

## Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture (Awla) fellowship program opens call for applications

- Awla fellowship program aims to help women researchers in agriculture secure leadership roles by encouraging gender-responsive working cultures and creating platforms that showcase their intellect, capability and contribution.
- Applications can be made through [www.awlafellowships.org](http://www.awlafellowships.org) and close on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Dubai, UAE, March 7, 2019 – On the eve of [International Women's Day](#), the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and [CGIAR Research Program on Wheat](#) launched a call for applications for the first edition of the Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture (Awla) fellowship program for women researchers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The Awla fellowship program aims to help women researchers in agriculture to secure leadership roles by encouraging gender-responsive working cultures and creating platforms to showcase their intellect, capability and contribution. Awla's first cohort will help establish the first R&D forum in the MENA to address pressing regional agricultural challenges and take part in the region's first networking platform for women researchers across agricultural disciplines.

The call for applications will lead to the selection of a group of 20 to 30 researchers from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. The program will be delivered from two regional hubs – Jordan and Tunisia - over a 10-month period, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Director General of ICBA, said: "Women-led contributions to agriculture, both on the farm and in the lab, are essential components of global food security. And our program is designed to address structural causes of gender inequality and encourage women to take an active role in future scientific developments and innovation. Tapping women's knowledge and potential today will set the world on course for a more sustainable and food-secure future."

H.E. Dr. Bandar Hajjar, President of the IsDB, said: "We are delighted to be partnering in launching this new program, which is a solid step in making sure no one is left behind. At the IsDB, we are focused on putting in place the next steps to help achieve gender parity and the Awla fellowship program is a welcome addition to the number of high-profile projects we have launched and designed to promote women and women's empowerment, along with our IsDB Prize for Women's Contribution to Development".

Mr. Hassan Damluji, Deputy Director – Global Policy & Advocacy and Head of Middle East Relations at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said: "This year's call to action for International Women's Day is to build a gender-balanced world – and that's precisely what Awla aims to do for regional agricultural research and development. By providing female researchers with the resources needed to build their skills and networks and a platform to be heard, the program aims to address the gender gap in agricultural R&D and create a more balanced playing field for women and men. This will improve the quality and impact of agricultural research in MENA overall, resulting in more solutions to the region's most pressing challenges.

"We're delighted to partner with ICBA and the IsDB on a fellowship program that will produce a wave of skilled, empowered and well-connected female researchers. This first cohort will play a key role in the success and sustainability of the program, and we encourage all candidates from across the focus countries to apply."

Mr. Victor Kommerell, Program Manager for the CGIAR Research Program on Wheat, remarked: "We are excited to work together with Awla. We have the same interest – building female science power in the

MENA region. Naturally, WHEAT's focus is on social or natural sciences research connected to wheat-based systems. Awla is the larger program and WHEAT can fit right in. Together, we can build critical mass in a few years' time."

Empirical evidence indicates that a disproportionately low number of women work in senior research and leadership positions in the region. The average share of women researchers across the region stands at 17% - the lowest in the world. This gap is most visible in the staffing of agricultural research and extension organizations, despite women making up more than 40% of the labor force in the sector. This means that policy and investment measures in agriculture might not be as effective as they could be because they do not fully reflect gender perspectives.

ICBA developed Awla in 2016 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the IsDB. The program aims to contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on gender equality and women's empowerment by building and enhancing the capacities of a new generation of Arab women researchers and leaders. By doing so, Awla aspires to have a positive impact on the SDGs on Climate Action; Life on Land; and Partnerships for the Goals.

###

### **About ICBA**

The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) is a unique applied agricultural research center in the world with a focus on marginal areas where an estimated 1.7 billion people live. It identifies, tests and introduces resource-efficient, climate-smart crops and technologies that are best suited to different regions affected by salinity, water scarcity and drought. Through its work, ICBA helps to improve food security and livelihoods for some of the poorest rural communities around the world.

[www.biosaline.org](http://www.biosaline.org)

### **About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy and productive lives. Through collaboration and partnership, the foundation helps fund research and programs to benefit those living in poverty all around the globe. The foundation works with partners in the Middle East to address the needs of the most vulnerable people through investments in disease eradication, emergency relief and agricultural research, as well as providing support to the philanthropic and development aid sectors.

<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/>

### **About IsDB**

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group is one of the world's largest multilateral development banks that has been working for over 40 years to improve the lives of the communities that it serves by delivering impact at scale.

The Bank brings together 57-member countries across four continents touching the lives of 1 in every 5 of the world's population.

Rated AAA by the three major rating agencies of the world, the IsDB Mission is to equip people to drive their own economic and social progress at scale, putting the infrastructure in place to enable them to fulfil their potential.

The IsDB builds collaborative partnerships among communities and nations, and work towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by harnessing the power of science, technology and innovation and fostering ethical and sustainable solutions to the world's greatest development challenges.

Over the years, the Islamic Development Bank has evolved from a single entity into a group (IsDB Group) comprising five entities: Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Islamic Research and Training Institute

(IRTI), the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC).

[www.isdb.org](http://www.isdb.org)

#### **About CGIAR Research Program on Wheat**

Joining advanced science with field-level research and extension in lower- and middle-income countries, the [Agri-Food Systems CGIAR](#) Research Program on Wheat ([WHEAT](#)) works with public and private organizations worldwide to raise the productivity, production and affordable availability of wheat for 2.5 billion resource-poor producers and consumers who depend on the crop as a staple food. WHEAT is led by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), with the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) as a primary research partner. Funding for WHEAT comes from [CGIAR](#) and national governments, foundations, development banks and other public and private agencies, in particular the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research ([ACIAR](#)), the UK Department for International Development ([DFID](#)) and the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)).

[www.wheat.org](http://www.wheat.org)

#### **Press enquiries:**

##### **ICBA**

Mr. Showkat Nabi Rather, ICBA, Dubai, UAE: [s.rather@biosaline.org.ae](mailto:s.rather@biosaline.org.ae), or +971 55 137 8653

##### **IsDB**

Mr. Muhammad Jameel Yusha'U, IsDB, Jeddah, KSA: [myushau@isdb.org](mailto:myushau@isdb.org), or +966126466421