

Hon Minister, directors, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the International Conference, which is being organized by MOAM in collaboration with IFOAM-EU and the Ministry for Gozo.

Today's conference focus is on Organic Agriculture and Eco-Gozo. We are living in a world of challenges, opportunities and innovations. If we do not change, we do not survive. We need to be dynamic at all times and we need to adapt to change.

When MOAM was founded in 1999, the movement played the role of an agent of change. The movement's mission was to convince the Maltese farmers to convert from conventional farming to organic.

During these eleven years, MOAM has participated in more than 120 events and issued manuals and a documentary film in Maltese language on organic farming. From our participation, we managed to learn a lot and had to change in order to grow. After a decade of participation on local and foreign platforms, MOAM is still young and fresh to adopt an ever changing role to secure quality life enrichment for mankind. Lots of information is passed from IFOAM to MOAM, where John Portelli the PR of MOAM is representing the Maltese NGO on the IFOAM EU forum.

MOAM as a movement has a clear vision about what needs to be done in agriculture and in aquaculture, as partial fulfilment to establish the Maltese archipelago as a destination of excellence. Organic agricultural and agro-biodynamic practices stand on top of our agenda. Organic production has no hidden costs. It is a pure transparent production. It does not leave any negative impact on the environment. On the contrary, it enhances positive externalities.

MOAM is very concerned with the irrational use of our limited natural resources. A case in point is the situation of the Water Management on the island. On a long term objective, MOAM would be pressing and lobbying on the issue of rational use of water. In the agriculture industry, water is the most important resource. MOAM's position is in favour of rain water harvesting. Investing in the construction of water reservoirs will enhance the green economy. Vertical rain water collection is adapted to the topography of Gozo and this is necessary to avoid the run off water into the sea. At present, the runoff water on the Maltese islands is equivalent to the water consumption of the Maltese population. Fresh clean harvested water is an added value in the green economy of an eco-island. This first class water is needed so much in organic production.

The household effluent is another resource, which can be used in a rationale way. All the effluents on the islands could be purified to produce second class water, which is ideal to irrigate certain fodder crops and the soft areas such as central strips and roundabouts in our localities. The solids can be composted and used as fertilizer. Composting and the processing of the effluents generate green jobs. The excess animal manure, which cannot be used to fertilize the 10,000 hectare agro land on the islands, can be processed in adequate biogas plants, in order to produce green energy. This energy production is in harmony and compliant with the protection of the ozone layer. Sustainable management of manure, wastes and effluents contribute towards production of alternative energy and reduce the CO₂ emissions. This process is compliant with the principle of ecology.

MOAM is in favour to stop the pumping of sewerage into the Mediterranean Sea and this abuse must be addressed by the Mediterranean countries. This issue could be tackled in the Euromed forum. MOAM is against the extraction of water from the boreholes for agricultural and industrial use, but alternative supply of water must be available from other sources or otherwise there would be crises in the agriculture industry. Also MOAM urges the farmers to stop the use of synthetic chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers which leach into the ground into our ground water. MOAM is in favour of seed conservation and thus against the use of Genetically Modified seeds and against all kinds. MOAM is also sensitive to animal cruelty.

MOAM encourages the producers to apply a holistic approach to adopt precise agricultural practices, where organic pesticides, organic fertilizers, organic feeds and organic animal production contribute towards a sustainable future for the producers. MOAM is at present evaluating the possibility to introduce "sterile Insect Technique" to eliminate the Mediterranean fruit fly and other biological means to eradicate the olive fruit fly, which causes economical damage to the local fruit production. MOAM aims to convince the farmers to eliminate the use of synthetic insecticides and to opt for environmental friendly practices. In the meantime, farmers in

Malta are witnessing insecticide resistance by many insects, when these insects can be easily controlled by biological means. Example by the use Bacillus Thuringiensis on the Tuta Absoluta (is-susa tad-tadam)

In today's global scenario, environmentalists claim that globalized deterioration caused negative externalities, which are hard to quantify. In Europe, we have experienced different environmental problems with high levels of nitrates and heavy metals in rivers, lakes, oceans and in our underground water tables, we suffered from new animal diseases such as the Mad cow disease, with our own conventional farming and fishing systems we had impoverished our primary industries, with our own vehicles and shipping vessels we caused air and sea pollution and billions of Euros were lost due to mismanagement of the resources. Globalization affects every nation, irrespective whether big or small!

Thus the road map towards the success of an eco-island is to think globally but to act locally. A bottom up approach towards the development of projects will pave the way towards a sustainable future for the islanders. The eco-project belongs to everyone and every citizen is obliged to contribute towards the common good of the nation. However, we should create insight and public awareness, so that the citizen is able to distinguish what is good from what is bad. It is important that the stakeholder of the eco-island knows the difference between a negative and a positive externality. An educational campaign is needed, which involves NGOs and the local governments. The latter are obliged to teach, educate and train the people to embrace the principles of health, care, fairness and ecology.

This is conducive towards enhancing and sustaining quality life enrichment, where various community services are interlinked in a complex way.

Focusing on agriculture, the application of the environmental friendly practices can bring a positive change in the quality of our food production. The eradication of soil borne pathogens is essential for a successful horticulturist. Instead of using conventional costly methods to get rid of the replant disease the horticulturist can easily use soil steam sterilization produced from water solar heater instead of chemical soil sterilization. A Solar water heater bowser on a mobile trailer, can sterilize a 100 square meter glasshouse within 6 hours. Thus a mobile trailer can manage two different sites in one summer day. However, we need to integrate engineering with agriculture to come out with a successful product.

Organic animal husbandry and organic aquaculture can be taught in our vocational training centres and these will create new niches in the tourism industry. Ecological and agro tourism are being demanded on the international tourist market. Tourists are becoming more demanding about environmental issues and they are satisfied to spend their money, where they get value for their money.

Farming systems, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism and cultural tourism, health and education, finance and industrial developments, land and sea transport ,sports and leisure amenities, fish farming and aquaculture , scuba diving, green processing plants, afforestation, garigue and manmade landscaping, apiculture, water and energy productions and coastline management need to be taken in a holistic sustainable way within developmental stages in Gozo, if we want to establish Gozo as an eco-island by the year 2010. We need to prioritize our steps in our road map. For example, organic production will be the first step to enhance the agriculture industry. However, we need to have an Action Plan on Agriculture and on Water Management. We cannot ignore nor leave out one sector in our holistic approach towards a sustainable management of an eco-island. Just an example, fields near a road can be polluted from vehicles emissions and it is highly important that vehicles are driven by gas such as hydrogen or by alternative energy. I suggest that for the CAP third pillar 2014-2020, there would be EU and national funds which favour car owners to change their fossil fuel driven engines into green engines. As being double insulated from the continent, Gozo deserves to obtain specific funding for this ecological project.

As second step, we must exploit the solar energy. The farms and the fields can be used as the green infrastructure to generate alternative energy. It might be a problem to install photovoltaic panels on the roofs of the town houses as high blocks of apartments are cropping up like mushrooms overnights. So, green areas can be used as alternative sites for the installation of photovoltaic panels. The farmers can tap another form of financial income. Financial corporations and local banks can provide the required financing for such green investments. It would be better if a bottom up approach would be applied, where the families invest their savings

in their own localities on the new green infrastructure. Such investments would boost the community feeling; give a sense of belonging and ownership to the citizens.

As third step, on an island of a square area of 67 kilometres, one must address the issue of accommodation. On such a small island, conservation of the villages and of the rural zone is a necessity. These villages like the core of Victoria must be conserved and protected. On an eco-island there is no room for kitsch buildings and unsustainable developments. Quality tourism brings more advantages than disadvantages. A Gozo Tourism Authority should be set up and uses the SWOT analysis as a tool to propose sustainable tourist developments. The 4 principles of health, care, fairness and ecology must be embraced in all the decision-making of the developments.

Another important resource for the Maltese inhabitants is the sea zone. We have different natural beautiful bays and a wide array of seascapes. But are these bays properly managed? However, in almost all the Mediterranean countries, we lack vocational training on Integrated Coastline Zone Management. It is a fact that all the Mediterranean folks are in the same boat!

The coastline zone is our most precious resource. This natural resource can be very much productive in creating new green jobs. The future of the inhabitants in Gozo can be sustained by an Integrated Coastline Zone Management. At present, we need appropriate vocational training to address the Integrated Coastline Zone Management of the Maltese archipelago. We need to have educational institutes and stakeholders to merge together on certain projects.

It is a fact that the Mediterranean coastal areas have usually a low resource base and at the same time are under severe pressures.

According to data (e.g. UNDP-ACT, Eurostat) there is a gap in information, training and capacity building on these issues in the Mediterranean at Local level. Local Authorities and NGOs are usually not well informed, not trained and thus not able to take action and decisions that promote sustainable development, compiling the impacts of climate change with the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

The EU ICZM Recommendation (2002/413/EC) suggests to the Member States to “(L148/26) *determine how appropriate national training on education programmes can support implementation of integrated management principles in the coastal zone*”. The ENCORA (European Network of Coastal Research) in its European Coastal Action Plan suggests as one of the four key actions *the concerted development of a European Network of capacity building resource centres*, aiming among others to *the creation of a critical mass of practitioners and policy makers that push ICZM to the centre stage of the economic and environmental goals*.

The environmental, economic, social and cultural goals must be attained within time-frames in Gozo in order to establish the island as an eco-island of excellence by 2020. This island has all the resources to offer a wide diversified package to tourists. However, management of these resources is crucial.

At present, MOAM is collaborating with the Kirkop Local Council on a project concerning the curricular development on Integrated Coastline Zone Management. As we worked together in the past, we are coordinating together in the LithusGo project. This will take three years to publish a manual for trainers and another manual for trainees on ICZM. These will be available in Maltese and in English versions and these will provide new information for the community leaders and for the public in general. Today, I would like to make an offer to the local governments in Gozo. I am inviting all the local councils to be part of this project. This will contribute towards the well-being of the inhabitants on an eco-island. What MOAM can do at this stage is to encourage all the local councils in Gozo to look for and select community leaders that are willing to follow vocational training on ICZM. Within twelve months, these leaders will be trained to train other trainees on Integrated Coastline Zone Management. Those who are interested can contact me or the Kirkop Local Council for more details about the Lithusgo Project, which is funded under the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to participate actively in the open discussion session. We can learn a lot from the experiences of our guest speakers and let us make the best of this international conference.

Thank you.

Mario Salerno President of MOAM