



**FAO**

**José Graziano da SILVA**  
Director General

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*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It's an honor to address the CIHEAM Ministerial Conference. Unfortunately, I cannot follow this meeting in person. FAO and CIHEAM are longstanding and like-minded partners with over 35 years of successful collaboration. We share the same vision and values to enhance food security, improved nutrition and promote sustainable agricultural development. FAO fully supports CIHEAM's new Strategic Agenda 2025 which is in line with our approach in the Mediterranean region. Bringing together our knowledge, our expertise, and our resources is important to face the challenge of our time.

I would like to highlight, in this opportunity, the issue of distress migration. Addressing the root causes of distress migration includes investing in sustainable livelihoods and building upon the resilience of rural households and fisher folks. FAO stands ready to join forces with CIHEAM to establish a multi-stakeholder platform to support countries to address migration flows. Throughout history the Mediterranean sea has been a shortcut for those in the search of opportunities. We cannot let it become now a cemetery.

FAO will soon launch the Blue Hope Initiative which aims at supporting Mediterranean small-scale fishing communities by transforming vulnerable coastal zones into engines of stability and hope. FAO and CIHEAM are also collaborating in other areas. We are combining efforts to address water scarcity issues, we are stressing the capacities of countries to prevent the introduction and spread of *Xylella fastidiosa*, the olive quick decline syndrome, and also the red palm weevil.

To conclude I would like to refer to our collaboration regarding the next edition of the publication *Mediterra* which will be released next December. This joint edition of *Mediterra* is an expression of the renewed strategic partnership between our two organizations.

I wish this ministerial conference every success.

Thank you for your attention