



**Conference of the Ministers of Agriculture
of the Member States of the Central European Initiative**

Trieste, 20 September 2002

STATEMENT OF COMMON PURPOSE

Upon invitation of their Italian colleague Minister Giovanni Alemanno, the Ministers of Agriculture of the CEI Member States or their representatives of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia met in Trieste on September 20th, 2002 in order to review questions of common concern.

The Ministers expressed their conviction that an efficient, healthy, sustainable and cost-effective production of food which guaranteed farmers a fair income and took into account the multifunctional role of agriculture remained a shared goal of the policies of the CEI Member States.

To achieve these goals, governments needed to focus on questions of rural infrastructure, communications with rural areas, special support to farmers living and working under less favourable conditions, attention to high quality standards of health and hygiene, as well as to a sustainable production process respectful of environmental considerations.

The Ministers welcomed the Italian proposal of creating within the CEI framework an "Observatory for Food Safety" as an instrument of harmonising the food production of CEI Member States with EU standards and invited the CEI – Executive Secretariat to further study the modalities of its implementation.

The Ministers agreed to protect the geographical indications and designations of origin in order to guarantee food quality in the interest of consumers.

The Ministers noted the on-going efforts in the context of the mid-term review of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with a view to improving market orientation and competitiveness of agriculture as well as strengthening the policies for rural development.

They were also aware of the necessary adjustments of the CAP with regard to the enlargement of the EU which will transform a number of CEI-Member States into full EU-Members. The far-reaching repercussions of this process in the conditions for agricultural production and trade in agriculture in all CEI Member States were commented upon by the Ministers who agreed that the enlargement process of the EU should not negatively affect the agriculture of CEI Member States remaining outside of the EU.

The Ministers mandated the CEI to keep the above issues under review. The CEI Working Group on Agriculture should address these issues in organising appropriate co-operation activities suitable for co-financing by the CEI.

The Ministers paid special attention to certain models of co-operation which have been successfully applied in some CEI Member States and which could usefully be extended to others as well to eliminate gradually all existing disparities between CEI member States. They focused particularly on the micro-credit system operative in Albania and the Agricultural Wholesale markets which are currently active in Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Belarus. The CEI was commended for its role as facilitator of these projects which counted with the support of the EBRD, World Bank, UNECE and FAO.

The Ministers expressed their appreciation to their Italian host for having taken the initiative of convening a follow-up meeting to the one held in 2001 in Verona. They confirmed the usefulness of these meetings for stimulating a debate on questions of mutual interest and leading to more structured forms of co-operation which will assist Eastern CEI Member States in their reform efforts to bring their agricultural sectors up to meet the relevant EU requirements on production and productivity taking into account the needs and expectations concerning food safety.