

UAE state ministers for advanced sciences, food security visit ICBA to mull cooperation

Dubai, UAE, January 23, 2018 – Her Excellency Mariam Bint Mohammed Almheiri, Minister of State for Future Food Security, and Her Excellency Sarah bint Yousif Al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced Sciences, paid a special visit recently to [the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture](#) (ICBA) to learn about the center’s advances in and contributions to agricultural science and technology.

During their visit, H.E. Mariam Almheiri and H.E. Sarah Al Amiri met Professor Abdulrahman Sultan Alsharhan, Chairman of ICBA’s Board of Directors, and Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, ICBA’s Director General, as well senior management and scientists of the center. Their excellencies were briefed about the center’s latest research-for-development initiatives in different regions, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and scientific advances in, among other things, plant breeding and biotechnology, seed science and technology, climate change modeling, irrigation and water management, and salinity management.

During the meeting, H.E. Mariam Bint Mohammed Almheiri said: “We were delighted to have the opportunity to come here and meet the team of scientists at the center, who are working to develop farming practices that are suitable for our environment. Perfecting these practices and scaling them up is key for food security in the country and the region. The ICBA has long been at the fore of the efforts to conduct in-depth research into food security. The time has now come to translate the findings from that research into on-the-ground applications that benefit our country in an economic sense, in addition to providing solutions to our most pressing challenges.”

In a similar vein, H.E. Sarah Al Amiri added: “In a region like ours, food security is a key concern and a priority for both government and private entities to address. With more than 20 years in the field of food production, ICBA has amassed a wealth of knowledge and insight into the sector, by virtue of the extensive research and expertise in the field. This knowledge is the foundation upon which we can begin to design and build initiatives and projects to address the challenges in the sector and transform them into opportunities. Empowering institutions such as ICBA is at the core of our mission and is essential for building a robust scientific ecosystem in the country, as well as highly capable human resources in the science and technology sector.”

Following the discussions, their excellencies toured ICBA’s facilities, including the Emirates Soil Museum, the Integrated Aqua-Agriculture System, experimental fields, wastewater treatment plots, biochar production sites, greenhouses and net-houses.

Speaking about the center’s work, Professor Abdulrahman Sultan Alsharhan said: “Since its formation in the UAE, ICBA has established a strong foothold and a considerable reputation as a center of excellence and a go-to research-for-development partner not only in the MENA region but also other regions of the world. The center’s efforts focus on innovative solutions for some of the most pressing problems of our time from climate change to environmental degradation to undernourishment.”

For her part, Dr. Ismahane Elouafi said: “We are delighted to welcome H.E. Mariam Almheiri and H.E. Sarah Al Amiri to showcase our center’s achievements in agricultural science and technology. We hope to find a lot of common ground for collaboration.”

She also said: “Like any other country, the UAE needs more innovative technologies to ensure continued food, water and nutrition security of the population in the future. However, we can

achieve this only if we make strategic investments into research and innovation today. This way we can deal with a wide range of challenges, including climate change and water scarcity.”

As an applied agricultural research center, ICBA works to address current problems and future risks in regions with less favorable environmental conditions. For almost two decades the center has been identifying, testing and piloting resource-efficient, climate-smart crops and technologies in salt-affected, water-scarce and drought-vulnerable regions around the world. As a result, ICBA has accumulated extensive applied experience and developed tailor-made solutions to the problems of salinity, water scarcity and drought. The center is uniquely positioned to introduce much-needed climate-smart crops and technologies in different parts of the world to alleviate projected food and water crises.

The center also stores one of the world’s largest collections of germplasm exclusively dedicated to heat- and salt-tolerant plant species. Its gene bank has over 13,000 accessions of some 240 plant species from more than 150 countries and territories of the world. The gene bank also preserves around 250 seed samples of 70 wild plant species from the UAE, the center’s host country.

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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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