PRESS RELEASE

PRIMA projects are redirecting their activities in response to the Covid-19 crisis

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Barcelona, 10 June 2020. Covid-19 is causing an unprecedented situation at a global level, particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In a region already distressed by the water scarcity and climate change threats, the Coronavirus pandemics has further demonstrated the fragility and the unsustainability of our way of producing and consuming affecting the most vulnerable categories such as the smallholders, threatening further their subsistence.

The current situation offers an historic opportunity to explore and promote the potential that it entails for the Euro-Mediterranean fostering the much-needed transition to more sustainable societies. It has highlighted the crucial role of research and innovation, and the need for reinforced international cooperation between scientists and stakeholders to increase the resilience of the Mediterranean societies to Covid-19 or possible similar future outbreaks.
PRIMA, Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, has taken several measures to address the crisis, starting with the adoption of similar measures as EC for the management of the Calls and the projects, assuring to beneficiaries the needed flexibility for their implementation. Moreover, PRIMA programme will include a specific topic to increase in future Work programmes to foster the resilience to the Covid-19 crisis or other similar ones. Furthermore, in the immediate, PRIMA has welcomed and approved the redirection of already funded PRIMA projects, to address the Covid-19 crisis.

Twelve PRIMA projects funded in response to 2018 and 2019 Calls are redirecting their activities in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Food security and agricultural livelihoods, access to safe water and sanitation, reconstruction of the relationship between humans and ecosystems are indeed key elements of social and health protection programmes. For this reason, the outcomes of the PRIMA projects can have an important role to play to address the effects and increase the resilience to Euro-Mediterranean societies and kick-start the long-term transformation of our system toward more sustainable ones.

- **Awesome** will develop a multiscale model-based framework to design robust water, ecosystem, and food (WEF) planning portfolios to generate shared economic, environmental, and societal benefits for Mediterranean. Pandemics, like COVID19, will be added to the analysis and modelled as potential shocks impacting the Mediterranean region in the future. Specific indicators will be formulated to characterize pandemics’ impact on the different components of the WEF nexus, and in particular on food.

- **Azmud** will cope with Covid-19 crisis by including on the best practices technique for greenhouse business another section with different measures and recommendations for prevention and protection against Covid-19 in greenhouses: assessment of the most extreme climate conditions to avoid the proliferation of new Covid-19 strains, implementation of new irrigation system to enable the reduction of water use, and production of micro-drops.

- **Biofreshcloud** brings together different digital technologies, built on the IoT paradigm, aimed to facilitate interconnection between food players and increase data availability through the food supply chain. The IT solutions in BIOFRESHCLOUD will offer cloud-based instruments to manage the negative impact of COVID-19 in the food chain, allowing remote monitoring of logistic processes and suitable risk management actions, beneficial for both food safety authorities and food suppliers.

- **BiOrangePack** will responds to the Covid-19 crisis offering solutions to the increased demand for agri-food products with a longer shelf-life, in particular focusing on the organic citrus fruit post-harvest supply chain. The project will develop Biocidal substances and innovative diagnostics to reduce losses caused by fruit rots from 30 to 0.5%, extending the shelf-life of oranges to 45-50 days. It
will also develop ICT-based logistics to minimise fruit losses due to rots and optimising delivery times.

- **Fedkito** will develop new biosensors relying on isothermal amplification and bioluminescent detection for low-cost SARS-Cov-2 detection of traces of viral genome. FEDKITO will address the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in inanimate surfaces along the food chain (i.e. food, food packages, and food processing surfaces). The technology has proved suitable for implementation into portable devices and detection via smartphone camera. This approach will enable the implementation of the analytical platform in a hand-held device with smartphone detection.

- **Fit4Reuse** will address Covid-19 including some analyses among the tests that we will perform with different water samples. Moreover, since many activities are focusing on the fate of this virus in wastewater systems, the Fit4Reuse consortium would include a chapter on the state of the art and integrate it within their Water Reuse Safety Plan methodology focusing therefore on preliminary qualitative risk analysis.

- **Iguess-Med** will ensure a nutritional, health and high-quality product for consumers, produced with minimum environmental impact, that will be timely and guaranteed delivered in the market. The system will benefit who work inside the greenhouse, since the technology will allow monitoring and organizing all the needed operations through portable real time data visualization tools, reducing the physical visits to the farms.

- **Meditomato** will introduce a series of innovations (IoT, Vis-NIR, MEDITOMATO platform…), with important economic impacts for smallholders and SMEs in the production and processing steps of food value chains to face the Covid-19 situation. In addition, the technologies in the project allow remote management and operation of day-to-day Fert irrigation processes.

- **Medifit** will contribute to food resilience as it will develop innovative IT solutions for exchanging food integrity data through a collaborative open-source software framework supporting the identification of adulteration and origin assessment of honey and cheese products. The customised methods of MEDIFIT for assessing food authenticity, traceability and safety data will enhance decision support making during periods that food supply chain will need to operate quickly, remotely and efficiently.

- **Phemac** will consider an adaptation of certain activities addressed to identify implemented best practices within the mapped projects that could be easily translated from agricultural and environmental sectors to health sector to understand the impact of Covid-19 on projects KPIs (at scientific, economic and technological level) and to comprehend at the econometric level the impact of the
outbreak in the ease of marketability and commercialization of project outputs that probably involved the rethinking of original assumptions or reprioritization of aims.

- **Sustain-Coast** will include the scenario of a Covid-19 or similar crisis in the roster of available scenarios for discussions with stakeholders and relevant modelling. The consortium will search for visible impact of the Covid-19 crisis in data, concerning water quantity and quality in areas where the sampling is still performed.

- **Surefish** will address the fish sector and its relationship to the Covid-19 pandemic. For that, the project is preparing a short manual of good practices for the Fisheries Industries to prevent Covid19 impact: recommended measures and practices, main technical considerations related to Certifications and Legal aspects in the EU.

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**About PRIMA**

[http://prima-med.org](http://prima-med.org)

PRIMA, Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, is the most ambitious joint programme to be undertaken in the frame of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. PRIMA consists of European Union Member States, Horizon 2020 Associated Countries and Mediterranean Partner Countries on an equal footing basis (co-ownership, co-management and co-funding) with the Participation of the European Commission, under the framework of an art.185 TFEU.

To date, 19 countries committed to the initiative: Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey have formally become PRIMA Participating States. The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area will devise new R&I approaches to improve water availability and sustainable agriculture production in a region heavily distressed by climate change, urbanisation and population growth.

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