2nd meeting of the AGRIMED Task Force
Friday December 10, 2021

MINUTES

Opening Remarks

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission (CPMR-IMC), opens the Task Force meeting explaining that it was created to implement the recommendations of the “Agriculture and food security in the face of climate change in the Mediterranean” report. This report was drawn at the initiative of Région Sud and subsequently presented to and unanimously adopted by the European Committee of the Regions’ Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) beginning of 2021.

As a follow-up of the 1st meeting in July 2021, this meeting addresses the issues related to climate change and food sovereignty, as well as the challenges linked to agriculture and food in the Mediterranean with a specific focus on food systems, food safety and food security.

To begin, Robin Guillou, Responsible for environmental, agricultural and maritime issues at Région Sud, Coordinator of the AGRIMED Task Force, gives an update on what has been done at the European level concerning the central issues of this Task Force:

- a proposal for a regulation on the EU sustainable food system, with the aim of integrating sustainability into all food-related policies. It will establish rules on the sustainability of food products, a minimum criterion for sustainable public procurement of food, and it will lay down the governance and monitoring of sustainable food systems.
- a proposal of a directive on food waste with a specific reduction target.

Both proposals are under preparation and public consultations will be open from the 1st semester of 2022. The adoption of these texts should take place in 2023.

He adds that a European working group to protect the Mediterranean diet would be created as per announcements of December 02, 2021. This joint initiative of both the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies and the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the main objective of promoting and protecting the Mediterranean diet.

Given this political momentum at EU level, he argues that we should collectively reflect on what we could do to make the voice of local and regional authorities heard in these institutional processes. He concludes by recalling the importance of public consultations as a good opportunity to intervene – also by contributing to the drafting of position papers.
PART I: INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS AROUND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

The first part of this meeting focuses on sustainable food systems and is the opportunity for representatives of international organizations (FAO) to present the discussions that took place during two main international events: the Food Systems Summit of the United Nations (23rd Sept. 2021, New York) and the COP26 (31st Oct. 2021/12 Nov. 2021, Glasgow). It concludes with a specific focus on the water and climate nexus, with an intervention of a representative of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Jamie Morrison, Director of the Food Systems and Food Safety Division (ESF) at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – FAO, presents the United Nations Food Systems Summit, held during the UN General Assembly in New York on the 23rd of September 2021. The Portfolio of Action about the Food Systems Transformation Pathways and Strategies captures the work of an 18-months pathway, which has been fueled with an inclusive dialogue during the COVID-19 pandemic context. The focus has been given to the role that food systems have on people, the planet, and prosperity.

During the Summit, several areas of action have been identified around their desirable outcomes:

- e.g., feeding all people and ensuring that the number of people who suffer from hunger is significantly reduced by 2030. This objective can be achieved through nature-based production solutions.
- building the necessary resilience of food systems, especially in response to climate change.

He underlines that the development of the areas of action is one of the most important outcomes of the Summit, along with the national dialogues.

Independent dialogues on the “Food Systems Transformation Processes and Pathways in the Mediterranean” also took place in the framework of this Summit and will result in a publication to be released by the end of 2021, with the ambition of providing a basis for advancing the transformation process in the Mediterranean regions. The main priorities that have emerged from these dialogues between the regions are sustainable land and water management, the Mediterranean diet as a lever for sustainable consumption production (SCP), as well as urban-rural linkages. Resilience, trade and the green and circular economy are also other important issues to be considered.

He pinpoints the so-called Sustainable Food System – Mediterranean Platform (SFS-MED Platform), in partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). This platform aims to:

- Support the implementation of the national food systems transformation pathways
- Co-design flagship projects and investment proposals
- Network for fostering knowledge sharing and capacity building
- Sustain the regional cooperation and multi-stakeholder dialogues

In conclusion, he mentions the importance of the Food Systems Coordination Hub hosted within the FAO which will provide several functions outside the support offered to the countries’ implementation of the pathways. It will be connected to other relevant structures of coordination, taking advantage of different stakeholders’ involvement.

(Switch in the agenda between 2nd & 3rd speakers)

Johannes Cullmann, coordinator of the Water and Cryosphere department at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), gives a presentation focused on the water and climate nexus. Firstly, he recalls that water, intended not only as drinking water but also linked to the food security problem, is among the main challenges of our days due to climate change. Indeed, he observes that soil moisture, even with an optimistic projection of a 1.5°C increase in global warming will have a strong impact on food productivity,
which is also being affected by the reduction of meltwater used for irrigation. Another issue he presents are the limited existing capabilities to produce warnings around droughts, flash floods and riverine floods. Today, 46% of States members of the WMO have inadequate drought and flood forecasting systems and only 33% are reaching the 2/3 of the population at risk.

He recalls the importance of food security that should be linked to the changing boundary conditions, to the risk that otherwise only short-lived solutions will be produced. Water and climate issues should be addressed as a single challenge, and for this purpose, the Water and Climate Coalition has been created. The Water and Climate leaders – a panel of representatives of UN Members, civil society, and the private sector – aim to set and pursue an integrated global Water and Climate Agenda. The Coalition aims to strengthen the global water system, regulate changes in the water supply and to foster cooperation to create networks between countries.

He insists on the following key messages:

- Every centigrade of increasing temperature matters in terms of hydrosphere and agriculture productivity.
- We must mitigate the water crisis and reverse the current trend of losing water.
- Food security must also consider the amount of carbon that can be used in our soils and released into the biosphere.
- We need to have efficient information systems and share the data, which can be useful to foster cooperation.

Robin Guillon then asks both speakers for their views on the role of local and regional entities in dealing with the water and climate issue and in implementing Sustainable Food Systems solutions in the Mediterranean area, as well as whether we can imagine a more independent role of the local authorities which would not only be nourishing the reflections of the Member States or not.

Johannes Cullman underlines the importance of cooperating with local and regional authorities. For example, in the framework of the global monitoring system, it is crucial to strengthen the local capacity of releasing information to the communities about the resources’ condition for their optimal management. He then stresses the fact that more cooperation between the regional administrations and the private sector is needed, as it is the main resources manager and has a significant impact on food production and on the overall regional economy. It is also worth noting that the cooperation process with the private sector’s agents should ensure that not only the biggest players are heard but also that most people have a voice.

James Morrison agrees with what has been said and points out that one of the most efficient levels of action is the municipal one. Globally, over 70% of food is nowadays consumed by people who are living in urban areas, which has implications for producers living in the closest areas, particularly for the intermediate and small cities where there is a real opportunity for local producers and small-scale producers to start feeding those growing urban areas. Concluding his intervention, he mentions the disconnection between national policy frameworks and the needs of municipalities, which they are working on to create an efficient dialogue.

Zitouni Ould-Dada, Deputy director at the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment at the FAO presents the results at COP26 (Glasgow, 30 October 2021/12 November 2021) about food systems. On the one hand, he recalls the four main objectives of the COP26 presidency – mitigation, adaptation, financing and international collaboration.

On the other hand, the FAO’s objectives advocated at the COP26 were:

- Making the agri-food systems an integral part of the solution to the climate crisis;
• Supporting countries in the climate negotiations – particularly on the Koronivia Joint Work and on agri-food systems adaptation and resilience to develop tools and policies to be able to respond to the impact of climate change;

• Reinforcing the commitment to continue supporting countries to raise ambition and enhance actions, particularly linked to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), their national adaptation plans (NAPs), and climate finance.

Among the main initiatives arising from COP26, we note:

• the pledge on Global Methane that has been signed by 109 countries to reduce global methane emissions by 30% by 2030;

• the US-China Joint Declaration, which aims to combat illegal deforestation by banning the import of illegal timber and to reduce methane emissions particularly from the agricultural sector;

• the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land signed by 141 countries representing about 91% of the world’s forests, that aims to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030.

• The announcement of the African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027, as the plan of sustainable recovery of Africa from COVID-19 pandemic.

• The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, which recognizes the unique potential of agriculture in combating climate change and Article 6 for Carbon Markets.

He concludes by reminding us that COP27 (7/18 Nov. 2022, Sharm el-Sheik) will be mainly based on four pillars: Water, Food and Agriculture, Adaptation, and Energy.

Robin Guillon asks: “how can you explain the gap between global media, which reported the tensions on the theme of agriculture during the negotiations and these concrete achievements?”

Zitouni Ould-Dada stresses the fact that COP26 was really the meeting with the most focus on food and agriculture, which was also of great interest to the private sector. He refers to the success of the decision on the carbon market (Article 6), which according to him has a clear impact on the agricultural sector and stresses that solutions must come from all sectors of the economy. He adds that while the agri-food system contributes in about one third of the global greenhouse gas emissions, agriculture is part of the solution: nature-based solutions have the potential to reduce emissions by 30% by 2030.

Robin Guillon concludes the first part of the meeting underlining the importance of COP26 regarding food and agriculture, which will also be a focus in the next meetings of this TF.

PART II: CONTEXTUALIZING FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGIONS

The second part allows to contextualize the topic of sustainable food systems for Mediterranean Regions with a discussion on the feedbacks from the survey filled in by some member regions after the 1st meeting of this Task Force. The Director of the PRIMA (Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area) program also intervenes to provide the regions with possible solutions to their identified challenges.

Juliette Olivier, Project and Policy Officer at the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, presents the answers to the follow-up survey to highlight existing initiatives on the subject comment on the potential Task Force orientation over the next two years.

Firstly, she notes that many ongoing projects aimed at the revitalization of short channels and the promotion of local products and diets exist, as well as various projects aimed at finding solutions for water scarcity, dedicated to the development of food technology, and others addressing the connection between the food and tourism sectors, and the promotion of organic farming.
Secondly, the Regions consider European Union funds (EAFRD, Interreg, LIFE) as a priority, followed by national and regional funds and, as strategic partnerships, those with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the FAO and the European Union are prioritized.

Lastly, among the strategic priorities that the AGRIMED Task Force could address in the framework of a 2-year roadmap, were underlined:

- The access to water and energy technologies for sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean with a strong reference to the issue of access to water for agriculture, and the impact of water scarcity on food security.
- The awareness raising on agriculture among young people with an emphasis on generational renewal in rural areas and the need to boost the connection among rural and urban areas.
- Residually, the strengthening of the links between tourism and sustainable agriculture.
- Residually, the promotion of a fair food chain with fair prices.

Javier Nadal from the Balearic Islands Region presents the territorial projects underway linked to the topic of “Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty” and funded by the Regional Government of the Balearic Islands. One of the most important and innovative projects is the public purchase of food, a public acquisition of food (fruits, vegetables, meat and milk) from the primary sector for the distribution to the social entities of the Balearic Islands. The acquisition respects the social and environment quality criteria, even though it has not been an easy process in terms of public purchase regulations compliance, in which the price represents the most important criterium for purchases. This project has activated producers from the local primary sector and the main positive effect has been that public entities like hospitals, schools, and residences are now buying local food.

Another initiative he mentions is the Local Product Committee to analyze the positioning of local agri-food products in the Balearic Islands and improve their marketing. All agents of the food chain are involved in proposing actions to improve the promotion and marketing of local products. In conclusion, he believes that it is crucial to involve other sectors, such as the tourism sector, and to make young people and tourists aware of these issues.

Natale Giordano, member of the Standing Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (COPPEM), focuses on the Mediterranean Diet defined as the intangible humanity heritage by the UNESCO in 2010, pointing out the linkage between the Mediterranean diet and the Sustainability Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Robin Guillon presents the contribution of the Région Sud and argues that their Regional Food and Agricultural policy is aligned with the Regional Climate Master Plan, established in 2017. Several projects are financed by the European Agriculture Fund for Regional Development (EAFRD) but also by the regional and national funds dedicated to agriculture. In addition to projects dedicated to the sustainability of agriculture, Région Sud created a Plan for the Competitiveness and Adaptation of Agricultural Holdings which is dedicated to the adaptation of farms to climate change, combining sustainable economic, environmental and social objectives. Nevertheless, the main challenge is to develop and maintain their regional production strategy (e.g., wine and olive oil, among others) in order to ensure that each regional agricultural segment benefits from support tools for their competitiveness. In this sense, advisors are hired to supervise the quality label and the origin of the products, which is essential in terms of food sovereignty. Another initiative is the Programme Alimentaire Territoriaux (PAT), which is a territorial food programme which aim is to promote efficient short food channels.
In their projects, he underlines the essential combination of EAFRD funds and the regional and national ones. Other interesting programmes are worth mentioning, such as LIFE, PRIMA and Destination 2 of the cluster 6 of Horizon Europe, with a new section addressing Sustainable Food Systems.

Furthermore, he reflects on the importance of the strategic partnership between the FAO and the CPMR in order to ensure that local and regional authorities have a dedicated voice. As priorities and objectives for the future, he mentions the building of a Euro-Mediterranean Agriculture Market Observatory based on the work of this Commission and stresses the importance of the Mediterranean Product Label’s creation, which would fully recognize the added value of the Mediterranean Diet and would represent a concrete economic opportunity for the stakeholders engaged.

In conclusion, he remarks that a greater presence is needed within European Institutions and reminds the participants of the two ongoing initiatives at the European Commission – the Regulation on the Sustainable European Union Food Systems and the Directive on Food Waste. He underlines the importance of visibility not only to make our voices and positions heard but also to obtain funds.

Anna Castellví Méndez, from the Generalitat of Catalunya, explains that the Strategic Food Plan for Catalonia 2021-2026 is the result of a two-years work with consideration to European Food policies, the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as the Sustainable Goals of the 2030 Agenda. According to this plan, the food system must take into account four dimensions:

- Sustainability, Transformative and Circular Bio-Economy;
- Locality and Rootedness in the Territory;
- Fairness, Equitability, and Cohesiveness;
- Health and Reliability.

To achieve these objectives, actions will be implemented such as the creation of food public procurement law, similar to the one from the Balearic Islands, and help the producers to avoid food waste, also by supporting their local products on the online distribution networks. Other initiatives to be mentioned are the creation of the Agri-Food Chain Observatory, the promotion of the digital and technological transformation of the Agri-Food system and the support to business models based on the circular Bio-Economy. She points out that also the projects linked to the Mediterranean Diet are among their interests.

In response to a question from a participant about the role of cities in developing their regional strategies, Anna Castellví Méndez emphasizes that the development of the strategies was based on an open participatory process throughout 2020 and that it has extended to all the territories of Catalonia. Different economic agents and consumers also have been involved.

Robin Guillon also emphasizes the engagement of different kinds of stakeholders in Région Sud’s initiatives, such as national and regional administrations, academia, actors involved along the food chain, and representatives of the civil society (associations of consumers, NGOs) and the “Social and Solidarity Committee.”

(Contribution read by Elodie Nunes)

Roberto Ciambetti, President of the Veneto Regional Council notes the vast majority of Italian cities, territories and regions are calling for decisive action to combat climate change, to act in favour of eco-sustainable development and are ready to play their part. He also underlines those cities and territories must be protagonists of the actions and policies undertaken and planned at global level. In their reflections, circular economy represents a development model that allows the protection of resources (raw materials, water, and fossil fuels), the preservation of biodiversity and the fight against climate...
change. Then, he recalls that the involvement of research and training institutions, the innovative business community and civil society is certainly important.

Regional experiences involve several projects related to the sustainable management of water and forms of purification and valorisation. These projects also address energy sustainability and carbon-content waste streams (LIFE BEWARE project, LIFE WSTORE2, LIFE VAIA, etc.). It is important to act on the management and efficiency of the production system through innovative integrated technologies that allow the transition from a linear economy to a circular economy. By doing so, we obtain measurable socio-environmental performance that are in line with the objectives of the Green Deal and global strategies. Finally, he bounces on irrigation as a key component and a strategic resource for ecological transition.

Octavi Quintana, Director of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area – PRIMA concludes the second part of this meeting by presenting the PRIMA program, a foundation program run by 19 countries in the Mediterranean – from 11 EU and 8 non-EU countries – in order to finance Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean to face the challenges that have been also mentioned in this Task Force (climate change, water scarcity, agricultural practices, population growth, among others). The PRIMA programme issues calls each year under four priorities: Water Management, Agricultural Systems, Agri-Food Value Chain, and Water, Energy, Food and Ecosystems.

Various projects exist on:

- **incremental adaptation related to farming, food, and water**, with activities such as selecting varieties (e.g., new varieties of legumes, cereals, others), planting times, and spacing. Other projects deal with systems adaptation and transformational adaptation across sectors.
- **mitigation** with carbon sequestration projects (CAMA, 4CEMED, CONSERVA TERRA, RECROP) and projects aiming at reducing the presence of methane, nitrate, and phosphate (FISH-FOTOCAT).
- **soil conservation and circular economy**. Two objectives of the latter are both the valorisation of agricultural and by-products for production of animal feeds (from the waste of winery, orange juice production, and olive oil food industries by-products) and the valorisation of by-products for production of new products, food additives and packaging (DAINME-SME, Pulping, BiorangePack).

In the context of climate change adaptation, the SUPRAMED project provides a holistic crop-livestock water management system resilient to climate change. Another example is 4CE-MED, a system used for different environmental conditions which uses a cash cover crop (Camelina). Camelina decreases soil erosion, increases soil water availability and biodiversity, hence farm revenues.

He concludes by recalling that research and innovation priorities for the coming years, defined in the agenda prepared with the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Commission, are climate change, renewable energy and health.

Elodie Nunes asks to Octavi Quintana how the regions can participate in the PRIMA program. He replies that a call is opened every year – the draft content of the next call can be found here, though the final document and the calls for proposals are expected to be published by January 2022.

**PART III: SOLAQUA PROJECT – OUTLINING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR SOLAR IRRIGATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

In the third part, updates on the H2020 SolaQua project are presented, in which CPMR-IMC is a partner. This project deals with irrigation powered by solar panels which leading to irrigation with lower water costs and lower carbon footprint.
Juliette Olivier presents the updates of the H2020 SolaQua project which aims to increase the share of renewable energy consumption in Europe by facilitating the market uptake of photovoltaic irrigation systems (PVIS) in the farming sector.

She recalls that in the Mediterranean area, irrigated land represents 10.2 million hectares, and is of great economic importance as it accounts for more than half of the value of agricultural production in the basin. However, irrigated land is also associated with a high level of energy and water consumption – it accounts for 44% of total water use in Europe.

To this issue an alternative exists: photovoltaic irrigation systems. Their implementation would allow to greatly reduce CO2 emissions and water consumption. Still, PVIS require investments, careful maintenance and higher energy costs. This is where the SolaQua project comes in: it will try to overcome these problems through the following main objectives:

- The development of a Standardized Power Purchase Agreement;
- The development of best practices in Energy Procurement, Construction, Operation and Maintenance to ensure the quality of the PVIS;
- The certification of installers and projects to ensure the reliability of PVIS;
- To facilitate the creation of pools of PVI projects to reduce the cost of production.

Over the past months, the SolaQua partners have worked to create several materials and tools – which are now available on the SolaQua website – to facilitate the implementation of Photovoltaic Irrigation Systems. The partners produced:

- A technical guide for photovoltaic irrigation installers which includes best practices and quality control protocols. It is an important document in order to assess the suitability of projects for a range of issues including bankability and obtention of grants.
- An economic assessment for photovoltaic irrigation which includes a techno-economic assessment oriented to investors and Banks (IRR, NPV, LCOE) and a cost-benefit assessment oriented to Public Authorities (socioeconomic impact, CO2 emissions avoidance).
- A Power Purchase Agreement for photovoltaic irrigation which is a standardized contract that protects consumers and investors. It aims to ensure the quality levels and legal protection. It has already been implemented in a 1.5 MW PV irrigation system.

Very relevant for Public Authorities, the partners are also developing an EAFRD financial instrument for photovoltaic irrigation which will consist of guarantees and loans for PVIS projects. Combined with subsidies, this instrument can reduce the cost of clean energy for irrigators to competitive levels. It should be implemented in the next Rural Development Plan (RDP) in at least three managing authorities in Spain. It can be easily replicated in other RDPs across Europe.

Next year, the SolaQua project will organize many dissemination actions such as seminars to present these useful documents. All necessary information will be published on the website and shared with our member regions.

Elodie Nunes concludes the meeting together with Robin Guillon by announcing that in the next months the CPMR-IMC is going to develop a collective strategy as to address the challenges of this Task Force.

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