

## Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture (AWLA) fellowship program opens call for applications

- AWLA fellowship program aims to help women researchers in agriculture secure leadership roles by encouraging gender-responsive working cultures and creating platforms that showcase their intellect, capability, and contribution.
- Applications – opening on 8 March and closing on 15 April 2021 - can be made through [www.awlafellowships.org](http://www.awlafellowships.org).

**Dubai, UAE, March 8, 2021** – During an online event dedicated to the [International Women’s Day](#) today, H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, UAE Minister of State for Food and Water Security, announced the launch of the second (virtual) edition of the Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture ([AWLA](#)) fellowship program for women scientists in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

AWLA aims to help early- and mid-career professionals in agriculture to secure leadership roles by encouraging gender-responsive working cultures and creating platforms to showcase their intellect, capability, and contribution. AWLA’s fellows will help establish a unique R&D forum for women scientists in the MENA region to address pressing agricultural challenges and take part in a regional networking platform for women researchers across agricultural disciplines.

H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, UAE Minister of State for Food and Water Security, said: “Women are playing an increasingly prominent role in the scientific and entrepreneurial areas of food security – we see this in our own food security landscape here in the UAE, with women in senior roles at the cutting edge of crop research and agricultural technology. I am therefore delighted to announce the ICBA’s second edition of its Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture ‘AWLA’ programme, which will be producing the next crop of food researchers who are so important to drive our food security sector forward. I look forward to seeing many more bright young women graduate from this important AWLA programme.”

The call for applications will lead to the selection of a group of 20 to 30 researchers from the MENA region. The program will be delivered online over a 10-month period, starting from 1 June 2021.

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Acting Director General of ICBA, said: “Women-led contributions to agriculture, both on the farm and in the lab, are essential components of global food security. In the Middle East and North Africa, women make up over 40 percent of the labor force in the sector. They also contribute around 18 percent to the region’s overall GDP. Through our program, we hope to encourage women to play a more active role in such areas as science and innovation for sustainable agricultural development and food security. This second (virtual) edition builds on the success of the program in 2019-2020 which saw the graduation of 22 fellows from the region.”

Empirical evidence indicates that a disproportionately low number of women work in senior research and leadership positions in the region. The average share of women researchers across the region stands at 17 percent - the lowest in the world. This gap is most visible in the staffing of agricultural research and extension organizations. This means that policy and investment measures in agriculture might not be as effective as they could be because they do not fully reflect gender perspectives.

ICBA developed AWLA in 2016 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). The program aims to contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on gender equality and women's empowerment by building and enhancing the capacities of a new generation of Arab women researchers and leaders. By doing so, AWLA aspires to have a positive impact on the SDGs on Climate Action; Life on Land; and Partnerships for the Goals.

Launched in 2019 by ICBA in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the IsDB and CGIAR Research Program on Wheat, the first edition of AWLA concluded in March 2020. The first cohort of fellows included 22 women scientists from six countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

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## **About ICBA**

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) is a unique applied agricultural research center in the world with a focus on marginal areas where an estimated 1.7 billion people live. It identifies, tests and introduces resource-efficient, climate-smart crops and technologies that are best suited to different regions affected by salinity, water scarcity and drought. Through its work, ICBA helps to improve food security and livelihoods for some of the poorest rural communities around the world.

[www.biosaline.org](http://www.biosaline.org)

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