



Minutes of the SupMed steering committee meeting **from 23rd to 25th May 2023 in Luxor (Egypt)**



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I – Steering committee objectives:

Summarising the activities carried out, the added value and the difficulties encountered in the design and implementation of adaptation strategies; clarifying future activities, in particular support for farmers and the valorisation of project results to support the regional and national strategies of the Egyptian and Lebanese Ministries of Agriculture; and finally, instigating the creation of a network on the modelling of agricultural systems, for the promotion of agro-ecological practices in the Mediterranean area in an uncertain climatic context.

II – Participants:

The committee meeting was attended by Mr T. Nancy, from the globalization and food security office of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and an alternate member of the FFEM steering committee¹, which is the project funder. It brought together the main institutional representatives of the project's co-financing partners in both countries (see attendance list appendix). The Egyptian MoA, with the participation of Dr Saad Moussa, Director of International Relations for the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture, and the Regional Directorate of Agriculture for the governorate of Luxor as well as its extension service were also represented.

III – Programme, discussions and decisions made

1) Day 1: Field visit and discussions with SupMed charter farmers

Demonstration of the mobile composting unit and the irrigation infrastructure co-financed by the project (photovoltaic pumping station). Discussion with farmers committed to the SupMed charter and local decision-makers (irrigators' associations and partner NGOs) on the various added values of the project for their activities, and the difficulties or expectations in terms of technical and/or financial support for the implementation of agro-ecological practices.

¹ As the FFEM (*Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial*, i.e. the French Facility for Global Environment) project manager was unable to attend, she asked Mr Nancy to represent her as a member of the FFEM steering committee.



What emerged from these discussions was a **strong interest on the part of growers and a thorough understanding of the project's issues and expectations in terms of developing agro-ecological practices and limiting production costs linked to irrigation. They emphasized the added value of the training they had received, as well as the ideas they had contributed and shared during the workshops** (cf. 1st phase of the project), and reiterated their desire to play an active part in the operational implementation phase.

On the other hand, delays in setting up demonstration plots and in receiving the support provided for by the SupMed charter are causing considerable concern among growers, who have already had to give up planting certain spring crops (sorghum and sugarcane). The risk of losing the momentum of local partners must therefore be taken into consideration, as expectations are high among farmers in Luxor and Lebanon.

Notable information: potential intensiveness of the farming context (2-3 harvests per year: winter wheat, spring sorghum ["Nile flood harvest"], maize in summer + sugar cane all year round); context of very fragmented plots (less than 0.25ha/family) -> no actual land consolidation, but coordination of crop practices and optimization of collective work.

The second part of the visit focused on the activities of women's cooperatives in the project's rural areas, and the involvement of the NGO EASD (Egyptian Association for Sustainable Development) in the development of these handicraft and agricultural waste recycling activities (manufacture of palm-based objects). These actions have led to a significant increase in the income of farm households, and could be better developed in the upcoming stages of the project, or taken into account in the design of a follow-up strategy or a SupMed 2 project.

Other avenues for development: dried tomatoes, table grapes, "duck loan", "poultry loan", "pregnant goat loan": allocation of an animal, repayment in cash or in kind over three, six or twelve months.

Two points stood out: the degree of awareness of environmental issues and the fight against the effects of climate change, for agricultural and rural populations with little training and education; the emphasis placed on empowering women, as at the steering committee meeting held in Lebanon in March 2022.

2) Day 2: plenary meeting with partners and Lebanon/Egypt SupMed coordination team, and main decisions

The aim of this morning session was to present the dissemination strategy and the means to be implemented to contribute to regional and national CC adaptation policies. (Introductory presentation by H. Belhouchette, project coordinator)

Ms Abdelhakim, SupMed expert, presented the methodology envisaged for the elaboration of concept notes aimed at **highlighting the SupMed method and experience (participatory approach, training and awareness-raising on CC, identification and typology of farms, use of bioeconomic modelling for designing adaptation scenarios and collective validation, obstacles and difficulties met, etc.) as food for thought for decision-makers and public policy designers at different levels (regional and national).**

3 concept notes will be produced

- **On the method:** the aim is to raise awareness of the method and its relevance to the identification and dissemination of farming practices for adapting to climate change at a



regional level. It will present the tools, stages, partners, implementation process and adaptation to different contexts. The note is intended for a wide audience: local decision-makers, researchers, NGOs, extension workers, etc.

- **On results and impact at a regional level:** the objective here is to focus, in each country, on the difficulties encountered, the strengths, the limits and the interest of the SupMed experience in addressing the issue of adaptation to climate change, and to provide elements for enhancing the value of the methodology applied at local and regional policy levels.
- **A broader document outlining the advantages of this approach, and the possible obstacles and levers for action with a view to taking agro-ecological practices into account in the design of national policies.** The aim is to recall the context and present the major issues that impact negatively or positively on the development and/or implementation of adaptation strategies. It also serves to formulate recommendations to help improve the effectiveness of strategy implementation, and to raise awareness of the levers that need to be taken into account.

It was agreed that the first note should be produced by September 2023 and that an initial working group be set up in Luxor to present this first deliverable in November 2023.

The presentation was made in the presence (remote participation) of Mr. Saad Moussa, Director of International Relations at the Egyptian MoA, who expressed his satisfaction with the project's progress, and his interest in and expectations for this approach to supporting CC adaptation policies in order to feed into the ongoing reflection on the construction of climate change strategies in Egypt.

-> scaling-up strategy

Interest and expectations are also very strong for the Lebanese MoA, as indicated by Mr. Salem Darwich, advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, who expressed the same inclination.

General discussion and proposals for the future: involving a local agricultural television station in Egypt; organizing Zoom meetings between farmers from different governorates; making interviews/experience sharing available on the Lebanese ministry's website; in Egypt, targeting students in their final year of training, who are disconnected from this type of project, targeting agricultural high schools, using social media, building on existing events (seminars and agricultural shows).

The rest of the presentations consisted in an **update on the activities carried out during year 2** of the project:

- **Capacity-development on the use of bioeconomic models (presentation by Y. Diab – Aswan Faculty of Agriculture)**

Mr Yaser Diab, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Aswan, presented a summary of the results of SupMed training at his faculty: over thirty engineers have been trained and are developing these skills as part of several large-scale agricultural projects in the Luxor Region, thus contributing to the dissemination of the project results. He reiterated his interest in further collaboration between his institution, the SupMed project and CIHEAM IAMM.

The bioeconomic modelling tool appears to be an important skill that is not part of the University's current teaching programmes, which represents an interesting opportunity for collaboration and a strong project deliverable.



- **Review of the adaptation strategy validation process and preparation of demonstration plots** (presentation by A. Fakh and S. Darwich, engineer and project focal point – presentation by O. El Shaikh and E. Abdullah, **SupMed Egypt focal point and engineer**)

The second part of the session consisted in a presentation of the different typologies of farming systems identified, the adaptation strategies adopted collectively and the approach to identifying support for farmers for implementing these strategies based on agro-ecological practices. The nature of the support is based on 3 strands:

- **Input support: improved seeds or organic fertilizer**
- **Support for plot irrigation infrastructures:** installation of drip irrigation systems in Lebanon and canal construction in Egypt.
- **Support for value-added production, with the project covering the cost of organic certification.**

FFEM support will be systematically backed by co-financing from local partners and farmers.

Update on the difficulties encountered: the necessary adjustments to the scenarios derived from the models required more adaptation time than expected, and led to some delays in identifying the nature of the support to be provided to farmers and the breakdown between co-financing and FFEM funding.

- **Feedback on the installation of collective investments in both countries**

The Lebanese team presented the process of setting up the olive tree cuttings nursery, which was finalized and inaugurated in May 2023. This collective facility is now up and running, and will ensure the structuring of the organic olive oil sector and its sustainability, by limiting the need to import seedlings and reducing production costs.

Mr Darwich, advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, stressed the importance of this investment, as well as its innovative and sustainable nature in a Lebanese context where seedlings are generally imported from Syria, and the attention paid by the MoA to the SupMed project. **This highlights the importance of showing what an agro-ecological approach means in concrete terms.**

The Egyptian team reported on the implementation of the mobile composting unit and its added value for local farmers in terms of lower input costs and valorization of agricultural waste.

3) Day 3: overall progress of the project and scheduling activities for the next 18 months

The coordination team presented the different stages of the project, the activities and expected results. (Presentation by A. Cobacho)

- **Setting up demonstration plots and farmer support**

It was agreed that the delays in implementing the support promised to farmers should be resolved as quickly as possible, otherwise the autumn crops would be missed, which would be highly disruptive to the smooth running of the project. At present, given the delays, it has not been possible to plant the spring crops, and innovation strategies for these crops will have to be postponed until 2024. There are several reasons for these delays:

- Delays in identifying the strategies to be tested and the types of support to be provided



- The financial/economic crisis, which has led to a sharp rise in the price of inputs for an FFEM budget that remains constrained, and the lack of interest among companies in responding to these types of contracts.
- Finally, delays in the validation of the TOR and the results of the FFEM calls for tender.

It was agreed that the Ministry of Agriculture and the FFEM would be attentive to any delays due to administrative validation procedures.

The Egyptian partners have also assured us that they will do their utmost to send their offer rapidly.

It was agreed that support for farmers should begin no later than September 2023.

In the meantime, so as not to break the momentum initiated with farmers, it has been agreed that demonstration visits should be organised around the agro-ecological practices that will be developed using pre-existing plots with the support of the research institutes present in the project areas (i.e. LARI in Lebanon).

- **Activities for the promotion and dissemination of the project results to be developed over the next 18 months**

By the end of 2023, the development activity should accelerate with the organization of 2 workshops in Luxor (Egypt):

- **One on the presentation of the 1st concept note on the project methodology** (see above).
- **The other on building a Lebanese-Egyptian network around bioeconomic modelling.** The aim of this network will be to disseminate and facilitate experience sharing between scientists and users. This workshop will clarify the network's objectives and examine the extent to which the SupMed experience and the modelling tool could contribute to shared training content between Egyptian and Lebanese universities (future Erasmus project?) and, beyond that, contribute to content for vocational training and/or MoA extension services.

The Director of Extension Services at the Luxor Directorate of Agriculture underlined his interest in this tool and in the SupMed approach for its services.

These two workshops will be organized jointly in order to pool resources and make sure that the 1st concept note reaches a wider audience.

An outline of the activities planned for the final year of the project was presented, with a focus on the promotion and enhancement of the products resulting from the project. To this end, we plan to involve local cooperatives and women's cooperatives more closely by organizing a workshop on the measures to be implemented to encourage the dissemination of agro-ecological practices.

This initial event will contribute to the preparation of a *market event* to promote local produce, and a survey of the various agricultural promotional events (fairs, shows, etc.) will need to be carried out in advance among the partners so as to identify the organizational arrangements.

A specific event will also be simultaneously dedicated to the promotion of technical data sheets summarizing the implementation of the agro-ecological practices adopted by SupMed.

With regard to strengthening the dissemination of the project results, **3 workshops will be organized in 2024** with a view to:

- **Presenting concept notes to political decision-makers (1 workshop per country)**



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- **Organising two international seminars in the Mediterranean area** to disseminate the SupMed experience in other arid regions (Algeria).

These events will provide an opportunity to reflect on a SupMed follow-up strategy to be developed in other territories in partner countries and beyond (to be specified), and on possible financing methods and institutional frameworks to be considered (FFEM, other funds, Baghdad II Conference, etc.).

It was agreed that this event should have a large number of participants, in order to open up possibilities for future collaboration and disseminate the project results as widely as possible.

Additional financial support may be requested from the French Ministry of Agriculture to contribute to the organization of this event, and other funding will be sought from bodies such as Agropolis International.

It was agreed that this request should be submitted in early 2024, so that an event may be held at the end of 2024.

The meeting ended with a presentation of the follow-up and monitoring tools needed to assess the impact of the actions to be implemented in the autumn.

One session was dedicated to describing the content and operation of the "*registration book*", which will be the central tool for collecting and evaluating the results of the strategies, and producing relevant indicators for disseminating and promoting the project results.

The idea is to be able to benefit from a mapped dynamic medium, which summarises the characteristics of the farms assisted, the types of inputs and support, the results and indicators. This tool, which will be similar in Lebanon and Egypt, will be made available on the project intranet to facilitate experience sharing. It will also be an interesting database and output for the sustainability of the project and for the project's institutional partners: MoA and the regional directorate of agriculture + others (to be specified...) by providing them with field-based elements that can easily be used for their own extension and intervention activities with farmers.



APPENDICES

List of main participants

Egyptian delegation

- Mr Saad Moussa, Director of International Relations, Egyptian MoA
- Mr Ahmed Sabry, Egyptian MoA's International Relations Department
- Mr Ibrahim Ramad Amin, Luxor Governorate Regional Directorate of Agriculture, Extension Department.
- Mr Yaser Diab, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Aswan University.
- Mr Abou Eil Mohamed, research professor at the Faculty of Agriculture, Aswan University.
- Mr Othman El Shaikh, focal point of the SupMed Egypt project – NGO EASD
- Mr Emad Abdullah, engineer for the SupMed Egypt project – NGO EASD
- Mr Ahmad Fathy Hafez – NGO EASD

Lebanese delegation

- Mr Salem Darwich, Advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, SupMed Lebanon focal point
- Mr Hassan Nasrallah, Green Plan Director, Lebanese MoA
- Mr Mohamed Moussa, Green Plan Manager, Lebanese MoA
- Mr Ahmad Fakih, SupMed Lebanon engineer
- *Excused: Mr Khodr Jaafar, President of the Balbeck-Hermel cooperative union (visa application rejected)*

Representative of the French Ministry of Agriculture and FFEM

- Mr Thibaut Nancy, International Relations Department, Globalization and Food Security Office.

SupMed coordination team for CIHEAM IAMM

- Mr Hatem Belhouchette, project coordinator
- Ms Tahani Abdelhakim, SupMed expert
- Ms Anne Cobacho, project administrative and financial coordinator.