

ICBA Joins AIRCA Partners to Strengthen Agricultural Research and Development Across Africa

- *AIRCA engagement on the sidelines of the 20th Africa Food Systems Forum brought together member centers, partners and stakeholders in Kigali*
- *Alliance highlighted the value of combining complementary scientific expertise to support more resilient and sustainable food systems*
- *ICBA contributed its expertise in resource-efficient and resilient agriculture for arid and saline environments*

Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 9 September 2026: The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) joined fellow members of the Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture (AIRCA) at the Friends of AIRCA Breakfast side event, held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 1 September 2026 on the sidelines of the 20th Africa Food Systems Forum, to strengthen partnerships and explore opportunities for greater collaboration in advancing agricultural research, innovation and development across Africa.

The engagement took place as leaders and stakeholders from across Africa and beyond gathered in Kigali for the Africa Food Systems Forum, held under the theme “Investing in Africa’s Agri-Food Systems: Nourishing Nations, Growing Jobs, Building Resilience”. The 2026 edition was expected to convene more than 5,000 participants from over 50 countries, focusing on priorities including investment and finance, food security and nutrition, climate resilience, youth and digital innovation, and trade and value chains.



Against this backdrop, the AIRCA event provided a platform for member centers, partners and stakeholders to exchange perspectives and explore how stronger collaboration can increase the contribution of agricultural research and innovation to Africa's food systems. The event was designed to foster connections, exchange ideas and strengthen partnerships around a shared commitment to transforming food systems and advancing sustainable development across the continent.

AIRCA is an alliance of six international research and development centers: The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), CAB International (CABI), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe), the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), and the World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg). By bringing together complementary expertise and capabilities, the alliance works to advance innovations for diverse, safe, nutritious and climate-resilient food systems that support livelihoods, health and the environment.

The strength of the alliance lies in its ability to connect these different areas of expertise and create opportunities for joint action. For Africa, where agricultural challenges increasingly intersect with climate pressures, land and soil degradation, water scarcity, nutrition and rural livelihoods, such collaboration can help strengthen the links between scientific research, practical innovation and solutions that respond to local priorities.

Representing ICBA at the event, Dr. Ganga Rao Nadigatla, Chief Scientist, participated in the center showcase and presented ICBA's latest research projects and key research-for-development initiatives. He highlighted the Center's work to



develop practical, resource-efficient and resilient agricultural systems designed around stakeholder needs and suited to arid and saline environments.

As a founding member of AIRCA, ICBA contributes specialized expertise in the management of land and water under challenging conditions, irrigation systems, soil salinity, crop management and the identification of crops and varieties suited to saline environments. This expertise complements the capabilities of other AIRCA members and strengthens opportunities to develop integrated approaches to agricultural challenges.

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA and former Chairperson of AIRCA's Steering Committee, said: "The transformation of Africa's food systems requires stronger connections between science, innovation and the realities on the ground. AIRCA brings together institutions with complementary expertise and provides an important platform for us to work collectively with national partners and other stakeholders. By combining our strengths, we can help accelerate the development, adaptation and scaling of practical solutions that strengthen agricultural resilience, improve livelihoods and contribute to sustainable food systems across Africa."

She added: "ICBA brings to this collective effort its experience in addressing salinity, water scarcity and other challenges affecting agriculture in arid and saline environments. Working alongside AIRCA partners allows us to connect this expertise with capabilities across other areas and create greater opportunities for research and innovation to deliver lasting impact".

Held under the message "Six Centres, One Alliance, Greater Impact", the AIRCA event featured presentations by member centers followed by partner reflections and discussion, creating an opportunity to identify areas for collaboration and build



connections with organizations participating in the wider Africa Food Systems Forum.

The engagement builds on AIRCA members' broader commitment to strengthen collective action and partnerships, with the alliance identifying collaboration as a means of increasing the reach and impact of research and translating scientific knowledge into practical solutions for farmers and communities. AIRCA had already identified the Africa Food Systems Forum in Kigali as an opportunity for an in-person engagement among members and partners in 2026.

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