



REPORT ON AREPO'S PLENARY MEETING

Brussels, November 12th, 2015

Second plenary meeting

The second plenary meeting in 2015 was held on November 12th from 10:00 to 17:00 in the headquarters of **Piedmont Region**, in rue du Trône 62, Brussels.

The meeting was chaired by **Vincent Labarthe**, Vice President of Midi-Pyrénées Region in charge of agriculture and elected to AREPO's presidency in October 2014.

On the agenda, the intermediary annual report and the membership fee proposal for 2016.

President Vincent Labarthe opened the plenary meeting

The President opened AREPO's plenary meeting, thanking Piedmont Region for the hospitality. He also thanked all member Regions who reaffirm every year their support and work hard to strengthen AREPO's legitimacy among European Institutions.

STATUTORY PART

Report of the President

Member regions

In 2014, 26 Regions payed the membership fee. On November 1st 2015, 20 regions payed the membership fee, while 4 Regions committed to pay after receiving a reminder.

RDP implementation

Our Regions are now confronted with the implementation of RDP, facing in particular the interpretations of regulations. For instance, in the case of support measure for producers participating in a quality scheme (3.1), the criterion of "new adherent" to a quality system poses problems due to the restrictive interpretation by the EC. In particular, producers who adhered to a quality schemes between the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2015 are excluded.

On the other hand, the promotion measure is disconnected from the support measure for producers and this interpretation provides greater flexibility.

From 2016, we will start working on the evaluation of the CAP mid-term review. This is an opportunity to highlight these critical points and achieve improvements before the reform in 2020.

Quality package: simplification

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 regulations on Quality Systems, simplify registration procedures and harmonize regulations.

Promotion policy

The annual work program for 2016 was adopted on October 13th, 2015. It will be implemented through the publication of calls for proposals for simple and multi programs in early 2016. A total of € 111 million will be available for promotion programs selected for EU co-financing in 2016.

Review of organic regulation

Since the agreement has been reached inside the European Parliament and the Council, negotiations between the two Institutions will be launched soon. The agreement should provide important improvements on the initial proposal of European Commission in almost all critical areas.



Cooperation with European Institutions and partner organizations

Our cooperation with European institutions and partner organizations grows every year which is a proof of recognition of our network as one of the leading representatives of European quality products and products of origin.

Finally, the President has presented **AREPO's seminar at Expo Milano: "Innovating and Organising Research, Education and Training for Sustainable GIs"**; our position on **non-agricultural geographical indications**; our participation to **European projects**; our [new page on Facebook](#) and our new sections on AREPO's website: ["Organic Agriculture"](#) ; ["Research and innovation"](#) and ["Conferences & seminars"](#).

Intermediary annual report

Audited accounts have be presented during AREPO's GA in March 2015

The financial situation on 12/31/2014 has been presented during the GA of March 25th, 2015: + 284.000 € of financial reserve (audited accounts).

Situation on 11/01/2015: + 291.000 € (+ 7.000 €)

- Estimated expenditures before 12/31/2015: - 15.000 to -20.000 €
- Estimated revenue before 12/31/2015: + 18.000 € (4 over 6 membership fees)
- Expected financial results at 12/13/2015: + 7.000 €
- Membership fees update: two membership fees received for 2014, 18 for 2015, 6 expected for 2015

Major events in 2015: exceptional expenditures amount at + 30.000 €

- European event on March 25th, 2015 in Brussels: - 18.000 €
- Seminar at Expo Milano: - 9.000 €
- Ham World Congress in Toulouse: - 3.000 €

Exceptional revenue in 2015:

Futurmed project (Emilia-Romagna): + 2.800 €

Provisional budget for 2016

Permanent contract of Giulia Scaglioni: + 25.000 € of additional expenditure

Impact of territorial reform in France: - 3 member Regions / - 13.500 €

- Merging of **Aquitaine, Limousin** and Poitou-Charentes
- Merging of **Rhône-Alpes** and **Auvergne**
- Merging of **Midi-Pyrénées** and **Languedoc-Roussillon**

Vote on 2016 membership fee

The Secretary-General proposed to maintain the membership fee for 2016 at the same amount (4.500€).

VOTE: *The quota of the membership fee will be validated through an official letter sent to all member Regions.*



THEMATIC PART

Lombardy Region experience in the valorisation of products of origin - Gianni Fava, Minister of Agriculture of Lombardy Region

Lombardy is the first Italian region for the dimension of its agricultural sector, the second in Europe. It has defined the protection and promotion of products of origin as a priority. On the occasion of Expo Milan 2015, the regional government focused its political action on this issue, presenting a [position paper on local products](#), which was signed by 22 European regions and by various stakeholders of the agri-food sector.

In a global market, characterized by the production of commodities at competitive prices, the EU should promote the quality and diversity of its products. Small productions, often considered marginal, have a huge potential in term of expansion in new markets, more and more interested in the differentiation of taste, biodiversity and territorial products. The EU must continue to protect the diversity and quality of European products, particularly in the context of bilateral trade agreements (especially within the TTIP). Indeed, through the promotion of products of origin, sustainable territorial management is ensured.

This is why Lombardy Region participates with interest in AREPO and supports the consolidation of the network, considered essential for the development and protection of the traditional European agriculture.

The organic farming regulation - Kathleen Delage, IFOAM EU

After introducing the issue and reminding the work done by AREPO to define a common position on organic regulation review (available on AREPO website in the members' area), the Secretary-General gave the floor to Kathleen Delange, from IFOAM EU.

The EC proposal for a new regulation has been under review since 2012. In June 2015, the Council reached a general agreement on the regulation. **On October 13th, the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted Martin Häusling's report (Greens/EFA, DE) on *Organic production and labelling of organic products*.**

For IFOAM EU, representative of the organic sector, the EC's reform proposal presents several critical points:

- Decertification thresholds for pesticide: for the sector, this measure is too drastic because it is almost impossible not to have residues. ***The Council and the Parliament took into account sector's recommendations and removed decertification thresholds from the final report.***
- Removal of annual control: IFOAM opposes the removal of the annual control considering that it is fundamental to maintain consumers' confidence. ***The Council and the Parliament reintroduced annual controls, maintaining an exception for "low risk" producers.***
- Removal of equivalence rules on imported organic products: IFOAM fears that this proposal will cause a decline in organic imports. ***The Council and the Parliament have included a derogation for products which are not covered by European regulation.***
- Removal of the derogation for mixed farms: IFOAM wants to maintain the derogation by providing an action plan to help farmers to fully convert to organic. ***The Council and the Parliament reintroduced the derogation.***
- Delegated acts: for IFOAM, a maximum of elements must be contained in the regulation and a minimum in the delegated acts. ***This is the most complicated point of the trilogue.***

The promotion policy - Laurent Gomez, Secretary-General of AREPO

EU Regulation No. 114/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council came into force on December 1st, 2015.

AREPO worked to increase the budget for promotion: European aid should increase progressively from €61 million in the 2013 budget to €200 million in 2019. This huge mobilization of European funds on promotion of agricultural products represents a big challenge and potential for the GIs sector.



The Secretary-General presented the funding opportunities included in the work program for 2016. After several requests from our members, AREPO proposes to act as a platform to improve connections between its member regions and producers who wish to apply for EU co-financing. **A dedicated page on our website will be set up to share information and to link interested producers' associations.**

Update on the TTIP negotiations - Raimondo Serra, European Commission

The Commission's negotiating mandate for the TTIP is to promote and defend the EU's interests. DG Agri is involved in negotiations with a leading role on the issue of tariff barriers for agriculture and on intellectual property, concerning in particular GIs.

GIs are an element of **offensive interest for the EU**, as they represent **one third of EU exports to the United States**. The EC aims to improve the protection of GIs in the US market, to prevent frauds and to avoid the high costs of registration and protection that characterize the system of trademarks, representing today the only possibility of GI protection in the US.

The objective of the Commission is to enforce intellectual property rights and to ensure transparency for American consumers, misled by the incorrect use of geographical names. The goal is thus to obtain the direct protection through an **agreement on a list of GIs** and to ask the United States to enforce the intellectual property rights. Finally, the EC is prepared to negotiate **specific treatments for certain controversial names**, for which it would be very difficult to guarantee the monopoly to GIs, due to their wide prior use in the US.

Unfortunately, the compromise at the moment is far from being reached and the US position after two years of negotiations continues to oppose recognition of GIs. In addition, there is a clear attempt to speed up the negotiations, concentrating exclusively on **tariff aspects**.

AREPO, **representing the legitimate interests of its member regions**, should express its position requiring that GIs are recognized under the TTIP.

Non-agricultural GIs - Virginie Rozière, MEP (visual contribution)

On October 6th, the European Parliament adopted Virginie Rozière report on "***the possible extension of geographical indication protection of the European Union to non-agricultural products***". MEP Rozière contributed to AREPO plenary with a video message. She thanked AREPO for its support on this issue.

A uniform legislation for non-agricultural GIs at EU level could protect producers from fraud and could benefit consumers and territories, promoting tourism and job creation. The EC has recognized nearly 800 products that could benefit from protection. On October 28th, the EC stated in its **strategy for the single market** that it will **continue working** on optimization of European know-how and **on the public consultation on the protection of GI for non-agricultural products**.

Presentation of results and reflections following AREPO seminar in Expo Milano 2015 - Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO's Brussels office

In the framework of the DG AGRI Week of Stakeholders, AREPO successfully organized a **high-level seminar on GIs**: "**Innovating and Organising Research, Education and Training for Sustainable GIs**", in the EU Pavilion at Expo. **The seminar underlined the need for support and funding at the European level on research, education and training on GIs.**

Following the seminar, AREPO continued to work with its partners in the areas of research, education and vocational training, to present to the European Commission a **position paper aimed at contributing to the definition of the EU long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation.**

A second outcome concerns the **development and strengthening of working relations between AREPO, universities and research centres of our member regions**. Our team will define the best way to achieve this cooperation through the creation of a **scientific committee** within AREPO.



European projects - Anne Clermontelle, AREPO's Bordeaux office

Within the program Horizon 2020, AREPO focused its work on SFS-20-2015 call for proposals: "Sustainable food chains through public policies: the cases of the EU quality policy and of public sector food procurement" whose objective is to study **the impact of the European quality policy on agricultural sustainability and on the promotion of a healthy diet.**

AREPO is currently associated to the winning consortium **Strenght2Food** as an external partner.

Moreover, the new Horizon 2020 programme for 2016-2017 was recently published and we are currently working on opportunities of participation for AREPO and its member Regions.

Finally, AREPO is involved in a project proposal within Interreg SUDOE programme regarding integration, competitiveness and economic growth of agri-food cooperatives in the SUDOE rural area. If the project **AGROSMART.coop** is selected, AREPO will be in charge of the WP "Results dissemination" with an envelope of 12.0000 euros and 24 months to implement its activities.

The project was submitted last November; we are currently waiting for the results of the first stage evaluation.

Conclusions

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

- **Validation of the membership fee** for 2016 through an official email to member regions;
- Creation of a **platform** on AREPO website to exchange information and contacts among producer associations interested to present a **promotion project**;
- Definition of **AREPO position regarding the TTIP**;
- Presentation of a **position paper** written by AREPO and its partners in the areas of research, education and vocational training to contribute to the EU's **definition of the long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation.**

Vincent Labarthe
President of
P/O Laurent Gomez
Secretary-General of AREPO