

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

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On behalf of the Mediterranean Committee of FIPA (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) I express my welcome to the International Conference on the important theme of water and land resources in the Mediterranean region. The Committee of FIPA that I have the honour to preside, has already dealt with these problems on two occasions, suggesting indications and proposals. The first meeting, in which the CIHEAM was represented by its President, Mr. Pisani, took place in Cairo in April 1993; the 2nd was held in Antalya, Turkey, in September 1993, with the participation of the Agricultural Commission of the Council of Europe, headed by the President Scheer.

The indications resulting from the two meetings are the following: to diversify the productions, improve the quality and typicality of products emphasizing the specificity of each land area. Moreover, the need of a joint action was envisaged in order to:

- i) develop irrigation through the correct use of water resources;
- ii) stimulate research and the use of alternative energy sources;
- iii) improve the relationship between agriculture and research with a view to enhance, by appropriate technologies and a correct and rigorous use of biotechnologies, all the potentials of each territory.

### The Mediterranean: area of cooperation or dangerous powder-keg

I wish to evoke that the Mediterranean Basin will soon become the second most populated area in the world after Asia. About half a billion men and women live today in this area. It is an excellent market but a dangerous powder-keg as well, which risks to explode if the most urgent problems like feeding, migration, ethnic and religious conflicts are not adequately solved.

Agriculture can be a decisive tool on which to work to determine the conditions of a balanced development of the area contributing to overcome conflicts and oppositions either between the Arabs and Israeli, among different Arabic States, or among non-EEC developing countries and non-EEC industrialized countries. Before signing the peace treaty, Arabs and Israeli have already demonstrated to be able to overcome the ideological contrasts and develop cooperation in the field of agriculture. This is the most important result of the activity of the Mediterranean Committee of FIPA.

In Cairo first and then in Antalya it was stated that farmers can and must find by themselves consistent forms of cooperation in order to suppress or minimize conflict competition, emphasizing the «regional» specificities through quality.

The goal is difficult and far-reaching but it is up to farmers to build their future, to be the masters of their destiny, without expecting everything from governments or other institutions. The agricultural organizations indeed should fight for a new economic and social policy based on the principle and strategy of re-equilibrium: territorial, productive and social reequilibrium. These objectives can be achieved by adequately using the concerted and integrated programmes, set out by the European Union.

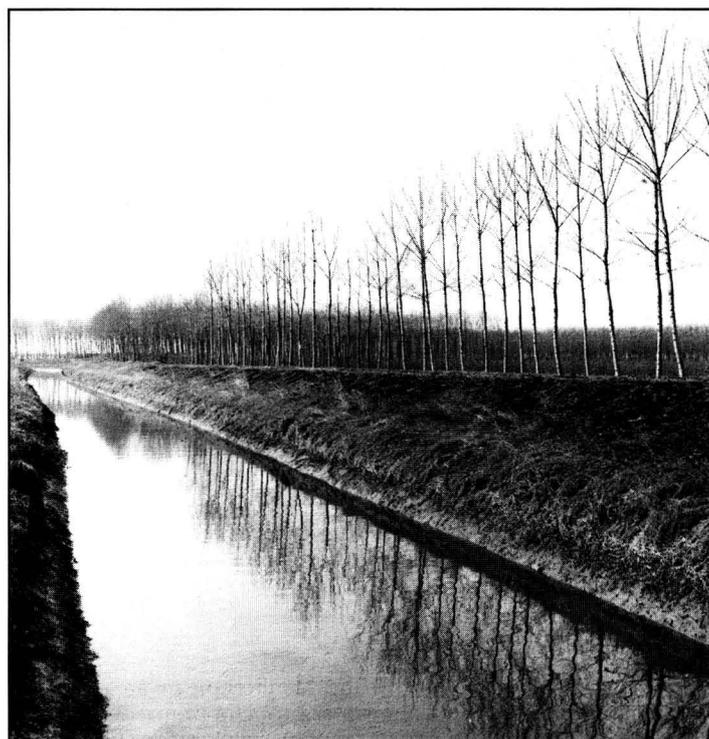
Between the EEC and the non-EEC Mediterranean countries, there is a condition of conflict competition: the crops grown are the same, they ripen in the same period and reach the same markets.

Developed countries have the advantage of a higher productivity, developing countries, the smallness of costs; conflicts are not attenuated and become a kind of «war among poor» one should try to close.

The solution does exist and is based on crop diversification, on quality and typicality related to the area, which allows each country to use its own specific resources. It is possible to differentiate seeding calendars or to get specialized in a particular segment within the same area. For example, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey produce tomato like Italy. But an agreement could be reached so that the former produce tomatoes for purée and Italy, for peeled tomatoes. This allows room for everybody. If these guidelines originate from a reflection of farmers themselves, they can be easily implemented. Governments should favour these choices by appropriate policies.

### The understanding between Arabs and Israeli points the way

It is evident that the rich countries are mostly interested in cooperation, because conflicts make everything unstable. In any case, there are natural convergences which might favour the balanced development of this area. The understanding, reached by Arabs and Israeli, to which the Mediterranean Committee has positively contributed by promoting meetings and cooperation on the theme of agriculture, by minimizing tension, will certainly favour the action for the development and economic and cultural growth of all the Mediterranean countries.



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With this in mind, the Mediterranean Committee of FIPA has drawn the attention of the European Union to organize a Mediterranean Agricultural Conference. The Conference should be arranged by the Community with the farmers' representatives being directly involved. It has been wrong from EEC to have defined a new common agricultural policy without considering the agricultural status of the other Mediterranean countries outside the EEC. The 1st Forum on the Mediterranean agriculture held in Antalya approved such an approach. I am sure that the vice-Prime Minister and the Minister of Agricultural Resources, I thank for being present here, direct sign of the awareness and interest for agricultural problems, will support such a request in Brussels. The European Union being open to other Northern countries, such as Sweden, Norway, Finland and Austria, a reflection on the necessity to define the key points of a balanced development is urgent and necessary.

### Science, technology and information for cooperation

To lay the bases for a progressive integration is a must to avoid the contrast between less favoured and more developed areas. This is possible today if, starting from agriculture, we set out a consistent action based on science, technology and information, made free from ideologies and nationalism. Cooperation makes everyone more certain, it allows migration flows to be planned in relation to different economies and mutual needs. It is more economically viable for everyone to establish and keep good relations among the Mediterranean countries rather than building customs barriers which could be always overtaken it is as demonstrated every day. Arabs and Israeli have finally understood this and have entered the way of peace. On the way of cooperation we could advance more quickly using agriculture as support.

### Primary point: water

The re-growth of agriculture in the Mediterranean area dictates tackling and adequately solving water problem primarily. Without water it is not possible to plan a modern development of produc-

tive agriculture, based on crop diversification, quality and typicality. Water is crucial to allow the productive activity to be «governed». We should work towards establish in the short run a single national Authority, charged of managing research, use and cost of water for agriculture, within each Mediterranean country. In Italy, there are lots of Bodies which are involved, at different levels, in water problems; but results are negative, as everybody can experience. The situation is more or less similar in the other countries.

The establishment of a single Water Authority in each country will enable agricultural organisations to have a counter-part which can take their problems in charge, and could lay the bases for an understanding and cooperation on water at an international level too. Instead, the national «leaders» of such an Authority should create an international body charged to work out concrete proposals to solve water problem, emphasizing research and the application of the most appropriate technologies for sea-water desalting or waste water reuse for the general benefit of all the Mediterranean countries.

I believe that on this ground too, a dary action of the Italian government could result to be useful, or even crucial.

### Research as driving force

Lastly I wish to recall you that in the meeting of the Mediterranean Committee of FIPA in Cairo and at the 1st Forum in Antalya, the theme of the relationship between agriculture and research was also discussed. It was stated basically that agriculture could be no longer only the beneficiary of decisions taken without taking into account its actual needs and possibilities. Agriculture should, instead, identify the most urgent problems and pointing them to research institutions which should work in order to solve them. In short, agriculture should be considered a «contractor» whose view should be kept in mind.

These subjects have been treated in the joint meeting of the Mediterranean Committee of FIPA and of the Agricultural Commission of the Council of Europe held in Jerusalem from 4 to 7 December. The reason for the choice of this venue is easily understandable, any additional word is useless. ●