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AREFLH - AREPO recommendations on the Annual Work Programme 2020 on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products implemented in the internal market and in third countries

The **Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH)** and the **Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO)** represent European Regions and producers' organisations operating in fruit, vegetables and ornamental plant production as well as products of origin.

The two networks gather together 40 regions from 9 different EU Member States, **representing over 50% of Geographical Indications and 45% of fruit, vegetables and ornamental plant production** in Europe.

Their common aim is to **represent, promote and defend the interests of producers and of European Regions** involved in the valorisation of high quality food products.

This paper has been developed to put forward **AREFLH - AREPO recommendations in regards to the drafting of the future 2020 Annual Work Programme** on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products implemented in the internal market and in third countries.

1. Background information

The **2019 Annual Work Programme** on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products presented a **series of enhancements and improvements** that were highly welcomed by AREFLH and AREPO:

- an increased overall budget;
- a reinforcement of multi programmes in terms of budget allocation;
- an important share of budget reserved for EU quality schemes in the Internal Market and Third Countries;
- a reserved envelope (8 Mio EUR) to promote healthy eating and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in the internal market;
- better support in addressing SPS barriers in third countries through the launch of the Promotion Seminars on Agri-food products and sanitary and phytosanitary standards (AGRI-SPS).

2. AREFLH - AREPO recommendations

In view of the upcoming drafting of the 2020 Annual Work Programme, both **AREFLH - AREPO would like to suggest the following recommendations.**

- A- Maintaining a sizeable budget dedicated to EU quality schemes:** AREFLH-AREPO praise the priorities laid down in the 2019 Work Programme, especially the increased budget and the



emphasis put on products under EU quality schemes and labels, as well as on organic products. We acknowledge the importance of the budgetary lines currently dedicated to these topics, both for single and multi programmes, and in a rationale of strengthening the reputation of EU quality schemes and labels, to date too little recognized by consumers (Special Eurobarometer 473), **AREFLH-AREPO believe that quality and origin products should still remain a priority for 2020.**

- B- Upholding a sizeable budget for the promotion of the consumption of fruits and vegetables in the internal market:** AREFLH-AREPO highly welcomes the Commission's decision to maintain in its 2019 AWP a reserved envelope for programmes under the theme '*Healthy eating: fruits and vegetables*'. The recent F&V consumption data highlights the alarming statistic that over 1/3 of the European population (36%) consumes F&V **less than once a day or not at all during a typical week** (Eurostat 2017). Therefore, AREFLH-AREPO believe that maintaining a **sizeable budget for the promotion of the consumption of F&V in the internal market (10%)** is crucial to boost the internal consumption of EU F&V. This dedicated budget would not only bring important health benefits for EU citizens and young people, but also contribute to the stabilization of agricultural markets by curbing the negative impact of certain market disturbances (Russian embargo, citrus crisis and apple market difficulties).
- C- Defining a better balance in budget lines between internal market and third countries:** in the 2019 AWP, simple programmes in the internal market have been allotted 20 Mio Euros, while simple programmes on third countries have being granted 75 Mio Euros. Albeit the majority of potential consumers of EU agricultural products does not reside within the EU, F&V producers have a strong interest in targeting EU consumers and promote their products in the internal market, where 70% of them are consumed. Therefore, **AREFLH-AREPO continue to advocate for a more balanced share of the budget allocated between internal and third country markets for information and promotion actions in the 2020 AWP.**
- D- Establishing specific sub-categories dedicated to each of the different quality schemes:** Also, rather than diluting a consistent amount of resources on all EU quality schemes, AREFLH-AREPO suggests to **establish specific sub-categories for the different schemes (PDO, PGI, organic, mountain products, etc..) in order to allow participants to present their proposals under the ad-hoc sub-program.**
- E- Ensuring market accessibility for F&V products in extra-EU markets:** AREFLH-AREPO would like once again to pinpoint the fact that several target third countries where promotion programmes are eligible for EU funding, **are either not yet fully opened to European fruits and vegetables or geographically located too far away for producers to export their most perishable produce.** Such issues continue to hinder the Commission's effort to make the best use possible out of the current budget allocated for promotion policies and should be avoided.
- F- Maintaining support to address SPS barriers in third countries:** AREFLH-AREPO welcome the Commission's initiative to provide support to F&V operators in addressing SPS barriers in third countries through the organization of a 2018 promotion seminar on agri-food products and sanitary and phytosanitary standards (AGRI-SPS). **Such initiative has proven to be helpful in providing operators with valuable information and important opportunities for their products and should therefore be sustained in the future,**
- G- Differentiating fresh and processed (including preparations) fruit and vegetables budget allocation and data analysis:** AREFLH-AREPO consider that the Commission should **make a clear distinction between promotion programmes for fresh F&V and processed F&V (incl.**



preparations) by establishing separate budget envelopes for each of these two sectors as well as by providing distinct data analysis of submission statistics for past promotion programmes.

AREFLH-AREPO would like to take this opportunity to underline the imperative need to differentiate fresh and processed F&V: both sectors operate in different markets, have different actors and their products possess different characteristics, which make their promotional messages very divergent. Moreover, their market access is also dissimilar because of different SPS barriers. Therefore, **both sectors should be treated distinctly**.

- H- **A more streamlined bureaucratic process:** Since most of the actors involved in promotion of products under EU quality schemes are mainly small associations who can't access such complex instruments, AREFLH-AREPO would like to stress **the need of a streamlined bureaucratic process, easy to access and manage**.

As a result, we believe that in the drafting of the 2020 Annual Work Programme, European Commission should consider to **encourage not only the participation of Consortia in calls for promotion of PGIs/PDOs, but also of Promotion Associations or Committees**, avoiding restrictions to their participation, such as the obligation to form expensive and unmanageable coalition between legally mixed entities, allowing an organization to apply to a programme on its own.

- I- **Better recognition of the added value brought by transnational consortiums in multi programmes:** AREFLH-AREPO considers that multi programmes proposals that promote transnational cooperation between proposing organisations from several member states should be rewarded. For instance, **multi programmes with a consortium involving partners from more EU member states should be awarded more points in the project's evaluation criteria**.