



## REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

20 May 2013 – Bordeaux, Aquitaine

Mr Rabboni, President of AREPO, opened the plenary meeting. In his speech, he thanked the Region of Aquitaine for hosting the event and underscored the importance of the work done together with oriGIn to organize the World and European Conference on Origin. The president made an introduction to the meeting, highlighting in particular the following points:

- **Budget:**
  - AREPO's budget is balanced. This was possible thanks to the keeping of a constant number of member regions and to spending cuts. The intention is to reduce membership fees, if possible, already from 2014, bringing them to around 4000€.
- **New regions :**
  - After participating in AREPO's activities as an observer for a year, Bavaria officially joined AREPO in 2013: this cannot but improve AREPO's legitimacy with respect to the European institutions.
  - The Region of Friuli asked to join the association as an observer.
  - Contacts have been established with the UK.
- **Quality package:**
  - It entered into force in January 2014
  - It will be essential to make sure that the ex-officio protection enters into force in all the 27 member states through the identification of the competent authorities. It would be relevant to organize a technical workshop to assess the state of application of the ex-officio protection, during or just before the next plenary meeting.
  - Delegated acts : Mountain products : it is necessary to strike the right balance between the protection of territories, and notably of local employment, and climatic constraints or the impossibility to produce some raw materials (e.g. food complements) in mountainous areas. The Region of Emilia-Romagna proposes to consider a more flexible act compared to the one currently under discussion by the EC and member states. In particular, the Presidency proposes to consider that:
    - animals can be born in a different place than the one where they are bred and that the time that refers to 1/3 of the animal's (should be spent in mountain areas) should refer only to the "productive life";
    - products transformation can take place outside mountain areas and beyond the 30 km limit;
    - raw materials used for animal feed should be allowed to come from outside mountain areas up to a maximum of 50% of dry matter for ruminants (with a lower % for monogastrics?)
- **AREPO-AREFLH administrative merger:**
  - In accordance with what was voted in Bologna, AREPO will continue working on an administrative merger with AREFLH, in order to maintain or improve its services through the development of synergies, while using the same amount of resources or less. The merger would take place over 2 years and lead to shared human resources, services and the Brussels office, while keeping the political autonomy of each association. The first part of this path would take place in 2013, leading to a shared use of human resources with a proportional division of the expenses. In 2014 AREPO will offer to AREFLH to proceed to a more incisive integration.

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The President then gave the floor to the Secretary General, who discussed the following items:

- **Vote on AREPO's budget for 2012:** unanimously approved. The Secretary General checked before the vote that present members had had the time to read the budget that had been e-mailed during the previous week.
- Presentation of the intermediary **report on the activities carried out** since the last plenary meeting (see dedicated document). Members interventions:
  - Mountain products: Juan Andres Gutierrez, new representative for the Basque Country within AREPO and President of Euromontana and Jean Luc Cazaubon, vice-president of AREPO representing Midi-Pyrénées presented their view on this issue. They highlighted the relevance of making delegated act flexible enough to be adapted to local conditions, while avoiding weakening a tool that has to objective to support mountain produce, foster the development of mountain areas and root the population to those areas. The elements sent by the Region Valle d'Aosta were also presented by the SG. The document containing these proposals can be accessed in the members-only part of the website.
  - Product from my farm: Cataluña created a system for the recognition of proximity products, which entered into force through a regional decree. The concept of proximity in this context is not considered in physical distance terms, but based on the number of intermediaries (max.1). Their work will be forward to AREPO and to the EC for information
  - Innovation: Cataluña suggests intervening on the on-going trilogue on the CAP reform in order to favour innovation for quality and biodiversity. Mr Cazaubon reminded that he wishes the EAFRD and the EIP to be used to support GIs through innovative actions.
- Presentation of the work carried out by the Commission on **non-agricultural geographical indications** by Audrey Aubard (Aubard Consulting, Bordeaux) and of the lobbying initiative in favour of the creation of such a recognition by Francisca Pleguezuelos, director of the Brussels representation office of the Region of Andalucía. The document relating to these initiatives are available on the members-only part of AREPO's website.
- Presentation of the **cooperation project on RDPs** by Alessandra Scudeller, Region of Veneto: it is suggested to work together to put in place the new RDPs, based on the proposed changes to the Rural Development Regulation which is being discussed in the framework of the CAP reform. A short list of introductory questions was sent to the members prior to the meeting:
  - Does the Region intend to activate the measure foreseen by art.17 of the regulation on rural development? If yes, how?
  - Does the region intend to activate other specific measures/sub-programmes to support PDO/PGI/TSG businesses?
  - Does the Region intend to assign specific priorities to PDO/PGI/TSG businesses? If yes, for which ones of the measures of the future RDP?Interested regions can contact AREPO's representation office in Brussels ([policyofficer@arepoquality.eu](mailto:policyofficer@arepoquality.eu)) and Alessandra Scudeller ([alessandra.scudeller@regione.veneto.it](mailto:alessandra.scudeller@regione.veneto.it)) in order to kick-start cooperation on this issue.
- Presentation of a project aimed at **identifying and classifying regional brands** present in AREPO's regions: a questionnaire has been prepared and sent to the interested member regions after the meeting, so that the basis for a dialogue on the relation between GIs and regional brands are set.

President Rabboni concluded AREPO's plenary meeting by delineating a **working programme for the coming 6 months**, of which he highlighted in particular the following items:

- The outcome of the CAP trilogues is uncertain. The president wishes AREPO and oriGIn to carry out a common action in order to stress the importance of quality in the future CAP. A joint press release has been diffused.
- Quality package:
  - Seminar on the implementation of the ex-officio protection before or during AREPO's next plenary meeting

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- Delegated acts: 1) mountain products: to keep a flexible approach while allowing for the necessary derogations to take into account economic conditions while protecting mountain areas; 2) islands and product “from my farm”: to start a new technical team meeting
- Non – agri GIs: it is considered that they are not a working priority for AREPO. Nevertheless member regions are invited to transmit the information that they have to the appropriate colleagues.
- Administrative merger with AREFLH: the audience was invited to express its support to this initiative and it responded affirmatively.
- Innovation: contacts will be established with Catalonia on this topic, in order to assess any cooperation opportunities.

A **formal meeting** among the President of AREPO, the President of oriGIn, the President of the Region of Aquitaine, Mr **Alain Rousset**, and the French Minister of Agriculture, Mr **Stéphane Le Foll**, concluded the meeting. Minister Le Foll highlighted the importance of the debate that opposes two different visions of agriculture: on the one side, the position that sees in private brands, which certify processes carried out by enterprises, the only tool for products valorisation; on the other the position that sees agriculture as the representation of a specific history and a specific link to a territory. He stressed that defending the second type of position is key, since it will also allow us to face the issue of food security. **The Minister committed to defend GIs within the Agriculture and Fisheries Council and in the framework of the free trade agreement with the US.** A thank you letter will be sent to him by AREPO shortly.