CIHEAM

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS WORKING GROUP

2020-2022

ACTIVITY REPORT



CIHEAM

www.ciheam.org

INTRODUCTION

This Activity Report has been realized by the Ciheam's Corporate working group on Sustainable food systems between March and September 2022.

The report is divided into two parts: the first part explains in general terms which are the problems and challenges affecting sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean area and shows how Ciheam develops its strategy and deploys its action in order to meet regional priorities and contribute to the fulfillment of UN sustainable development goals.

The second part represents a collection of the activities related to sustainable food systems, implemented by the Ciheam during the last three years.

Summary

1 The sustainability of Mediterranean food systems 3
1.1 What is meant by food systems and their sustainability? 3
1.2 The different dimensions of sustainability 4
1.3 The focus on the Mediterranean diet 5
2 Problems and challenges affecting SFS in the Mediterranean region 5
2.1 Policies implemented to address these problems and challenges 7
2.2 Mediterranean common trends and priorities 9
3 CIHEAM's Corporate Strategy on SFS 12
3.1 The SFS working group 15
3.3 The working plan for 2022-2023 15
3.4 CIHEAM tools: 16
COOPERATION 16
RESEARCH 17
EDUCATION 17
INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DIALOGUE 17
4 PORTFOLIO (See Annex 1) 18
TEAM/ CONTACTS 18

1 The sustainability of Mediterranean food systems

The Mediterranean is a region where sustainability issues such as climate change, population growth, loss of biodiversity, pressure on natural resources, soil erosion, high dependence on fossil fuels, cheap, indecent, or lack of job opportunities, especially for young people and women, scarcity and pollution of water resources, migration, food insecurity, and high dependence on imports are concentrated and amplified.

In this context, pursuing the sustainability of food systems represents an important prerequisite for achieving not only food and nutrition security but also social, economic, and environmental sustainability in the Mediterranean area.

In other words, the development of Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) could contribute to improving the development potential of the poorest rural populations, the most innovative food supply chains based on sustainable production, integration, and equity between the various actors in the food supply chain, the promotion of sustainable diets and the progressive integration between agricultural and environmental policies.

1.1 What is meant by food systems and their sustainability?

According to FAO, *"A food system gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.*[1]
The food system is composed of sub-systems (e.g., farming system, waste management system, input supply system, etc.) and interacts with other key systems (e.g., energy system, trade system, health system, etc.). Therefore, a structural change in the food system might originate from a change in another system".[2]

Looking at the complexity of food systems, it follows that, the definition of the concept of sustainability requires an all-around look that takes into account the different dimensions and different sectors involved in this process.

[1] FAO 2018, *Sustainable food systems Concept and framework*

[2] FAO 2018, *Sustainable food systems Concept and framework*

1.2 The different dimensions of sustainability

Sustainability is a holistic concept that must be examined from different perspectives: specifically, this means that to be sustainable, the development of the food system needs to generate positive value along three dimensions simultaneously: economic, social, and environmental" (Fig. 1).

FIG 1 - THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY: *"the activities conducted by each food system actor or support service provider are commercially or fiscally viable. The activities should generate benefits, or economic value-added, for all categories of stakeholders: (wages for workers, taxes for governments, profits for enterprises, and food supply improvements for consumers)".*

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY*: "there is equity in the distribution of the economic value-added, taking into account vulnerable groups categorized by gender, age, race, and so on. Of fundamental importance, food system activities need to contribute to the advancement of important socio-cultural outcomes, such as nutrition and health, traditions, labour conditions, and animal welfare".*

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY*: "it is determined by ensuring that the impacts of food system activities on the surrounding natural environment are neutral or positive, taking into consideration biodiversity, water, soil, animal and plant health, the carbon footprint, the water footprint, food loss and waste, and toxicity".*

SOURCE: FAO 2018, *Sustainable food systems Concept and framework*

Taking into consideration all sustainability dimensions we can state that *"A **sustainable food system** (SFS) is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social, and environmental bases generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised".* [3]

Another concept is strictly linked to the previous and the actions implemented by Ciheam over the last years. It is the concept of "sustainable diets". In fact, the adoption of sustainable diets contributes to the goal of a sustainable food system in its various dimensions.

But what is meant by **sustainable diets**?

"Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe, and healthy while optimizing natural and human resources". [4]

[3] FAO 2018, *Sustainable food systems Concept and framework*

[4] *FAO, 2010, Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity.*

1.3 The focus on the Mediterranean diet

The unsustainability of the food systems in the Mediterranean (which is at the same time a cause and an effect of the challenges related to sustainability in the area), has brought CIHEAM to implement, since 2010, an ambitious, multifaceted program on the sustainability of food systems and diets in the region, using the Mediterranean Diet as a case study[5].

This attention to sustainable and healthy diets derives from the consciousness that in a market-driven economy, the sustainability of the food chain is strongly influenced by consumer choices; therefore, the promotion of more sustainable consumption patterns and eating habits can represent the best strategy to ensure the transition to more sustainable food systems, also with impacts on agriculture and food production.

2 Problems and challenges affecting SFS in the Mediterranean region

The Mediterranean is a region characterized by a deep heterogeneity among, and within, its countries. Today, the region is facing unprecedented and **interdependent environmental, economic, and social challenges** that affect the livelihoods of all Mediterranean people[6].

- **At an environmental leve**l, the region results among the most susceptible areas to climate change, whose adverse impacts are exacerbated by the over-exploitation of natural resources. Many countries are currently experiencing phenomena of *water scarcity, desertification, drought, and loss of biodiversity.*

- **At an economic and social level,** we are assisting the widening of the gap between the advanced economies of northern countries and the region's less developed southern/eastern countries. Inequalities are also increasing at the domestic level: many countries experience higher poverty and unemployment rates (especially among young people), food insecurity, migration from rural areas, and other countries.

[5] *The erosion of the cultural food heritage in the Mediterranean region led UNESCO to inscribe the Mediterranean Diet, in 2010, in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of Humanity*.

[6] New Medit 2021 / Issue n. 3

- **At a cultural level,** changes in Mediterranean societies and roles of women are underway (cf. gender equality and inclusion); new unsustainable globalized lifestyle behaviours have emerged causing a progressive erosion of food cultures and traditional knowledge which is accelerated by a lack of social and cultural innovation.
- **At the health and nutritional level,** the area is marked by the coexistence of malnutrition problems, over-nutrition problems, and food-related non-communicable diseases. These are compounded by the spread of unsustainable unhealthy dietary shifts, sedentary lifestyles and lack of physical activity, food safety and food insecurity, growing public health expenditures, animal welfare, and diffusion of new pandemic diseases (COVID-19).

These trends, associated with globalization, population growth, and progressive urbanization phenomena are driving not only an increased food demand but causing a general fast change in Mediterranean lifestyles, with sharp changes in the food production and consumption patterns.

Concerning food production, the Mediterranean region is still characterized by food loss and waste, speculation on food products and lack of transparency and traceability, low profitability for smallholders, and a persistent mismatch between education and the job market.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the persistent weaknesses[7] which still characterize many contemporary food systems, threatening food security and sharpening inequities. In addition, the connection between infectious diseases and malnutrition has been scientifically proven, and people with diet-related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and children with undernutrition result in a higher risk of death from infectious diseases.

These challenges highlight the importance of having resilient agri-food systems within a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, to respond to global shocks and mitigate their socio-economic impacts.
In this view, it is of utmost importance, to decouple economic development from intensive exploitation of natural resources and induce changes in consumption and production patterns (UNEP/MAP, 2005) through the transition to Sustainable Food Systems and the adoption of sustainable diets focusing on agro-diversity, such as the Mediterranean diet.

An effective transition will be possible only through the "*deployment of concerted actions at multiple levels which include organizational and social innovations, low and high-tech innovations, digitalization, and technologies to protect workers, consumers, and those engaged in the recovery, redistribution, and food disposal"*[8]. Furthermore, the identification of a frame to harmonize different actions and initiatives undertaken by the mosaic of stakeholders (governments, the private sector, and civil society) remains an essential step to ensure their regional effectiveness.

[7] *These include accessing safe, nutritious food at affordable prices when borders close or when movement is restricted; the overdependence on a narrow range of crops; and the vulnerability of employees engaged throughout the food system. Twenty-seventh Session 28 September - 2 October 2020, operationalizing a Food Systems Approach to Accelerate Delivery of the 2030 Agenda Executive Summary.*

[8] *2020, Operationalizing a Food Systems Approach to Accelerate Delivery of the 2030 Agenda Executive Summary.*

2.1 Policies implemented to address these problems and challenges

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), have paved the way for the definition of a new **development paradigm** that takes into account the different dimensions of development. Recognizing the deep interconnections among them is functional for the adoption of a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach that can contribute to harmonizing policy with scientific knowledge and orienting government strategies to improve the well-being of future generations while preserving our planet's natural resources.

In September 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General convened the **Food Systems Summit** (**UNFSS**) to set the stage for food systems transformation (FST) across the globe, to deliver progress on all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through **a food systems approach,** based on **five action tracks**[9] established as a space to share and learn, fostering new actions and partnerships and amplifying existing initiatives. These actions aim to give leverage to the interconnectedness of food systems to tackle global challenges such as hunger, climate change, poverty, and inequality.

At the European level, the European Commission (EC) launched a new growth strategy, called the '**European Green Deal**'[10] which proposes a "European economic transition towards a sustainable and inclusive development model, to improve people's well-being and secure a healthy planet for the generations to come".

The European Green Deal strategy includes a specific component regarding food, called **'Farm to Fork'** which aims to accelerate the transition to sustainable agri-food systems. The EU Farm to Fork strategy aims at building a food chain that works for consumers, producers, climate, and the environment by, among others, ensuring sustainable food production and food security, stimulating sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality, and food-services practices, promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy and sustainable diets, reducing food loss and waste, and combating food fraud along the food supply chain.

Another remarkable initiative is the **Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program**, which aims at achieving significant improvements in sustainable agricultural production and food security, and resilience to climate change.

The CIHEAM is currently implementing different activities related to Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) in the framework of its **Action Plan 2025 for the Mediterranean (CAPMED 2025)** in line, among others, with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The CIHEAM Strategic Agenda 2025 aims at better supporting the transition to sustainable food systems, encouraging multilateral initiatives able to bring countries, private and public stakeholders to work together

[9] Action Track 1: E*nsure access to safe and nutritious food for all*
- Action Track 2: S*hift to sustainable consumption patterns*
- Action Track 3: *Boost nature-positive production*
- Action Track 4: *Advance equitable livelihoods*
- Action Track 5: *Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress*

[10] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

around themes that are at the core of SDGs and to decouple economic growth and use of natural resources in the Mediterranean region. It is structured around 4 pillars: **Protecting the Planet; Food Security and Nutrition; Inclusive Development; Crises and Resilience.**



2.2 Mediterranean common trends and priorities

Several countries and stakeholders of the Mediterranean region have engaged in collective processes to identify pathways for more sustainable food systems based on a common study realized in 2021 by CIHEAM, FAO, and UfM[11].

In 2021, during **the Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSDs**), convened at cross-national, national, and sub-national levels across the Mediterranean by countries and other stakeholders of the region, common challenges and priorities for sustainable food systems have been identified. The main issues identified are summarized in the figure below.

Fig. 1 – Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean [12]



[11] Food systems transformation. Processes and pathways in the Mediterranean. A stocktaking exercise. FAO, CIHEAM & UFM, 2021

[12] Food systems transformation. Processes and pathways in the Mediterranean. A stocktaking exercise. FAO, CIHEAM & UFM, 2021

GREEN AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

PRIORITY	ACTION
The transition toward greener and circular food systems, and climate neutrality	• *finding nature-based solutions; sustainable use of natural resources; reducing pollution; agroecology, biodiversity, and ecosystems conservation, diversified production, integrated pest management (IPM), local seeds; improving animal welfare and minimizing environmental impacts and carbon footprint, especially in the meat/dairy industry.* • *At the economic level, consider the true cost of food, (environmental, health, and social), and boost sustainable financing for SFS in the Mediterranean.*
The need for reliable information and transparency at all stages of food production	• *Management and infrastructure improvement to reduce food loss and waste.* • *Launch of education and awareness campaigns, from producers to consumers.*
National and international regulatory frameworks and fiscal regulations	• *subsidies and taxation*

BLUE ECONOMY

PRIORITY	ACTION
Need to promote greater consumer awareness	• *label or recognition system for Mediterranean seafood products integrating all sustainability dimensions*
Actions to address stocks and biodiversity protection, environmental degradation, and climate change	• *research and innovation.* • *sustainable finance.* • *protocols to monitor and prevent pollution from vessels and aquaculture, promotion of regional networks on best practices.* • *digitalization and improvement of regional data collection on fisheries, and aquaculture.* • *improving traceability of seafood products.*
Increase employability and access to innovation in the sector, especially for women and young people	• *implement targeted social security systems.* • *foster human resource development through capacity-building pathways for small-scale fishers and aquaculture operators.*
Need to improve national legislative frameworks on marine litter collection	• *promotion of regional recommendations*

RESILIENCE

PRIORITY	ACTION
Need to prevent, manage and address the effects of shocks and stressors	• *by developing targeted legal frameworks, methodologies, crisis management plans, and monitoring and early warning systems.* • *to reduce food price fluctuations, expand food storage, and establish insurance systems.* • *resilience-specific" R&D, innovation, and collaboration between countries and across sectors should be promoted.*

MD

PRIORITY	ACTION
Need to raise consumers' awareness to help them make healthy and sustainable dietary choices.	• *Promote better information and awareness-raising campaigns, adoption of consumer-friendly labeling, and packaging product traceability*
Mediterranean countries must renovate and increase their willingness to conserve, support, and promote local food systems through different mechanisms.	• *school meal programs and other social security mechanisms to address food insecurity.* • *fiscal regulations subsidies for healthy or sustainable products and taxes for unhealthy or unsustainable ones) to address issues related to the cost of the food.*
Incentivizing the development of sustainable practices, new technologies, and innovations, and improving institutional communication to promote MD.	

CITIES, URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

PRIORITY	ACTION
Persistence of gap between national policies and local needs	• *Recognizing cities as key drivers of FST.* • *Promoting urban food systems which adopt local multi-stakeholder food governance structures and develop evidence-based local policies.* • *Improving the availability and quality of data and information on food systems at the local level.* • *Promoting food-related local initiatives, as well as food networks between cities and city-to-city exchanges*
Need to increase urban and local productivity	• *Adopting urban/local food policies and systemic approaches* • *Foreseeing local purchasing for school meal programs.* • *Launching education campaigns on food waste and the circular economy.* • *Establishing links with tourism.*

WATER AND LAND MANAGEMENT

PRIORITY	ACTION
Need to improve water use and quality	• *efficient irrigation systems, develop sustainable practices, new technologies, and innovations.* • *promotion of awareness-raising campaigns on the impacts of food on natural resources.*
Need to improve water management and governance at different levels	• *strengthening diversified and combined farming systems through environmental labels and certification; implementing deforestation-free trade agreements; promoting R&D; incentivizing good use while penalizing wasteful/inefficient use by farmers and industry; adopting an integrated systemic approach based on the interlinkages within food systems.*

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LIVELIHOODS

PRIORITY	ACTION
Promoting the livelihoods of all actors in food systems, and focusing on the most vulnerable	• *Strengthening entrepreneurship capacities, business environments, and access to markets.* • *Improve and guarantee access to land rights, finance, training, digitalization, technologies, and innovation.* • *Adopt innovative approaches to promote small-scale actors' inclusion in food systems.*
Addressing gender inequality	• *Increasing access for rural women through different finance mechanisms.* • *Engaging them in larger production scales.* • *Promoting female entrepreneurship.*
Reducing high young people's unemployment	• *better inclusion in decision-making processes, better interaction between education and business, and implementation of youth economic empowerment programs.*
Need to address living conditions in rural areas.	• *create better opportunities for representation and participation of small-scale actors.* • *improving access to better health, services, and infrastructure.*

3 CIHEAM's Corporate Strategy on SFS

The transition to sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean region requires the adoption of a holistic approach that considers *sustainable food systems* as a whole and goes beyond the boundaries of singular fields and disciplines.

CIHEAM focuses its current and future efforts to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supports the transition toward more sustainable food systems and sustainable diets in the Mediterranean region, through collaborative actions and political dialogs.

Its action has evolved throughout the years, refining a science-based and multisectoral approach that takes into account the different dimensions of sustainable food systems (SFS) (political, economic, environmental, social, and health) to better understand the main challenges faced by the Mediterranean region and to respond with integrated, efficient and tailored solutions.

At an operational level, CIHEAM adopts a bottom-up, inclusive, and multilateral perspective, promoting the active involvement of different stakeholders, which are bearers of particular interests but, at the same time, direct observers of national and local dynamics, relevant to the definition of policy frames.

For this reason, in the framework of Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSDs), for the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), that took place in 2021, the CIHEAM has contributed actively to the organization and

management of Independent Dialogues, such as on "Pathways for the future of sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean", which are jointly convened by the CIHEAM, FAO, UfM, OPN-SFSP, and PRIMA[13].

The common priorities that emerged during these dialogues held in 2021 and listed above, represent an important beacon/ lighthouse to which Ciheam looks to define and constantly update its strategy and direction. The aim is to contribute to defining a common path to address the urgent challenges that we are called to face, identifying common objectives and harmonizing policies and actions, and always paying attention to emerging needs and context-related specificities.

In accordance with the necessity of adopting an intersectoral approach to deal with the sustainability of food systems, CIHEAM deploys its activities encompassing all the components of the food chain (not only agricultural production but also the processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption of food) and providing at the same time a comprehensive analysis of agricultural productivity: its impacts on natural resources (e.g., water, land, biodiversity), distortions in agro-food markets, the potential for food production and consumption, income generation, well-being, and employment.

In particular, over the last years, CIHEAM has made considerable efforts in promoting "Responsible consumption and production" (SDG 12), and, through a multidisciplinary methodological approach based on appropriate indicators, it has analyzed the sustainability of food patterns in the Mediterranean, holding several international workshops and meetings[14] on the topic.

As a result of the work carried out, Ciheam identified the Mediterranean Diet as a case study. Based on the concept of frugality and sobriety and the consumption of seasonal, typical, and local products, the Mediterranean Diet can contribute to reducing food waste, strengthening the links between production and consumption, and countering the erosion of food cultures and traditions[15]. It has been demonstrated that adherence to an MD pattern contributes to the preservation of biodiversity, which is essential to ensure all

---

[13] *An executive note entitled "Accelerating Food Systems Transformation in the Mediterranean" was carried out by Partnership after the first SFS-MED Independent Dialogues to highlight key messages on what and how to transform the Mediterranean food systems, as well as the contribution of the SFS-MED Platform to accelerate food systems transformation in the Mediterranean region. The strong partnership (FAO, CIHEAM, and UfM) has conducted a stocktaking exercise of national and independent dialogues that took place in the Mediterranean region, as a starting point to reflect on the ongoing efforts by countries and stakeholders in the preparation and follow-up to the UNFSS*.

[14] *FAO, Biodiversity, Ciheam Bari, in the Symposium on "Sustainable Diet and biodiversity". Directions and solutions for policy, research, and actions. November 2010, Rome.*
International Workshop, "Sustainability of diets and food consumption patterns: the Mediterranean Diet as a pilot study". - CIHEAM-Bari November 29-30, 2011.
International Seminar of FAO and CIHEAM Bari on the Sustainability of Food Systems in the Mediterranean Area. "Towards the development of guidelines for improving the sustainability of diets and food consumption patterns in Mediterranean Area". – Malta, September 2012.
Side-Event of FAO and CIHEAM Bari on "The Mediterranean diet as a lever to improve the sustainability of food systems, production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean region". - May 2016, Rome:
On the 2016 International Year of Pulses, 1st World Conference on the Mediterranean Diet, The Mediterranean diet as a lever to improve the sustainability of food systems, production, and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean region, within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. - July 2016, Milan.
Workshop of FAO & CIHEAM-Bari on "Voluntary guidelines for the sustainability of the Mediterranean Diet in the Mediterranean Region". - 13-15 March 2017, Valenzano (Bari).
2nd MED Forum. CIHEAM and FAO launched a Field Research Initiative for Ph.D. students and young researchers participating in the event. –September 2018, Palermo.

[15] *In this regard, during Expo Milano 2015 CIHEAM launched the **Med Diet EXPO 2015 Call** as well as the **Med Diet 4.0**, which represent innovative tools to highlight the multiple benefits of MD (not only healthy and nutritional but especially environmental, social, economic, and cultural) to promote it as a sustainable food pattern.*

populations have access to good quality food and varieties, enhancing populations' livelihoods in terms of nutrition and health, and empowering marginal population groups, ecosystem health, and culture.
Therefore, through awareness campaigns and food education (especially among young people), CIHEAM has actively promoted adherence to the Mediterranean Diet as a lever to strengthen the sustainability of production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean region.
However, to allow food systems in the Mediterranean to deliver sustainable food and nutrition security to all, it is equally important paying attention to food safety and quality, access to food, population mobility and migrations, animal and plant health, and agricultural markets.

This is the reason why, in addition to its focus on MD, CIHEAM carries on an approach to sustainability and food system that transcends sectoral and disciplinary boundaries, implementing parallel and integrated actions which fall within different areas of expertise, all fundamental to achieving sustainability at economic, social, and environmental levels.

CIHEAM AREAS OF EXPERTISE/ ACTION

- Sustainable Agriculture/ farming
- Sustainable food systems and Sustainable Diets (MD)
- Plant, breeding health, and production
- Horticultural Genetics and Biotechnology
- Food security and quality
- Climate change, agricultural and environmental management
- Conservation agriculture in Mediterranean environments
- Greenhouse gas assessment and mitigation in agriculture
- Agri-cultural Tourism
- Farm Management and Business Economics
- Food value chain analysis
- Rural Communities (resilience, participation, and creation of new job opportunities)
- SMEs' inclusiveness, competitivity, and sustainable innovation
- Institutional strengthening and capacity building

Thanks to the activities of CIHEAM, Mediterranean countries and policymakers can profit from a web of interconnected and interdependent initiatives and services, within an environment (related to food systems), usually very fragmented. Its action is composed of a wide range of instruments, diverse institutional and agroecological projects, research activities, education and training courses, cooperation actions, field experiences, networking, and other opportunities coming from all shores of the Mediterranean.
As CIHEAM we must keep our long experience and expertise available and aim to become a key player in the Mediterranean region in the frame of the EU Neighbourhood Policy. Only by promoting sustainable food

systems as a means of **building regional integration, we can realize our vision of a united Mediterranean region**, where the sustainable development of agriculture and fisheries, food security, and territorial cohesion are the seeds of social stability, inclusive growth, and the well-being and vitality of the region.

3.1 The SFS working group

In 2019, CIHEAM decided to create an institutional Working Group on Sustainable Food Systems (CIHEAM WG-SFS).

This group represents an important place for reflection, exchange, and collaboration, based on the infrastructures and resources of the four CIHEAM Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier, and Zaragoza) and his headquarter in Paris, and the mission of **coordinating the Institutes' work** and **commitment** to the transition to sustainable food systems, **increasing synergies** among the four Institutes, to provide a **stronger corporate vision.**

Capitalizing on the skills and resources of each institute and putting them into a system defining at the same time a common direction for our future actions, will strengthen our role in the Mediterranean region in proving concrete solutions, capacity-building, and policy recommendations in line with priorities defined by national and international organizations.

3.3 The working plan for 2022-2023

CIHEAM will contribute to accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through collaborative actions to support the shift towards more sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean region. This objective will be achieved over two years with various activities:

Activities 1: Policy dialogue, research, knowledge sharing, and capacity development to promote innovative pathways for food systems transformation to accelerate the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in the Mediterranean.

- Facilitation of policy dialogue, science diplomacy, and support to CIHEAM member states to accelerate the Agenda 2030 in the Mediterranean region, by enhancing more sustainable food systems in the region through 1) **CIHEAM Ministerial meetings** to facilitate increased interregional dialogue and 2) **common actions on both shores of the Mediterranean** for a common response to the new challenge posed by the ongoing and unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, the energy crisis and the recent War crisis and political and financial instability in the Mediterranean region, affecting food systems and all dimensions of food security across the region.

Activities 2: Technical collaboration to develop a framework for sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean region, towards the acceleration of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

- Contribution to the co-development and initial functional operation of the "**SFS-MED Platform**" by providing its Coordination Desk, hosted at CIHEAM-Bari, in the framework of the implementation of the existing MoU between FAO and CIHEAM signed in July 2019.
- Contribution to the establishment and the co-development of an "**SFS-MED Platform Community of Practice**", through the continuation of the SFS-web-dialogues, initiated in Autumn 2019, for broader inclusive participation of all interested stakeholders.
- Contribution to the development of innovative multi-stakeholder SFS project proposals for case studies to be scaled-up as SFS-MED Platform **flagship projects**, and multi-sectoral actions with assessable transformative sustainable impacts on multiple and interdependent challenges related to the SDG achievement, following a country context-specific approach.

Activities 3: Advocacy and awareness-raising on the role of sustainable food systems in the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in the Mediterranean region.

- The Organisation and co-organization of **several Meetings** (Roundtables, SFS-Web Dialogues, events, etc.) at country and regional levels, as a contribution to the post-UN Food Systems Summit 2021.
- The Organisation of the **3rd World Conference on the Revitalisation of the Mediterranean diet** focused on the transformation of food systems in the Mediterranean region, as a follow-up of the 2nd World Conference held in Palermo in May 2019, as a high-level regional collaborative event with FAO and UfM, in the framework of the Food Dialogues action track of the UN Food Systems Summit. (CIHEAM – Bari 28-30 September 2022)

3.4 CIHEAM tools:

CIHEAM's major asset is represented by the integrated approach and methodology on which its strategy relies. The action, with which CIHEAM responds to current major challenges affecting the Mediterranean region, is structured around **4 specific and complementary tools:**

COOPERATION

➢ **Capacity-building initiatives** aimed at promoting and supporting the transition of actual Mediterranean food chain conditions towards more sustainable production and consumption systems (enhancing actors' coordination, information management, and business model organization).

➢ The promotion of a smart value chain accompanied by the design of **fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food systems**, and supporting the renewing of the governance of value chains and a circular economy approach that will expand the sustainable products as well offer enormous potential for new activities and jobs.

➢ **Promotion of the Mediterranean Diet** (based on seasonal, typical, and local products) as a lever to strengthen the sustainability of production and consumption in the Mediterranean.

- **Cooperation programs mobilize research** and foster innovation by the introduction of new technologies, organizational innovation, and integrated solutions, targeting the above-mentioned points.

RESEARCH

- The implementation o**f research projects** on the promotion of healthy and sustainable models focusing on innovation tools and good practices to preserve agrobiodiversity and food safety and quality as a key factor to ensure economic performance providing a guarantee that populations have access to good-quality food in sufficient quantities for a healthy and active life.

- Support and improvement of coordination between research institutions and networks. The researchers' network of the CIHEAM Institutes permits dynamic and effective participation in the academic fields at local and international levels.

- The **Field Research Initiativ**e (establish closer links between research and the needs of territories and vice versa).

EDUCATION

- Education, training, and capacity building of students and young professionals (Master of Science, summer schools, professional training, student exchanges, Ph.D., internships, etc.).

- Organization of workshops and conferences.

- Doctoral Platform

- The CIHEAM Alumni Network is a particularly important tool for sharing experiences and networking.

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DIALOGUE

- The animation of networks, and coordination of international, national, and local programs that support more sustainable, more innovative, and more inclusive food systems.

- The organization of and participation in high-level meetings (ministerial meetings and side events).

- Awareness-raising actions and dissemination of information.

4 PORTFOLIO (See Annex 1)

TEAM/ CONTACTS

CIHEAM Working Group:

Roberto CAPONE	CIHEAM Bari	capone@iamb.it
Gianluigi CARDONE	CIHEAM Bari	cardone@iamb.it
Eleni STAMATAKI	CIHEAM Chania	eleni@maich.gr
Myriam KESSARI	CIHEAM Montpellier	kessari@iamm.fr
Mario Anna Maria	CIHEAM Zaragoza	anamaria@iamz.ciheam.org
Ana Maria SANCHEZ	CIHEAM Zaragoza	sanchez@iamz.ciheam.org
Vincenzo FERSINO	CIHEAM Paris	fersino@ciheam.org
Giulia NABORRE	CIHEAM Paris	g.naborre@ciheam.org