International Teamwork in Agriculture and Extension Education: An example in the Mediterranean Region

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Introduction

With about 20 countries and 500M people, the Mediterranean Region is becoming an increasingly important entity from a political perspective: Cohesion and unity in the region is indispensable to assure global stability. To some, this is an impossible task: With countries as disparate as France, Malta, Turkey, Egypt, Italy and Algeria, the region could not be more contrasting, not just politically and culturally, but also with respect to physical environmental factors, and degree of development. To others, however, parallelisms are more important than differences. For example, all countries have similar problems related to the preservation of natural resources and agricultural production: a) The fragility of soil (erosion, desertification), water (scarcity, salinization), and sea (pollution, biological equilibrium) resources; b) The relative importance of agriculture in the national economies; and c) The need to develop adequate agricultural technologies adapted to Mediterranean conditions.

Purpose of the Poster

To present, analyze, and discuss an example of an organization working to create and enhance cooperation and development links in the Mediterranean Region, focusing in education, technology transfer, service, and research networks, in agriculture and the environment. The poster will focus on the particular characteristics of the organization that establish it in the best position to be successful where others have failed.

Major Points and Information to be Shared

Some of the distinctive characteristics of the organization are: a) Small size, international character, lack of cumbersome organizational structures, and organizational and networking experience, which give it great flexibility, adaptability, dynamism, and ability to respond promptly; b) Promotes valorization of other institutions, avoids duplication, diversifies, and seeks complementarity, which make important foundations for sustainable development; and c) Strives for excellence, both in human resources and in programs, which help maximize ripple effects.

Conclusions

Many agree that knowledge is the key to development and that "societies build their own futures . . . a country can only develop when its own people acquire the capacity to deal with their own problems." (Whalen, 1998). The organization presented in this poster stands behind this statement, for it aims to promote technological capacity and human resources through high level training and research, and by creating sustainable links and networks between institutions and people in the Mediterranean region.

Educational Importance

The poster provides ideas to individuals, groups, and institutions, about different strategies to support development, in particular networking for education and research. The analysis of characteristics and guiding principles of a specific institutional example allows the reader to understand the situation and processes, and be able to assess the potential of successfully adapting the approach to other institutions, environments, or circumstances.