Here is a quarterly update on agricultural news from the heart of the SEMED region

Aug 2015

MedAgri is a network of practitioners committed to sharing knowledge on agricultural investment in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region. Its members belong to international finance institutions, private banks, international development organizations, governments and other institutions involved in agriculture and agribusiness.

MedAgri covers the following four countries: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. It was founded by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Its website - http://www.medagri.org - provides information on investment projects, sectors and subsectors, investment-related topics, events and meetings. It also features news, videos and publications.


The Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region took place in Barcelona on 5-6 May 2015. It was the first event jointly organized by the EBRD, FAO, and the Union for the Mediterranean (“UfM”). The Forum brought together 200 participants from more than 70 companies, international financing institutions, banks, farmer organizations, governments and academia. For two days, the Forum’s participants shared experiences on agricultural/agribusiness investment and identified investment priorities. Water scarcity and support to agricultural cooperatives were identified as common priorities for governments operating in the region, as well international financing institutions. More →

Announcement

Two new members are on board to share knowledge on agricultural investment in the Mediterranean region.

The first one is the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an intergovernmental institution created in 2008 by 43 Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government as a multilateral partnership to promote stability and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean region. The UfM hosted and co-chaired – along with FAO and EBRD - the Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean that took place in Barcelona on 5 May 2015. More info on the Forum can be found in the newsletter.

The International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) also joined MedAgri.

CIHEAM works in the field of cooperation in agriculture, food and rural development in 13 Mediterranean countries. CIHEAM’s membership will be a gateway to the Centre’s vast pool of knowledge on Mediterranean agriculture, as well as CIHEAM’s new information platform MED-Amin (Mediterranean Agricultural Markets Information Network). FAO and CIHEAM have been collaborating on numerous projects since 1977 including irrigation, improving fruits crops, and fisheries throughout the Mediterranean area.

EGYPT

Wheat consumption drops under new bread subsidy system, May 2015
A new smart-card programme, introduced last year to cut down on state spending, has decreased the country's wheat consumption by twenty-three percent.

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Italy to build 10 silos for wheat storage in Egypt, April 2015
Italy has agreed to establish 10 horizontal silos for the storage of wheat, for a total capacity of 500,000 tonnes, within the next two years.

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EBRD enhances Egypt's agricultural commodities trade, March 2015
EBRD is providing a USD 20 million loan, which will help finance the working capital of Medsofts, a family-owned Egypt-based company and one of the key agricultural commodity importers and supply chain managers in the country.

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EGYPT

Egypt's dollar shortage squeezes private wheat importers, March 2015
Egypt is the world's largest wheat importer. Current market reforms are taking a heavy toll on wheat trade in the private sector.

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A green economy could save Egypt over USD 2.4 billion every year, March 2015
A shift to a greener economic could lead to important savings in the agriculture and water sectors, as well as a considerable reduction in CO2 emissions and water consumption.

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Field irrigation project to provide 7-10% increase in cultivated land, February 2015
The implementation of a field irrigation project funded by IFAD will help increase Egypt's cultivated land by 7-10%. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture to irrigate 5 million acres and reclaim 1 million acres as part of a national programme for land reclamation.

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Italy-Egypt sign memorandum of understanding to improve agro-food cooperation, January 2015
Italy and Egypt strengthen their cooperation in the agro-food sector: a Memorandum of Understanding to reinforce exchanges of information between research institutes was signed in Cairo by the Italian Minister of Agricultural Policies, Maurizio Martina, and the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture, Adel el Betagy.

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MOROCCO

International Exhibition of Agriculture (SIAM) draws 817,000 visitors, May 2015
Visitors gathered in Morocco, for the tenth edition of the fair, to discuss agriculture and food systems.

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Morocco: vegetables production growing fast on EU markets, January 2015
Morocco holds 70% of France's tomato market share. Moroccan production is also increasing its presence on the German market thanks to French operators.

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Proposed rules would align Morocco with international standards, January 2015
The Moroccan government has proposed new rules which will define and regulate the quality of commercial olive oil, thus improving the quality of the oil while helping Morocco compete in the international market.

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New agreement will guarantee that products are truly “Made in Morocco”, January 2015
An agreement signed by chief negotiators of Morocco and the EU will ensure consumers of the origin and quality of their food products.

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For more information on Morocco, click here

JORDAN

Jordan exports 300 tonnes of watermelon per day to Gulf states, May 2015
Jordan is exporting 300 tonnes of watermelon daily to Gulf countries, a government official said, expecting the amount to increase as demand is growing. Agriculture Ministry Spokesperson Nimer Haddadin said demand for local watermelon in the Gulf States has reached record amounts. The fruit is also being exported to Iraq but in lower quantities.

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Jordan is the world's third largest importer of US short/medium grain rice, according to US Ambassador to the Kingdom Alice G.
Wells. Over 60 per cent of the Kingdom's rice imports come from the US, amounting to around 140,000 tonnes in 2014, worth nearly USD 125 million.

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**Jordan agriculture exports on the rise, January 2015**

Farm exports from Jordan showed substantial growth in 2014, aided by foreign sales of vegetables, while deals with new markets and key investments in water irrigation are strengthening growth potential for future years.

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**TUNISIA**

**Sousse, Tunisia Set to Host ‘Med Mag Oliva’ Exhibition, June 2015**

The third instalment of Tunisia's biggest event related to the olive oil sector will promote commercial exchanges, facilitate transfers of technologies and foster partnerships between suppliers.

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**Tunisian Olive Sector Benefits from Japanese Cooperation Project, May 2015**

A Japanese project underway in Tunisia aims to support the development of new olive oil products and promote exports of Tunisian olive oil.

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**EBRD boosts Tunisian agricultural sector by investing in raspberry plantations, April 2015**

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a EUR 4 million loan to Sanlucar Flor’alia, the first large-scale raspberry plantation ever established in the country.

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**EU increases Tunisian exports of olive oil to support local producers, February 2015**

The European Commission has adopted a regulation that redefines the monthly quotas of olive oil from Tunisia between 1 February and 31 October 2015 to facilitate olive oil exports to the EU. Olive oil is the main agricultural export from Tunisia to the EU.

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**The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region falls short of halving hunger by 2015, June 2015**

33 million people in the NENA region are chronically undernourished, double the number in 1990, the FAO announced. The region's prevalence of undernourishment rose to 7.5 percent from 6.6 percent, according to FAO's first NENA Overview of Food Insecurity.

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**Improving quality of life in the MENA region through integrated water management, May 2015**

The UfM-labelled project “Water Integrity Capacity Building Programme for the Middle East and North Africa” was officially launched in during the IUCN-ROWA Regional Conference “Water and Nature Knowledge Sharing Forum”. It shows the UfM's commitment to improving living standards in the region through the implementation of integrated, equitable and sustainable water resources management.

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**CFS and FAO organize, in collaboration with WFP, the 4th Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition in Amman, April 2015**

Acknowledging the urgency and scale of food security and nutrition challenges faced by the region, FAO’s Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa and the Secretariat of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in collaboration with WFP, launched on 28 April the 4th Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop Food Security and Nutrition, under the Patronage of Jordan’s Prime Minister, Dr. Abdullah Ensour.

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Tunisian farmers picking olives during the harvest time
**Tunisia - Review of the Olive Oil Sector and Policy Options**
This study was carried out under the cooperation between FAO and the EBRD. It examines the current situation of the olive oil sector in Tunisia, including its economic performance and opportunities for future development.

**Jordan - Water along the Food Chain**
This analytical work was carried out by FAO in partnership with the EBRD. The study identifies the poultry meat sector and high-value market fruit and vegetables from the Jordan Valley as areas deserving priority investment attention.

**Agri-food Trade and Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMCs)**
This paper highlights the critical social, economic and political importance of addressing food security in the region through improved trade integration.

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**Infographic**

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**Video Corner**

- **Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region**
- **Gilles Mettetel, Director, Agribusiness, EBRD** on promoting dialogue in the SEMED region
- **Mohamed Manssouri, FAO Investment Centre** on public and private sector co-operation in agribusiness
- **Hafez Ghanem, Regional Vice President, Middle East and North Africa, World Bank** on food security bringing stability to the MENA region
- **Laurent Thomas, Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation Department, FAO** on tackling youth unemployment in the SEMED

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