

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF CIHEAM TO THE URBAN FOOD POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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### Abstract

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IAMB) is one of the four institutes of the CIHEAM, its research activities are oriented to *organic and sustainable agriculture, land and water management, integrated pest management*. In the course of its work, IAMB supported different examples of Proximity and Urban and Periurban Agriculture (UPA). Such experiences highlighted specific issues to address in site specific way, in order to include UPA in the cities contexts.

### The CIHEAM

The International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) was established in 1962, as an inter-governmental institution, under the auspices of the OECD<sup>1</sup> and of the Council of Europe.

Since 1983 CIHEAM includes 13 Member Countries (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey) and works with several international and regional institutions from both shores of the Mediterranean. CIHEAM's actions rely on a bottom-up collaboration and are problem-solving oriented, connected to the peculiar needs of the countries. With our Member States, public and private partners and academics we strive to meet the 4 following challenges: Struggling against “triple waste” (Knowledge-Natural Resources-Food), Boosting Sustainable Agriculture and Food, Investing in new generations and fragile territories, Preventing risks and managing tensions.

### The IAMB

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IAMB - <http://www.iamb.ciheam.org/>) is one of four institutes of the CIHEAM and was founded in 1962 together with the Institute of Montpellier (IAMM).

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<sup>1</sup>L'Organizzazione per la cooperazione e lo sviluppo economico (OCSE) (in [inglese](#) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); in [francese](#) Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques (OCDE).

Since 1962 CIHEAM-IAMB works in the Mediterranean for improving sustainable agriculture and fisheries, for ensuring food and nutrition security and for developing rural and coastal territories through Education, Applied Research and International Cooperation.

The Institute has a strong national and regional reputation based on about 25 permanent staff researchers and more than 100 MSc and PhD students, and other collaborators.

The research activities of the Bari institute are oriented to *organic and sustainable agriculture, land and water management, irrigated agriculture, integrated pest management*, mainly in the Mediterranean region but also elsewhere.

The CIHEAM-MAIB focused on the applied research concerning the Mediterranean agricultural systems and participated in numerous regional, national and international research projects.

### **Sustainable Development and UPA**

Since 2008 more than one half of the total world population lives in the urban centers (UN, 2008); the same data probably will score around 70% (66%) in 2050 (UN, 2015); the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11- <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>) requires human settlements and urban centers more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable are a priority and a specific objective was included to this issue in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDA - <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>). In this scenario, planning for sustainable food systems able to integrate productions and agriculture from urban areas and countryside is of utmost importance for food security of local populations.

So far the CIHEAM IAMB has not developed a comprehensive programmatic approach to the planning of Urban Food Policies, although in the course of usual activities aimed to achieve sustainable rural development in the Med area, the Institute met and supported different examples of Proximity and Urban and Periurban Agriculture because they were finalized to improve food security in the territories of direct intervention.

This is the case of some initiatives related to the production phase that we met in the course of cooperation activities carried out. In the course of activities related to the *gender* issue we had the opportunity of supporting women cooperatives, and the implementation of small food-processing plants in urban areas.

The quality of food environments in places where people live, work, and play bears significant consequences affecting human health and well being; this awareness is often at the base of choosing the method of Organic Agriculture to produce food mainly aimed to local market and consumption. In relation to *Organic agriculture and farming* we met different urban initiatives aiming to produce

food with no chemical use, or by applying low input agriculture. More rarely, and in contexts more aware from an environmental point of view, some urban initiatives aimed to apply low environmental impact agriculture practices and to promote ecosystem services that could be agriculture supportive and also functional biodiversity because they are thought to be helpful to agricultural productions. In relation to the field of competences related to *sustainable resource management*, in urban areas we faced the problem related to the optimal allocation of water resource; this is closely related to the economic value of water use and some how to considerations and studies about the safe use of non-conventional water sources or to treated water resources. We also helped in boosting initiatives of social farming aiming to the *integration of disadvantaged groups* in productive activities.

The lesson learnt from such previous and scattered experiences, is that, to achieve proper planning and concrete policy actions, there are some important issues that need to be addressed site by site and in a specific way.

One of such issues relates to the areas around the cities, that need for a multifunctional landscape management because competition among urban agriculture and rural agriculture must be avoided because might lead to further land abandonment and degradation of rural areas, therefore better integration and access to markets to both products either from urban areas then from agricultural areas is to be achieved; furthermore attention need to be payed to the role of natural biodiversity in supporting productions and in concretely achieve sustainable agroecosystems even in urban contexts. Therefore proper multifunctional planning is needed to connect both the productions systems to local markets and to save biodiversity.

In urban contexts, natural resources are most of times under strong pressure(<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>) and, in case of UPA, a competition for the alternative uses of such resources might arise; water, soil, land, biodiversity, they all can have different uses and consequently the efficiencies of use can be different; sustainable political choices need indications about a rational use of such natural resources therefore careful tailored investigations and analysis are required.

the correlation urban pollution and food safety, is an often neglected but important question. It is not to be denied that some source of pollution are present in urban areas, therefore a certain attention to the food safety would be required, for instance by performing analysis on produced food and by setting a systematic monitoring.

On the other hand, some agricultural activities can generate pollution that is not easily tolerated by people living neighbouring the urban gardens; a quiet coexistence needs that farmers take care of

managing of smells and of possible noises from agriculture activities to respect neighbouring people.

Some conceptual equations need also to be analysed in relation to different situations.

The first one is the equation local food = sustainable food. Usually local food is claimed to be more sustainable because it is produced close to the place where it is consumed. Actually local food might not be always sustainable, since transport is just one of the components in favour of sustainability in the whole, that entails also other environmental as well as social and economic dimensions as for instance the scale factor. Consequently Even the equation local food = nutritious food, needs to be investigated. Often urban agriculture is thought to provide higher quality food because fresher products arrive on local markets and to consumers, but actually the nutritional value and the real quality of products has never been investigated. Therefore in order to achieve more sustainable diets and food systems more attention to those factors is required and deserve further investigations.

For what we just said, it is clear that the integration of UPA in the systems of the cities, requires that food policies and urban planning engage in a whole reorganization of the food systems. This might have direct impacts and consequences on different sectors and aspects: public health, social justice, ecological integrity / environment (water, land, biodiversity, ...), energy, economic development, public works, transport requiring technical tools and expertise.

Another element to be considered is that, the responsibility for the management of the UPA falls under different levels (local, regional, national, ...) and types of authorities (agriculture, trade, environment, public works, ...). This state of fact complicates the phase of implementation that should follow in time the planning and decision-making phases. Thanks to past experience and to the network of experts mobilized in Med Countries, the IAMB can help to solve problems and institutional gaps that may arise in the practical implementation of policies, and this might be our first contribution to action.

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