

THE JORDAN TIMES

‘Agriculture key solution to many global challenges’

By Hani Hazaimeh

AMMAN - Jordan is a priority country for the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) considering the direct relevance of the challenges faced by its agriculture sector to the centre's mandate, ICARDA Chairperson Guido Greyseels said on Wednesday.

"All ICARDA-mandated crops are important crops in Jordan, in addition to our mutual interest in enhancing water productivity and sustainable water use," Greyseels said at the opening of the 44th meeting of the ICARDA board of trustees yesterday.

Representatives from 16 Arab and foreign countries are attending the four-day meeting, which aims at highlighting the centre's agricultural cooperation programmes with West Asian countries including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Cyprus and south Turkey.

In his address at the opening, Agriculture Minister Muzahim Muhaisin said agriculture is a key solution to many challenges facing the globe, such as poverty and unemployment.

"Despite its limited agriculture resources and the challenges facing the agriculture sector in the Kingdom, we have achieved significant progress in the field of vegetable production, organic agriculture, irrigation, water management and water harvesting," the minister said.

He added that agriculture in Jordan is the core of rural development as it contributes to improving the living conditions of rural citizens, in addition to providing food security.

According to Muhaisin, His Majesty King Abdullah's recent announcement that 2009 will be the year of agriculture motivated sector stakeholders to work as a team.

The minister said the Kingdom is keen to continue its joint activities with ICARDA, which were conducted through the National Centre for Agriculture Research and Extension.

Greyseels, for his part, said ICARDA is committed to work with the ministry and other local institutions to address the challenges of climate change, land degradation and desertification, drought and water scarcity.

He added that the centre is keen to enhance capacity development in both human and institutional resources to promote food security, adding that over the past 30 years, the centre has trained around 4,500 scientists and technicians, around 500 them Jordanians.

During the meeting, the ICARDA board will discuss its research strategy in water management sustainability in addition to other issues related to livestock, fodder and garden crops.

13 November 2008