

Analysis

Quality and safety of Mediterranean food products

Although the Mediterranean food consumption model is officially recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a benchmark for the rest of the world, recent years have witnessed a radical change in consumption patterns in the Mediterranean, with more and more consumers abandoning the traditional model. On the southern shore, where the change has gone hand in hand with the economic development and urbansiation of societies, there has been a serious decline in the quality of the diet, which in turn has led to an increase in overweight and obesity, especially among the young. This type of malnutrition is thus becoming a real challenge for public health, as we can see from the relevant statistics for the South of the Mediterranean Region: undernutrition in the region is relatively low, affecting just 4% of the population (which nevertheless corresponds to 9 million people), whereas food-related diseases (of microbial or dietary origin) are a particularly serious problem, accounting on average for 55% of all deaths, compared with 35-40% in other developing regions. Food safety and diet are therefore critical variables in any general analysis of current trends in agriculture and food in the Mediterranean.

Fears over food

Man has always been concerned to identify possible risks posed by new foods. As the historian Madeleine Ferrières tells us, in 1669 there was a great debate at the *assises du pain* under Louis XIV on the "new bread" made with brewer's yeast. Was it good for the health? Might it not contain an unknown poison? Was it sensible to eat it? Today we use different words but the problems and fears are the same. The closing years of the nineteenth century, with the development of hygienism, and above all the twentieth century were of critical importance in the history of risk assessment measures. Our attitude to food safety is inconsistent: although we are not prepared to eat contaminated food, we have no misgivings about eating to excess or eating an unbalanced diet. Moreover there are serious flaws in our perception of the problem: perceived risks and genuine risks are by no means the same and we are driven to take all manner of unnecessary precautions.

Today's fear of globalisation is partly a fear of the trend towards concentration of enterprises and standardisation of food, in terms of the ingredients used and what it represents. The mistrust aroused by the food industry's output reflects an ethical response to the intangible impacts of intensive rearing methods and uniform industrialised agriculture, notably on the environment.

Globalised food systems are organised in such a way as to remove any connection between the agricultural production system, the food production system and the consumer, which makes food more vulnerable to contamination. In the northern part of the Mediterranean, a food item from the supermarket will have travelled an average of 1,300 km. The many different stages food goes through between farm and table and the high concentration of industrial systems, which would appear to be well equipped to ensure safety, actually cause a dramatic increase in food risks.

Contents of this edition:

Dossier "Identity and safety of Mediterranean food products"

- **Analysis**

Quality and safety of Mediterranean food products, by Martine Padilla (CIHEAM-MAI Montpellier)

Publication of Mediterra 2007

- **Interview**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle (Executive Director of EFSA)

- **Key figures**

Panagiotis Kalaitzis and Panagiotis Kefalas (CIHEAM-MAI Chania)

- **Links**

News in Brief

- Council of Europe: adoption of a report on Mediterranean agriculture
- Morocco: water resources management in the Doukkala area
- FONCIMED: establishment of an information-sharing network on Mediterranean land issues
- EU: reform of system of aid for fruit and vegetable producers

Publications

Events

Recently published on the Observatory

CIHEAM

General Secretariat

11 rue Newton
75116 Paris
France

+33(0)153239100
www.ciheam.org

The CIHEAM Watch Letter

Editorial Director

Bertrand Hervieu
Secretary General
CIHEAM

Editor in chief

Sébastien Abis
CIHEAM

Scientific Committee

Elena Kagkou
CIHEAM

Martine Padilla
MAIM

Nicola Lamaddalena
MAIB

Antonio Lopez-Francos
MAIMZ

Georges Baourakis
MAICH

Hassane TIII
CIHEAM

CIHEAM

Founded in 1962, CIHEAM is an intergovernmental organisation comprising thirteen member countries from the Mediterranean Basin.

CIHEAM is made up of a General Secretariat (Paris) and four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes (Bari, Chania, Montpellier and Zaragoza)

In pursuing its three central missions (education, research and cooperation) CIHEAM has established itself as a reference in its fields of activity: Mediterranean agriculture, food and rural development.

At present, Mr Abdelaziz Mougou is President of CIHEAM and Mr Bertrand Hervieu is Secretary General.

Food is not like any other commodity; it has economic, environmental, cultural and other intangible implications. Associations have been formed to champion good eating habits, such as Slow Food, established in 1989. This eco-gastronomical movement encourages quality local products and seeks to counter the excesses of the agrifood industry. But, to quote the aphorism of the eighteenth century French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *"there is unease over what we eat, how we produce it and what this implies for what we are and what we might become"*.

Quality – the making of a myth

In recent years it has become widely accepted throughout the world that there is a close connection between improved quality and increased economic growth. This has prompted a rush to improve products and services, in developed as well as developing countries. Many of them see higher standards of quality as a national strategic priority. Experts, economists, and industrialists are unanimous in thinking that quality will be a key issue for all countries in the future, including those of the Mediterranean Region. The idea that quality holds out the promise of wealth is derived from a famous work published by Harvard University in 1985 under the title *"Quality, a strategic weapon"*. It showed that quality was a factor in improving productivity, reducing costs, and increasing market share and profits and concluded that quality represented an almost miraculous remedy to the ills ailing the industry.

Quality means two different things in the agrifood sector: the word may refer to the properties of the product itself (its intrinsic measurable characteristics used for objective identification); or it may be used to evoke the high level of consumer satisfaction it offers (because it is a rare, specific or local commodity, the product of a cottage industry, from a particular region, or destined for a niche market). Quality in the first sense is the basis of designation-of-origin and quality-labelling strategies. In the second sense it conveys the idea that a product is good, distinctive, and just what it should be. In this connection what do we mean by a "specific quality" product?

The distinction between "specific quality" products and products manufactured according to industrial standards has been blurred for various reasons: inclusion of traditional products in industrial product ranges; improvements in the quality of industrial products; convergence of hygiene regulations and tastes; a trend towards industrial production of traditional commodities, as in Turkey, the Maghreb and southern Europe. All of these factors are making the distinction less clear cut.

Is standardisation an essential step ?

The proliferation of standards of all kinds has been widely emphasised. To the South of the Mediterranean there is a genuine determination to implement standards and achieve high levels of quality; however, there is still a significant disparity between the express desire of the authorities and the reality of public sector involvement in the process. Companies in these countries, accustomed to flanking and support measures, have difficulty taking the initiative to reorganise work methods, create, innovate, delegate responsibilities and empower officials and employees.

Does quality guarantee competitiveness? This is by no means certain: although quality standards were intended to make products more competitive, the requirement to comply with them incurs costs, which reduce competitiveness. At present, the cost of compliance accounts for between 5% and 10% of the overall cost of a food item. Universal standardisation, if it were applied, would lead to the disappearance of the so-called "informal" or traditional sector, which ensures that a variety of tastes are catered for and that expertise is safeguarded. Given the high costs involved, only a limited number of products would comply with standards and typical Mediterranean products made from fresh produce might well be forced out of the market or lose their current value.

Bibliographical References

- CIHEAM, *Mediterra 2007: Identité et qualité des produits alimentaires méditerranéens*, Paris, CIHEAM - Presses de Sciences-Po, 2007.
- M. Padilla and B. Oberti (Eds), *Alimentation et nourritures autour de la Méditerranée*, Paris, CIHEAM - Karthala, 2000
- A. Berger, P.Chevalier and M.Dedeire, *Les nouveaux territoires ruraux: éléments d'analyse*, Montpellier, Mutations des territoires en Europe, UMR 5045- CNRS-Université P.Valéry, 2005.
- B. Sylvander, G. Allaire and G. Belletti, *Les dispositifs français et européens de protection de la qualité et de l'origine dans le contexte de l'OMC: justifications générales et contextes nationaux*, Grenoble, INRA, 2005
- P. Stassart, *Produits fermiers: entre qualification et identité*, EcoPolis, Bruxelles, PIE, Peter Lang, 2003.
- Conference "Food Quality Certification: adding value to farm produce", organised by the European Commission, Brussels, 6-7 February 2007

We might also highlight the need to simplify standardisation procedures and associated legal processes, and above all to stabilise international regulations. Increasingly stringent requirements represent serious non-tariff barriers for southern Mediterranean products. The market is restricted both by the absence of international legislation on specific regional products and by overlegislation that seeks to regulate them under general regulations applicable to industrial products. Frequent amendments to international regulations aggravate the difficulties experienced by southern Mediterranean enterprises and cottage industries in bringing their operations up to standard.

Traceability encourages collective responsibility

While standardisation is of limited effectiveness, leads to disproportionate costs and organisational difficulties, and requires a change in mentalities, traceability is clearly indispensable if we are to reassure consumers, empower producers and distributors, and embark upon genuine Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Traceability is essential, not merely for strictly logistical reasons, but also for maintaining and controlling quality, ensuring product safety, establishing relations of trust between players, recalling defective products, ensuring common knowledge of regulatory and legal constraints, etc.

Traceability, like subjection to standards, should not be regarded as a sign of quality, but rather as a means of ensuring quality. The success of a quality control system depends on accuracy of information and rapidity of response. It would seem that a network traceability system is more efficient than a cascade system (but very costly). To ensure that the development of traceability, transparency and quality is sustained, it is necessary to encourage a fair, equitable rise in the Value Added obtained by those at the centre of the process, who have invested a great deal in it. It is also necessary to assess the cost of traceability and compare the ratio of the tracing cost/product cost with that of the tracing cost/cost of a possible health risk.

Cultural quality: Geographical indications and advantages thereof

Products closely identified with a local area are part of a cultural tradition, which tends to be ill served by standardisation: is it possible to standardise and protect products without diminishing them? What qualities does a particular historical tradition bring to the products and how can they be brought to public attention, particularly in the Mediterranean, an area where products, expertise and customs have been exchanged so widely? Anybody can claim that a product is rooted in a tradition or a locality, but if it is to have protection, the producer must be able to demonstrate its deep historical associations, close links with the locality and special technical characteristics, as well as the different forms it might take.

These protective measures also lead to exclusion. Although well-intentioned, they can result in loss of the name and reduced diversity, depending on the way they are implemented. Regulation of origin and indications of quality seem perfectly compatible, but Registered Designation of Origin (RDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Red Label, Mediterranean Label and Conformity Certification are not interchangeable. Supervisory and control procedures should in all cases be less rigid than standardisation measures.

The debate is on: should protective measures focus on the origin of the ingredients or the origin of the expertise needed to make the product? The PGI presents a number of advantages in that it shows that the product has been legally recognised (although the process takes 10 years). It is therefore an important lever for rural development, with a significant role in agritourism, which in turn fosters rural SMEs. Lastly, promoting a product means promoting a territory. The PGI is not without its dangers and whether we choose to protect the basic product or the expertise will have important consequences.

If there is a favourable response to the Mediterranean product (and therefore the territory), it will have an excellent market. But in that case there will be a strong temptation to intensify production to create wealth at the cost of exhausting local land and water resources. Moreover we know that when production is too intensive, the intrinsic quality of the products may be changed (adverse selection). If consumers appreciate the authenticity of the food and the expertise used to produce it, industrial producers and cottage industries in the Mediterranean should organise themselves as quickly as possible to protect their expertise and recipes by taking out patents and obtaining labels. For multinational agribusinesses, always on the look out for a niche market that will increase their income, will use the Mediterranean image to create a market and will seek to obtain typical regional recipes.

Codex Alimentarius

Established in 1963 by the FAO and the WHO, the Codex Alimentarius Commission sets food standards and guidelines on food safety.

Its main objectives are to protect consumer health and to promote fair practice in the food trade.

www.codexalimentarius.net/

Slow Food

An association founded in 1989, Slow Food represents an international response to the harmful effects of the fast-food culture and the growing uniformity of food consumption patterns.

Slow Food in contrast highlights the beneficial effects of choosing to eat local food through programmes designed to educate the palate and efforts to safeguard gastronomic traditions.

Slow Food supports producers who make quality food products, encourages initiatives to promote solidarity in the sector, and promotes a spirit of environmental responsibility.

www.slowfood.com

Conclusion

Standardisation of food products is certainly important and beneficial, although improved health monitoring of local mass consumption products would not necessarily require standards as stringent as European ones. Moreover these measures would mainly apply to products for export, notably to Europe, and so not all national efforts would be for the benefit of the local population. The fact is that southern Mediterranean countries do not have the financial and organisational capacity to invest in standardisation on a very large scale. What guarantees do these countries have that the bar will not be set even higher in a not too distant future ? It is possible to imagine regulations that provide for protection of the environment, fair trade or other matters of concern to the rich countries.

Does not the future lie in a more measured form of standardisation, one that is better adapted to local conditions and takes greater account of local expertise? Could not the southern Mediterranean countries save time and invest now, under the Euro-Mediterranean collaboration scheme, in the most relevant areas: preservation of food and protection of the environment? The nutritional quality and environmental credentials of food products are intangible attributes to which consumers attach increasing importance and which surely point the way forward for the sector.

It is also necessary to bring our concept of traditional foods up to date. Is not a preoccupation with local production necessarily backward looking ? Rather than adopt an unbending commitment to locally produced foods and reject dynamism and progress, it would be more innovative to consider ways of incorporating these traditional products into our own culture. Localised production, as an aspect of cultural diversity rather than a way of preserving fixed inward-looking cultures, could go hand in hand with a changing society and the multicultural practices of the globalised consumer.

The Mediterranean Region offers us a food heritage that is the envy of many. Why not equip ourselves to make the most of this heritage by building bridges between farmers and industrialists, setting up shared information and traceability systems, and establishing suitable ways of distinguishing between different products, not to encourage competition between products in niche markets but to offer as wide a range of products as the consumer might desire ?

We must use the knowledge and wisdom of our forefathers in establishing a modern production system suited to our way of life. We must adopt a tripartite approach that takes account of traditional food, industrial food and sustainable development, reconciling production with care for the environment and biodiversity. This is the right approach to ensuring the future of quality Mediterranean food.

Martine Padilla

CIHEAM – MAI Montpellier

Publication of *Mediterra* 2007

First published in 1999, CIHEAM's annual report is a document of reference reflecting general agricultural trends in the Mediterranean countries. This year it is to be published for the first time under its new name: *Mediterra*.

Mediterra 2007 focuses on issues surrounding the identity, safety and quality of Mediterranean food products and highlights the importance of designation of origin, a guarantee of quality and a safeguard against imitation or relocation of production for many Mediterranean countries.

Maps, graphs and tables provide a detailed set of agricultural development indicators for countries on the Mediterranean Rim. Published in five languages (French, English, Spanish, Arabic and Italian), *Mediterra* offers a basis for discussion and provides officials and professionals with an aid to decision making.



Order *Mediterra* 2007

Les Presses de Sciences-Po
117 boulevard Saint-Germain - 75006 Paris - France
www.pressesdesciencespo.fr - presses@sciences-po.fr

Interview

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

This interview was conducted on 5 June 2007 in Parma, shortly after the international conference, jointly organised by CIHEAM and EFSA, on the subject of the identity, quality and safety of Mediterranean products.

EFSA

Founded in 2002, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is the cornerstone of the European Union's risk assessment operation, designed to ensure food and feed safety.

In close collaboration with national authorities and in open consultation with its stakeholders, EFSA provides independent scientific advice and clear communication on existing and emerging risks

Its headquarters is in Parma, Italy

Information

www.efsa.europa.eu

Q.: In your opinion, what has EFSA mainly achieved in its short history?

It is true that EFSA has not been in existence for very long: this year it celebrates its fifth anniversary. But we should not forget that it benefits from the long experience of European Union countries in the field of food safety. It did not invent scientific risk assessment but I think it has made a difference to it. Not only has it greatly increased the support given to scientific experts in assessing food risks, it has also, I think, made significant progress in improving transparency and risk communication, although much remains to be done.

EFSA has also helped to improve the public decision-making process by distinguishing between different areas of responsibility: that of the scientists, who have to provide opinions and conduct scientific risk assessment, and that of the public decision makers, who must not only take account of scientific findings but also consider other information, on social and economic factors for example, if they are to satisfy consumer expectations.

Q.: In your opinion what are the main areas for cooperation between EFSA, national agencies and other food safety organisations?

Let me first point out that EFSA was established in accordance with rules that were not invented by the European Union alone. In our work we follow international regulations, in particular those of the Codex Alimentarius. You are right to say that risk assessment agencies have been set up by many countries in the European Union and elsewhere (I am thinking of countries in the Mediterranean Basin such as Tunisia). They too observe the international regulations of the Codex Alimentarius.

The areas on which all partners are working and concentrating their efforts were referred to today in Parma at the seminar:

- How can we do more to organise ourselves?
- What can we do to ensure that institutions always operate effectively and provide citizens with a better service?
- Which legal and regulatory framework best enables us to deal with present and future risks?
- How can we work with partners in the food sector to empower players in all areas and at all stages of food production, upstream and downstream, from cowshed to table, from the field to the plate?
- How can we best communicate with consumers?

These are everyday concerns at EFSA. Today the same questions demand a response from all countries in the Mediterranean zone.

CIHEAM-EFSA Conference

On 5 June 2007 an international conference on the identity, quality and safety of Mediterranean products was held in Parma (Italy) at the headquarters of EFSA.

Jointly organised by CIHEAM and EFSA, the event was attended by nearly a hundred experts and decision makers from the Mediterranean Basin.

At the close of this conference, CIHEAM undertook to examine the possibility of offering a Master's degree on food safety at one of the MAIs and organising a short training course for food safety operatives.

This theme might be on the agenda of the 7th meeting of CIHEAM member countries' Ministers of Agriculture, which is due to be held in 2008 in Spain.

Q.: How might EFSA help the southern Mediterranean countries make their food-risk assessment systems more effective?

I think we should begin by getting to know each other better and we have made a start today. Such an initiative demands a deeper engagement on our part. I do not think Europe has any lessons to teach other regions of the world: there have been times when it too has experienced food safety problems. So we need to pool our experiences, tell each other what has worked well and what has not worked so well. At the same time we must take account of particular contexts and problems, given that circumstances are not the same in all countries.

In any event I think EFSA might make a modest contribution to countries in the South and other parts of the Mediterranean in terms of its experience in organising the work of scientific assessment, communicating with consumers and raising their awareness of risks.

It can give other countries advice on setting up their own agencies. But it should also be willing to hear about the specific needs of countries (I am thinking here of the Mediterranean countries) so that it can give them the right support.

Q.: How do you envisage future cooperation between EFSA and CIHEAM in this area?

I am pleased that a partnership has been established between EFSA and CIHEAM. It is particularly gratifying in that the work we have done and will be doing in the future concerns countries that have common ambitions and plans and are already accustomed to working together.

So as far as we are concerned it is easier to work alongside and with the support of an organisation such as CIHEAM, because it offers everything I have just mentioned: countries that are used to working together, wish to embrace the values, plans and identity common to Mediterranean countries, and wish to share the best of themselves with the European Union.

Interview by Hassane Tlili

Journalist specialising
in agricultural and environmental issues.

"Farm to Table": European policy on food safety

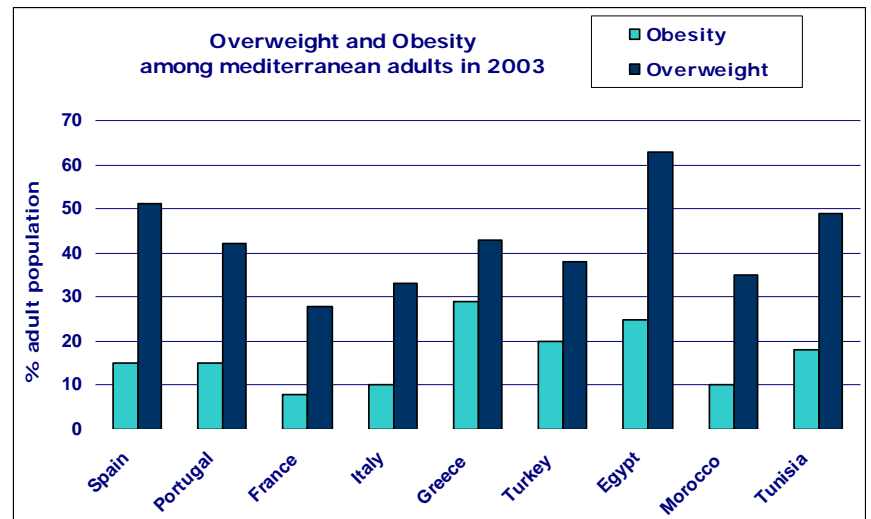
The European Union's food safety policy is designed to promote a high standard of food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health within the European Union through coherent farm-to-table measures and adequate monitoring, while ensuring the effective operation of the internal market.

The policy consists in:

- *providing for effective control systems and evaluating compliance with EU standards in the food safety and quality, animal health and welfare, animal nutrition, and plant health sectors within the EU and in third countries in relation to their exports to the European Union.*
- *managing relations with third countries and international organisations in matters relating to food safety, animal health and welfare, and plant health;*
- *seeking scientific advice when preparing European food legislation.*

Key figures

- **18%**: proportion of the Mediterranean population over 15 years of age suffering from obesity.
- **54%**: percentage of deaths in 2002 related to foodborne microbial diseases or nutritional disorders in the Mediterranean (1.8 millions deaths).
- **4%**: proportion of the population suffering from undernutrition in countries to the South and West of the Mediterranean in 2003 (9.2 million people).
- **80%**: share in all Mediterranean products with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) certification filed with the European Union (a total of 762 products at present) of the five big EU countries (Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal).
- **48%**: combined share of Spain (13%), France (18%) and Italy (17%) in world production of quality wines (with PDO, GPI or TSG certification) in 2005.
- **16%**: share of the Mediterranean Region in world fruit production in 2005 (compared with 26% at the beginning of the nineteen-seventies).
- **13%**: share of the Mediterranean Region in world vegetable production in 2005.
- **31%**: share of Spain in world olive oil production in 2005.
- **10%**: combined share of Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt in world olive oil production in 2005.
- **36%**: share of the Mediterranean Region in world date production in 2005 (of which Egypt alone accounts for 20%).



Sources

FAOSTAT (2006)
WHO (2006)
CIHEAM (Mediterra 2007)

Dossier prepared by
Panagiotis Kalaitzis
Panagiotis Kefalas
CIHEAM - MAI Chania

MAI Chania

The MAI of Chania (CIHEAM-MAICH) is participating in a number of new European research programmes, including:

The TRADEAG (Agricultural Trade Agreements) project, which is intended to provide decision makers with help in putting in place the necessary instruments in preparation for liberalisation of agricultural trade;

The FARVALDI project, which promotes cross-border cooperation to conserve regional agrobiodiversity;

The FIRE Paradox project, which addresses the multiple contrasting consequences of forest fires in the Mediterranean.

Information:
www.maich.gr

Links

International Portal on Food Safety, Animal & Plant Health
www.ipfsaph.org

European Food Information Council
www.eufic.org

World Organisation for Animal Health
www.oie.int

Fondacion Dieta Mediterranea
www.dietamediterranea.com

News in Brief

Best CIHEAM theses for 2006

The Governing Board of CIHEAM, at its 117th meeting held in Parma (Italy) on 7 June 2007, decided to award the prize for the best CIHEAM MSc thesis for 2006 to

Mr Bouabid Badaoui (Morocco) for his work at the MAI of Zaragoza on "*Molecular analysis of the goat lipoprotein lipase*"

and to

Ms Sofia Nikolaidou (Greece) for her research at the MAI of Montpellier into "*Socio-spatial change and the future of agriculture in peri-urban zones: a study of viticulture in Messoghela (Attica, Greece)*".

CIHEAM Emeritus distinction

The Governing Board of CIHEAM, at its 117th meeting held in Parma (Italy) on 7 June 2007, conferred the title of "Emeritus professor of CIHEAM" on three lecturers-researchers formerly at the MAI of Montpellier, who have recently retired:
Alain Bourbouze,
Pierre Campagne, and
Guillermo Flichman

Council of Europe: adoption of a report on Mediterranean agriculture

On 25 June 2007, at one of its ordinary meetings, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted report no 11301 "*Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and rural policy*". The rapporteur, Mr Walter Schmied, Chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, introduced his document and presented its recommendations in the presence of Mr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In spring 2007, the General Secretariat of CIHEAM had been called upon to help prepare and draft this rapport.

Morocco: water resources management in the Doukkala area

In Morocco, a pilot scheme designed to help farmers in the Doukkala area (centre-west of the country, south of Casablanca) to manage water resources better was launched on 11 June 2007 as part of the country's National Water Plan. The object of the plan is to reduce loss of water during irrigation operations through restoration of infrastructure and improved management of the resource. Mr Mohand Laenser, the Moroccan Minister of Agriculture, Rural development and Fisheries, said that the initiative had a threefold purpose: to improve food security, increase agricultural exports and raise farmers' incomes. The Spanish government was contributing 920,000 euros to the project and the FAO was providing technical assistance. It should be noted that work carried out under the project should, among other things, enable the authorities to make a very precise assessment of the present state of water resources in the Doukkala zone, draw up a plan to modernise irrigation systems and devise participatory extension methods with the beneficiaries, taking particular account of the situation of rural women.

FONCIMED: establishment of an information-sharing network on Mediterranean land issues

This project is mainly a response to anthropogenic pressure in countries in the Mediterranean Region, whatever their level of development. This pressure, of varying strength in different areas, may be the result of urban sprawl, tourism, or changes in rural land use. In the past, work by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier's network on modernisation of Mediterranean agriculture (MODAM), set up by Pierre Coulomb, demonstrated the value to researchers from different disciplines of a dialogue focussing specifically on land issues, whether in relation to research, education or institutional transfers. A convergence of public organisations' research interests and institutional directions (those of INRA and CIHEAM in particular) suggests that the time is right for a new series of exchanges on the land question in the Mediterranean Region. The FONCIMED network, now being set up, has a Mediterranean, multidisciplinary and inter-institutional dimension and is intended to be a forum where researchers and practitioners can share their experiences, methods and research findings on the subject of land. Steps are now being taken to find funding that will enable the network to operate for an initial period of three years. For more information contact Anne-Marie Jouve (CIHEAM-MAIM, jouve@iamm.fr).

European Union: reform of system of aid for fruit and vegetable producers

On 12 June 2007 in Luxemburg, the EU's Ministers of Agriculture succeeded in reaching a political agreement on reform of the system of community aid to fruit and vegetable producers. The reform is intended to increase competitiveness, ensure that producers are better prepared to manage crises and confront major distributors, and provide better protection for the environment. Aid to producers under the new agreement, which will enter into force in 2008, will be paid according to the number of hectares cultivated and not the volume of output. It involves the principle of "decoupling of aid", which has governed reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) since 2003 but has not been applied to the fruit and vegetables sector until now. The new reform, by providing for a system of specific aids, will encourage producers to affiliate themselves to professional organisations, which will strengthen their position vis-à-vis big retailers. It also makes certain concessions to major fruit and vegetable producing countries to enable some of their more vulnerable sectors to adapt to the new requirements. The text of the reform contains provisions specially designed to promote organic agriculture. On this score the 27 EU member countries have agreed to new regulations for organic products, which will bear a unique European label and will be required to comply with more rigorous safety standards in 2009.

MEDROPLAN

Launched in 2003 under the European Commission's MEDA Water programme, the MEDROPLAN project (Mediterranean Drought Preparedness and Mitigation Planning) is being coordinated by the MAI of Zaragoza. The findings of operational research into drought in the Mediterranean will be used to promote drought preparedness and/or minimise the impact of drought on populations, agriculture and other economic sectors.

"Drought management guidelines" have been drawn up and were presented to the 3rd project seminar in Marrakech on 15 and 16 May 2007. An international network for drought preparedness is also being set up.

The Drought management guidelines are the fruit of four years of close collaboration between scientists and professionals from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia.

The European Commission has approved the extension of the MEDROPLAN project until June 2008, during which time educational activities will be organised and the results of the project will be made available.

Information:

www.iamz.ciheam.org/metroplan

Publications

European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, *Scenar 2020: scenario study on agriculture and the rural world*, January 2007.

Jean-Paul Emorine (Ed.), *Avenir de la filière agricole à l'horizon 2050*, information report No 200 to the French Senate, Commission des Affaires économiques, Paris (France), January 2007.

Helga Willer and Minou Yussefi (Eds), *The World organic Agriculture: statistics and emerging trends 2007*, IFOAM, Bonn (Germany), February 2007.

European Citizens' Panel, *What Roles for Rural Areas in Tomorrow's Europe?*, Brussels (Belgium), April 2007.

Iglesias, A., Cancelliere, A., Gabiña, D., López-Francos, A., Moneo, M., Rossi, G. (Eds), *Drought Management Guidelines*, CIHEAM-IAMZ, MEDA Water Program (European Commission), Zaragoza, May 2007.

FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2006*, FAO, Rome (Italy), 2007.

Sub Rosa, *Exploring scenarios for rural Europe: the future of agricultural policy*, report by Pareto Consulting, Brussels (Belgium), May 2007.

Fondazione Qualività, *The role of the products of quality in the Italian agricultural and food exports and the phenomenon of the agropiracy*, Quaderni Qualività No 05, Siena (Italy), May 2007.

European Commission, White Paper, *A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues*, Brussels (Belgium), COM (2007) 279 final, May 2007.

OECD-FAO, *Agricultural Outlook 2007-2016*, Joint OECD-FAO report, Rome (Italy), July 2007.

Events

27-30 August 2007 - Paris (France)

International conference on "Continental Biosphere. Vegetation and Water Cycle: Analyses and Prospects", organised by INRA (*information: <http://www.inra.fr>*)

19-20 October 2007 - Rabat (Morocco)

Conference on the Economic, Social and Environmental Consequences of Trade Liberalization in North Africa and Middle East, organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (*information: <http://www.uneca.org/atpc/colloque.asp>*)

24-27 October 2007 - Istanbul (Turkey)

"Aquaculture Europe 2007: Competing claims": Scientific conference and exhibition on present and future challenges for aquaculture in Europe, organised by the European Aquaculture Society (*information: <http://www.easonline.org/>*)

29-31 October 2007 - Bologna (Italy)

Colloquium on "The Role of Cooperatives in the European Agro-Food System", organised by the International Association of Food and Agro-industrial Economy (*information: <http://aiea2.stat.unibo.it/en/nevents.htm>*)

8-9 November 2007 - Rabat (Morocco)

FAO seminar "quality food products linked to geographical origin and traditions in the Mediterranean" (*information: seminaire-mediterranee@fao.org*)

CIHEAM Mediterranean Observatory

Recent publications

Mediterra 2007

- Executive summary of the new CIHEAM annual report, *Mediterra 2007, Identity and quality of Mediterranean food products*.

CIHEAM Analytical Notes

- "Potential alliances for Turkey in coming WTO agricultural negotiations?", by Berna Türkekel, No 20, June 2007
- "French Academy of agriculture and the sustainable development", by Pierre Marsal, No 21, July 2007
- "The state of natural resources in Malta", by George Attard, No 22, July 2007
- "Share of the Mediterranean in world fruit and vegetable production", by Roberta Giove, No 23, July 2007

CIHEAM Briefing Notes

- *The Wasamed project*, by Nicola Lamaddalena, No 24, April 2007
- *Conclusions of the 3rd regional workshop on water and sustainable development in the Mediterranean*, by CIHEAM and BLUE PLAN, No 25, April 2007
- *Statistical data on agricultural workers in the Mediterranean*, by the General Secretariat of CIHEAM, No 26, May 2007
- *The Mediterranean: our horizon*, by Bertrand Hervieu, No 27, May 2007
- *Gaining recognition for the identity of Mediterranean fruit products*, by Habiba Hassan-Wassef, No 28, June 2007
- *The Olive tree in Palestine*, by Jean-Marie Baldassari, No 29, July 2007
- *Irrigated areas in Tunisia and their strategic importance in increasing agricultural output*, by Abderraouf Laajimi, No 30, July 2007

* * * * *

CIHEAM Mediterranean Observatory

An instrument for analysis and discussion
of Mediterranean agriculture, rural affairs and food

Version française
www.ciheam.org/observatoire/

English version
www.ciheam.org/uk/observatoire/

Contact us
observatoire@ciheam.org

The CIHEAM Watch Letter

Every quarter
CIHEAM issues its
Watch Letter in English
and French.

The next issue will be
published in
October 2007

To receive
the Watch Letter,
contact observatoire@ciheam.org