



REPORT ON AREPO PLENARY MEETING

Bruxelles, October 18th 2019

Second plenary meeting

The second AREPO plenary meeting in 2019 was held on October 18th from 09h30 to 13h00, at the **common office of Hessen, Emilia-Romagna and Nouvelle-Aquitaine**, Rue Montoyer 21, Brussels.

Master in Management of Food Systems of Quality and Gastronomy (Food Quality): Presentation and future collaboration with AREPO, Filippo Arfini, Department of Economics – University of Parma

Professor Filippo Arfini, from the University of Parma, presented the structure and content of the Master in Food Quality and Gastronomy Management, established in 2018, based on a diverse educational offer and on an idea of quality as a **business model**.

The educational offer consists of two parallel and complementary curricula:

1) **Food Quality Management**, allows to form an economic profile that also has gastronomic skills. The graduate is an agri-food quality manager, who knows how to recognize, manage, protect, communicate, promote and enhance the quality of food along the value chain and on the territory. It is a profile oriented to **quality management**.

2) **Gastroeconomist**, allows to form a gastronome with a deep knowledge of the products (origin and presentation) and their promotion. This profile aims to **promote quality**.

Both curricula provide **20 training credits linked to activities of traineeship and thesis**, with the aim of translating the theoretical aspects of the course into concrete and professional approaches. For this reason, the presentation of this offer aimed to inform and propose to the members **to identify some companies willing to accept students to carry out traineeships or thesis research for free**, under the funding made available by Erasmus + SMT - Individual Mobility for Traineeship (each trainee receives a monthly contribution during the traineeship period). By facilitating this exchange between students and companies, the main goal is **to create a network of AREPO companies, open to all the Universities of the member Regions**, so that the results produced during the traineeship or thesis research periods can be disseminated to the entire Association.

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

STATUTORY PART

The statutory part of the AREPO plenary meeting was introduced by the **Secretary General**, who welcomed **the new President, Mrs Eirini Choudetsanaki**, Regional Councillor of Crete, who replaced Mrs Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki, former Deputy Governor of Crete. The Secretary thus reminded that in AREPO it is always a Region that presides the network, in the person of the President or Governor. In the case of the Crete Region, it was Governor Stavros Arnaoutakis who appointed Mrs Choudetsanaki to chair the network during the last year of the Crete Presidency, following the departure of Mrs Vrentzou-Skordalaki.

Then Mr. Gomez **presented the agenda of the day**. Following a request from Mrs Simona Caselli, Minister of Agriculture of the Emilia-Romagna Region, and the Vice-President of AREPO, Mr



Guglielmo Garagnani, an item on US tariffs was included on the agenda to discuss measures to deal with the negative impact on GIs.

Report of the President

The President of AREPO, Mrs **Eirini Choudetsanaki**, started by welcoming the members and thanking the Region of Hessen, Emilia-Romagna and Nouvelle-Aquitaine that hosted the assembly.

She presented the main results achieved by AREPO during the last semester (March 2019 – October 2019), reminding that it covers the last months of Mrs Vrentzou-Skordalaki Presidency. Thus, she took the occasion to thank her for her work during the last 2 years.

Then, she highlighted the key points concerning the following issues ([see the activity report for more details](#)):

- **Members:** Until October 2019, AREPO received 26 membership fees. Furthermore, we welcomed one new member Region: Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.
- **Common Agricultural Policy post 2020:** AREPO most important priority in order to achieve the right support for GIs and quality products in the next programming period. AREPO and oriGIn developed a common position and lobbying strategy on the CAP to jointly defend GIs at EU level ([see common amendments](#)). All our amendments proposals have been tabled and the majority has been included in the final COMAGRI report ([see analysis of objectives achieved](#)).
- **Promotion policy:** constant monitoring and information actions ([see programme fiche on promotion 2019](#)).
- **EU trade agreements:** position on EU trade agreements focuses on requiring protection from imitations and counterfeiting for all registered GI products, including those that have not been included in the individual agreements. Contribution to the EC consultation on the accession of the EU to the Geneva Act of Lisbon Agreement. Monitoring of bilateral trade agreement with Japan, Vietnam, Mercosur and Mongolia.

Before moving on to the next point, the Secretary General thanked the AREPO team for the work done and the member Regions that support this work with their responses and regular feedback to our internal consultations.

He also thanked the producers for their increasing participation in the meetings and work of AREPO.

Presentation of the state of the accounts for 2019 and provisional budget for 2020

The Secretary General then presented the state of the accounts for 2019. He recalled that this was not the presentation of the audited accounts by AREPO's external accountant, which was made at the time of the first General Assembly in March 2019, but a presentation of the situation of the accounts.

As of 17 October, the situation is quite positive as we have €106.500 in AREPO's current account. This is a high result due to:

- The regular payment of the contribution by our members (26 membership fees already received, 3 to 4 still awaited);
- The €28.000 subsidy from the Interreg Sudoe AGROSMARTcoop project, expected in December 2018, was finally received in March 2019;
- Maternity leave for Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO's policy officer, who was replaced by Francesca Alampi with a professional immersion contract.



The estimated expenses that still remain in the last 3 months of the year:

- GA and the event AREPO-AREFLH-Agriregions (October 17th)
- Salaries, social security contributions and benefits: €25.900
- Website, current expenses and travels: 5.000 €

We can expect a positive result of €8.000 excluding subsidy, and €36.000 with the subsidy from the Interreg Sudoe AGROSMARTcoop project.

Projection for 2020: increase in workforce and balance of accounts sought

- A part-time contract for Giulia Scaglioni (20h/week) and the recruitment of Francesca Alampi with a V.I.E. contract for 24 months (subsidized French contract, which allows to hire young people outside France with a decent salary). Thanks to this expansion, we will not only be able to continue AREPO's current activities, but also to further develop them;
- 2020 will be a year without exceptional events planned (this may change depending on political events);
- AREPO is partner of the consortium who won a new Interreg Sudoe project, AGROSMARTGlobal, which will bring us some extra expenses during the start-up phase, then will bring us an additional grant of €89.000.

More information at the [presentation](#).

Membership fee for 2020

On the basis of the situation presented, the Secretary General proposed to the Assembly to maintain the same membership fee for 2020 at € 4.500.

This will allow the Secretary to propose to the Executive Committee to anticipate the call for contributions from member regions at the beginning of the year, as the amount of the fee will be unchanged from the previous year. This anticipation is in accordance with the Statute of AREPO and ensures that there is no cash flow gap.

The proposal will be submitted to and voted by the Executive Committee. It will then be validated by the first AREPO GA in 2020.

THEMATIC PART

Update on CAP post 2020, Ms Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO, Brussels Representation Office

AREPO policy officer presented an update on CAP post 2020 describing the main results of AREPO and oriGIn common lobbying strategy (for more details you can consult the [presentation](#), the [activity report](#) and [the last analysis on CAP](#)), in order to share and discuss it with the members.

Update on the new European Parliament and the future European Commission, Francesca Alampi, AREPO, Brussels Representation Office

Following the European elections of May 2019 and the beginning of the process that will lead the Von der Leyen Commission to take up office, the policy officer presented the new EU institutional framework and the place of GIs among the priorities of the incoming EU political term. She gave an overview of the new Agricultural Committee of the European Parliament, sorting through the new



MEPs with whom AREPO has started to collaborate as well as the re-elected ones, concluding with the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture and its mandate. More details in the [presentation](#).

Update on EU Projects, Anne Clermontelle, AREPO

Anne Clermontelle, AREPO's external consultant in charge of European projects (recently renewed following a competitive tendering procedure subject to public procurement rules), updated members on AREPO's participation in European projects (approved, ongoing and future) and on project proposals that have not passed the evaluation stage, in which AREPO has been involved as a partner.

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

Extraordinary agenda item on US tariff barriers

After wishing the new President a good job, **Guglielmo Garagnani, Vice-President of AREPO**, presented an extraordinary item on the agenda concerning the emergency caused by the US duties. Given the negative impact of tariffs on countless products with geographical indications, the Vice-President invited the assembly to discuss the possibility of adopting a shared position to request the European institutions to activate some measures, within the CAP, that can help the GIs affected by tariff barriers for as long as they last.

Emilia-Romagna Regional Minister in charge of Agriculture, Simona Caselli, spoke in support of the Vice-President's request, emphasising the symbolic importance of AREPO taking a position on US tariffs in the day of their entry into force.

The two interventions outlined an initial proposal for a position based on the following points:

- AREPO should **express a position against the use of duties**. Trade-damaging tariff barriers are not acceptable, especially when they come from years-long political allies.

Furthermore, given the clear attack on GIs and the awareness of USA political will to counter the European quality policy, it would be necessary:

- To support the proposal put forward by Mr De Castro in COMAGRI (PE) **to strengthen the crisis reserve so that it can be used to support GIs affected by tariffs;**
- To ask for the introduction of **a fund to support consortia with legal activities of litigation at world level**. These consortia are not only defending a specific GI, but are also providing a defence service for the whole European quality system, ensuring that it is maintained worldwide;
- To ask for **priority scores under the Regulation on the promotion of agri-food products for projects carried out by groups of producers affected by the duties**, in the markets that imposed the duty.

The President expressed her support to the proposal and suggested that a position had to be adopted.

The **Secretary General** recalled that we could take advantage of AREPO's privileged position of dialogue with the European Commission by presenting a position at the next meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Quality and Promotion on 6 December 2019. To this end, we should share and approve a common position by the end of November.



The President of oriGIn, Claude Vermot-Desroches, expressed the willingness of CNAOL and oriGIn France to support the position of AREPO.

Minister of Agriculture of Toscana Region, Marco Remaschi, intervened to support the proposal. He also stressed the need to take a clear position at this decisive moment, giving a clear sign of support to companies in AREPO regions that are working to create quality products, but are facing increasing difficulties. AREPO has the strength to represent our position and make it heard with determination.

The proposal was unanimously approved.

Presentation of AREPO study on Origin Wine, Laurent Gomez, Secretary General of AREPO

Until now, wine has not been included among AREPO working themes. No action has ever been taken in this field, given the existence of another dedicated organisation, **AREV**. However, during the last year, AREPO has been repeatedly urged by several members, to work also on wine. For this reason, as decided during the first plenary meeting of 2019 in Thessaloniki, **a study was conducted to understand what could be the role of AREPO in relation to the wine sector, without affecting the competences of AREV, but on the contrary thinking about forms of collaboration with this organization.**

The vine in Europe covers 3.2 million hectares and the EU is the leading producer of wine in the world, with 1750 geographical indications for wine (more than for foodstuffs), of which 1291 PDO and 459 PGI.

The study focused on how regions can contribute to the needs of the wine sector through a territorial approach. First of all, the involvement of the Regions makes it possible to support the promotion of wines and exports. In addition, they can participate in international protection; be the interface between producers and civil society; educate in the taste and consumption of alcohol; promote professions related to vine and wine, given their expertise in training; support innovation to meet these challenges.

Considering this premise, the Secretary General proposed to the members **to develop AREPO's positions exclusively on wines of origin, with a territorial approach on viticulture**. Furthermore, he proposed **to share these positions with the organizations already operating in the sector, in particular AREV and EFOW**, collaborating with them in order to mutually strengthen our demand, as we currently do with other partner associations like oriGIn.

The proposal was welcomed by Catalunya. Carmel Mòdol Bressoli, Director of the Food, Quality and Agri-food Sector of the Department of Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries and Food of Catalonia, stressed the importance of understanding how to introduce a wine culture in new societies and how to protect it from misinformation, recalling that Catalunya has information and expertise on wine.

Piemonte Region too said it was in favour of AREPO dealing with wines. The Region was once a member of AREV, of which it also held the presidency, and acknowledges that there is currently no association in Brussels covering these issues. Jean-Pierre Raynaud, Vice-President of Nouvelle Aquitaine in charge of Agriculture; the President of AREPO and representative of the Region of Crete; Simona Caselli, Minister of Agriculture of Emilia-Romagna Region; Marco Remaschi, Minister of Agriculture of the Toscana Region, as well as the Region of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, supported the proposal of AREPO reaffirming the need to develop a strong position on wine and a more comprehensive approach of AREPO on Geographical Indications.



The Secretary General concluded by informing that some regions have proposed to have an interface role between AREPO and AREV and that Anne Clermontelle will deal with the subject, contacting members to identify priorities and ways of intervention in this field.

Proposals for new strategic actions, Joan Godia Tresanchez, Generalitat de Catalunya

With regard to the future activities of AREPO, the Treasurer, Joan Godia Tresanchez, has presented to the members attending the Assembly some proposals **for strategic actions for the future**.

- 1) **Study on small PDO/IGP** to better understand the situation and needs of these products and possibly outline a basis for possible future policies;
- 2) **Study on the use of PDO/PGI as ingredients**: although EU legislation exists on this issue, it is difficult to interpret and consortia and regional administrations do not have complete information on the subject.
- 3) **Strengthening AREPO's relations with its member regions**: establishing direct communication between AREPO and member regions beyond the regular meetings, to promote and facilitate active participation.

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

Several representatives of producers commented on the subject. The Extremadura producers supported the proposal, suggesting the importance of a study on the producers' weaknesses and the difficulties they face. Specifically, it was noted that in Extremadura producers are leaving quality systems. For this reason, the CAP should develop concrete measures to support them, to allow differentiation of these producers and to counteract this negative trend. In addition, it is necessary that product specifications for GIs that have been in place for some time can be updated more easily and quickly in order to cope with the new market conditions.

As regards the proposal for a study on PDO/PGI as ingredients, as pointed out by the President of oriGIn, attention must be paid to the different positions between the consortia.

The director of the PGI, Canard à foie gras du Sud-Ouest, drew attention not only to the concept of ingredient, but above all to the need for checks after the use of a PDO/PGI for a processed product, since it often happens that it is mixed with other ingredients of which it cannot be guaranteed the same level of quality because they come from third countries. There is a risk that some products will use a PDO/PGI mark only because they use PDO/PGI as ingredients. Vincent Labarthe, Vice-President of the Occitanie Region, in charge of Agriculture, also took a similar position, pointing out the need to safeguard the food safety requirements of a product, especially when a GI becomes an ingredient of a processed product.

The Vice-President of AREPO, echoed the importance of the issue of ingredients, suggesting that, precisely because of the different positions of the consortia in this regard, it should also be addressed by the college of producers, to better understand what individual consortia think about it. For Parmigiano Reggiano it is important to be identified as an ingredient of a processed product, if it can be used to ennoble it, but only if properly used. For this reason, Parmigiano Reggiano has already created voluntary agreements that regulate its use. It supports a study in the framework of AREPO and considers that EU legislation should be improved.

On the basis of the requests received, the Secretary General stated that AREPO will evaluate which type of study can be developed directly by the AREPO team, probably with the collaboration of a



trainee. On some aspects, however, it should be considered to request the Commission to provide a budget for more in-depth studies.

The proposal was unanimously approved.

Update on Non-Agricultural Geographical Indications, Laurent Gomez, Secretary General of AREPO

Although the subject does not fall strictly within the competence of AREPO, there are industrial and artisanal products, therefore not agri-foodstuffs, which are recognised as Geographical Indications and protected by specific regulations at national level in some Member States, but which lack specific recognition and regulation at EU level.

The French Ministry of Finance has contacted the Secretary General to seek contacts in other European countries, as it aims at developing a European task force to relaunch the discussion on EU legislation on non-agricultural GIs.

Update on EU Trade Agreements, Mathilde Chareyron, OriGIn

GIs remain one of the most controversial issues in trade agreement negotiations. OriGIn is working extensively on the subject of trade treaties, especially with regard to:

1. trade agreements and opening of new markets;
2. consolidation and promotion in new markets.

CETA: The agreement with Canada allows the protection of 172 Geographical Indications, mostly agri-food, because for wine there is a special agreement between the parties since 2003. Nevertheless, the agreement has generally allowed improvements in the recognition and protection of GIs, since Canada, following the CETA, has put in place a new system of protection that also allows GIs not included in the agreement to apply for protection in Canada. What is important to bear in mind is that the list of geographical indications covered by the Agreement may be amended to include in the list new GIs registered after the conclusion of the Agreement. On the contrary, GIs already registered before the agreement and not included in the list, cannot be included in future.

A permanent negotiating tool, the EU/Canada GI Committee, has also been created to report problems with GIs.

EU-Japan agreement: no figures are yet available on the economic impact of this agreement. It includes a list of 205 GIs. There is an improvement compared to the CETA, as any GI can be added later on. Japan has also created its own system of GI registration and protection, but it is certainly easier to ask the Commission to include the product on the list than to register it directly in Japan.

EU-Mercosur: The political agreement reached provides for the protection of 355 EU GIs in Mercosur countries and 220 GIs from Mercosur countries in the EU.

For some GIs there are exceptions that limit their protection. One example is the so-called "*grandfathering*" or "*prior user*", i.e. if a product name was used before it was included in the agreement, the users can continue to do so (it applies to a shortlist). Nevertheless, for the first time, EU manufacturers will have access to the list of operators from Mercosur countries authorised to use these names. This list of "*prior users*" will be made public before the adoption of the agreement, which will not be signed until the list has been ratified. Other limitations relate to GIs included in the list of the Agreement, but which will only be eligible for protection in 5- or 7-years' time.



As regards the Annex on Geographical Indications, it may be amended by adding new GIs. Yet, one point of concern is the provision of a list of names to be considered generic. These are common names such as cheese, ham. There is still a year before the final text is submitted and ratification will not take place before the beginning of 2021.

OriGIn's policy officer, Mathilde Chareyron, concluded her speech by recalling the difficulty of reaching balanced positions on international agreements' accession through lists of Geographical Indications. Despite all the weak points, oriGIn approves the Commission's approach. In fact, this system has managed to get international agreements through by including EU PDOs/PGIs in countries that did not want to recognise them (e.g. Canada).

The Vice-Governor of Central Macedonia, Katerina Zografou, asked for an in-depth analysis of the selection criteria of products to be included in the lists. Generally, the European Commission prepares a first draft (the same for all trade agreements) based on previous agreements. Then this is sent to all Member States, which are required to indicate which products to maintain, remove or add, also providing data on the value of exports and usurpations in third countries. If there is no data to support the presence of a product in the list, the product in question is excluded.

More information available in the [presentation](#).

Before moving on to the President's conclusions, there was time for a [presentation](#) by Charalampos-Nikolaos Piteris, from the region of Crete. Returning to the proposal to build a network of AREPO companies to host interns and students, he stressed the willingness of the Region to identify producers, expanding the collaboration with the Master Food Identity.

Conclusions

The President concluded the plenary meeting reminding the main points for AREPO work programme for 2020 and beyond:

- AREPO's priority should be the revision of Common Agricultural Policy, in order to assure the right recognition and support for quality and origin products in the final text.
- In line with that priority, we should monitor and actively participate to the process of evaluation of EU quality policy, which will be run through 2020, in order to improve it and assure that it replies to the needs of producers and rural territories.
- AREPO should also expand its position including the demands of ultra-peripheral regions, in order to equally give voice to the different needs of our Regions. This could also help us in enhancing the membership.
- We should as well strengthen the commitment of our member Regions with ad hoc missions, both to present AREPO to the local stakeholders and to better understand the specific needs of each Regions and its producers.
- AREPO will have to develop a strategy for carrying out the proposed studies on small PDOs/PGIs and PDOs/PGIs as ingredients.
- Furthermore, as discussed with professor Filippo Arfini, AREPO commit to set up a network of GI producers that could host students for internships or research for their thesis. This network will be open to all AREPO's partner Universities and would be a great opportunity to carry out studies addressing the needs of AREPO regions and producers.



- As part of the Stakeholder Advisory Board of the Strenght2food project, we will collaborate in the organisation of a conference in Brussels, aiming at discussing and elaborating policy recommendations on quality policy. We could organise at the same time one of our plenary meeting to give our members the opportunity to participate to the project conference. It will be the occasion to briefly present the main results of the project and discuss policy recommendations. The conference will be organised in the second half of 2020, simultaneously with the conclusion of the Commission evaluation process on quality policy.
- Furthermore, all the previous points will help relaunching the work of AREPO Scientific Committee and strengthen our collaboration with our associate members.
- Finally, in 2020 a meeting of the board of producers will be organised.