

## **ICBA Launches Millet Demo Farm on COP28 Sidelines**

- The Millet Demo Farm was established in collaboration with SELCO Foundation
- The event was attended by senior government officials, representatives of international organizations and CEOs of private companies participating in COP28

**Dubai, UAE, 11 December 2023** – The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)) recently hosted a ceremony to launch a Millet Demo Farm with the aim of contributing to the objectives of the International Year of Millets and COP28 on climate action, sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition.

Established in collaboration with SELCO Foundation, the Millet Demo Farm is designed to showcase the whole value chain for millets - from seed production to consumption – and raise awareness about its benefits for climate change adaptation in agriculture.

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA, said: “As we work towards more sustainable and resilient agrifood systems, we must embrace neglected and underutilized crops such as millets. Not only are they climate-smart but are also nutrient-dense. So, millets can be a powerful tool in our efforts to adapt agrifood systems to climate change and improve food security and nutrition. But this requires that we conduct applied research studies and scale up innovations to achieve a lasting impact.”

Ms. Nirmita Chandrashekar, Senior Program Manager at SELCO Foundation, said: “It is critical that we look at the entire MENA region adopting decentralized and sustainable clean energy-driven processing at the farm gate for smallholding farmers. Together with ICBA, we are ready to transfer knowledge to all countries where ICBA works.”

Attended by over 40 delegates, the event also included statements by H.E. Eng. Mohammed Mousa Alameeri, Assistant Undersecretary for the Food Diversity Sector, Ministry of Climate Change and Environment of the UAE; H.E. Dr. Abdulhakim Elwaer, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa; and H.E. Eng. Mohammad Jamal Alsaati, Special Advisor to the President of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

Participants, including CEOs of private companies and senior government officials from different countries, learned about ongoing millet trials at ICBA’s research station and post-harvest processing machines, and tasted a variety of millet-based dishes.

The millets and technologies presented at the Millet Demo Farm are a result of ICBA's extensive research and collaboration with different partners, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and SELCO Foundation. The purpose is to promote the production and consumption of millets in the Middle East and North Africa and other regions through technology transfer and capacity development.

For more than two decades, ICBA has been at the forefront of research and development on climate-resilient and nutritious crops suited to arid and salt-affected environments, having identified and introduced a range of stress-resistant crops like quinoa, sorghum, pearl millet, and Salicornia in various locations.

The center operates a unique genebank with over 16,000 accessions of around 300 drought-, heat- and salt-tolerant plant species, including millets, from more than 150 countries and territories. This collection also includes around 270 accessions of 70 wild and cultivated plant species from the UAE; about 5,000 accessions of barley, which is one of the largest in the Middle East; as well as more than 1,300 accessions of quinoa, which is the largest of its kind outside South America.

To date the center has distributed over 1,700 samples of millet germplasm to partners in 29 countries. The center has also studied millet cultivation in Morocco, Togo, Tunisia, The Gambia, and Uzbekistan.

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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.

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

### **About SELCO Foundation**

SELCO Foundation is a non-profit organization working towards sustainable development by providing decentralized renewable energy solutions to empower marginalized communities.

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

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