



## **ICBA Advances Innovation and Collaboration for Sustainable Land Restoration at COP16**

**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 16 December 2024:** The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture ([ICBA](#)) marked its impactful participation at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held under the theme “Our Land. Our Future.” The event, hosted in Riyadh from December 2 to 13, was the first UNCCD COP held in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and coincided with the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD. The conference brought together global leaders, scientists, and policymakers to accelerate efforts in land restoration and resilience.

“At COP16, ICBA demonstrated the power of inclusive collaboration and science-driven solutions to combat land degradation,” said Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General of ICBA. “Our focus on empowering women, advancing biosaline agriculture, and building capacity underscores our commitment to creating sustainable and resilient communities. Our contributions to soil health, stress-tolerant crops, and regenerative agriculture reflect ICBA’s role in delivering scalable solutions tailored to arid and saline environments.”

### **Strategic Dialogues and Innovations**

During the Food and Agricultural Systems Day, Dr. Alzaabi participated in the “NENA High-Level Breakfast Dialogue on Investment for Planet and People,” organized by the UNCCD Secretariat and key regional stakeholders. Dr. Tarifa emphasized the need for climate-resilient solutions, capacity development, and nature-based approaches to drive sustainable development and ecosystem restoration in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region.

In a session organized by ICRISAT and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), titled “Unlocking Opportunities of Dryland Cereal Food Systems,” Dr. Alzaabi outlined ICBA’s advancements in stress-tolerant crops such as millet and sorghum, efficient water use, and biosaline agriculture. She also highlighted ICBA’s flagship programs, including AWLA and ICBA-YES, which empower women and youth to lead innovation and build resilience in dryland agriculture.

At the UAE Pavilion, Dr. Alzaabi, alongside Ms. Nour El Jundi, Project Development Specialist at ICBA, led a Fireside Chat titled “Biosaline Accelerators for Land Restoration”. Exploring innovative biosaline agriculture practices and their transformative potential in sustainable land restoration and combating land degradation, key discussions revolved around ICBA’s solutions,



including the use of salt-tolerant crops and innovative technologies to restore degraded lands and ensure long-term agricultural sustainability in arid regions.

### **Empowering Communities Through Science and Collaboration**

Dr. Charbel Tarraf, Chief Operations and Development at ICBA, contributed to the session “Innovative Multi-faceted Approaches to Land Restoration,” organized by the UNCCD and ICBA. He highlighted biosaline agriculture as a transformative tool for rehabilitating degraded lands and underscored the critical role of women in advancing sustainable land management. The discussion showcased ICBA’s integrative methodologies, combining scientific innovation, technological advancements, and community-based practices.

During the Agri-Food Systems Day, Ms. Nour El Jundi represented ICBA in the session “Regenerative Agriculture as a Solution to Desertification,” organized by SOMA MATER. She showcased ICBA’s expertise in regenerative agricultural practices, detailing approaches that restore degraded lands, enhance soil health, and promote sustainable food systems in arid regions.

ICBA hosted the session “Soil Health to Combat Land Desertification” at the UAE Pavilion, featuring contributions from Dr. Tarraf, Mrs. Ryma Affani, Curator of the Emirates Soil Museum, and Dr. Ahmed El-Naggar, Soil Management Scientist. The session highlighted biosaline techniques for soil restoration and presented the Emirates Soil Museum as a hub for capacity development and knowledge sharing. Advanced research on soil amendments and microbial solutions demonstrated innovative methods for enhancing land resilience.

### **Innovative Solutions and Strategic Collaborations**

#### **Stress-tolerant Seeds Showcase**

ICBA was prominently featured as part of the UAE Pavilion at COP16, highlighting its role as a center of excellence for smart resilience and water management technologies. The pavilion showcased ICBA’s innovative approaches to tackling climate challenges, including its portfolio of stress-tolerant seeds, which include UAE-native varieties designed for saline and arid environments. These seeds enhance biodiversity, combat soil erosion, and improve agricultural resilience. Additionally, ICBA presented land rehabilitation techniques, such as the use of *Prosopis juliflora*, demonstrating practical solutions for addressing desertification and promoting sustainable agriculture.



## **Looking Ahead**

ICBA's active engagement at COP16 reinforced its role as a global leader in addressing desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity. By fostering partnerships, advancing scientific research, and empowering communities, ICBA continues to drive transformative change for a sustainable and inclusive future.

For more information, visit [www.biosaline.org](http://www.biosaline.org).

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