Water Security in the Mediterranean: Connecting Knowledge, Skills and Regional Cooperation

CIHEAM WORKSHOP
Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026
Rome, 1 October 2026
16:30 to 18:00
GIORDANO Room
Duration: 90 minutes

A) Background and rationale

Water security and sustainable water management are issues that are both critical and increasingly complex for the future of agriculture and rural areas in the Mediterranean. Increasing water scarcity, recurrent droughts, extreme weather events, the depletion of groundwater reserves and competing uses are, on the one hand, putting water resources under pressure; and, on the other hand, calling existing agricultural models into question and demanding new approaches to the governance, use and optimisation of water.

Building resilience requires technological innovation, integrated governance, closer links between science and public policy, investment in skills and human capital, and enhanced regional cooperation to support the adaptation of Mediterranean agriculture to climate change.

Against this backdrop, the CIHEAM workshop will bring together the political, scientific and capacity-building dimensions related to water security. Building on the key messages drawn from CIHEAM's contributions throughout the Forum, the discussion will explore how knowledge, education and training, innovative approaches and regional partnerships can help translate shared priorities into concrete actions and strengthen water resilience across the Mediterranean.

B) Expected objectives and outcomes

The workshop aims to:

- **Identify the main economic, social and governance challenges** associated with increasing water scarcity and groundwater pressure in Mediterranean agricultural and rural areas
- **Draw lessons from concrete experiences and projects**, including both successful approaches and their limitations, and assess the conditions under which solutions can (or cannot) be transferred across different contexts
- **Examine the potential and limits of technological and agronomic solutions**, including non-conventional water resources, and the governance, regulatory, economic and social conditions required for their sustainable and inclusive deployment
- **Identify emerging skills and capacity-building needs** and explore how education, training and research institutions can better support farmers, professionals, water managers and policymakers in adapting to changing water challenges
- **Formulate practical messages and recommendations for Mediterranean cooperation**, helping connect local and national experiences with regional policy dialogue and collective action on water resilience

Proposed Agenda

16:30 - 16:35 Opening remarks	**Teodoro Miano, Secretary General, CIHEAM**
16:35- 16:45 Setting the scene: Key takeaways from the Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum	**Biagio Di Terlizzi, Director, CIHEAM Bari**
16:45-17:40 Moderated panel discussion (7-8 minutes/speaker) or [3-4 min/question (2)/speaker[	Moderator**: Yasmine Seghirate, Administrator, CIHEAM General Secretariat** **Ms. Nour Nsiri, CIHEAM Montpellier** **“Sustainable Water Governance and Groundwater Management in the Mediterranean: Policy Challenges and Solutions. Morocco”** • Drawing on the Moroccan case, what does groundwater overexploitation tell us about the limitations of current water management and agricultural development models, including their economic and social dimensions?

	• What governance and policy levers could help reduce pressure on groundwater while preserving the economic viability of farms and rural territories? In addressing these trade-offs, what role should be given to rural communities and civil society actors, including environmental and water-user associations? **Mr. Ramzi Belkhodja, Head of Training, CIHEAM Zaragoza** • Drawing on projects implemented by CIHEAM Zaragoza, which solutions or approaches do you consider most promising for improving agricultural water management in a context of increasing scarcity? What have been the main factors behind their success, but also the difficulties encountered or the reasons why some solutions may not have delivered the expected results? • Spain is particularly exposed to water stress and has extensive experience in agricultural water management, including desalination and wastewater reuse. What lessons can other Mediterranean countries draw from the Spanish experience? What can realistically be transferred to other contexts, what cannot, and why? **Prof. Zohra Lili Chabaane, Delegate of Tunisia to CIHEAM, President of the Institution of Agricultural Research and Higher Education** • In Tunisia, what role can treated wastewater reuse and, more broadly, non-conventional water resources realistically play in adapting the agricultural sector to increasing water scarcity? What are also the limitations of these solutions? • Beyond the availability of technological innovations, what regulatory, economic, institutional and social acceptance conditions are needed to deploy these solutions at a larger scale, over the long term, and in ways that respond to the needs of local communities? **Ms. Virginia Lachana, Coordinator of the CIHEAM Education Pillar, CIHEAM General Secretariat** • The transformation of agricultural water management is creating new skills needs. Which skills and capacities should be prioritised today to support this transition across Mediterranean countries? • Are our education and training systems adapting quickly enough to these changing needs? How can education and research institutions evolve their programmes and support mechanisms to better respond to the needs of professionals, farmers, water managers and policymakers?

	Mr. Dario Quadri, Project Analyst; Stability and Resilience Division, Union for the Mediterranean (TBC) ● The second ministerial meeting of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on water was held on the sidelines of this Forum, with the aim of defining regional guidelines for cooperation in the field of water through 2030. What are the key messages and priorities that emerged from this ministerial meeting, and what do they mean in practical terms for agriculture, food systems, and rural areas in the Mediterranean? ● Today we heard accounts of a wide variety of national experiences, challenges, and solutions. In which areas can regional cooperation truly add value (whether through the water-food-energy nexus, investments, digitalization, or knowledge sharing) and what is still preventing us from moving more quickly from common strategies and commitments to concrete actions on the ground? **Common closing question (if time allows and possibly involving the public)** If you had to identify just one priority or one change that we are still taking too long to implement, what message or recommendation would you want to see taken forward at Mediterranean level to genuinely strengthen the resilience of our agricultural systems to water constraints?
17:40- 17h50	**Q&R**
17:50 - 18:00 Closing messages	● **H.E. Dr. Hussein El-Atfy, Secretary General of the Arab Water Council Arab Water Council** ● **Mr. Teodoro Miano, Secretary General, CIHEAM**

PANELISTS - SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

Yasmine Seghirate - Administrator (CIHEAM General Secretariat)

Yasmine Seghirate oversees communications and publications at the CIHEAM General Secretariat and serves as focal point for Gender Policy and Women and Youth Empowerment. A graduate of Sciences Po Aix-en-Provence, she has held positions with ORSE, UNITAID, and the French Development Agency (AFD), and is a founding member of ATLAS.

Teodoro Miano - Secretary General (CIHEAM General Secretariat)

Teodoro Miano has served as Secretary General of CIHEAM since March 2023. Full Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at the University of Bari Aldo Moro and former Vice Rector for International Relations, he has over 35 years of academic and professional experience in agriculture, food systems, and sustainability.

Biagio Di Terlizzi - Director (CIHEAM Bari)

Biagio Di Terlizzi is Director of CIHEAM Bari and an agronomist by training, with over 35 years of experience in sustainable agricultural development and international cooperation. Since joining CIHEAM Bari in 1987, he has held several senior positions and contributed to training, research, and technical assistance initiatives across the Mediterranean and beyond.

Nour Nsiri - Researcher (CIHEAM Montpellier)

Nour Nsiri, economist and researcher at CIHEAM Montpellier, specializing in environmental and agricultural economics, with a focus on sustainable groundwater management, farming systems, and water governance in the Mediterranean.

Ramzi Belkhodja - Principal Administrator, Head of Training (CIHEAM Zaragoza)

Ramzi Belkhodja is Principal Administrator and Head of Training at CIHEAM Zaragoza, where he also coordinates the International Master in Plant Genetics, Genomics and Breeding. His expertise covers agricultural education, plant production, health, and breeding, with a focus on training, research, and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Zohra Lili Chabaane - President (IRESA)

Zohra Lili Chabaane is President of the Institution of Agricultural Research and Higher Education (IRESA) in Tunisia and Professor at the National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia (INAT). An agricultural engineer by training, she specializes in remote sensing, GIS, and sustainable water resource management, and contributes to agricultural research, higher education, and international cooperation. She also serves as Tunisia's Delegate to the CIHEAM Governing Board.

Virginia Lachana, Head of Education (CIHEAM General Secretariat)

Virginia Lachana is an economist specializing in education coordination, CSR, and institutional management. At CIHEAM, she coordinates academic programmes and educational activities and leads the Educational Working Group, contributing to curriculum development, academic governance, and alumni engagement.

Dario Quadri Ilkhani - Project Analyst, Stability and Resilience Division (UfM)

Dario Quadri Ilkhani is a Project Analyst at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, contributing to regional cooperation on water and sustainable resource management. His work focuses on water resilience, digitalisation, and the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus.

H.E. Dr. Hussein El-Atfy, Secretary General of the Arab Water Council

H.E. Dr. Hussein El-Atfy is Secretary General of the Arab Water Council and former Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt. A civil engineer by training, he has over 40 years of experience in water resources management, irrigation, and sustainable water development at national, regional, and international levels.