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CIHEAM
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Safe
Habitus

PROGRAMME

International Symposium

The farmers of tomorrow: Skills, jobs and renewal pathways in times of uncertainty

Zaragoza • 30 Sept - 1 Oct 2026



CONTEXT

The agricultural sector, as the backbone of broader agri-food systems, is undergoing a structural transformation, raising important questions about its long-term economic, social and territorial sustainability. Beyond generational replacement understood as a purely demographic issue, renewal and attractiveness are shaped by broader factors related to employment conditions, access to productive resources, organisational models, rural living conditions and evolving societal expectations, among others.

Across the Mediterranean region, these dynamics take diverse forms. Variations in demographic structures, labour markets, territorial contexts and institutional frameworks suggest that the challenges and opportunities linked to renewal, farm succession and agricultural employment cannot be addressed through uniform assumptions or solutions.

This symposium, organised by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (CIHEAM Zaragoza) in collaboration with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the SafeHabitat project, aims to provide an evidence-based space to analyse how economic, social, institutional and territorial factors interact to shape the attractiveness of the agri-food sector across the Mediterranean, with particular attention to young people and the future of family farming. While recognising structural constraints, the symposium also seeks to identify existing and emerging opportunities linked to innovation, new organisational models and new ways of living in rural territories.

This discussion is situated within a broader international and regional policy context, informed by initiatives such as the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028), and it builds on very recent strategies shaping the Mediterranean agri-food sector: the European Union Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture (2025) and the African Union Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035).

Another regional reference framework is the Sustainable Arab Agricultural Development Strategy (2020-2030), adopted by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development under the auspices of the League of Arab States, which supports agricultural modernisation, rural employment and access to productive resources – factors that directly shape farm succession, youth participation and the overall attractiveness of agricultural professions across the Southern Mediterranean. At the multilateral level, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) report on The Status of Youth in the Agrifood Systems (2025) analyses structural barriers and opportunities for youth employment and engagement in agriculture, while the International Labour Organization (ILO) Policy Guidelines on Promoting Decent Work in the Agri-Food Sector emphasise improving working conditions, social protection, labour rights and employment quality to enhance the sustainability and attractiveness of agricultural pathways.

Complementing these frameworks, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report Attracting New Farmers for the Future of Agriculture (2025) underscores generational renewal as a structural policy challenge, stressing the need to lower entry barriers, improve access to land and finance, and strengthen rural living conditions.

Together, these frameworks highlight that the future of agriculture depends not only on production systems, but also on who enters the sector, under what conditions, and with which skills and opportunities.



PROGRAMME

Hybrid format
with English-Spanish interpretation

Day 1 | Wednesday 30 September 2026

9:00 Registration and warm-up exercise

9:30 Opening Session "The future of farming: Who will farm? And under what conditions?"

10:30 Setting the scene: FAO key findings from the Mediterranean region

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Round Table I: Economic and Productive Dimension: "The economics of farming: profitability, land and access to resources"

12:45 Case studies I / Field perspectives

13:15 Lunch

14:30 Round Table II: Labour Market and Vocational Training Dimension: "Work in agriculture: labour dynamics, skills and working conditions"

15:45 Case studies II / Field perspectives

16:15 Coffee break

16:30 Poster Session and Networking exchange

Day 2 | Thursday 1 October 2026

9:00 Key takeaways from Day 1 + warm up exercise

9:15 Round Table III - Social and Cultural Dimension: "Why choose farming? Rural living conditions and the choice to stay"

10:30 Case studies III / Field perspectives

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Round Table IV: Organisational and Technological Dimension: "Farming differently: technology, cooperatives and new business models"

12:45 Case studies IV / Field perspectives

13:15 Lunch break

14:30 Round Table V: Political and Institutional Dimension: "Enabling the next farmers: policies, partnerships and investment for agricultural renewal"

15:45 Coffee break

16:00 Conclusions/Rapporteur session: Looking Ahead: What needs to change for the next generation of farmers? (interactive synthesis by rapporteurs and audience engagement session)

16:30 Closing Session