

## **ICBA HQ in UAE hosts regional training on building community seed banks in sub-Saharan Africa**

**Dubai, UAE, June 26, 2023** – The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)), an agricultural research-for-development organization based in the UAE, is building the capacities of local stakeholders, including farmers and extension specialists, in seven sub-Saharan African countries to locally produce, preserve and distribute seeds of climate-resilient and salt-tolerant crops within communities as part of a major regional project.

Under the five-year project titled “Improving Agricultural Resilience to Salinity through Development and Promotion of Pro-poor Technologies” (RESADE), ICBA is working with national agricultural research systems in Botswana, The Gambia, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and Togo to improve agricultural production and productivity and increase incomes of farming communities in salt-affected agricultural areas.

In particular ICBA is introducing a number of climate-resilient and salt-tolerant crops for food and feed; building value chains for new crops; and developing the skills and knowledge of farmers and extension workers in climate-smart agriculture and salinity management. And community seed banks play a crucial role in crop diversification as they serve such purposes as short-term storage, timely distribution to local farmers, multiplication, and conservation of seed.

As part of this project, ICBA recently conducted in Dubai, the UAE, a hands-on training workshop on community seed banks for 27 researchers, extension specialists, cooperative members and other stakeholders from the project countries.

During the workshop, the participants learnt about approaches and strategies to establish and manage community seed banks and were introduced to value chains for millets using the farm-to-fork approach.

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA, said: “The workshop is part of our center’s continued efforts to diversify and climate-proof agrifood systems in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions. Because climate-resilient and salt-tolerant crops are crucial for this purpose, it is important to build community seed banks. Not only will they help to improve food security and nutrition among farming communities, but also increase their adaptation and resilience to climate change. And this work also guides our program of activities and initiatives for COP28.”

Since 2019, ICBA has established best practice hubs in six project countries to introduce different genotypes of crops such as millets and cowpea from its genebank, which is home to over 16,000 accessions of around 300 drought-, heat- and salt-tolerant plant species from more than 150 countries and territories. The genebank’s collection also includes about 5,000 accessions of barley, which is one of the largest in the Middle East, as well as more than 1,200 accessions of quinoa, which is the largest of its kind outside South America.

Supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), RESADE aims to reach 11,500 farmers, with at least half of them being women, over its course in the target areas and increase the productivity of their lands by 30 percent and economic returns by 20 percent.

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. It also suffers from soil salinity, with serious consequences for rural livelihoods and economies that depend on farming. It is estimated that around 19 million hectares of land is affected by salinity to varying degrees in the region.

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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)

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