

ICBA joins forces with partners to set up first-ever operational drought monitoring system in Jordan

Amman, Jordan, 27 April 2017 — Jordan is set to have its first-ever operational drought monitoring system as a result of collaboration between different organizations, including the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ([FAO](#)), the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)), the United Nations Development Program ([UNDP](#)), and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln ([UNL](#)).

Over the past few years the country has experienced several droughts that badly affected its agriculture and water resources.

All the organizations will work together with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of Jordan and other government agencies to operationalize an integrated drought monitoring system. The system will use open-source and free-of-charge software developed by the climate change and adaptation research team at ICBA and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's National Drought Mitigation Center.

As part of this initiative, ICBA organized with partners a USAID-funded three-day practical workshop at the [Ministry of Water and Irrigation](#) in Amman, Jordan, on 25-27 April 2017. The workshop provided participants with hands-on training on how to create monthly maps in minutes to monitor the drought using this software.

Over 18 participants representing various organizations in Jordan, such as the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Environment, the University of Jordan, the National Center for Agricultural Research and Extension (NCARE), and the Ministry of Agriculture took part in the training. During the training, all participants created monthly maps for 16 years (2000-2016), and for the first quarter of 2017, with the help of the trainers from ICBA.

Eng. Ali Subah, Assistant Secretary General for Technical Affairs, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Jordan, said: "Our dams in Jordan have currently less than 50 percent capacity, and we're in a difficult situation to meet the water demand of all sectors. What we have noticed so far is that different agencies are working towards this issue in Jordan, and we would like all these agencies to work together for an effective system and avoid duplication of work. I'm happy to see ICBA, UNDP, FAO and USAID coming together to enhance the drought monitoring system for Jordan. I'm hopeful these types of drought monitoring systems will help us to better plan and manage our water resources in the future."

For her part, Dr. Rachael McDonnell, Head of Climate Change Modeling and Adaptation Section and Principal Scientist on Water Governance and Policy at ICBA, said: "On behalf of FAO, USAID, UNL, UNDP and ICBA, we appreciate the support and hospitality of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Jordan. Drought is a responsibility of many different organizations in Jordan and we are committed to working together and transfer the technology which we have developed with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with all these agencies to have an integrated drought management system for Jordan."

Dr. McDonnell added: "ICBA is a practical and applied research organization and the climate modelling and adaptation team of ICBA not just looks at the climate change, but the impacts of the climate change like drought, which is going to be one of the most severe for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. We are committed to bringing together all the resources we have and we are committed to supporting the development of an operational drought management system in Jordan in the next few years."

Highlighting the need for an integrated system, Eng. Talal Alfayez, Program Expert, FAO, Jordan, said: "FAO in Jordan is very happy to work with ICBA, USAID, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and all other partners for a common goal, i.e. to help Jordan in managing the issues such as drought. The drought monitoring system from ICBA is a great tool and I'm hopeful that it will be helpful in managing the issues of drought, and it will save a lot of time."

Mr. Sami Tarabieh, Project Manager, UNDP, Jordan, said: "We at the project are pleased to be invited by our colleagues from ICBA to attend this important technical training on the drought monitoring system, and that reveals the willingness to coordinate efforts and create a space for information exchange and promote an effective collaboration framework to support Jordan to be well prepared for drought and its potential impacts."

Ms. Buthainah Batarseh, Head of Water Resources Protection Section, Ministry of Environment, Jordan, one of the participants of the training, said: "Over the last few years, we have been experiencing a change in weather, like erratic change in rainfall and unseasonable high temperatures, which is very unusual for Jordan. Our Climate Change Directorate of the Ministry is working on a component to build an early warning system for the farmers and after attending the training, which was very helpful, I'm hopeful that a drought monitoring system will be of great help as we can use the data from it to build the early warning system."

Periodic drought is a threat to food and water security in the MENA region. The region already faces challenges from the limited water supply, political instability, and desertification. So droughts bring unwanted additional pressures on natural resources, impacting economic and social development.

Many more countries require enhanced drought management. Therefore, ICBA plans to build on the success and MENA experience of the current project, and continue to develop the local capabilities in monitoring/early warning systems, policy planning and practical implementation. ICBA's work will contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation in countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco, which are most likely to suffer from climate change-related effects.

There are also planned activities in helping policy-makers embed drought within water policy frameworks so that these extreme events are managed proactively.

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About ICBA

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) is an international, non-profit research-for-development organization that aims to strengthen agricultural productivity in marginal and saline environments through identifying, testing and facilitating access to sustainable solutions for food, nutrition and income security.

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