

Note from Representative of Egypt in PRIMA Board of Trustees

Egypt has responded immediately to COVID-19 crises upon its first arise by taking measure on so many directions using a highly strategic, scientific proven methods. On the level of health monitoring and economy preservation, The Egyptian government has gathered all relevant actors to make suggestions on how to face this crises with minimal losses and highest efficiency. This has been/being achieved on my axis:

1- Health monitoring:

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, through the Science and Technology Development Fund (STDF) and The Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) has launched an emergency funds for short research projects (with total funds of 60M EGP). Priority was given to projects that able to provide short term solutions to contain this crises. Examples of projects which received funds are those to manufacture 3D printed face-masks with changeable filters, cheap and practical face-shields, portable high throughput PCR machines, sterilization cabinets, cheap production of Ethyl-alcohol, assessment of pharmaceutical supply chain and impact of COVID-19 crises on the pharma business. Rapid diagnostic kits and local manufacturing of IR thermometers as well as predictive models of the spread of the infection and strategies to contain it.

Moreover, a call with funds over 100M EGP was launched by STDF to funds centers for viral research, with special emphasis to viral zoonoses.

2- Food systems and Agriculture

Egypt has the advantage of producing most of its fruits and vegetables, and this crisis increased Egypt's competence of food production due its fine production of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP), which now has gained a high interest by all people. In addition to MAP, other food products have become the main interest for production; such as, olive oil, citrus-based products and organic food at large.

Egypt has notably urged researchers and SMEs to find solutions in shortening the supply chain through digitalization and energy efficient storage systems as well as local production of fertilizers and pest-control methods. Strategic crops such as wheat and corn, which are mainly used in bread production is secured, and researchers are urged to experiment solutions on alternative/high-yield varieties of wheat and corn.

Animal production, on the other hand, is encouraged to start using locally produced/experimented feedstuff and research to enhance its quality.

3- Suggestions for PRIMA for the upcoming 2 years

Mediterranean basin countries could contribute in resolving COVID-19 crises in the are of Agriculture and Agrofood by the following:

- 1- Novel (highly efficient and cost-effective) extraction and processing/drying technologies of essential and volatile oils from medicinal and aromatic plants grown in the Mediterranean basin and known (heritage) for the their health benefits.
- 2- Online/digital markets and supply chains for small producers and farmers that are connected with home delivery network.
- 3- Encourage “Participatory Guarantee Systems” (PGS), which are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. This mainly to increase exportation across the Mediterranean shores.
- 4- Restore highly nutritious recipes from Mediterranean heritage to foster immunity of people.
- 5- Intensive agriculture systems and high-yield varieties of strategic crops, such as wheat, barley and corn.