

## MEETING REPORT

### A snapshot of the meeting

The eleventh MOAN meeting was held in Amman, Jordan on September 17-20, 2019 at Rotana Hotel. The core theme of discussion was the group certification in the secondary EU organic regulation and the possible suggestions for amendments to fit better the diversity of contexts where it shall be applied.

The four-day gathering (Annex 1) started with the official institutional opening, followed by a full morning to introduce the organic sector of the hosting country and the afternoon for the thematic workshop in collaboration with IFOAM EU. The second day also divided in two main sessions one for group work on the theme of the year and the network internal meeting to conclude the day. The third day was entirely dedicated to the field visits of farms and production units. The fourth day consisted of a visit to the Petra archaeological site in the Valley of Moses.

This meeting gathered thirty-eight (38) participants: nineteen (19) representatives from MOAN countries, the four (4) members of MOAN Secretariat, two (2) IFOAM EU experts, seven (7) speakers from the Jordanian organic sector as well as six (6) members of the Jordanian Organic Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture (Annex 2).

### The meeting major facts

#### Day 1, morning – open conference and debate

For the second year in a row, the plenary session for the presentation of the hosting country's organic sector was opened to the public, including actors of the Jordanian organic sector as well as all stakeholders interested in organic and that would like to know better and exchange about the situation within their country and network with the sector parties. The open conference of the morning session gathered over one hundred fifty (150) persons from several Jordanian institutions, civil society and private sector. It hosted also an exhibition of organic products where producers and manufacturer/processors exposed their products and exchanged with the participants on their techniques and products peculiarities.

After the National Anthem, *Tamam Khawalda* Head of the Organic Agricultural Products Division at the MoA and Jordanian representative in MOAN opened the plenary session at 10.10 welcoming all attendants and introducing the state and institutional formal representatives.

CIHEAM Bari director, *Maurizio Raeli* greeted the presents and the hosting country particularly the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Environment *Ibrahim Al-Shahahdeh* and to the MOAN representative from Jordan *Ms Tamam Khawalda* and the

local team for the meeting organisation. He also thanked the IFOAM EU for their continuous collaboration in the organisation of the thematic workshop and the institutional commitment and interest of CIHEAM Paris in supporting the strategic network. He recalled the strategic importance of the MOAN workshop due to the decisive timing of the negotiation at EC level for the new EU regulation for organic agriculture. He pointed out the current thematic projects ongoing in Jordan with the collaboration framework between CIHEAM Bari and the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan.

During his speech, the Secretary-General of the CIHEAM, *Plácido Plaza*, underlined that the MOAN Network is acting as a “platform for North-South and South-South discussions on legislative and technical issues related to organic agriculture”. He also emphasised the Network’s capacity to contribute to a sustainable future for Mediterranean agriculture, in line with the CIHEAM Strategic Agenda 2025 (CAPMED), inspired by the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

*Eduardo Cuoco*, IFOAM EU director, through a registered video message regrets for not being able to participate this year for other commitments in the Far East. Cuoco defined organic agriculture as a source concept animated by a movement for agriculture change with committed individuals, businesses and producers working together for the fine standards and development system and practices in order to achieve the organic movement goals of environmental protection, plant and animal production, animal welfare, food quality health and social justice. Over the past three decades, organic agriculture continued to expand accompanied by a market growth in the last ten year. The EU market registered 34.3 billion euro in 2017. Worldwide there are 51 million hectares organically grown and 2.4 million certified organic farmers worldwide with an organic food market valued at 65 billion Euros. He stressed on the importance of the workshop on group certification as by 2021 when the new EU regulation will come into force, its provisions will affect the work of public administration, CBs and organic operators who are willing to exchange products with the EU countries.

The warm welcoming word of his H.E. the Hashemite Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Environment *Ibrahim Al-Shahahdeh* closed the welcoming official speeches. He acknowledged the technical experience of the CIHEAM Bari Institute and IFOAM EU, and of other countries in providing and exchanging information, data and technical knowledge related to the organic agriculture sector with the Hashemite Ministry of Agriculture. He also added that the Ministry of Agriculture has made significant steps ahead in organic agriculture and has been committed in developing and supporting the sector especially in terms of regulations and by-laws as well as in awareness raising.

A 45 minutes coffee break allowed visiting the stands, interacting with the exhibiting producers and eventually buying some local organic products.

After the break, *Lina Al-Bitar*, from MOAN secretariat outlined the activities and achievements of the Network as well as their interactions with the field of research, cooperation, education and institutional support within the Mediterranean. She pointed out that the importance of keeping up with common interest projects for a better organic sector in the Mediterranean.

*Tamam Khawalda*, head of the Organic Agricultural Products Department at the MoA, gave a snapshot of the regulatory framework, state of the art of the sector statistics and the different actions taken for organic agriculture in Jordan. She pointed out the institutional commitment toward the development of the organic agriculture in the country within the last few years. Indeed, the MoA commitment includes among others the Issuance of the organic farming Bylaw, the upgrading of the Organic Agriculture Division the establishment of an Organic Agricultural Products Department the ministry as well as the development of a National Action Plan for Organic Agriculture 2018-2022 with ambitious goal for the sector growth. She closed with some examples on the implementation of the NAP.

*Tariq Okasha*, head of the Organic Agriculture Division at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) presented the main domains of interventions of his centre and outlined the tasks and duties of the Department of Organic Agriculture Research established in 2018 within the Horticulture Research Directorate: from the applied research to the capacity-building and technical training. He concluded briefing the planned upcoming activities.

*Ibrahim Abu-Helil*, from the Jordan Society for Organic Farming (JS4OF) briefly presented the mission objectives and activities of the society since its implementation in 2005. JS4OF aims at encouraging and assisting producers and processors to convert to organic, at spreading the concept of organic agriculture amid the stakeholders and at engaging actors of different agricultural value chains who are keen to serve the association goals.

*Tamara Qatarneh*, from the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organization (JSMO) presented the governmental organisation established in 1995 after being a department in the Ministry of Industry and Trade. She presented the certification department of the organisation, its vision, mission and services. She highlighted the control and confirmation of organic certificates and granting organic certification. The certification department will expand its services and activities to accreditation of organic certifications. Employees of this department are members in various national and technical committees in the Ministry of Agriculture.

*Mohammed Ayesh*, from CCPB Middle East introduced the activities of inspection and certification body for agrifood and non-food organic products and for environmental and sustainability certificates. She presents the process for the certification and the list of required documents to get the organic conformity certificate for both food and no food products.

Three success stories of Jordanian organic entrepreneurs were presented:

- Success story 1: Yanboot organic farm (<https://www.yanboot.com/about>), by *Bashar Humeid*, Yanboot is a family business that converted their farms to organic in 2014. They adopt a holistic approach to offer the community alternatives to conventional agriculture and food products. They follow the principle of organic farming in producing certified products, local, natural and healthy, trade fairly and build their community through educational events that reconnect to nature. Their work is based on four main aspects: *i*) respect for nature and attentive care for resources; *ii*)

transparency; *iii*) cooperative work and fair-trading and *iv*) technological innovation and balance. They have a wide assortment of products available for on-line and home delivery purchase and in their main branch in Dabouq 13 km from Amman where they also organise weekends' organic brunches and on demand meals.

- Success story 2: Good Food Mood Co. (GFMC) (<http://gfmood.com/>), by *Eyad Abu Awad* a company established in 2014 for organic extra virgin olive oil and palm date mainly export oriented to Europe and the Middle East region. He gave a picture about GFMC, its business goals and objectives and main products. He stressed on the achievement of his company mainly the premium quality products they reached and the main market destinations. He closed highlighting the core challenges they face such as some date palm diseases (Red Palm Weevil) the competition for olive oil in Europe and the lack of awareness of local consumers.
- Success story 3: Al Majdal for Natural Products, by *Amina Mango*, a family and personal story that started in 2000, when Amina's boy has been diagnosed with food allergies causing him severe eczema and her firm and constant search for suitable and natural products to ease her child eczemas' reactions. After several research and experiences, she built her own formulas, in 2006 build her factory, and started producing branded "Amina's natural skin care" range of products. Between 2014-2016 she started with the international certification process and accreditation for ISO and organic certification. Her products are certificated as natural and organic by COSMOS and Soil Association. The packages used for her wide range of products that are innovative, practical and environmentally friendly. She closed by underlining that Amina's products are the only organic cosmetics products with international standards and verified origins in the MENA region.

After the interesting and captivating presentations about the Jordanian organic sector's realities and facts, the session was concluded with an open dialogue and Q&A between the participants and the speakers. Besides the clarification and the in-depth question on some technical aspects of the presentations topics, several issues were raised as the problems faced and still to overcome in the Jordanian context and the core challenges mainly the very narrow local market, mainly due to the local consumer low awareness; and the technical challenges for organic production and produces.

### **Day 1, afternoon – workshop on secondary legislation on group certification (session 2)**

The afternoon session started after lunch with *Marie Reine Bteich*, from MOAN secretariat introducing the workshop objectives and relevance for the debate at EU level, she also announced the change in programme by postponing the group work to the next morning and concentrating the afternoon session for the last update and introducing the work of the next morning.

*Emanuele Busacca* from IFOAM EU outlined the updates on the current debate on the new EU Regulation for Organic Agriculture. He updated the presents on the ongoing discussions on controls and how to deal with suspicions and non-compliances,

harmonization of controls, certification of group of operators and on the plant reproductive material. He also mentioned that the coming ones will be on Import and international trade and on rules for salt and insects. After going into details of each of these points discussion, he exposed a list of ad-hoc questions divided in four groups, for the next day world café group work. The group went quickly through the questions and left for the social dinner.

His H.E. Mr Ibrahim Al-Shahahdeh, Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Environment joined the group at the official dinner held in Jerash and at the conclusion of the evening distributed an assortment of organic products as a welcome gift to all participants.

### **Day 2, morning – workshop on secondary legislation on group certification (session 3)**

Based on the questions proposed at the end of session 2, facilitators from IFOAM EU and MOAN secretariat explained the world café process to follow and the participants were divided in 4 groups. The two experts from IFOAM EU and two members of MOAN Secretariat facilitated and reported each on the discussion of a set of questions. The group discussion found interest from all the participants who actively contributed to the output of this session that are reported in Annex 3.

As the discussion and exchange on the group certification issue within the new EU regulation is of utmost relevance for the network, the world café discussion protracted and the technical seminar - “Presentation of Practical Examples and Discussion on the use of organic input in the EU and outside the EU”- previewed after the wrap up of session 2 and 3 was postponed. The seminar will be organised in the coming months through webinar to which all delegates can participate and interact.

### **Day 2, afternoon – MOAN internal meeting**

After lunch break, the internal MOAN meeting took place and consisted of an informal and relaxed exchange the conversed arguments were:

1. Delivering of and commenting the folder-shape MOAN publication with the country fiches and the restyled logo and graphics to be used for the network. The folder and new graphics were welcomed and appreciated by all presents.
2. The assembly exchanged on the collected information for the folder and on how to keep it updated. It was agreed that for a higher efficiency in terms of current and recent facts and figures from MOAN countries, it is recommended that each delegate shall report regularly to MOAN secretariat any highlight or relevant info related the organic sector in her/his country/region.
3. In coherence with what said in point (2), MOAN should aim to be a reference and a pillar of the organic sector in the Mediterranean; not only as institutional networking but also as academic and scientific source of reference. Therefore, shared information among the network should be more accurate, consistent and

continuous on detailed and credible contents for a quality product, could that be a publication, a report or a book chapter.

4. The deadline for the annual statistical data communication is mid-December 2019.
5. MOAN secretariat proposed to launch a new activity to the network that consists of collecting success stories in organic agriculture from all countries based on a set of criteria for selection and validation before proposing them to the network. The debate went through the harmonization and adaptation to the context of the success stories to be chosen and presented to the wide public as MOAN has different stage of development of the organic sector that directly transfer into different “forms” of success. For that reason, it was proposed to be referred as “Inspiring stories” that illustrate the facts of an organic reality. The format of such inspiring stories was not defined, though it was proposed as printed stories or short video/reportage.

Delegates engaged in sharing with MOAN secretariat relevant material and documents that could be used to set-up the criteria, and procedure for the inspiring stories from MOAN.

6. The MOAN secretariat to set-up a series of technical webinars in collaboration with IFOAM EU on regulation for the coming months and of other topic of interest to the delegates.
7. The hosting country for the 2020 MOAN meeting will be Montenegro, period between October and November. Andrijana, the Montenegrin delegate will check with her administration for a concrete data proposal. As soon as these data are available, MOAN secretariat will communicate them to the Assembly.
8. A thematic task force could be set up in the coming months depending on the interest and commitment of member countries and the availability of documented material and information on group certification within the interested countries. Such a task force shall engage in working for and participating to an international meeting of experts on group certification to be held at CIHEAM Bari in 2020. The task force could be composed of three to four country representatives, two international experts and two members of MOAN secretariat.

By the end of October, MOAN secretariat will circulate a questionnaire on the country experience with group certification to be compiled by all representatives. Based on the replies received, MOAN secretariat will contact representatives individually to compile and complete information on detailed experiences and initiatives on that topic.

### **Day 3 - technical visits and site visiting**

The technical tour started with a visit to a farm in Tuneib. Run by a young woman passionate of nature and environmental protection. The farm produces a wide variety of vegetables and distribute to the supermarket chain in Amman as well as to the local farmers markets and markets in Amman. After the visit, the group had a typical consistent breakfast with fresh vegetables from the farm.

The next stop was the visit to the green apple farm where the group was welcomed under the typical Jordanian tent before heading to the field visit. This farm is run by a man head of household who involved all his family members in his dream of producing free pesticides and healthy agricultural products. The environmental and soil conditions are hard but he does not intend to give up on his dream. The farm produces fruits and vegetables and are sold mainly in the family shop located in Amman but also on internet.

The bus head toward the Mount Nebo site in Madaba Governorate, to visit the memorial of Moses where the responsible priest guided the group through the Byzantine mosaics and the basilica that dates back the 4th century.

After a quick stop to a souvenir shop, on the way back the group had a gastronomic stopover to conclude the day with a self-service delicious and healthy farm to fork dinner at Yanboot shop and restaurant in Dabouq near Amman.

#### **Day 4 – touristic and cultural visit to Petra**

The fourth day was entirely dedicated to a trip to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site Petra. The Jordanian by excellence archaeological site.

Once back to the hotel in the evening a spur of the moment gathering was set-up to thank the Jordanian team and in person the Jordanian representative Tamam Khalawlda for the effort made in the organisation of the meeting and touristic trip handing her over a murano souvenir from CIHEAM Bari.