First meeting of the AGRIMED Task Force

Tuesday 6 July 2021

MINUTES

Opening remarks

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission (CPMR-IMC), opens the Task Force meeting announcing that it will address on the one hand, the issues related to climate change, food sovereignty, challenges and solutions regarding agriculture and food in the Mediterranean. In particular, representatives of international organisations will explain their work and how they are complementary on these issues and two experiences coming from projects on which we would like to capitalised on will be presented.

On the other hand, the second part will present specific solutions for greener agriculture in the Mediterranean with a specific focus on the H2020 SolaQua project on solar irrigation in which the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission is involved as partner. In this project, the CPMR-IMC will work with its Member regions to understand how the solar irrigation systems contribute to the greening of agriculture, what are the existing legislations and what can we do about it.

Finally, she points out that this first meeting of the AGRIMED Task Force is also the opportunity to start “implementing” the report on “Agriculture and food security in the face of climate change in the Mediterranean.” This report, for which the Région Sud was rapporteur, was presented to the European Committee of the Regions’ Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) beginning of 2021 and adopted unanimously by its members. It represents the first step to mobilizing territories in a coordinated way to adapt practices for sustainable food systems in the basin.

PART I: Facing climate change, challenges and solutions for sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty in the Mediterranean

Agnès Rampal, Deputy Mayor of the City of Nice, Rapporteur for the Report of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly of the European Committee of the Regions (ARLEM): “Agriculture and food in the face of climate change in the Mediterranean” recalls that this report comes at a time when the Farm to Fork (F2F) and biodiversity strategies are being discussed at EU level and the United Nations World Food Programme has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Besides, the international agenda in 2021 has a strong focus on food sovereignty and security issues, as well as on respect for biodiversity. The messages in this report will resonate well in the future.
This report highlights the **link between agriculture, food and food security**. It proposes **concrete solutions** for the 22 neighboring countries and pleads for a **real Mediterranean food sovereignty** based on a **reinforcement of cooperation between local and regional authorities** of the EU, and of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. In the annex of this report, a catalogue of **good practices in the Mediterranean** illustrates that many solutions already exist and shows that we can turn the situation around if we **implement a real resilient Mediterranean agricultural policy**.

The aim of the report is to **initiate a renewal of the agricultural sector** that is sustainable, that offers decent incomes to farmers and that would preserve the health of the populations thanks to our **Mediterranean diet**, revalued and recognised in terms of its benefits, and that would make it possible to conserve the very rich biodiversity of our Mediterranean hotspot, in accordance with the 2030 UN agenda and of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and with the Paris Agreements.

The report is structured in three parts: (1) the State of play in the Mediterranean, (2) Agronomic recommendations and (3) Policy recommendations for macro-regional cooperation. They can be consulted [here](http://cpmr-intermed.org).

**Robin Guillou**, Responsible for environmental, agricultural and maritime issues at the Région Sud, Coordinator of the AGRIMED Task Force gives some interesting ideas for the future of this Task Force:

- To develop synergies between the themes of water and food
- To position oneself on the opportunities of the Green Deal
- To foster the macro-regional integration of these themes on a Mediterranean scale
- To establish links with other actors working on the subject: UfM, EU, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), etc.
- To maximise the exchange of good practices and the ability to position oneself in a common and collective way within the framework of common positions
- To ensure that past and ongoing projects are capitalized on and leave the door open for collaboration via partnerships

In the medium term, the Task Force would position itself on 2 project objectives:

- Structuring an “European Observatory” for agricultural markets, resilient agri-environmental practices and sustainable food systems
- Structuring a “Mediterranean Products” or “Mediterranean Diet” label with a specification and communication plan

He adds that 2021-2022 represents a political Momentum, with the [2nd UfM Inter-Ministerial Summit on Environment and Climate](http://cpmr-intermed.org) in October 2021 in Cairo and the [IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille](http://cpmr-intermed.org) in September 2021.

**José Valls Bedeau**, from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), presents the Mediterranean Platform for Sustainable Food Systems recently established with the UfM and the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) in the framework of the Joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The idea is to provide a background of the general approach to sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean and how they are working with the partners to create the platform.

More than 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Diets foster hidden costs, i.e. the difference between the market price of food and its comprehensive cost to society (e.g. environmental costs), which are not reflected in the final price of food, while the target of ending poverty by 2030 is unlikely to be met. Agri-food systems employ
the most people – 1 billion people worldwide – and one knows that food systems are highly dependent on natural resources. They are affected but also are affecting climate change (GHG emissions, cause of biodiversity loss). Besides, 14% of the food produced is lost from the post-harvest up to the retail level. Providing enough food to meet the needs, in terms of quantity but also quality of a growing population, while improving the livelihoods and preserving the natural environment is key.

Sustainable agro-food systems are linked to the delivery of healthy diets that are dietary patterns promoting all dimensions of people’s health and well-being. They have low environmental pressures and impacts, they are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable, and they are culturally acceptable.

Promoting sustainable food systems means that it is necessary to tackle the three sustainability dimensions:

- Economic: to ensure that the activities generate benefits for all categories of stakeholders.
- Social: to ensure an equitable distribution of this economic added value while taking into account the vulnerable groups.
- Environmental: to ensure that the impact of all activities is neutral or positive for the environment.

There is a need for a multistakeholder approach.

He adds that the FAO is looking at Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) in the Mediterranean, keeping people as the key actors and targets of the system. Elements to have an impact are those such as data and evidence to understand interconnections and interdependences, multi-stakeholder partnerships, finance and investment, innovation, sustainable technologies, digitalization, education, capacities and awareness-raising. Alongside these elements, engagement, collective understanding, capacities development, further dialogue and cooperation are needed.

The FAO, CIHEAM and UfM came together to create the **Memorandum of Understanding** in 2021. It consists of 3 areas of cooperation with identified activities:

- Work together on policy dialogue, research
- Technical collaboration to develop framework for SFS in the Med.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising on the role of SFS in achieving the 2030 Agenda in Med.

The SFS-MED Platform is a multistakeholder initiative that aims to trigger collective actions for food system transformation leveraging UNSFS outcomes at the regional level, to strengthen a context specific SFS approach to integrate and address thematic issues, to develop innovative pathways, and link Sustainable Consumption and Production using the Mediterranean Diet as a powerful common lever.

**Alessandra Sensi**, Head of Sector Environment and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) recalls the [UfM Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy](#), specifying that one of the UfM’s ministerial priorities for 2021 is “sustainable food from the sea,” referring to fisheries and aquaculture.

The **1st UfM Ministerial Declaration on the environment and climate change in 2014**, which had for main topics de-pollution, pollution prevention and climate change and focused more on the sea than on land, paved the way towards the **2nd UfM Ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate Action of October 2021**. This meeting is planned to focus itself on the topics of green, circular, socially inclusive economy at the Mediterranean level, building and accelerating the shift, and on land-sea interactions.

The UfM tries to bring together the Northern and Southern Mediterranean areas through different tools, initiatives, and projects (Interreg Med, ENI South).

**Elen Lemaître-Curri**, Deputy Director, International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM–Montpellier), presents the Mediterranean Agricultural Market Information Network (MED-Amin...
Network. It is an observation and information network on agricultural markets in the Mediterranean, set up in 2014 by the ministers of the 13 Mediterranean countries of the CIHEAM to better prevent crises on agricultural markets. This network cooperates with the FAO but also with the European Commission (EC) and French institutions. It provides information on the markets and aims in particular to build confidence between the actors of the Mediterranean market and promote knowledge sharing.

Two examples of network’s productions:

- Since 2014, the network has been supporting countries to better anticipate crises in crop monitoring. Crop forecast information bulletins are produced three times a year in partnership between CIHEAM in Montpellier, the EC and the focal points in the countries. They are composed of statistical data on yield and remote sensing, which allow the production of analyses and simulations. In the end, this makes it possible to feed an early warning system.

- Exchange of market information in partnership with the International Cereal Centre. Despite the lack of real time information on the production of the countries, meetings with market experts who exchanged their harvest forecasts allowed to have a certain vision in the future.

This year, MED-Amin is developing a new action plan:

- Consolidation of an early warning system,
- Strengthening political cooperation and strategic partnerships,
- Analysis of key issues to anticipate crises and structural changes,
- Work on more quantitative crop forecasting,
- Involvement of non-state actors in early warning systems and training programmes continue.

Other initiatives and projects include:

- The 3rd World Conference on Food Systems to be held early 2022.
- Cooperation on observation and foresight in the Mediterranean on broader issues of sustainable development.
- The Interreg Europe project on the reduction of food losses.
- The MOAN network on organic farming.

Roxane Fages, Project Manager for Sustainable Food and Consumption at the Directorate of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (DRAAF) – Occitanie Region, illustrates the region has taken ownership of the issues of agricultural sustainability and food sovereignty, which are priority issues in the region. In 2016, the budgets devoted to agriculture and agri-food increased by 46%, and has become a priority for the region since 2018.

The Occitanie regional agricultural policy is based on a major citizen consultation carried out in 2018 (consultation of residents, professionals, associations and the research field). The results led to the emergence of the main lines of action, which were then submitted to a citizen vote and resulted in the “Food Pact for a sustainable food supply in Occitanie,” adopted at the end of 2018.

The Food Pact has given a new direction to the regional agricultural policy, and the Region wishes to respond to the challenges of climate change and the demands of citizens. Among its flagship actions are:

- Promoting the region’s agricultural and food heritage, with strict specifications and allowing the know-how of Occitanie farmers to be promoted;
- Re-territorialisation of food in order to create value on the territory and make it a driver of economic development.
• Accompanying and supporting agricultural actors to initiate the agro-ecological transition (researchers, producers, agri-food industry, etc.) to finance projects. This includes the organisation of participatory budgets to encourage the emergence of initiatives.

Since 2020, with the observation of the fragility of the food system following the crisis, as well as with the European Green Deal that the President of the Region wished to implement at the regional level with the “Green New Deal”, which has been the opportunity to amplify the actions carried out over the last three years on food and adopted in July 2020:

• To support the actors with a new contractualisation method, that is the creation of sustainable agriculture contracts to encourage farmers to think about a global sustainable exploitation project by integrating the stakes of the territory,
• To facilitate access to land, for projects that are not necessarily supported by banks for example,
• To explore food solidarity with the “eating well for all” operation aimed at distributing fresh and local products to food aid beneficiaries. As data, 1 million foodstuffs were purchased in 1 year.

During the debate, Agnès Rampal returned to the proposal for an Observatory to gather good practices in order to influence policies, install strong dynamics, ensure that these good practices are put in place in other regions and that this subject is appropriated by all territories according to their specificities.

José Valls Bedeau supports the objective of creating a network of networks and insists on the fact that many initiatives have to be centralised. He argues that platforms centralising data already exist, but a platform focused on solutions is still needed.

Carmela Cotrone, from Campania Region, agrees with this idea but insists on the gap that exists between the regional and local levels. She observes that these international Mediterranean principles and policies that want to implement a sustainable strategy almost never reach the local level. She thinks that bringing training to the local level is the most important way to achieve these goals and this represents a task for the regions.

Robin Guillou asks what synergies could be envisaged between the AGRIMED Task Force and the MED-Amin network, taking into account the need for greater regional involvement.

Elen Lemaître-Curri explains that the MED-Amin network operates with few resources but relies on the voluntary and active involvement of countries, which shows a real need. Three challenges were identified, notably continuity, the dissemination of information beyond the technical services in the countries – here the link with the regions could be crucial – to the users of this information, and finally the issue of connection and exchange with the political level at national and local levels. She sees opportunities for collaboration on these issues.

Alessandra Sensi says that the work of the Task Force is a good objective for the future in order to capitalise on the momentum generated and stressed the importance of federating actors at the local level.

Jean-Marc Faures, FAO – Coordinator Regional Office Near East and North Africa, insists on the importance of the Mediterranean Diet label, which brings together the three dimensions of sustainability. Concerning the idea of an observatory, he has the impression that many information platforms on agricultural practices already exist; he nonetheless points out that they are not specifically Mediterranean and thus there might be an entry point here to avoid replication. He observes that too often there seems to be a gap between the solutions thought at the international level and the reality on the ground: the criteria of the producers are not always the same as those of the politicians and therefore a vision close to the producers is necessary. This raises the question of financing, and the role for the private sector in a more sustainable agriculture. Incentives must be found that allow producers to earn a living while managing their land in a more sustainable way.

Sylvain Doublet, Head of bioresource activity at SOLAGRO, presents the LIFE AGRIADAPT project on “Climate
change adaptation measures, competitiveness and sustainability of Mediterranean farms in the future.” The idea was to show the impact of climate change on three types of systems: livestock farms, field crop farms and permanent crop farms. One of the big difficulties was to find the right concepts to talk about climate change issues with farmers. The aim was to collect farms in the 4 main climate zones of Europe – about 50 farms in total. Four stages of learning process were established:

- Starting from the assumption that farmers do not know their vulnerability to climate.
- Show them agro-climatic information for the next 30 years.
- Show them the risks of climate change in their specific case. The degradation of the climate vulnerability of each farm.
- Show them the adaptation measures that can be imagined in the short and medium term.

The idea was to provide enough information for farmers to take climate change into account in their farm decisions. Agro-climatic information had to be created during the project. Indicators such as thermic stress indicator on cereals, humidity and temperature indexes were used.

Then the project worked on adaptation measures, underlining that it is necessary to adapt to a trend, to consider the increasing inter-annual variability of climate/crops, and take into account increasing extremes. Adaptation measures can be of three levels. Depending on where the farmer is in his journey, the advice must be adapted to the existing situation:

- For production farms: diversification of varieties and crops, soil improvement, crop or system modification with more extensive systems such as organic systems.
- The same is true for livestock systems.
- Finally, an observation was made for vineyards.

Four key measures can be highlighted to these identified situations:

- The diversification of cultures, adaptation of livestock buildings to heat waves, soil health, extensification.

During the project, the difficulty was particularly related to the access of agro-climatic data: www.agriadapt.eu is a platform where all the calculations made can be found. A new platform called Canari will go further in processing climate data for agro-climatic data.

Carmela Cotrone, presents the Interreg MED Md.net project on the Mediterranean Diet, a multifactorial opportunity for agriculture, health, food sovereignty, Euro-Mediterranean interregional cooperation, initial/continuous training. She underlines the effort to translate the principles of the Mediterranean diet into a working plan at local level through this project.

The objective of the project is to face, through a mix of innovation and tradition, the challenges and opportunities of the international market to control desertification and depopulation. To do this, a sustainable strategy is needed beyond the duration of the project. To date, the strengths of the Mediterranean Diet have been listed in a database (agricultural products, tradition, landscape). In addition, ideas on the Mediterranean diet were produced through local laboratories with the help of young people. This is currently being transferred to the transnational level.

At the same time, work has been done on a label gathering local actors who accept to be part of the Mediterranean Diet declaration. 5 to 8 ideas were selected and pooled at a networking festival to try to build transnational clusters for networking products and services to help territories enter the international market. This, to respond to the fact that companies normally working on Mediterranean diet products are very small and
therefore not very competitive.

As a result, an Agency has been created to put together territories on the basis of: values, relevance and integration. It has three permanent themes to be developed: (1) to contribute to promote UNESCO principles, (2) to implement the programme FAO-Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, and (3) to support the implementation of the international strategy.

Robin Guillon concludes the first part of the meeting by thanking the participants and highlighting the fact that the local and regional authorities of this Task Force must position themselves as the legitimate and reference interface between macro-regional initiatives and the implementation of operational projects on the ground. He adds that a questionnaire will be shared with the members of the Task Force in order to better define its activities.

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PART II: Solutions for a greener agriculture in the Mediterranean

Julio Pombo, Project Manager at the Polytechnic University of Madrid, Leader of the SolaQua project shows a video introducing the main objectives of the project. He recalls that irrigation is the basic component of Mediterranean agriculture – more than half of the value of Mediterranean agriculture depends on irrigation – and it needs a lot of energy.

In Spain, 25% of the total energy consumption of agriculture is needed just to pump water for irrigation. Irrigation is a key component of Mediterranean agriculture, not only economically but also in relation with carbon emissions: if we want to make the Mediterranean agriculture sustainable, we need to make irrigation sustainable. This is the context of the SolaQua project.

In order to introduce solar irrigation system, a number of improvements is needed to be able to present competitive alternative in terms of price and in terms of reliability to the farmers and the irrigators.

The SolaQua project will start by producing the materials and technical tools that reflect the state of the art for monitoring the problem. Secondly, the project will produce a reference for all farmers to prove that the technology works. Finally, the project will work on adapting and improving existing public support programmes and regulations to suit this technology.

The project partners are working on creating standards that can lead to a competitive cost of clean and reliable energy for irrigators with a reduction in cost and an increase in the reliability (e.g. certified installers and projects, standardized Power Purchase Agreements, produce large pool of photovoltaic projects).

The consortium is composed of relevant actors, including several managing authorities and their collaboration is crucial to overcome the problems related to regulation. Indeed, problems related to regulation or to the regulatory process can hamper the development of photovoltaic (PV) irrigation systems. Therefore, the SolaQua project is developing good practices on photovoltaic regulation to support managing authorities on a number of issues. It examines various elements in different regions, such as how long it takes to obtain a licence to introduce a photovoltaic system or who to contact to obtain a permit.

The project also aims to take advantage of the EAFRD and the financial instruments it contains to encourage photovoltaic irrigation systems. It should be a resource to be shared by many managing authorities.

Overall, photovoltaic irrigation represents a great opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of agriculture in the Mediterranean and to foster its implementation, the role of the managing authorities of Rural Development Plans is crucial to reduce regulatory barriers and to take advantage of European funding.

Juliette Olivier, Project and Policy Officer at the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, presents the activities so far developed by the CPMR-IMC in the framework of SolaQua, notably the mapping of legislation regarding
Solar Irrigation (SI) in the Mediterranean.

She starts by sharing the observation that complex and differing regulations affect SI across EU countries and regions, and beyond. It is a crucial aspect to facilitate the SI market uptake as local regulatory frameworks can facilitate or hinder it.

Therefore, one goal of the SolaQua project is to produce a set of best practices for SI-regulation and supporting policies, to serve as a reference or well-informed policy making and a tool to improve existing regulations in all the regions suitable for SI.

To do so, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission aims to analyze the different regulatory frameworks and experiences affecting SI in Europe and beyond and create a report containing guidelines and best practices. For that, a survey has been sent to the IMC Member regions to provide information regarding the administrative, technical, and financial issues that hinder the implementation and development of solar irrigation systems on their territories. The guiding questions of the survey were:

- How are the regulations (if any) governing photovoltaics, irrigation, and photovoltaic irrigation implemented?
- What support measures exist for photovoltaics and photovoltaic irrigation?

The results will be compiled in a report (Fall 2021-Winter 2022) providing an analysis of the legal and administrative barriers to SI introduction, while also gathering best practices to capitalize on (incl. in the use of EAFRD financial instruments).

To give some overall observations so far, it seems that many regions do not have solar irrigation technology yet implemented. In the case where they do use solar irrigation, we observe that:

- The percentage of the irrigation sector connected to the electricity grid is very low.
- Various limits exist regarding PV power installation (e.g., low capacity of the network infrastructure).
- Still, in most regions, subsidies for solar irrigation exist (national level, EU level (CAP, EAFRD).

Finally, we note that many regions are in favor of a special legislative framework for solar irrigation.

To conclude, Juliette insists on the fact that it is important to have the input of the public authorities in order to know the problems they may encounter on this subject on their territories.

Elodie Nunes concludes by inviting all Regions to spread the survey and announces that the CPMR-IMC will also come back to them to understand the implementation of related financial instruments.