

ICBA, Uzbekistan's Innovation Ministry partner to set up international Aral Sea innovation center

Samarkand, Uzbekistan | Dubai, UAE, October 16, 2018 – The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)) and the Ministry of Innovative Development of Uzbekistan signed today a memorandum of understanding to establish an international innovation center for the Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The center will be based in Nukus at the experimental station of the State Committee on Forestry in Karakalpakstan (an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan).

The agreement was reached during a three-day international forum on innovative approaches to promoting sustainable governance and social stability in the Aral Sea Basin, which began in Samarkand. The announcement of the new center coincided with World Food Day dedicated to tackling global hunger with the 2018 theme “Our actions are our future”.

The center will focus on innovations in research, technology transfer and education in saline environments with a unique mandate to improve the livelihoods of communities living in the Aral Sea region.

In collaboration with ICBA and other international research, development and donor institutions, the center will work towards addressing, among other things, the problems of soil and water salinity, water scarcity and climate change impact in the region.

The shrinking of the Aral Sea is widely considered as one of the planet's worst environmental disasters. The consequences go far beyond the environment, affecting the lives of millions of people in and out of the region. They range from salt and dust storms, loss of biological productivity and biodiversity, deterioration of ecosystems, water supply and health risks, and economic losses to climate change.

Once viewed as a problem confined to Central Asia, there is a growing international consensus today on the need to take urgent action to mitigate its effects and ensure sustainable development in the Aral Sea Basin. As one of the most affected countries, Uzbekistan is mobilizing regional and international support to address the problem through scientific and innovative solutions.

Dr. Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov, Minister of Innovative Development of Uzbekistan, said: “The establishment of the international center under the President of Uzbekistan means that the issue of mitigating the consequences of the environmental crisis in the Aral Sea Basin will receive attention at the highest level.”

For her part, Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Director General of ICBA, said: “In line with its mission, ICBA has been implementing research and development projects in Uzbekistan since 2006. With the establishment of the new center, we look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Government of Uzbekistan, and specifically the Ministry of Innovative Development, and improving the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations in the Aral Sea Basin through cutting-edge, innovative technologies and approaches. The center will support all Central Asian countries and serve as an international hub for knowledge and technology exchange.”

As part of the initiative supported by the Islamic Development Bank, ICBA will provide technical and scientific assistance to the Ministry of Innovative Development in establishing and operationalizing the center.

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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.

www.biosaline.org