the different talks chosen and a list of the experts considered to be best-qualified to give them.

Participation by the four institutes was of course planned, as this seminar particularly concerns them.

After this reminder of the preparatory phase, I would like to review our two days of intense activity.

## II – Attention to demand

On the **first day**, we listened to what politicians, decision makers, professionals, company managers and international bodies had to say about the following subjects:

### 1. The general context for the future

A new era has begun since the end of the cold war. The globalisation of the economy and the general globalisation trend are becoming dominant but have harmful effects on the underdeveloped countries:

- ☐ the three largest fortunes in the world exceed the GNP of the 48 poorest countries. From 1960 to 1980, the gap between the richest 20 percent of the world population and the poorest increased from 30 to 82 times;
- ☐ a third of the people in Africa will not reach the age of 40;
- ☐ 40 percent of women are still illiterate;
- ☐ aid has decreased from a hoped-for 1 percent of the GDP to 0.22 percent of the GDP of the most highly industrialised countries. It is related to particular objectives;
- ☐ democracy, the Rights of Man, the state of law and freedom of the press together with the right to work, to health, to education and dignified development are the subjects of strong demand on a world scale;
- ☐ futurists stressed the phenomenon of the intangibility of economies and the increasing share of the information economy that has now overtaken the agricultural economy;
- ☐ the technical revolutions in information and biology are upsetting the production of knowledge and its mediation and dissemination, whence the danger of scientific apartheid;
- ☐ the observation of a strong break between researchers and educators on the one hand and users and political decision makers on the other makes the prospects of reform uncertain and delicate. Those who know find it difficult to co-operate with those who do.

### 2. The Mediterranean and the Barcelona process

- ☐ The Mediterranean is a zone of proximity between north and south, the route to the oil fields of the Gulf and central Asia;
- ☐ Will there be new Andalusias?
- ☐ The construction of the Mediterranean of agriculture and food is behind;
- ☐ The strategic priorities of the Barcelona process are the integration of central and eastern Europe on the one hand and the association of the southern countries on the other, with the aim of creating a free trade zone in the Mediterranean by 2010. Partnership is designed according to two principles, that of a zone of peace to allow the growth and economic development of the partners and that of real discussion for equality, mutual dignity and responsibility. The architecture of this process has three pillars:
  - political dialogue and security aimed at political reform, democracy and human rights, together with security and good relations between neighbours,
  - economic and financial partnership to reduce gaps,
  - bringing peoples together at the cultural and social levels—in their cultures and societies.
- ☐ This process is seen in different ways;

- by politicians, who see twofold inequality:
    - the specific weight of the north is greater than that of the south,
    - the north is organised in a union approach and the south is dispersed;
  - by professional associations, which say that agriculture has not been taken into account and which are disappointed by the agreements, which should be renegotiated.
- ☐ The dynamisation of the funding available through the MEDA programme should result in better consolidation of the Barcelona process.

### 3. Agriculture and the issues

- ☐ Agriculture is in a transition phase, moving from protection to competition. The traditional forms of crop and animal farming face modernity and scientific and technological discoveries.
- ☐ Agriculture is involved with opinion through the media. Faced with pressing structural constraints, it has an impact on the environment but also has strong points, being able to render commercial services ('green' tourism) and non-commercial services (landscape conservation).
- ☐ Farmers are willing to take up the challenges by developing the presence, strength and role of professional organisations and by participating in decision making. They claim not only political democracy but also social and economic democracy by agreeing to consider the question of what kind of agriculture for what kind of society.
- ☐ The main issues that should require our attention and action are hinged on:
- national and regional food sovereignty,
  - food security from the sanitary point of view and with regard to access to food,
  - the future of small farmers. What kind of agricultural development? With or without smallholders?
  - resource management for sustainable agriculture,
  - Mediterranean development

### 4. What have they proposed to us?

The reply must be simultaneously technical, economic, political and cultural:

- ☐ collaboration should be favoured rather than competition at country, agriculture and training level;
- ☐ as WTO negotiations and reform of CAP approach, action must be undertaken to prepare senior officials. Action must be taken in real time;
- ☐ a public policy watch in the Mediterranean should be established rapidly to ensure a continuous watch;
- ☐ a network of volunteer working groups in favour of the joint construction of Mediterranean agriculture is necessary.

## III – The first results of joint reflection

On the **second day**, the round table procedure and cleverly managed and intense joint reflection enabled us to approach a consensus for each theme addressed:

**1.** In theme I concerning **new profiles and new trades**, the jobs of the future should be apprehended closely for the five main profiles:

- ☐ Project manager (farm, new products, agroindustrial investments, natural resources, professional agricultural organisations, etc.);
- ☐ Production engineer (agriculture, agroindustry and food industry);
- ☐ Developer (transfer of knowledge, services for enterprises);

- ☐ Marketing specialist (technico-commercial work, sales);
- ☐ Innovation expert (creation of new products and services, e.g. biotechnology, advanced appraisals, etc.).

The following **skills** must be provided and developed for these profiles:

- ☐ Relational capability (communication, organisation, leadership);
- ☐ Technical skills (new technologies);
- ☐ Ability to appraise complex situations;
- ☐ Responsiveness (understanding of change, forward-looking attitude);
- ☐ International openmindedness (languages, cultures, markets).

**2.** In theme II on **training operators of the future and new programmes**, the orientation towards **new training approaches** was stressed unanimously. These would be centred on:

- ☐ Adaptation of programmes to users' requirements (interactivity);
- ☐ Flexible programmes (response to change, innovative programmes);
- ☐ Balance and integration of theoretical and practical training;
- ☐ Pluridisciplinarity.

It was also recognised that the training of tomorrow is not the business of teachers alone, but of several operators who must be organised by means of:

- ☐ links between public institutions and private players,
- ☐ combinations of academic and professional skills, and
- ☐ inter-regional and international co-operation.

**3.** The session devoted to **new pedagogical approaches and networks**, led by Messrs. Gherzi and Lasram, underlined CIHEAM's involvement in reflection and in the implementation of **new communication and information techniques** through recognition of their contribution:

- ☐ ease of access to information (speed, quantity and quality);
- ☐ networking of the various participants (students, teachers, researchers and professionals);
- ☐ Personalisation of the cursus (management of time, access to new diplomas);
- ☐ cost reduced by numbers (economy of scale).

These new techniques do not exclude the **other pedagogical approaches** involving:

- ☐ the need for a teacher and tutoring;
- ☐ the usefulness of conventional teaching material (written documents, case studies);
- ☐ field placements (learning by doing), and
- ☐ group dynamics (contacts between students).

**4.** This new pedagogy requires **new methods of co-operation** centred on networks; the participants defined the co-operation actions to be performed in the Mediterranean area:

- ☐ inventory and analysis of requirements (centres of skills, the setting up of a watch);
- ☐ the creation of training consortia (private-public sector partnership);
- ☐ facilities (database, exchange groups, joint tutoring, mobility);
- ☐ the holding of training sessions for training staff.

The **advantages and constraints of the development of co-operation** were also stressed:

with regard to *advantages*:

- ☐ the specific features of Mediterranean agriculture and nutrition;
- ☐ critical size (cost sharing, existence of funding/MEDA, etc., institutional complementarity);
- ☐ need and desire for co-operation (pressure from the economic and social environment);

and the constraints to be removed or corrected:

- ☐ inertia of institutions and individuals;
- ☐ human and financial resources limited to the south and east of the Mediterranean;
- ☐ inadequate political determination with regard to co-operation;
- ☐ co-ordination difficulties.

## A conclusion to the seminar

### What remains for us to do?

Taking into account our individual and institutional experiences, our discussions during the past two days have enabled us to plot the main lines of reflection and actions to be performed between now and 2010 with CIHEAM for:

1. making up for the lag in Mediterranean development;
2. continuing dialogue with politicians and decision makers and rendering it sustainable;
3. continuing the Istanbul work to draw up work plans;
4. reconstructing co-operation.

For Mediterranean development, CIHEAM and the national institutions that have already achieved much should improve the legibility and visibility of their reflection and actions in order to convince politicians, decision makers and international bodies and organisations.

For this, we, the teachers, must:

- ☐ go beyond the academic calendar and take the political calendar into account: Agenda 2000, agricultural renegotiation, free trade zone in 2010, etc.;
- ☐ continue the discussions before and during the Istanbul seminar and sustain it through regular meetings covering the major topics and above all during the training and research processes, which are no longer a monopoly for teacher-researchers.

The new pattern of the global context of politics and economics and revolutions in information and biology means that we must draw up or draw up again the work plans for the IAMs and national institutions to improve individually and collectively our response to the expectations of our clients and the hopes of our products.

Will CIHEAM know how to be the driving force behind partnerships to take up the challenges of the issues that have been mentioned?

