المركز الدولي للزراعة الملحية
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR BIOSALINE AGRICULTURE

# ICBA convenes first forum for farmers and agricultural extension professionals to expand climate-smart crop cultivation in the UAE

- In the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for the Food Diversity Sector at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, the forum brings together farmers, agricultural extension professionals and ICBA experts to support wider cultivation of four crops.
- ICBA launches a digital tool to collect farm-level data and document crop performance and agricultural practices.
- Farmers receive seeds, technical guides and crop calendars, alongside practical instruction in land preparation, planting and irrigation management.

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4 November 2026** – The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) organised the First Forum for Farmers and Agricultural Extension Professionals at its headquarters in Dubai. The forum was attended by H.E. Dr. Mohammed Salman Al Hammadi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Food Diversity Sector at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment; H.E. Sultan Salem Al Shamsi, Director of the National Agriculture Centre; and Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA. It brought together farmers from all seven emirates, agricultural extension service professionals and ICBA experts to coordinate preparations for planting four climate-smart crops and provide the seeds, knowledge and tools needed to grow them under local conditions.

ICBA researchers and specialists and representatives of local project partners joined the farmers and extension professionals at the forum. The event formed part of the National Agricultural Initiative for the Adoption of Climate-Smart Crops in the UAE, launched by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment in partnership with ICBA in April 2026. The initiative aims to expand cultivation of the four crops to 45 farms, diversify local food and fodder production and improve water-use efficiency.

ICBA launched a digital tool for collecting farm-level data and delivered the first technical training session for participating farmers on preparations for planting. Farmers received seeds, technical

guides and crop calendars for the four crops: sorghum, proso millet, foxtail millet and blue panicum. They also discussed their farms' needs and the challenges they anticipate directly with ICBA experts and agricultural extension professionals.

H.E. Dr. Mohammed Salman Al Hammadi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Food Diversity Sector at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, said: "Expanding the cultivation of climate-smart crops is an investment in the UAE's capacity to produce its own food efficiently and sustainably. Water scarcity and rising temperatures call for wider cultivation of crops suited to our environment. This will diversify domestic production, improve resource efficiency and help farmers sustain and develop their operations. The initiative supports the objectives of the National Food Security Strategy 2051 by translating research findings into practical choices about what to grow, strengthening our food system's resilience and its capacity to withstand changing conditions."

H.E. Dr. Al Hammadi added: "Launching the National Agricultural Initiative for the Adoption of Climate-Smart Crops at the second Emirates Agriculture Conference and Exhibition in Al Ain was a step towards connecting agricultural research with farmers' needs. Through this partnership, we are helping farmers select suitable crops and manage their resources, while providing advice and training throughout the growing season. Documenting results and listening to farmers' experiences will give us a scientific and economic basis for expanding cultivation, so that adopting these crops becomes a practical and viable choice that supports the long-term sustainability of farms and domestic production."

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA, said: "This forum is a practical step towards expanding the cultivation of climate-smart crops. It brings farmers, agricultural extension service professionals and our research team together to address what it takes to grow these crops on participating farms. ICBA provides scientific evidence and technical guidance, working alongside farmers as they prepare for planting, manage their crops and bring them to harvest. Extension professionals play a central role in guiding this work and monitoring progress. Data and feedback from farms enable us to direct support to the challenges farmers face. Through this partnership,

we aim to make crops suited to local conditions a lasting part of farming practice, supporting sustainable production and farmers' livelihoods."

ICBA recognised each participating farmer as a pioneer in the adoption of climate-smart crops, marking their role as the first group to cultivate these crops under the national initiative. The experience they gain from growing the crops and monitoring their performance throughout the season is expected to encourage other farmers across the Emirates to adopt them.

ICBA experts led technical sessions on crop establishment, followed by practical instruction in land preparation, sowing requirements and the installation and testing of irrigation systems. Farmers also received guidance on irrigation scheduling. The technical guides and crop calendars provide a reference throughout the season, setting out when to carry out farm operations and how to care for each crop.

Participants tested the digital data collection tool, with an emphasis on data quality and consistent record-keeping. The tool allows users to record crop growth and farm operations, including irrigation, fertiliser application and harvesting. Researchers and extension professionals can use these records to assess crop performance and identify the technical support each farm needs.

Farmers will receive support throughout the growing season, from checks on land preparation and irrigation water sources before planting to monitoring crop growth, identifying problems and recording harvest results. Agricultural extension service professionals will work regularly with farmers and ICBA researchers to monitor progress and provide technical recommendations suited to conditions on each farm.

Participants gathered for a group photograph and took part in a flag-raising ceremony to mark UAE Flag Day. The forum concluded with a discussion of implementation challenges and next steps, followed by the distribution of seeds to farmers.

The forum built on the Training of Trainers Programme for Agricultural Extension Service Professionals, which ICBA organised on 27 October. It involved farmers directly in preparations

for planting and enabled them to coordinate with the extension professionals who will support them throughout the season, putting agricultural research into practice on farms across the Emirates.

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**About the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA)**

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture is an international, non-profit centre for applied research for development, established through the leadership of the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Development Bank. ICBA combines scientific expertise, partnerships and knowledge exchange to develop solutions that support livelihoods and food security in arid and saline environments. Its research on soil, water, crops and climate addresses salinity, the management of affected land and the restoration of agricultural systems. Through this work, ICBA helps farming communities adapt to changing conditions and sustain their livelihoods.

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