

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR/WORKSHOP****MEDITERRANEAN LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS: CHALLENGES AND PATHWAYS FOR SUSTAINABILITY****Launching a Renewed Knowledge Exchange Network on  
Sustainable Mediterranean Livestock Systems****Madrid (Spain), 7-8 April 2026****(In the framework of the [Madrid International Meeting “Celebrating the IYRP 2026”](#))****Background**

Livestock systems in Mediterranean countries face significant sustainability challenges due to a combination of environmental, economic, and social factors. The region's climate, characterized by hot, dry summers and increasingly erratic rainfall patterns, puts pressure on water resources and pasture availability. Climate change exacerbates these issues, leading to grassland and rangeland degradation and biodiversity loss, which in turn reduce the productivity and resilience of livestock systems.

Another major challenge is the economic viability of traditional livestock farming. Many small-scale farmers struggle to compete with industrialized production systems, which benefit from economies of scale. Rural depopulation, aging farming populations and mutation of the systems (many times including massive use of external inputs) are becoming common, threatening the continuity of traditional knowledge and practices based on land and animal resources that often support more sustainable and extensive farming models. Additionally, there is growing public concern about animal welfare issues and about the environmental footprint of livestock production, including greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, and animal welfare. This has led to increased demand for more sustainable and transparent supply chains.

Transitioning to more sustainable systems requires integrated approaches that combine technological innovation, improved resource management, collaborative and organisational innovations and supportive policies. Emphasizing agroecological principles, encouraging local breeds, husbandry and feeding practices adapted to harsh environments, improving forage and grassland management, strengthening breeder's organisation and access to markets and integrating pastoral systems into territorial development and environmental plans can contribute to the resilience and sustainability of Mediterranean livestock systems.

For several years, FAO, CIHEAM and other national and international organisations have been promoting the transformation of conventional livestock production and livestock value chains into sustainable livestock systems. Research and innovation, as well as the exchange and dissemination of scientific knowledge plays a key role in proposing alternatives and pathways for the transition of Mediterranean Livestock systems towards sustainability and resilience.

Since the 1990s, CIHEAM and FAO have been collaborating in the maintenance of thematic networks dedicated to the exchange of knowledge among specialists on sheep, goats, pastures and grasslands. The FAO-CIHEAM Networks on Pastures and Forages (Subnetworks on Mountain and on Mediterranean Pastures) and on Sheep and Goats (subnetworks on Nutrition and on Production Systems) have been main promoters of scientific and technical discussions and exchanges around topics relevant for the development and the sustainability of the livestock systems, grasslands and forage resources in the Mediterranean climate and Mountain areas.

Under the paradigm of the transition towards sustainability of livestock systems, it is proposed to re-found the previous Networks and subnetworks into a more comprehensive Network on Sustainable Mediterranean Livestock Systems. This new CIHEAM Zaragoza Network will encompass the existing networks and enlarge their scope; it will take a more holistic approach, integrating technical (animal, grasslands), environmental, ecological and social sciences and promoting multi- and interdisciplinary approaches and exchanges, but also maintaining specialised groups inside for specific topics of common interest.

### **Objectives**

- (i) Identify the main challenges for (grazing/extensive/traditional production) systems in the Mediterranean countries and regions and propose main scientific pathways for overcoming challenges and achieving sustainability.
- (ii) Explore, through experts' presentations and further discussions, the state of the art of scientific knowledge in the region concerning options for addressing the challenges and opportunities for innovation and development of the Mediterranean livestock production systems.
- (iii) Top put the basis of a renewed Network on Sustainable Mediterranean Livestock Systems, encompassing and enlarging the scope of the previous networks, proposing a governance structure and a mid-term draft activity plan and starting with the engagement of institutions interested in joining and supporting the Network.
- (iv) Identify needs and opportunities for training, research and innovation to investigate and develop Mediterranean sustainable livestock systems; and eventually launch and start concrete activities of this kind within the network action plan.

### **Organisation and format**

The Seminar/Workshop is organised by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza/International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (**CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain**) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Organisation (**FAO**), with the collaboration of the Masar al'an programme of the **Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)**.

It will be held in the framework of the Madrid International Meeting "[Celebrating the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists](#)" (Madrid, 9-11 April 2026) co-organised by the Instituto Madrileño de Investigación y Desarrollo Rural, Agrario y Alimentario (IMIDRA), the Nature and Transhumance Foundation, the Entretantos Foundation, the Global Alliance for Rangelands and Pastoralists, CIHEAM Zaragoza and FAO.

The Seminar/Workshop will be 1.5 days long. It will be structured around first block of thematic presentations offering a diversity of disciplines and geographical coverage; and a second block devoted to the starting of a Network on Mediterranean Sustainable Livestock Systems.

Number of invited persons: 20-25 (keynote speakers and network invited representatives from the Mediterranean countries).

### **Countries to be represented**

Priority countries: CIHEAM Members (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey), Mauritania and Jordan. Other Mediterranean basin countries and Mediterranean climate countries, or other countries in the world may also participate.

**Language:** English

**Venue:** Instituto de la Ingeniería de España (General Arrando, 38, Madrid, Spain)

**PROGRAMME**

<b>Day 1 (7 April 2026)</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Lunch and registration</b>	<b>13.00-14.00</b>
<b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Raúl Compés (CIHEAM Zaragoza)</i></li> <li>- <i>Mohamed Bengoumi (FAO – FAO Subregional Office for North Africa)</i></li> <li>- <i>Maura López de Ayala (Joint Deputy Director General of Livestock and Game Production. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain)</i></li> </ul>	<b>14.00-14.25</b>
<b>Challenges for Mediterranean Ruminant Livestock Systems and pathways for sustainability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenges and pathways for Mediterranean Ruminant Livestock Systems. <i>Veronique Alary (CIRAD, France)</i></li> <li>- Social sciences approaches to livestock systems, integrating disciplines. <i>Elsa Varela (CSIC-IIP, Spain)</i></li> <li>- Discussion</li> </ul>	<b>14.25-15.45</b>
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>15.45-16.15</b>
<b>Presentations by region (North Mediterranean and South/East Mediterranean on challenges and scientific lines/programmes.</b> Integrating regional challenges and diversity of disciplines (animal, plant and rangeland, natural resources, socio-economy) Discussions and close of day 1	<b>16.15-17.45</b>

<b>Day 2 (8 April 2026)</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Keynote presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO Global strategy for Sustainable Livestock Transformation. <i>M. Bengoumi (FAO Subregional Office for North Africa)</i></li> <li>- Private sector vision – Beef. <i>Alejandro Gutiérrez (Provacuno, Spanish Beef interprofessional organisation)</i></li> <li>- Private sector vision – Meat sheep. <i>Leticia Riaguas (Oviaragon Grupo Pastores, sheep Cooperative)</i></li> <li>- Discussion</li> </ul>	<b>9.00-10.15</b>
<b>Presentations by region (North Mediterranean and South/East Mediterranean on challenges and scientific lines/programmes.</b> Integrating regional challenges and diversity of disciplines (animal, plant and rangeland, natural resources, socio-economy)	<b>10.15-10.45</b>
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>10.45-11.15</b>
<b>Presentations by region (North Mediterranean and South/East Mediterranean on challenges and scientific lines/programmes (cont.)</b> Presentations and general discussion	<b>11.15-12.15</b>
<b>Knowledge exchange networks presentations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Network on Mediterranean Sustainable Livestock Systems – Sharing knowledge, integrating levels and disciplines. <i>Antonio López-Francos (CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain)</i></li> <li>- Other examples of networks on animal, grassland sciences and livestock systems studies. EAAP, EGF, Re-Livestock project as an example of integration.</li> </ul>	<b>12.15-13.00</b>
<b>Lunch</b>	<b>13.00-14.00</b>

<b>Day 2 (8 April 2026) (cont.)</b>	<b>Time</b>
<p><b>Working groups: Network on Mediterranean Sustainable Livestock Systems</b> Identify common issues and approaches, integrate disciplines, define network structure, key working topics, and propose future activities of the Network</p>	<b>14.00-15.15</b>
<p><b>Network on Mediterranean Sustainable Livestock Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentations by working groups</li> <li>- Plenary discussion on network concept and integration of disciplines</li> </ul>	<b>15.15-16.00</b>
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>16.00-16.30</b>
<p><b>Network on Mediterranean Sustainable Livestock Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plenary discussion on network structure &amp; governance</li> <li>- Plenary discussion on next activities</li> </ul>	<b>16.30-17.30</b>
<b>Wrap-up, next steps and close</b>	<b>17.30-17.45</b>