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**EIMA 2024, innovative technologies for Morocco's agriculture**

***The press conference to present EIMA 2024 was held this afternoon in Meknés, in the setting of the Siam agricultural fair. Morocco's increasingly competitive agriculture is showing a growing demand for innovative technologies to counter the effects of climate change. The great Bologna exhibition is one of the most eagerly awaited events by farmers and technicians in the North African country.***

Reduction of water supply sources, soil impoverishment, loss of productivity and decline in agricultural incomes are the main challenges that Moroccan agriculture has been facing positively in recent years, also thanks to state support policies. The Maroc Vert Programme (PMC) and the Génération Green plan have in fact succeeded in increasing the competitiveness of a strategic sector for the Moroccan economy, which contributes to 13% of total GDP and employs 31% of the national workforce. Among the measures envisaged by the PMC, a leading role was played by the funds aimed at facilitating the purchase of irrigation systems (equal to about half of the total budget of the PMC). The expansion of the irrigated area, achieved thanks to these investments, has allowed the country to further diversify its agricultural production, especially in the segment of high value-added crops, which are particularly in demand on foreign markets. With the increase in hectares planted with vegetables, fruit and olives – it was explained this afternoon by the manufacturers' association FederUnacoma during the launch conference of EIMA International 2024 – exports in the sector have also grown. Between 2008 and 2018, the annual production of olives grew by an average of 7.4% per year, and that of citrus fruits by 6.3%, while exports of fruit, vegetables and tomatoes increased by 13.5%, 8.5% and 5.6% per year, respectively. In addition to focusing on irrigation systems, which are truly strategic for a country that is suffering from the effects of climate change, the state support plans also provide for specific interventions for mechanisation, which have boosted the market for tractors, operating machinery and equipment. However, after years of great dynamism, the two-year period 2022-2023 marked a slowdown in sales, also caused by a change in the VAT regime that penalised purchases by importing companies. According to the forecasts of the company Exportplanning, the downturn in the agro-mechanical sector, which closed 2023 with 138 million euros in turnover (-17%), would be transitory: as early as the current year, the market should return to running (+6.4%), and then consolidate growth in the following years. The expansionary phase - said Girolamo Rossi, Head of FederUnacoma's Communication and Business Culture Office at a press conference - could last until the end of 2027 and should record an average increase rate of 6%. This recovery would also have a positive impact on trade relations and technical cooperation with Italy which, despite the slowdown in exports in the two-year period 2022-2023, last year confirmed itself as Morocco's second largest supplier in the world with a market share of 12.4% (18 million euros the value of our exports).

The 46th edition of EIMA International, the world exhibition of agricultural mechanisation organised by FederUnacoma in Bologna from 6 to 10 November, is therefore an important opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. With its five thematic halls (EIMA Green, EIMA Components, EIMA Energy, EIMA Idrotech, EIMA Digital) and with more than 50 thousand models on display representing 14 product sectors - from irrigation systems to specialised tractors, from agricultural equipment to green maintenance machines, up to bioenergy - the Bologna event offers a wide range of technologies suitable to meet every need of agriculture in the North African country. The audience of exhibitors is very rich: to date, over 1,500 companies, 500 of which from abroad, have already formalised their participation in the event, but the number is destined to grow further in the coming weeks, bringing the total number of exhibitors to the highest levels in the history of the exhibition. Precisely for this reason, EIMA International is one of the most eagerly awaited events by Moroccan technicians and farmers, whose number in past editions has more than doubled, from 194 in 2016 to 424 in 2022. So, together with Algeria, today Morocco is the African nation most represented at the great Bologna fair. According to the organisers' forecasts, the incremental trend should be confirmed again this year: in addition to buyers from all over the country, a large delegation of highly qualified operators selected by the Italian Agency for Foreign Trade ICE is also expected at the Bologna exhibition centre. The ICE office in Casablanca, with which FederUnacoma can boast a long-standing collaboration – it was said at the press conference – is organising the incoming of the delegates who will be engaged in business-to-business meetings with Italian manufacturers of agricultural machinery in Bologna.

The 46th edition of EIMA 2024 offers many innovations to Moroccan operators, starting with the REAL space, a space dedicated to robots, drones and, more generally, to all those highly automated technologies capable of increasing production yields, improving the sustainability of crops, optimising the use of production factors. These are requirements that are truly stringent for the agriculture of the North African state, which is particularly exposed to the consequences of climate change. The focus on innovation continues with the usual exhibition of the winning models of the "Technical Innovations 2024" competition and with the numerous in-depth technical meetings on the most relevant issues for the primary sector and for the world of agricultural machinery. Technology will also be the protagonist in the spaces outside the pavilions, in the outdoor areas where the show of the finalist tractors of the Tractor of the Year will be staged, as well as demonstrations of vehicles for bioenergy supply chains, trials of gardening and green care machines. The November appointment is still six months away, but already EIMA 2024 has the character of a 'top' event.

**Meknés, 24 April 2024**