



REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

Bruxelles, January 25th 2017

First plenary meeting

The first AREPO plenary meeting in 2017 was held on January 25th from 10h00 to 16h30, at the Common House of the **Regions Emilia-Romagna, Hessen and Nouvelle-Aquitaine**.

STATUTORY PART

The President introduced the meeting by thanking Emilia-Romagna, Hessen and Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regions that hosted our meeting. He also thanked all member Regions who reaffirm every year their support and work hard to strengthen AREPO's legitimacy among European Institutions.

Report of the President (April 2016 – January 2017)

Member regions: In 2016, **24 Regions paid the membership fee and two committed to pay**. It is an exceptional result considering the impact of territorial reform in France.

The President presented the main results achieved by AREPO during the last year (April 2016 – January 2017) concerning the following policies ([see the activity report for more details](#)):

- **GA in Strasbourg (April 2016):** AREPO participated in the Intergroup on Wine, Spirits and Quality Foodstuffs, chaired by MEP Dorfmann, to highlight the importance of R&I for quality products.
- **CAP:** we realised two surveys concerning implementation of RDP measure on **operational groups** and RDP measure on **quality scheme** (certification and promotion) to prepare AREPO contribution to EC public consultation on the future of CAP after 2020.
- **Promotion policy:** constant monitoring and information actions (see programme fiche on promotion).
- **Review of organic regulation:** trilogues continue under Maltese Presidency, after Slovak Presidency, but a clear political agreement is still missing on many important issues.
- **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.
- **Non-agri GIs:** On October 12th, 2016, the President of AREPO participated as speaker in a DG GROW Workshop organised in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities.
- **TTIP:** AREPO disseminated its common position that has been published in several reviews and specialised website as well as taken into account in the COMAGRI opinion on future strategy on trade.

Finally, the President recalled that this was the last GA of his mandate and that the next meeting of AREPO will be an elective assembly to renew the Presidency.

VOTE: The report of the President was unanimously approved.

Presentation of the financial accounts for 2016

The Secretary General presented the [financial accounts for 2016](#). A detailed analysis was sent to the members one week before the GA. [Read the PPT presentation for more info](#).

VOTE: The financial account for 2016 was unanimously approved.

Budget proposal for 2017

The estimated budget for 2017 is set in balance at 142.250 €. [Read the PPT presentation for more info](#).

VOTE: The budget proposal for 2017 was unanimously approved.

www.arepoquality.eu

Secretary-General: secgen@arepoquality.eu ; Tel: + 33 (0)6 10 13 11 89
Bruxelles Office: policyofficer@arepoquality.eu ; Tel: +32 (0)2 743 30 09
Bordeaux Office: eu-projects@arepoquality.eu ; Tel: +33 (0)6 88 62 24 08

Vote on the contribution for 2017

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 affects particularly European Regions. After 2016, our capitals remain at the same level as in 2014 (257.600€). For this reason, **the Secretary-General proposed to maintain the membership fee for 2017 at the same amount (4.500€).**

VOTE: The membership fee for 2017 was unanimously approved at 4.500 €.

Proposal for the next GA, Ms Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki, Deputy Governor of Primary Sector Economy, Region of Crete [Click here to read the PPT presentation](#)

The **Vice-governor of Crete, Ms Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki**, announced that **Crete will host the next AREPO General Assembly that will be held at the beginning of the autumn**. In this occasion, AREPO Members will have the pleasure to discover the best practices and excellences of Crete.

Crete has been an active member of AREPO since 2012 and valorization and promotion of GIs is one of its main objectives for the development of rural areas. The Region of Crete has implemented **a strategic plan aimed at supporting local sustainable production in respect of local environment and natural resources, as well as local traditions and eating habits (Cretan Diet).**

Speech by Mr Gianni Fava, Regional Minister for Agriculture, Lombardia Region

Mr Fava proposed a **critical reflection on the economic added value of geographical indications**:

- GI recognition is not always able to ensure an economic valorisation of the product. In fact, GI protection and promotion are not systematically accompanied by a dynamic growth of the product's added value, resulting in a market distortion that leads producers out of the GI protection system.
- This problem could undermine the sustainability of the entire system, if the administrative and economic burden of GI recognition is not balanced by a return on investment in terms of added value.

Finally, the Minister proposed to organize a working group to exchange and harmonise good practices as well as to analyse negative experiences, in occasion of next AREPO plenary meeting.

Debate

The President and Vice-president shared the concerns expressed and highlighted the following challenges:

- Large-scale distribution's attempt to appropriate quality products represent a risk for GIs;
- Need to simplify the system while maintaining the same level of guarantee required to reassure the consumer.

Furthermore, they identified the following lines of reflection/work:

- **processed products** could be a key to bring added value to GIs value chains;
- important to develop the synergies between quality products and **tourism**;
- AREPO should ask for **more instruments in the CAP** to ensure the promotion and protection of quality products.

The President of Euromontana, Juan Andrés Gutierrez, proposed to **include in the agenda of next AREPO plenary meeting the optional quality term "mountain product"**. Euromontana would be available to present the results of the study regarding the implementation of this term in different EU Member States and Regions.

The Minister for Agriculture of Emilia-Romagna Region, Ms Simona Caselli, intervened to:

- Confirm the interest of Euromontana proposal, considering the difficulties to implement the term "mountain product" due to the absence of a national legislation in Italy;
- Inform that in the particular case of Emilia-Romagna Region, the main problems in terms of lack of recognition of GI added value are related to fruit and vegetables.

President Labarthe accepted the proposals to include the two mentioned items in the agenda of next AREPO plenary meeting and to collect contributions from participants.

THEMATIC PART (I) – Presentation of the activity report for 2016

AREPO technical team then presented in detail the activity report for 2016 ([click here to read the PPT presentation](#)), regarding the following issues: simplification and modernisation of CAP and presentation of the results of AREPO survey on RDP measure 3 on quality schemes; update on the TTIP; latest news on GIs for non-agricultural products; and promotion policy (new work programme for 2017).

For more information, [see the activity report](#).

Finally, Anne Clermontelle, consultant in charge of the European projects for AREPO, presented the project Interreg Sudoe #AGROSMARTcoop. For more information read [AREPO news](#) and the [activity report](#).

Observations

Veneto: suggested completing the study on measure 3 by checking whether the LAGs have activated the measure 3 within their local development programmes.

Toscana: regarding trade agreements, AREPO should ask to the EC:

- to provide funding to register GIs trademarks in third countries that don't have a GI system;
- to register EU quality logos in third countries;
- to provide further information regarding GIs protection under trade agreements.

THEMATIC PART (II) – Research and Innovation

Agricultural Research and Innovation and promotion of GIs in Emilia-Romagna Region, Ms Simona Caselli, Minister for Agriculture, Emilia-Romagna Region

Ms Caselli presented Emilia-Romagna experience in **implementing RDP measure 16 on operational groups** ([click here to read the PPT presentation of OGs in Emilia-Romagna](#)):

- **Funding:** €50M for M16.01, €93M in total for innovation, education/training and consulting;
- **First call 2016:** 159 applications, 56 selected project (more than 400 stakeholders involved) for a total of €12,6M of aids;
- **Quality** is a recurrent issue in the majority of selected projects, often focused on PDO/PGI value chains (e.g. projects on animal husbandry for PDO cheeses; PDO/PGI fruit and vegetables).

Furthermore, the Minister presented the “**Geographical indications global forum**” **Origo**, an initiative that will be held on **11-13 April in Parma**, during Cibus Connect. It is the first international event on PDO/PGI aimed at involving all EU and non-EU GIs. It will be organised by Emilia-Romagna Region in collaboration with the Italian Government. [Click here to read the PPT presentation on ORIGO](#)

AREPO will support Emilia-Romagna Region in the organisation of the event and all AREPO members are invited to participate involving their producers.

Signature of the cooperation agreement AREPO-SYAL

The Secretary General reminded the Assembly of the main contacts of the cooperation agreement between AREPO and SYAL ([click here to read the text](#)). The European Research Group SYAL was created in 2008 to promote research on localised agrifood systems at the European level. It gathers together around 36 research institutions from eight European countries and it's an ideal partner for AREPO.

The SYAL coordinator François Casabianca, presented the principal objectives of the network: to develop scientific research, teaching and training on the local Agri-food development; to provide information on sustainable local development strategies for civil society; to provide technical assistance for the design of public policies; to serve as a platform for launching initiatives and projects for further European and international cooperation; to strengthen the cooperation with non-European countries; to promote the publication and diffusion of relevant information and research results for the welfare of the civil society.

In the cooperation agreement, SYAL undertakes to participate actively in AREPO scientific committee, to provide scientific support for AREPO activities and to invite AREPO to its own events.



SYAL expectation on the cooperation agreement:

- To open operational and collaborative working spaces with AREPO and member regions;
- To create working groups on topic of common interest, for example:
 - Working at regional level to elaborate an innovative strategy for the promotion of local quality products;
 - Analysing the challenges of modern consumerism (consumer demands);
 - Identifying strategies for resources specification at local level in order to contribute to the creation of sustainable agri-food systems.

Finally, Mr Casabianca proposed to fix a deadline within one year in order to report on the progress made in the implementation of the cooperation agreement.

Then, the President of AREPO and the Coordinator of SYAL formalised the collaboration signing the agreement.

Presentation of an action plan for AREPO scientific committee

In order to work more effectively on R&I, AREPO decided to set up a **scientific committee based on the SYAL coordination committee and composed of research centres/universities from AREPO regions. This body should work in constant interaction with AREPO member Regions.**

On January 24th, AREPO organized the first working meeting with the SYAL coordination committee, the Master Food Identity and the regions corresponding to these institutions to create a first connection and interaction.

Aim of the meeting: exchanging on the priority themes for research and innovation on GIs and Localised Agri-food systems (LAFs) and defining the main guidelines for the work of Scientific Committee. **The following issues/challenges were identified for the Committee:**

1. To consult research actors on specific questions in order to have an immediate opinions or to put in place more long term methods of analysis (definition of the research needs);
2. **Discuss and disseminate research findings;**
 - **Request and propose lobbying actions** on research (H2020) and education (defending, developing and strengthening and creating network between the existing experiences) as well as producing technical or strategic documents in support of lobbying actions.

Next steps – AREPO should:

- Enlarge the composition of the Committee including one representative for each member region;
- Define a methodology to identify strategic priorities in order to start our work, on the basis of our position paper on research and innovation

Presentation of the results of AREPO survey on RDP measure 16.01 on operational groups, Ms Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO, Bruxelles Representation Office [Read the presentation](#)

AREPO policy officer presented the preliminary results of the survey on measure 16.01 on operational groups, realised in collaboration with ERIAFF. AREPO intends to continue monitoring the implementation to enlarge the database and to create an inventory with measure fiches for each Region in order to share information and best practices with particular attention to GIs and quality products.

The **EC representative**, Alberto D'Avino, deputy-head of Unit on R&I (DG AGRI), expressed interest in the study results, highlighting that the EC is particularly interested in the following issues:

- Impact and benefits of EIP Focus Groups for the creation of operational groups;
- Best practices and difficulties for the creation of cross border OG funded by different regions.

Presentation of the H2020 project Strenght2food, Mr Filippo Arfini, University of Parma, Italy [Click here to read the PPT presentation](#)

Professor Arfini has presented [Strenght2food](#), a 5-year EU-funded project, aiming at providing the EU and its Member States with evidence-based recommendations on quality policy implementation.



Conclusions: work programme for 2017

The Secretary-General concluded the plenary meeting reminding the main points for AREPO work program for the coming months:

- Elaboration of AREPO contribution on EC public consultation on CAP post 2020;
- We will continue monitoring and analysing the implementation of cooperation measure (creation of **operational groups**) and **quality measure** (certification and promotion) of the RDP;
- **Scientific committee**: we need to enlarge the composition in order to include at least one representative for each AREPO member region; furthermore, we should define the strategic priorities to start our work, on the basis of our position paper on research and innovation;
- Implementation of the cooperation agreement between **AREPO** and **SYAL** ;
- **Organisation of the second AREPO plenary meeting in Crete**. As requested by the members we will include the two mentioned topic: 1) the problem of economic added value of GIs; 2) the state of the art of the implementation of the optional quality term “mountain product”.

Vincent Labarthe
President of AREPO
P/O Laurent Gomez
Secretary General of AREPO