



REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

Bruxelles, March 25th, 2015

First plenary meeting

The first AREPO plenary meeting in 2015 was held on March 25th from 11h00 to 12h30 in the Common House of Emilia-Romagna, Hessen and Aquitaine region, in rue Montoyer 21, Bruxelles.

This assembly was followed by a conference in the afternoon and a presentation/tasting of quality products of our regions in the evening. The afternoon and the evening were organized in collaboration with AREFLH (Fruits, vegetables and plants).

President Vincent Labarthe opened the General Assembly

President Labarthe opened AREPO plenary meeting, thanking the directors of the offices of Hessen, Emilia Romagna and Aquitaine for their hospitality. He also thanked the participants from our member regions for their presence and participation in our activity. He expressed gratitude to the staff of the Brussels representations of our member regions. Without them, AREPO would not have the same level of legitimacy among the European institutions.

Furthermore, the President thanked all AREPO members for his election to AREPO presidency, in October 2014, for the next 3 years. He wasn't present in Bilbao since he was in China for a representation mission.

The President met with the cabinet of Commissioner Hogan on February 25th, 2015. The Commissioner confirmed few days later his participation in our event.

He also met Mr Pelegrí, President of AREFLH, in preparation of the common event and to begin to discuss about future possibilities of cooperation.

STATUTORY PART

Report of the President

Only 5 months passed between the GA in Bilbao and the GA in Brussels. The Secretary General was injured on the 1st of January 2015 and continued to work at home, but without mobility. The President thanked the policy officer in Brussels, Giulia Scaglioni, who had to assume more work, showing her effectiveness.

New members

Friuli Venezia Giulia and Extremadura formalized their adhesion to the network in 2014. Similarly, Campania and Sardinia announced their adhesion as observers. The expansion of AREPO network continues at a good pace, despite the crisis. It's a mark of confidence in our work.

Civil Dialogue Groups

The new Civil Dialogue Groups of DG Agri started to work, replacing the old advisory groups. A high number of organizations representing regional and local governments lost their seats in the groups. On the contrary, AREPO has been strengthened by this new system of dialogue with the civil society. AREPO seats in the CDG on "rural development", "quality and promotion" and "organic agriculture".



The CDG *rural development* is a small part of a huge network devoted to rural development set up by the European Commission. We will work specifically on the measure 3.1 and 3.2 dedicated to quality systems.

The CDG *quality and promotion* has begun to discuss the possibility to simplify the regulatory framework for quality systems. “Simplification” is the key word of the new Commission. The objective is to reduce the number of regulations dedicated to wine, spirits and quality products and improving them (i.e. shortening the registration process). Other issues in the agenda of the CDG will be the international protection of GIs and the origin labeling of raw material in food products. AREPO will work on these issues also with the Parliamentary Intergroup on wine, spirits and quality foodstuffs. Its President, the MEP Herbert Dorfmann, participated to our conference.

Finally, the CDG *organic farming* will work mainly on the review of organic regulation and the connected delegated act. On this issue we continue to regularly exchange with IFOAM EU.

Promotion

The new regulation on promotion was adopted and will enter into force in December 2015. AREPO was involved in the work of the Commission, including at informal level. This regulation concerns all food products on the internal and external market. The promotion actions will no more be co-financed at national level, but the Commission will contribute with the 70-80% of the share of the programmes.

Promotion is included also in the measure 3.2 of the RDP. Carlo Malavolta followed and presented the discussion on the implementation of this measure, as well as measure 3.1. The President took the occasion to thank the Emilia-Romagna region for maintaining its commitment with AREPO activity after the end of the presidency. The Brussels office continues to kindly host AREPO representation office.

Tribute to Guy Saint-Martin

Guy Saint-Martin, former Vice-President of Aquitaine, was the founder and the first President of AREPO and AREFLH. He passed away on March 6th at the age of 82. He inaugurated the first AREPO event in 2007 with the Commissioner Fischer Boel.

Tribute to the victims of the plane crash in the South of France

The President wished to honor the victims of the Germanwings plane crash in the French Alps. The majority of the victims were Spanish and German.

Event

The preparation of our quadrennial event (2007 – 2011 – 2015) has mobilized our team intensively since early January. The Secretary General and the Policy Officer were supported by the offices of Aquitaine, Emilia-Romagna, Catalonia and Hessen, as well as all the Brussels delegations of our member regions. The cooperation with AREFLH showed the importance of this kind of collaboration for both networks. We tried to associate also AREV, but without success. The President expressed a special thanks to the 4 coordinators: Nolwenn Le Tallec and Chantal Malotiaux for Aquitaine, Cristina Cremaschi for Emilia-Romagna and Elisenda Fatjo Vilas for Catalonia.

AREPO event is at its third edition and it has been a real success. In our events we welcomed three Commissioners for Agriculture and Rural Development: Marian Fischer Boel, Dacian Ciolos and Phil Hogan. This expresses the importance and interest to continue together AREPO work.

VOTE: The report of President Vincent Labarthe was unanimously adopted.



Presentation and vote on AREPO's budget for 2014

Expenditures: In 2014, the expenditures were 14.000€ lower than the budget proposal, since the quadrennial event was postponed to March 25th, 2015. An external consultant has been hired to support the implementation of innovation policy and the participation in EC call for project (cost: 1 500 €/month = 11.000 € for 2014).

Revenues: the revenues exceeded 8.400 € compared to the projections for 2014.

Surplus: the 2014 budget presented a surplus of 22 300€. The Secretary-General proposed to add the surplus to the associative funds that, as a consequence, amounted to 284.100 € on 31st December, 2014. The budget of the Association is positive since 2012. This situation will consent to consider the possibility for a permanent contract for our policy office, Giulia Scaglioni, starting from 2016.

VOTE: The annual budget for 2014 has been approved unanimously.

Vote on budget proposal for 2015

The budget proposal for 2015 proposes to maintain the same level of membership fee (+117.000€). On the other hand, the principal expenditure previewed are the external consultant (-18.000€), the budget for an intern (-3.000€) and the event of March 25th (-14.000€).

VOTE: The budget proposal was unanimously approved.

Vote on 2015 membership fee

In 2014, AREPO General Assembly voted to lower the membership fee from 5.000€ to 4.500€. This decrease didn't affect negatively AREPO budget. For this reason, the Secretary General proposed to maintain the quota for 2015 at the same amount of 4.500€.

VOTE: The maintenance of the membership fee at 4.500€ for 2015 has been unanimously approved.

THEMATIC PART

Horizon 2020 – Anne Clermontelle, external consultant for AREPO

AREPO takes part in a consortium which is candidate to the SFS-20-2015 call for proposals of the European program for research and innovation Horizon 2020: "Sustainable food chains through public policies: the cases of the EU quality policy and of public sector food procurement". This call for proposals is about the impact of the European quality policies on the sustainability of agriculture and the promotion of a healthy diet. The funds allocated by the EC to this project amount to 7 million euros.

There are two main steps to the answer to this call: the first one consists in elaborating a draft in which the consortium has to be almost complete and the first means of action suggested. The draft was presented in February 2015 and the answer is expected in the course of April. If the draft is validated by the EC, we will submit a final proposition for the project on the 11th of June 2015¹.

¹ The result of the first evaluation was negative. At the end of March the Commission informed us that our project has not been selected.



The coordinator of the consortium is Han Wiskerke, Professor of rural sociology at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. H2020 strongly insists on a “multi-actor” approach. It will only accept the most diversified consortium projects in terms of actors and insists on a range going from research to innovation. Our consortium includes more than 16 European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland, etc...) and a dozen of different types of actors such as researchers, universities, SMEs, associations like ours and territorial collectivities. There are only 11 consortia in competition which is an asset compared to other calls for proposals in the program.

Review of organic farming regulation – Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO policy officer

The regulation proposal is being discussed in the Council and in the European Parliament.

Work in the **Council** has been actively advanced by the Italian Presidency. Nevertheless, a consolidated position on articles 1-19 was not adopted due to the opposition of the other MS.

The *AGRIFISH Council* held on 15-16 December 2014, has identified non-binding guidelines shared by the Member States on the first 19 articles:

- significant reduction of the number and scope of delegated acts;
- maintenance of some important derogation (mixed farms, derogations for the use of non-organic seeds, non-organic animals and non-organic juveniles);
- elimination of the obligation to put in place an environmental management system;
- maintenance of existing conversion rules.

The *AGRIFISH Council* held on 16th March 2015 permitted further advancement, through a public debate that highlighted the following issues:

- *non-authorized substances in organic products*: MS took the view that an EU harmonised approach could address the issue of the presence of non-authorized substances in organic products. However they differed over whether this should depend on the establishment of legally binding thresholds or on the existing system of controls in the production process.
- For *imports*, most member states were in favour of a gradual shift to a compliance regime. Third countries would have to apply EU standards, but some derogations and an appropriate transition period would allow for a smooth adaptation.
- On *controls*, most member states prefer to keep mandatory annual inspections but with the possible addition of risk based controls.

The Council will continue to work for the adoption of a consolidated position to start the discussion with the Parliament.

The European Parliament adjusted the agenda, taking more time for the discussion despite of the 6 months Commissions deadline:

- ENVI Committee – the rapporteur, MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE) presented the draft opinion on 23/02/15 :
 - o more flexibility for derogation on non-organic reproductive material;
 - o introduction of “polluter pays” principle for contamination cases (residues) where there is evidence of third party’s liability;
 - o development of open and fair quality controls for imported organic products;
 - o more stringent rules on animal welfare standards;
 - o organic farming should be enhanced also in other EU legislation: the CAP should secure better incentives and more financial resources. More funding should be available for research and innovation with a view to increasing availability of organic seed and plant reproductive material.



- AGRI Committee - Rapporteur: MEP Martin Häusling (Verts); Shadow rapporteur: Eric Andrieu (S&D). Discussion in ComAgri started on March 24th, deadline for amendments: beginning of June.

Lobbying actions:

- Members consultation in order to prepare the AREPO common position on review of organic regulation;
- Participation in the consultative meeting of the Committee of Regions (CoR) on the EC proposal;
- Presentation of AREPO position to the rapporteur on the opinion of the CoR, Hester Maji (NL/PPE);
- Presentation of AREPO position to assistant of MEP Eric Andrieu (shadow rapporteur of S&D and COMAGRI vice-president).

RDP implementation – Carlo Malavolta, Emilia-Romagna expert

During the CAP negotiation AREPO obtained important results regarding the RDP measure for quality systems (eligibility of producers associations and re-introduction of promotion measure). Regarding the implementation of measure 3 of RDP:

- *Measure 3.1* (aid for participation costs): In spite of AREPO opposition, the EC gave a very restrictive interpretation about the eligibility criteria. It's considered a *new adherent* a producer that applied for the first inscription to the quality scheme only after the opening of the public call for the measure 3.1. This interpretation will cause a very low level of implementation of the measure and exclusion of producers that adhered to quality schemes during late 2013-early 2015.
- *Measure 3.2* (promotion): after several requests from AREPO, this measure will apply to all quality schemes eligible under 3.1. It will not be necessary that one producer is financed under the 3.1, since it will be sufficient that the quality system is considered eligible under the 3.1. This interpretation gives a higher flexibility but exclude the optional quality terms that are ineligible in the 3.1 due to the absence of certification costs.

Quality policy (calendar) – Laurent Gomez, AREPO Secretary-General

The new European Commission established a high priority for simplification. After 10 years of reforms of the quality policy, the EC wants to reduce the number of regulation on Quality Systems (food products/wines/spirits/aromatized wines) and to simplify the registration procedures (i.e. reducing the time to present opposition; harmonizing between the different regulations).

Fair Gusto-ko

The Basque Country presented its new project of fair focused on traditional products: Gusto-ko, quality and origin. It will be held in the Bilbao exhibition centre (BEC) from 13 to 15 November 2015.

Vincent Labarthe,
President of AREPO

P/O Laurent Gomez
Secretary-General of AREPO