

Report about the SMARTCHAIN workshop

The SMARTCHAIN workshop “Innovations for increasing income of smallholders and resilience of the wheat supply chain in North African countries” took place from October 29–30, 2018, at IAMO. EEGA provided financial support for the workshop.

The workshop was attended by 16 representatives of research institutions and one representative of an IT company. The representatives came from 8 countries (Egypt, Germany, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain, Sudan, Tunisia).

The research institutions represented include the University of Cairo, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the G20 Wheat Initiative (Berlin) and the Institut National de Recherche Agronomique de Rabat (INRA) in Morocco.

The participating scientists (mainly professors and postdoctoral researchers) belonged to a wide range of disciplines, including agricultural economists, plant breeders and hydrologists.

The aim of the workshop was to prepare a pre-application for a Horizon2020 call. The proposal focused on the sustainable intensification of cereal production in North African countries. North Africa, as the world’s largest wheat-importing region, is heavily dependent on imports of wheat as a staple food by grain-exporting countries in the Black Sea region, in particular Russia, Ukraine and Romania.

In addition, there are the effects of the environmental crisis: harvest losses have increased in recent years as a result of droughts caused by climate change in North Africa. In addition, soil degradation is increasingly problematic as a result of excessive irrigation and application of chemical pesticides.

In the workshop, the representatives of the individual target countries reported on the current situation in the grain sector of their country. In discussions, case studies were jointly selected for the proposal. Furthermore, the participants identified additional suitable partners for the project consortium. Last but not least, a roadmap for the preparation of the pre-application was drawn up.