

ICBA launches global initiative to spur youth innovation in food security, sustainability

Dubai, UAE, 22 December 2019 – Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Almhairi, UAE Minister of State for Food Security, has launched ICBA YES, the Youth Engagement Society (YES) initiative by the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)), which is aimed at facilitating communication and collaboration between young people in the UAE and their peers in other countries. The main goal of the initiative is to address local and global challenges related to food security and agricultural production in marginal environments, as well as to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ICBA YES initiative adopts a strategic framework that rests on four pillars: Inspiration, Communication, Biodiversity and Agripreneurship. These pillars support finding innovative solutions to food security and other challenges in marginal environments through youth's collaboration with various stakeholders, including farmers, entrepreneurs and policy-makers.

Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Almhairi stressed the significance of raising the awareness of and communication among youth on issues related to enhancing food security while preserving biodiversity and supporting agroecosystems, as well as developing leading agri-businesses. Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Almhairi also highlighted that one of the enabling factors of the UAE's national food security strategy is focused on involving community members, particularly youth, so that perceptions and behaviors related to food production and consumption are changed while youth capacity is built, which falls under the goals of the ICBA YES initiative.

ICBA, therefore, urges educational, academic and youth institutions to take part in this initiative to benefit from the expertise of researchers and specialists in this field to make practical changes in research, development and training programs.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Deputy Director General of ICBA and Project Lead, said: "We hope that more and more young people will join the initiative to contribute to food security and Sustainable Development Goals so that the best solutions are found by 2030. The ICBA YES initiative will serve as a platform for best practices, innovative solutions and technologies which will be applied on the ground in various countries with the UAE as a starting point. Today's youth are the producers, scientists and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. In early 2020, activities to launch ICBA YES student clubs will be coordinated with universities and youth institutions."

The ICBA YES initiative was launched during the [Global Forum on Innovations for Marginal Environments](#) in Dubai. The forum brought together over 300 participants from about 70 countries to showcase the latest advances in research, innovation, development and policy related to agriculture and food production in marginal environments – areas of the world most vulnerable to climate change, water scarcity and salinity.

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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.

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