

## INSTITUTE PROFILE

### General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR), Syria

Agricultural research in Syria goes back to the 1960's, when the General Commission for Agricultural Scientific Research (GCSAR) was established. Six departments including Department of Agricultural Research, Land Department, Department of Irrigation and Water Uses, Cotton Office, Citrus Office, and Olive Office were reorganized and merged.

#### *Mission and Goals*

GCSAR mission is to develop agricultural research programs and enhance efficiency through raising disbursement on agricultural research, ensure financial and administration flexibility, improve well-being of researchers and staff, and boost their scientific qualifications. However, the main goals of agricultural research in Syria are:

- \* Increase productivity and improve quality of production, as well as minimize cost of production.
- \* Conserve natural resources (soil, water, and plant).
- \* Endorse and implement agricultural research plans and programs focusing on strategic crops (cereals, cotton, olive, apple, legumes, and vegetables), sheep and goat, biotechnology and new irrigation methods.
- \* Develop and adopt agricultural technologies that contribute to improving agricultural productivity.
- \* Maintain strong research ties with local, regional and international institutions.

#### *Organization and Structure*

GCSAR is directed by a management council headed by the Minister of Agriculture and consists of the Director General of GCSAR, and representatives of the Planning State Authority, Agricultural Planning, Agricultural Extension, Farmers' Union, and Universities.

GCSAR comprises a well-distributed network of 19 research centers, 50 research stations, and 70 specialized laboratories to cover all agro-ecological zones of the

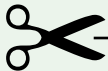
country. GCSAR staff includes 180 PhD's and MSc's, and about 1000 agronomists.

With an annual budget of about \$ 20 million, the agricultural research programs at GCSAR consists of:

- \* Crop Research Department
- \* Cotton Research Department
- \* Horticulture Research Department
- \* Plant Protection Research Department
- \* Natural Resources Research Department
- \* Livestock Research Department
- \* Socio-economic Studies Research Department
- \* Biotechnology Department
- \* Department of Plant Genetic Resources
- \* Department of Food Technology

#### *Major Achievements*

- \* Introduce 21 new varieties of wheat, 8 varieties of barley, 8 varieties of cotton, and 17 varieties of corn, maize, lentils, and chickpeas.
- \* Develop new irrigation techniques that decrease water consumption by 30-50% and increase crop productivity by 25-40%
- \* Improve productivity of Awasi sheep to 220 kg milk/head/year, and Shami races to 670 kg milk/head/year
- \* More than 300 thousands free lab analyses of soil, water, fertilizer, pesticides, and plant were conducted to farmers and beneficiaries
- \* Endorse the specifications and standards of most agricultural commodities
- \* About 28 thousand samples of plant genetic resources were collected and maintained at the gene bank
- \* A set of tissue culture protocols of fruit trees and crops were successfully accomplished.



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