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MEDCOASTLAND Project



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Mediterranean Agronomic
Institute
Bari-Italy

MEDCOASTLAND PROJECT

Mediterranean coordination and dissemination of land conservation management to combat land degradation for the sustainable use of Mediterranean natural resources

Thematic Network

October 2002- May 2007 (ICA3-CT-2002-10002)



In collaboration with:

**MINISTERE DE L'AGRICULTURE ET DES RESSOURCES
HYDRAULIQUES, TUNISIE**

INSTITUTION DE LA RECHERCHE ET
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR
AGRIQUES

DIRECTION GENERALE DES
AMENAGEMENTS ET DE
LA CONSERVATION DES

DES TERRES AGRICOLES

INSTITUT NATIONAL AGRONOMIQUE DE TUNISIE

**UNION
TUNISIENNE DE
L'AGRICULTURE
ET DE LA PECHE**

Conference Report

The EU-funded MEDCOASTLAND Project officially closed on 30 September 2006 however; following a request from the project's coordinator the European Commission granted an extension period of 8 months (with no additional budget). The main task assigned by this extension was the organisation of a regional conference to make an assessment on the status of Mediterranean soil resources. The conference was organised in close collaboration between the CIHEAM Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, Italy in the role of project coordinator, the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources of Tunisia and the Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie (INAT). Special thanks are addressed to Prof. Hedi Daghari of INAT, Dr. Hedi Hamrouni, Director of Soil Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Mr. Faousi El Oueslati of the Farmer Association of Tunisia.

Great appreciation is addressed also to the staff of the Regional Department for Agricultural Development of Kairouan for the warm welcome expressed both during the discussions at their offices and especially during the field visits while meeting with local extensions service agents and farmers.

Summary of the conclusions of the conference

1. The theme of the conference was: "Status of Mediterranean Soil resources: "Actions needed to Promote their Sustainable Use"
2. The conference was greeted during the opening ceremony by His Excellency Prof. Abderrazek Daaloul, State Secretary of Fishery, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Tunisia, Prof. Abdellaziz Mougou President of CIHEAM and IRESA, Prof.



Fethi Lebdi, Director of INAT, Dr. Amor Mtimet, Director General of Soil and Water Department at the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia and President of the Tunisian Society of Soil Science, as well as by Dr. Pandi Zdruli, Project Manager and Dr. Talal Darwish in the name of all the partners. Greetings were forwarded also by Prof. Ferdo Basic from Croatia, Dr. Sid Theocharopoulos from Greece, and Prof. Hamid Custovic from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3. Twenty-seven MEDCOASTLAND partners from 12 countries attended the conference. Overall the conference was attended by about 50 people
4. Invited were also Dr. Edoardo Costantini from the Istituto Sperimentale per lo Studio e la Difesa del Suolo of Florence,

Italy, Dr. Sid Theocharopoulos, Director of the Soil Science Institute of Athens, Greece that is part of NAGREF, Prof. Ferdo Basic from the University of Zagreb, Croatia, Prof. Hamid Custovic of the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Prof. Tomaz Prus, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Dr. Jaume Boixadera of the Departament d'Agricultura, Ramaderia i Pesca (DARP), Secció d'Avaluació de Recursos Agraris (SARA), Generalitat De Catalunya, Lleida, Spain, Prof. Sherif Lushaj, Director of the Centre for Study and Consulting on Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, based in Tirana, Albania and Dr. Khaled Ben Mahmoud of the Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands

(ACSAD), League of Arab States, based in Damascus, Syria. The conference was attended also by the representatives of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the World Bank



The opening ceremony: (from the left) Prof. H. Daghari, Prof. A. Mougou, HE. Prof. Daaloul, Dr. P. Zdruli, and Prof. F. Lebdi

5. For known and unknown reasons, the following partners did not attend the conference:

- **P6 Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Malta**
- **P10 IAV Hassan II Rabat, Morocco**
- **P12 Ministry of Agriculture, Algeria**
- **P14 University of Jordan**
- **P16 University of Malta**
- **P21 General Directorate of Rural Services, (now Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs), Turkey**

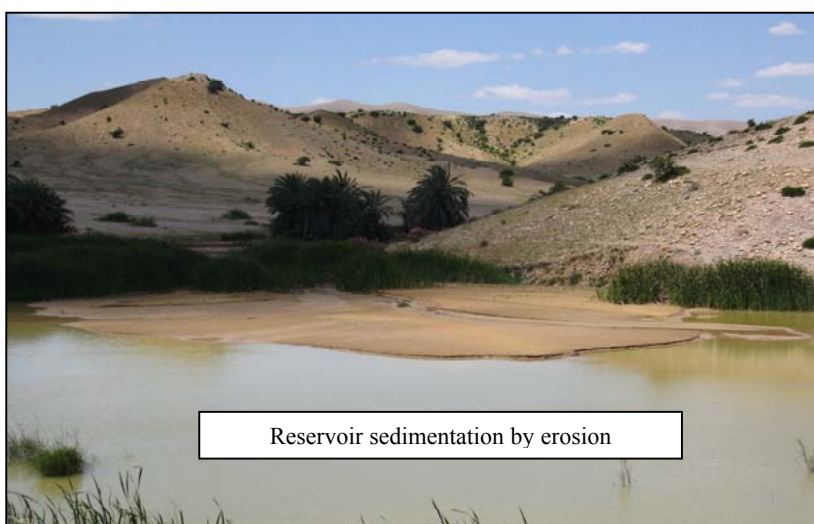
6. No one from Algeria did attend the conference; all other MEDCOASTLAND member countries were present

7. The Coordinating team was represented by Dr. Pandi Zdruli (Project Manager), Mr. Saverio De Santis (Project finance officer) and Mr. Giuseppe Morganella (IAMB Accounting Department). Greetings were forwarded in the name of the IAMB director Dr. Cosimo Lacirignola, Prof. Giuliana Trisorio Liuzzi (Vice president of CIHEAM and project coordinator), and Prof. Nicola Lamaddalena, Head of Land and Water Department of IAMB

8. Conference objectives

- Assessment of existing soil information systems in the Mediterranean
- Evaluation of the status of soil surveys and soil databases
- Availability of soil maps
- Environmental problems related to soils
- Best soil management practices and local technical knowledge in soil conservation

- National institutions dealing with soils
 - Enhancement of international and regional cooperation in soil science related activities
9. **Twenty-two** presentations were made in seven conference sessions. They included reports for **18 countries** including: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, France and Spain
 10. Key note papers were provided by **Dr. Luca Montanarella** on the “EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection and its implications in the Mediterranean”, **Dr. Claudio Zucca** on the “EcoPedological map of Sardinia and its practical uses for land use planning”, **Dr. Mourad Briki** of OSS presented their experience in combining local monitoring and remote sensing for analysing the evolution of land cover and desertification and **Dr. Pandi Zdruli** on: “The MEDCOASTLAND project from the beginning to the end”
 11. All sessions were followed by intense and fruitful discussions. The general understanding was that *throughout the region there are valuable human resources dealing with soils as well as important soil information is available*, but unfortunately often this is scattered among many institutions and access to it is difficult to reach



12. The field trip organised in the province of Kairouan was perfectly arranged between office discussions and practical observations. Participants appreciated the high level of technical knowledge showed by the staff of the Regional Department for Agricultural Development of Kairouan that is a prerequisite for sustainable land use planning and

rural development. Most importantly discussions with extension service agents and farmers reaffirmed the fact that *the area of Kairouan has developed some unique water harvesting practices and efficient drip irrigation systems*. Living standards are improving and the area is looking for new opportunities in expanding its exports and promoting tourism development thanks also to its rich cultural heritage. A number of problems were revealed as well. The most pressing one is the **sedimentation of reservoirs** due to increased erosion on the surrounding hills of the watershed. This fact bring again to the need of endorsing the **“ecosystem approach in natural resources management”** since off-site effects of soil erosion could wipe out positive results reached in increasing productivity on the flat lands that are desperately in need of irrigation water stored on the upland reservoirs. Groundwater resources are another important source of water that needs to be better preserved.

Conference outputs and recommendations of the final Plenary Session held on 30 May 2007

The Conference reaffirmed the important role played by the MEDCOASTLAND project in **coordinating activities of knowledge dissemination** and good management practices among the consortium partners. Discussions during the final plenary session held on 30 May concluded as follows:

- All scientific papers should be submitted until **30 June 2007**. Proceedings will be published within 2007 (Action by all the participants)
- Following the proposal of the Croatian representative all participants agreed to endorse a **Declaration on Mediterranean Soil Protection**. Once agreed by all participants, the Declaration will be included in the Tunis Proceedings. (Action by IAMB to write and circulate the first draft)
- It was emphasised that soil’s multifunction needs to be better understood and studied. The diversity of Mediterranean soils requires intense soil surveys at larger scales. While appreciating the development of remote sensing technologies in support of digital soil mapping, participants strongly supported the need for **continued field soil surveys**
- Participants agreed that **integrated soil and water management** is a necessity for sustainable natural resources management and sustained agricultural productivity. This is especially vital for the Mediterranean
- It was emphasised that the **biodiversity component** should be an essential part of studies dealing with land degradation as an important indicator of the land quality and its trends
- Land degradation and desertification has no borders, thus tranboundary assessments are needed to estimate its extent region wide and consequently similar **remediation practices should be applied across national political borders**. Collaboration among all the Mediterranean countries should be strengthened
- **EU policies in the Mediterranean** should tackle both EU member states as well as non-EU members. The EU assistance for North Africa, Middle East and the Western Balkans should be continued and increased as these regions are facing much severe processes of land degradation, desertification and climate change
- Following the signature of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in Beirut, Lebanon in June 2006, the partnership requested that all remaining signatures should be collected as soon as possible and copies of the MoU must be sent to all the partners. (Action for IAMB)
- The partnership and invited experts strongly support the establishment of the **Regional Office for Sustainable Mediterranean Soil Management (ROSOM)** as the logical follow-up of MEDCOASTLAND and as the most important overall deliverable of this project
- The MEDCOASTLAND Syrian team in the name of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) and the Government of Syria made a concrete proposal to host **ROSOM in Damascus**. The Government of Syria is willing to provide initial logistic and

financial support for ROSOM if a convincing proposal is submitted to the European Union for further funding

- The MEDCOASTLAND Moroccan delegation opposed the idea of hosting ROSOM in Damascus and suggested that this **Office should be based in an EU member country**
- It was concluded that **CIHEAM Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, Italy should host ROSOM** as it was agreed also in the Memorandum signed in Beirut. ROSOM should play an important role as the Mediterranean branch of the European Soil Data Centre that will be established (in 2008) by the EC at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) Ispra site
- The Greek representative Dr. Theocharopoulos, proposed that **Dr. Pandi Zdruli should be the Person-in-Charge** of coordinating and leading ROSOM for the technical, scientific, and management aspects. Participants agreed with such proposal. Dr. Zdruli should inform IAMB director and other high ranking officials within IAMB on this proposal
- It was proposed that the Chairman of the Advisory and Scientific Committee of ROSOM should rotate among the different members



Participants during the technical visit in Kairouan in 29 May 2007

List of participants

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and on personal notes taken by P. Zdruli

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June 2007