



REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

Strasbourg, April 14th, 2016

First plenary meeting

The first AREPO plenary meeting in 2016 was held on April 14th 2016, from 14h00 to 17h30, in the **House of Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine Region in Strasbourg**.

The plenary meeting was opened by the Secretary General, who thanked the participants and presented the apologies of the President Vincent Labarthe, absent due to a meeting of the Regional Council of Midi Pyrénées Languedoc Roussillon Region. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-president Jean-Louis Cazaubon.

Introduction of Vice-president Jean-Louis Cazaubon

The Vice-president introduced the meeting by thanking the new region Alsace-Lorraine-Champagne-Ardenne (ALCA) that hosted our meeting in Strasbourg. He also thanked the regional service and the Regional Institute for Quality of Alsace (IRQUA), directed by Bénédicte Baur.

STATUTORY PART

Half-year report of the President (November 2015 - April 2016)

Member regions

In 2015, 25 regions paid the membership fee. That is one fee less than in 2014 (see the analysis of audited accounts).

European policies

The Vice-president presented the main results achieved by AREPO during the last six months (November 2015-April 2016) concerning the following policies ([see the activity report for more details](#)):

- **Promotion policy:** AREPO presented a **descriptive note** concerning the promotion policy and created a new section "Partner search" on the website **to facilitate the partner search** and the exchange of information for promotion projects among the producers of AREPO member regions.
- **Review of organic farming regulation:** the trilogue is still ongoing under the Dutch Presidency that took over after the Luxembourgish Presidency. The main critical issues remain unresolved.
- **Research and Innovation:** AREPO continued to work in collaboration with the network ERG SYAL to capitalise on the conclusions of the seminar. As a result, in December 2015, AREPO presented to the European Commission a position paper as a contribution to the consultation process for the definition of the EU long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation.
- **GI for non-agricultural products:** this issue is really important for the regions since, as in the case of agricultural GIs, it concerns productions activities that cannot be delocalised. Furthermore, it is also important for agricultural GIs, since potentially it represent a counterpart in international negotiations with the developing countries for the recognition of GIs.
- **TTIP:** On February 24th, 2016, AREPO participated to the Stakeholder Presentation Event organised by the European Commission in occasion of the 12th round of talks. In March, we sent you the documents published by the EC and we realised a survey in order to facilitate the definition of AREPO position during the AG.

VOTE: The half-year report of the President was unanimously approved.

Presentation and vote of the audited accounts for 2015

Expenses: In 2015, the expenses exceeded the total of planned expenses of 12.100€. This was mainly due to the incredible opportunities of participation in Expo Milano 2015 (participation in EC conferences, organisation of a high level seminar on research, education and training on GIs).

Revenues: The revenues were 1.500€ lower than the estimated budget. AREPO received 25 membership fees, instead of the 26 planned (-4.000€) and the financial income was 650€ below the estimates.

Results: the financial year 2015 shows a negative result mainly due to the incredible opportunities of participation in Expo Milano 2015

AREPO capital: Despite the negative result in 2015, the association capital is still very high (270.400€). It corresponds to 2 full years of operation at the same spending level as 2015 (135.600€). Therefore, there is no need to reconsider the decision taken in 2014. The annual contribution in 2016 will remain at 4.500€, as voted in the plenary session held on November 2015.

VOTE: The annual budget of 2015 was approved.

Budget proposal for 2016

Expected revenues are set at the same level of 2015, i.e. 124.200€ corresponding to 26 payed membership fees. Furthermore, the same value of flights reimbursed by the EC is considered, as well as better financial performance of the investments. To this end, in February 2016, AREPO saving account with an interest rate of 0.25% was closed. AREPO now has 3.000€ invested in shares of the bank Crédit Agricole, with an annual interest rate of 1,69%; a guaranteed investment of 161.800€ for 60 months with an annual average interest rate of 1,9% (0,4% for the first year); and 81.500€ in a saving account with an interest rate of 0,75%.

Indeterminate term contract for Giulia Scaglioni: The cost of this new contract is high and represents an increase in the expenses of +34.000 € compared to 2015 budget, i.e. twice the cost of the subsidized contract. Therefore, we must compensate for this increase in expenses controlling travel expenses (-15.000€ lower compared with 2015). In 2016, no exceptional event is planned apart from the usual two annual plenary meetings.

The estimated budget for 2016 is set in balance.

VOTE: The budget proposal for 2016 was approved.

Discussion on the inclusion of a scientific committee in AREPO

In occasion of the plenary meeting held on November 2015, AREPO team committed to analyse possible options for the inclusion of a scientific committee in the association. As a first step, the Secretary-General proposes to sign a cooperation agreement with SYAL network. ERG SYAL is a research network established between thirty institutions of eight European countries. It aims at promoting research on localized agrifood system at European level.

The structure of the proposed cooperation agreement is as follows:

- **Introduction** on mission and objectives of ERG SYAL and AREPO;
- **Article 1: history** of the collaboration with SYAL that led to the drafting of a position paper on research and innovation.
- **Article 2: objectives of the political cooperation agreement** (the agreement does not bind the two associations financially):
 - a) To strengthen AREPO positions and actions, with the support of academic research, exploiting and promoting research results produced by ERG SYAL;
 - b) To bring the research needs and questions of AREPO regions and producers to the

attention of ERG SYAL;

- c) To strengthen European R&I in favor of GIs and European quality food systems.
- **Article 3: form of cooperation:**
 - a) Participation in the events of the two networks;
 - b) Sharing work and activities, exchanging information and opinions;
 - c) Contribution of ERG SYAL to AREPO Scientific Committee.

The text has not been voted by the GA, since it is a first proposal to be discussed with the ERG SYAL. The GA has given the mandate to Giulia Scaglioni and Anne Clermontelle to present the agreement proposal to SYAL Coordinating Committee, in order to finalise the text. A meeting is scheduled with SYAL at the beginning of May in Stockholm.

THEMATIC PART

Presentation of Alsatian products under quality schemes and of the scheme “Savourez l’Alsace - Produit du Terroir” - Alsace Qualité

Attached you will find the Power Point of Alsace Qualité, presented at the GA.

CAP: PDR implementation and mid-term review - Laurent Gomez, Secretary-General of AREPO

For the moment, the EC does not intend to start a mid-term review of the CAP. Nevertheless, there are still difficulties in several regions in the implementation of certain measures of the rural development programmes (RDP). This is particularly true for the cooperation measure concerning the **implementation of the operational groups**.

After a brief exchange among the participants in the GA, it is evident that the regions have not advanced in a uniform way. There are still many doubts and a lot of work to be done on this measure.

For this reason, the Secretary General proposes to realise a **survey to make an inventory of the different forms of implementation of the operational groups among AREPO member regions**. We would like to collect pilot examples and best practices to share and exchange information among our members.

A second area of work concerns the **quality measure (certification, promotion) of the RDP**. The Secretary proposes to collect and analyse the different forms of implementation of this measure in AREPO member regions. As result of this work, an inventory should be made available to our members on AREPO website. In addition, AREPO team will take the opportunity to submit a survey to identify the difficulties and problems faced in the implementation, as well as unanswered questions.

Presentation of AREPO-SYAL position paper on R&I - Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO Brussels Office

In December 2015, AREPO presented to the European Commission a **position paper as a contribution to the consultation process for the definition of the EU long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation** ([available on AREPO website](#)).

On this point, AREPO is currently working with **TP Organics**, developing a strategy to present some shared priorities for H2020 topics. In particular, we are working on food processing, consumers-producers relation and certification.

Update on TTIP – Laurent Gomez, Secretary-General of AREPO

On March 21st, the EC published several documents on the ongoing TTIP negotiations concerning intellectual property and GIs. In particular, these documents include a positive list of PDO and PGI that the EC would like to protect under the TTIP. The list is a common practice of the Commission in all bilateral trade agreements (e.g.

Canada, Mercosur countries, Thailand, Georgia). Nevertheless, this time the sector is reacting more strongly since the US account for 30% of the total value of exported European GIs products.

In order to react to this document, AREPO sent a survey to its members. The received answers were uniform and sound and allowed us to develop a **proposal for AREPO common position**. The structure of the text proposal is as follows:

- **Introduction:** The 1.300 Geographical Indication (GI) for foodstuffs –PDO and PGI registered by the European Commission (EC)- are collective intellectual property rights. These products not only represent a whole section of European agricultural and food culture, but also a really important share of rural economy, accounting for an annual turnover of at least 60 billion euros. Moreover, the total value of GIs products exported outside EU is estimated at €15 billion and the US represents by far the leading destination country for EU GIs, accounting for 30% of the total exports from the EU.
1. **AREPO opposes the principle of an a priori restricted list of Geographical Indications** and asks the European Commission for a widespread recognition and strong protection of GIs in TTIP.
 2. **AREPO calls for an exhaustive consultation of the European GIs.** AREPO questions the modalities of the democratic process that led to the drafting of the restricted list published by the EC. AREPO members argue that a significant number of GIs with commercial interests in the US are not included in the list published by the EC.
 3. **AREPO highlights the importance to keep the inscription to the eventual bilateral register open to future GIs.**
 4. **AREPO demands that US stop using the names of 17 European GIs for wine wrongly considered semi-generic.**

Toscana Region has highlighted that the products excluded from the list will have to protect themselves in the US market by using trademarks. Registration and protection of a private brand in the United States have very high costs for producers. Therefore, Toscana proposes to request to the Commission to introduce new financial instruments in support of European GIs in their protective action in foreign markets. This proposal was integrated in the common position and AREPO team committed to evaluate the opportunity to present concrete proposals to the EC, once the negotiations are concluded.

VOTE: The proposal for the adoption of AREPO common position on TTIP was unanimously approved.

Update on the review of organic regulation - Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO Brussels Office

In January 2016 the Dutch Presidency of the Council took over the role of steering the Member States through the trilogue negotiations with the Parliament and the Commission on the organic dossier. Until now, not much progress was made and the key issues (decertification threshold and control system) remain unresolved. This is despite the other two EU institutions quite clearly demand a reversal of Commission original proposals on these issues. On import system, the three institutions are a bit closer but still discussing how much flexibility there should be in allowing the EU rules to adapt to different global conditions.

GIs for non-agricultural products - Laurent Gomez, Secretary-General of AREPO

DG Grow requested AREPO to participate in an event on non-agricultural GIs during the "European Week of Cities and Regions" - (Open Days) in October 2016. We will discuss the possibility to organise an AREPO side-event in this occasion (high level meeting? workshop?).

Furthermore, AREPO is in contact with the MEP Virginie Rozière, rapporteur on this issue for the EP. In occasion of the last meeting in Strasbourg, MEP Rozière asked AREPO to evaluate the possibility to collaborate on three fields of action:

1. Disseminate MEP Rozière's **letter** to stakeholders and competent authorities to put pressure on the EC, which is acting too slowly on this issue;



2. Organisation of an **event** in autumn in Brussels;
3. Creation of an **inventory** of potential handicraft and industrial GIs AREPO regions. AREPO committed to send to its members the methodology developed and used in Aquitaine to identify these products and proposes to realise a first inventory. In France this work was done by AFIGIA (the French Association of Industrial and Handicraft GIs), created after the introduction of national legislation on the subject.

Presentation of the new AREPO instrument for promotion projects - Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO Brussels Office

In order to facilitate the exchange of information, networking and the partner search for promotion projects among the producers of its member regions, AREPO created a new section “[Partner search](#)” in its website. The organizations interested in submitting a partner search can fill the following [questionnaire](#). The contacts and the information regarding the project proposal and the proposing organizations that will fill the questionnaire will be published at the following [link](#).

Furthermore, AREPO attended the **Infoday on promotion** (February 2016) and prepared a **descriptive note concerning the promotion policy** (to be find on AREPO website, in the section reserved to AREPO members).

European projects - Anne Clermontelle, AREPO Bordeaux Office

AREPO participate as external stakeholder in the consortium Strenght2Food that won the call **SFS-20-2015 “Sustainable food chains through public policies”**. The project aims at studying the impact of EU quality policy on agricultural sustainability and promotion of a healthy diet.

Moreover, AREPO is partner of GLOSSAFOOD consortium, coordinated by Ceia3, who presented a **project proposal for the call SFS-45-2016 “Increase overall transparency of processed agri-food products”**. We are waiting the results of the first selection phase.

Finally, AREPO participated in the development of a **project proposal for the programme Interreg SUDOE, AGROSMARTcoop**. This proposal concerns the integration, competitiveness and economic growth of agri-food cooperatives in rural areas. The consortium coordinator is AGACA (the Association of Agricultural Cooperatives of Galicia). AREPO should coordinate the WP on dissemination with a budget of 112.000€, co-financed at 75% by the ERDF. The activities should be implemented in 24 months. We are waiting for the results of the second phase of selection that should be published at the end of June 2016.

Conclusions

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

- Finalisation of the text and **signature of AREPO-SYAL agreement**;
- Creation of a **survey and analysis** of the RDP implementation of cooperation measure (creation of **operational groups**) and **quality measure** (support for the certification, promotion) in AREPO regions;
- Collaboration with SYAL and TP Organics in order to transform the position paper in **research priorities for H2020 calls**;
- Dissemination of **AREPO position on TTIP**;
- Elaboration of a **working method to create an inventory of potential handicraft and industrial GIs in AREPO regions**.

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Presidente dell'AREPO
P/O Laurent Gomez
Segretario Generale dell'AREPO