



# REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

Bruxelles, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2018

First plenary meeting

The first AREPO plenary meeting in 2018 was held on March 20<sup>th</sup> from 12h00 to 17h00, at the **common office of Hessen, Emilia-Romagna and Nouvelle-Aquitaine**, Rue Montoyer 21, Brussels. Moreover, in the same occasion AREPO held an **Extraordinary General Assembly** in order to modify its Statutes and align them to its actual functioning.

## Extraordinary General Assembly

The President of AREPO, Mrs Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki, Vice-Governor of the Region of Crete, introduced the meeting by welcoming the members and thanking the Region of Hessen, Emilia-Romagna and Nouvelle-Aquitaine that hosted the assembly.

Furthermore, she introduced the Extraordinary GA, reminding that it was convened in occasion of the GA held in Crete (October 2017), with the objective to **modify AREPO Statutes and align them to its actual functioning**. In particular, she highlighted that the purpose of the proposed amendments was to:

- **update the Statutes:** the reference to the UE Reg. 1151/12 and the article on AREPO's objectives;
- **adapt the Statutes to our effective functioning:** no Board of Directors, 2 General Assemblies per year to associate all the members;
- **improve AREPO functioning:** creation of an **Executive Board** (3 members instead of the 12 of the original Board of Directors) to better manage AREPO and introduction of a **College of associate members**, without voting rights nor contribution, to integrate our partners from the field of R&I and education with whom we have signed a cooperation agreement.

As a next step in the process, she proposed to define the role and competences of the Secretary General with an internal regulation that could be discussed and voted in the next General Assembly.

Finally, she gave the floor to the Secretary General who presented the modifications proposal, previously shared with all the members ([consult here the modification proposal](#)).

The quorum of at least one third of AREPO members, needed to vote validly, has been reached with 15 of 25 Member Regions attending the Extraordinary General Assembly.

**VOTE: The modification proposal was unanimously approved.**

## STATUTORY PART

The statutory part of AREPO plenary meeting was opened by the **Secretary General** who presented the agenda and gave the floor to the President for her annual report for 2017.

## Report of the President

The President presented the main results achieved by AREPO during the last year (January 2017 – March 2018). She reminded that the first months covered by the report (January – October 2017) concerned the last semester of Mr Labarthe Presidency. Thus, she took the occasion to salute him and thank him for his work during the last 3 years.

She then highlighted the key points concerning the following issues ([see the activity report for more details](#)):

- **Members:** In 2017, AREPO received 25 membership fees. Furthermore, we welcomed two new member Regions: Epirus and Central Macedonia; and two new observers: Western Macedonia and Thessaly.
- **Common Agricultural Policy post 2020:** contribution to EC public consultation on the future of CAP after

2020; [analysis](#) of the EC Communication; improvement of AREPO position through national technical meetings; and dissemination of AREPO position paper “[A new CAP for high quality food](#)” in occasion of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products (21/03/18, Brussels).

- **Promotion policy:** constant monitoring and information actions ([see programme fiche on promotion 2018](#)).
- **Review of organic regulation:** on 28 June 2017 the Maltese presidency and the European Parliament reached a preliminary agreement on the review of the existing EU rules on organic production and labelling of organic products. The new regulation will enter into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.
- **Research and Innovation:** collaboration with the European Research Group SYAL to sign a cooperation agreement between the two networks as well as to create AREPO scientific committee.
- **EU trade agreement:** adoption of a clear position to assure that GI protection is recognized in the best possible way. Monitoring of bilateral trade agreement EU-China and EU-Japan, as well as of EU accession process to the Geneva Act of Lisbon Agreement.
- **European Event on Quality and Origin Products** (21/03/18 - Brussels): organised in the framework of [AGROSMARTcoop](#) project with a conference on the future of CAP post 2020 and a sampling of GIs products from AREPO regions. Participants: 22 member Regions from 5 different EU countries and 3 cooperative associations, members of AGROSMARTcoop.

The President concluded her report with some proposals for 2018:

- The new **CAP reform should be AREPO first priority** in order to ensure the correct recognition and support of quality and origin products;
- **Small producers:** we should analyse how to improve and adapt European policies to better support small producers. Furthermore, AREPO could act as a platform for the exchange of good practices at regional level;
- **LEADER** could be a good instrument for regions to support GIs and it would be interesting to evaluate the possibility to carry out interregional project. We could consider realising a study on the implementation of LEADER among our member regions;
- **Trade agreements:** we should update AREPO position on trade agreement in order to ask the Commission to protect all the registered GI products from imitation and counterfeit, even those that have not been included in agreements;
- Finally, she proposed to AREPO Regions to participate together, under AREPO umbrella, in an international exhibition in order to promote our traditional products.

**VOTE: The report of the President was unanimously approved.**

### **Presentation of the financial accounts for 2017**

The Secretary General presented a [preliminary financial report for the year 2017](#), written by AREPO independent accountant. The certified financial accounts will be presented during the second annual plenary meeting in autumn.

A detailed analysis was sent to the members one week before the GA.

**VOTE: The preliminary financial report for 2017 was unanimously approved.**

### **Budget proposal for 2018**

The estimated budget for 2018 is set in balance at 189.000 €. [Consult the budget for more info.](#)

**VOTE: The budget proposal for 2018 was unanimously approved.**

### **Vote on the contribution for 2018**

In 2014 AREPO General Assembly decided unanimously to approve the Secretary General’s proposal to lower

the membership fee from 5.000€ to 4.500€, due to the economic crisis that affected particularly European Regions. After 2017, our capitals remain at a very high level (250.652€), corresponding to 1,5 year of operation. For this reason, the **Secretary-General proposed to maintain the membership fee for 2018 at the same amount (4.500€).**

***VOTE: The membership fee for 2018 was unanimously approved at 4.500 €.***

## **Election of AREPO Vice-Presidency 2018-2021**

### *The Vice-President and his representative*

As reminded by the Secretary General, AREPO Statutes establish that the candidate for the Vice-presidency is submitted to the vote of the General Assembly by the College of Producers. The participation of producer associations is fundamental for AREPO and we should strengthen it. For this reason, the Secretary General invited all the Regions that have not done so yet to formally appoint a producer representative.

Then, he presented the formal candidacy of the Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese Consortium (Emilia-Romagna Region) for AREPO Vice-Presidency, on behalf of the College of Producers: **Mr Nicola Bertinelli**, President of the Consortium, while Mr **Guglielmo Garagnani**, Vice-President of the Consortium, will be his representative.

***VOTE: The candidacy of Mr Nicola Bertinelli, Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese Consortium, for AREPO Vice-Presidency has been unanimously approved.***

The President of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium, Nicola Bertinelli, thanked AREPO for the trust and expressed the wish that the collaboration will be mutually beneficial. He recalled that Parmigiano Reggiano has not only a great economic value (it is the most important PDO in the world in terms of turnover) but also, and above all, a great social value. More than 3.500 families live in the area thanks to Parmigiano Reggiano (333 dairies that buy milk from over 3.000 farmers), not to mention that more than 20% of production takes place in the mountains. AREPO can make an important contribution to producers, first of all by enhancing and strengthening the role of GIs in the future CAP, as a tool for territorial development. Furthermore, the protection of GIs in trade agreements should continue to be a key element of the network's lobbying work.

### *The substitute Vice-President*

Furthermore, the Secretary General presented the candidacy of **Mr Dominique Graciet**, President of the Regional Chamber of Agriculture Nouvelle Aquitaine, as substitute Vice-President.

***VOTE: The candidacy of Mr Dominique Graciet, Regional Chamber of Agriculture Nouvelle Aquitaine, as substitute Vice-President has been unanimously approved.***

Mr Graciet first of all presented the Region of Nouvelle Aquitaine with its 220 registered quality products. He assured that the experience of the Chamber of Agriculture, and in particular of the team working on quality schemes, will be at the service of AREPO. He stated that he shares the importance of the fight on trade agreements to ensure the recognition of GIs by third countries. In addition, he stressed the need to ensure recognition of GIs *consortia* as producer organizations, in order to improve their skills in term of market management of their products.

## **Election of AREPO Treasurer 2018-2021**

Finally, the Secretary General presented the candidacy of Catalunya for the role of Treasurer: **Mr Joan Gòdia Tresanchez**, Deputy Director General for agri-food industries and quality.

***VOTE: The candidacy of Mr Joan Gòdia Tresanchez, Region of Catalunya, as Treasurer of AREPO has been unanimously approved.***

The Secretary General concluded the statutory part reminding that with the election of the Vice-President and Treasurer the new Executive Board has been appointed, as established by the modified Statutes.



## THEMATIC PART

### AREPO position on the future of CAP post 2020, Ms Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO, Bruxelles Representation Office

AREPO policy officer presented the updated version of the position paper "[A new CAP for high quality food](#)" (you can consult the [presentation](#) for more details) in order to share and discuss it with the members.

The presentation has been followed by a fruitful discussion that has highlighted the following key points:

- **Role of GIs producer associations in volume control:** it would be important to assure to GIs producer associations the possibility to adjust the production volume of their marketed products, in order to strengthen their marketing position and face external and unfair competition.
- **Animal welfare** has assumed a great importance for the European consumer. Although it is central to producers' choices, it is a sensitive issue due to the strong lobbying activity of the animal welfare associations that promote a concept that goes well beyond sustainability. For this reason it would be important to provide for a promotion and information budget within the CAP dedicated to animal welfare in order to explain EU criteria to the consumer.
- **Sustainability:** in line with the previous point but more in general, it would be important that GIs start to communicate on their production characteristics linked to sustainability.
- Proposal to set up an **investment fund for management and promotion of new PDO/PGI**, with the objective to cover up to 80% of the costs incurred by the new consortia, provided that the producer association formally commits to achieve environmental ethical and energetic sustainability objectives. This measure aims at strengthening the link between quality production, rural territories and local populations, keeping these territories alive.
- **CAP budget:** Important to maintain the CAP budget at least at the current level in order to meet ambitious objectives in term of socioeconomic and environmental sustainability, as well as rural development and public goods. Furthermore, AREPO members are against **co-financing of the CAP** for the first pillar because it would inflict a severe burden on MS budget, with devastating consequences for rural areas.
- **Regionalisation and subsidiarity** are two fundamental principles for a new CAP focused on a result based approach and oriented to the specific needs of territories. CAP objectives may only be reached through the regionalisation of the largest part of CAP instruments. For this reason, it is necessary to respect the distribution of powers within each MS in terms of EU's Regions competences in CAP implementation policies, avoiding a re-centralisation at national level of rural development implementation. Regional implementation is particularly important for valorisation and protection of quality and origin products.
- **Financial instruments:** a generalised use of financial instruments should be avoided since it could have a negative impact. The success of the implementation of financial instruments depends on the sectors and on the characteristics of each Region. Managing authorities should have the autonomy to decide whether and how to implement these instruments.
- **Quality in the first pillar** is a controversial issues: for some members aid for quality should be limited to the second pillar and not extended to the first, in order to avoid competition over limited resources that should be dedicated to other sectors in need.
- **Quality as an instrument of cohesion policy:** AREPO should highlight that quality is important as an instrument of cohesion and territorial policy. Especially in mountain and disadvantaged areas, the production of quality and origin products generates public goods.
- **Research, innovation and training:** it's fundamental to continue our work on research and innovation in agriculture, as well as on training and education to create new competences.
- **International protection and trade agreements:** all GIs products should be granted the same level of



protection on the international market. The EC should not distinguish between products with high export potential, to be protected at international level, and smaller and more localised products, only protected at European or even national level. AREPO should work with DG Trade and create an internal working group on these issues.

### Any other business

In order to assure enough space to the discussion, the Secretary General proposed to modify the agenda and skip the points concerning the **promotion programme for 2018** (find here the [fiche](#) and the [presentation](#)) and the study on the **role of Regions in the modification of GI product' specifications** (find here the [presentation](#)).

Concerning the **update on the Lisbon Agreement** on GIs, he highlighted that in January 2018, AREPO contributed to the EC consultation on the EU accession to the Geneva Act of Lisbon Agreement (LA) for the protection of Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications. Furthermore, he informed the member Regions that AREPO team will prepare a brief analysis of this topic in order to collect feedbacks and define a common position.

Finally, the Secretary General informed the members that AREPO team is going to update the **study on regional brands** realised in 2014, in order to verify the state of the art in the member Regions. Denis Renoul, intern at the AREPO office in Bordeaux, will be in charge to realise the survey and the study and will contact the members to collect the necessary information.

### Conclusions: work programme for the next months

The President concluded the General Assembly thanking the participants for the interesting exchange and discussion.

In conclusion, the main points for AREPO work program for the coming months will be the following:

- **Dissemination of AREPO position on CAP post 2020** and constant monitoring of the next step of the decision-making process.
- Organisation of a **meeting with AREPO College of Producers** dedicated to discuss how to achieve a greater participation of producer representatives.
- Collaboration in the organisation and active participation in **Origo Global Forum** that will be held in Parma on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018.
- Organisation of the second General Assembly that will be held in autumn. In that occasion we should put in the agenda a discussion on international protection of GIs.
- Preparation of a brief analysis concerning the EC accession to the Geneva Act of Lisbon Agreement, in order to collect feedbacks and define a common position.

**Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki**  
President of AREPO  
**P/O Laurent Gomez**  
Secretary General of AREPO