

# AREPO Activity report 2023

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January - December 2023



**The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin**

The European network of regions and producer associations  
that deals with products of quality and origin

## Table of contents

<b>Part 1   About AREPO .....</b>	<b>3</b>
I. Member Regions .....	3
II. Associate members .....	6
III. Scientific council .....	7
IV. Partner organisations .....	7
V. Executive board .....	10
VI. Our team .....	11
<b>Part 2   European policies .....</b>	<b>13</b>
I. EU quality policy .....	13
II. Farm to Fork strategy .....	16
III. Promotion policy .....	19
IV. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) .....	19
V. Geographical Indications for craft and industrial product .....	20
VI. Regulation on packaging and packaging waste .....	21
VII. EU trade policy .....	22
<b>Part 3   Strategic cooperation with EU institutions .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Part 4   European projects .....</b>	<b>27</b>
I. AGROSMARTglobal   Interreg Sudoe 2014-2020 .....	27
II. MOVING   Horizon 2020 .....	28
III. GI SMART   Horizon Europe .....	29

### AREPO

14 rue François de Sourdis  
33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
Website: [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)

### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
Email: [info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)  
Phone: +32 0498 73 22 03

### Social networks

Facebook: @arepoquality  
LinkedIn: AREPO Quality  
X: @arepoquality\_eu

**Part 5 | Events..... 30**

- I. AREPO events .....30
- II. Other events involving AREPO.....31

**Part 6 | Communication strategy..... 33**

- I. AREPO website .....33
- II. AREPO social networks .....34



## Part 1 | About AREPO

The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin, AREPO, is a **network of Regions and producer associations** that deals with products of origin.

AREPO aims **to promote and defend the interests of producers and consumers** of European regions involved in the valorisation of quality food products.



### I. Member Regions

#### Our member Regions

##### France

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes  
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté  
Bretagne  
Centre-Val de Loire  
Corse  
Grand Est  
Nouvelle-Aquitaine  
Occitanie  
Pays de la Loire  
PACA

##### Italy

Emilia-Romagna  
Friuli Venezia Giulia  
Lombardia  
Piemonte  
Puglia  
Toscana  
Valle d'Aosta  
Veneto

##### Greece

Attikí  
Ditikí Makedonía  
Épiros  
Kentrikí Makedonía  
Kríti  
Thessalía

##### Spain

Andalucía  
Catalunya  
Castilla y León  
Extremadura  
Euskadi

##### Germany

Baden-Württemberg  
Bayern  
Hessen

##### Portugal

Açores

##### Poland

Malopolska (obs.)

##### Croatia

Istria (obs.)

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Phone: +32 0498 73 22 03

#### Social networks

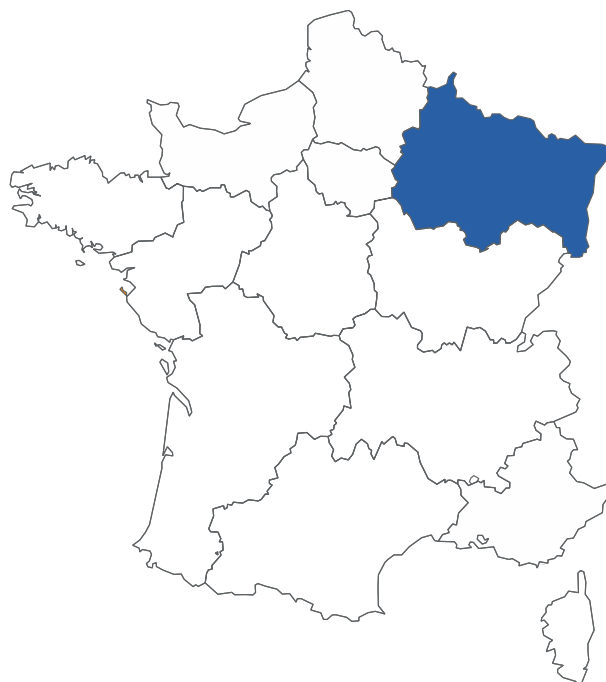
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AREPO currently represents **35 Regions** (33 members and 2 observers) from 8 different Member States.

► **New members**

Two Regions joined AREPO as full members in 2023:

► **Grand Est Region (France)**



Logo of the **Grand Est** Region



Find out more about the **Grand Est** Region and its quality and origin products on [the dedicated page](#) on AREPO website!

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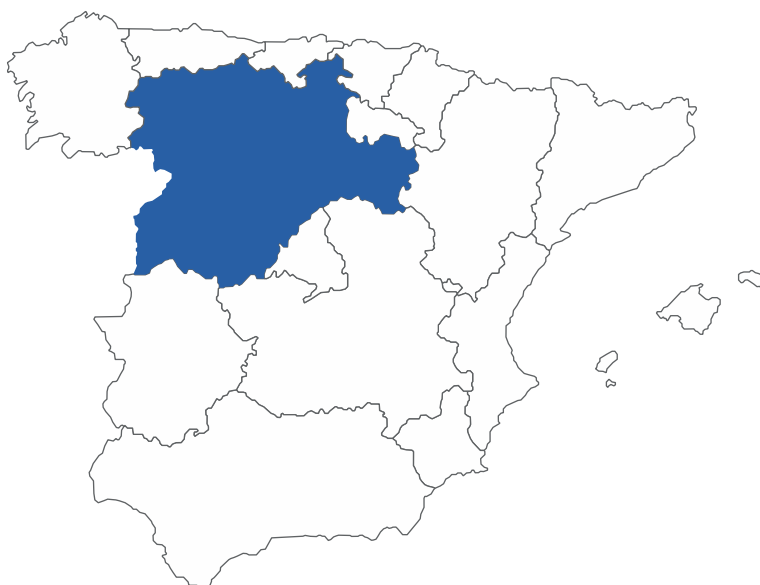
**Contacts**

Brussels representation office  
Email: [info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)  
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► **Castilla y León** Region (Spain)



Logo of the **Castilla y León** Region



Find out more about the **Castilla y León** Region and its quality and origin products on [the dedicated page](#) on AREPO website!

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## II. Associate members

The College of **associate members** is a consultative body composed of organisations that have signed a **partnership agreement** with AREPO and wish to sit in it: thematic, territorial and scientific organisation, networks, etc.

### ► AREPO associate members are currently the following:

ERG SYAL		European Research Group on Localized Agri-food Systems Find their website <a href="#">here</a>
ERPA		European Rural Poultry Association Find their website <a href="#">here</a>
Euro Foie Gras		European Federation of Foie Gras Find their website <a href="#">here</a>
FedeLIS		Federation of Label Rouge, GIs and TSGs Find their website <a href="#">here</a>
FEVAO		French Federation of Designation of Origin Meats Find their website <a href="#">here</a>

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FFIGIA



French Federation of Industrial and Artisanal Geographical Indications

Visit their website [here](#)

UniPR



Università di Parma

Find their website [here](#)

To find out more about our associate members and partnership agreements, take a look on [our dedicated page](#) on AREPO website!

### III. Scientific council

AREPO is supported in its work by a **Scientific Council**, a collegial consultative body composed of experts from universities and research centres of its member regions, aiming to develop cooperation between the research world and AREPO's member regions and producers.

The Scientific Council welcomes academics and researchers from research centres and universities situated in some of our member regions in Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, as well as experts in the field of Geographical Indications and Intellectual property coming from non-member regions or countries not represented within AREPO (Austria, England).

Members of the steering body of the Scientific Council, the **AREPO Scientific Committee**, contributed to the meetings of the working group on the GI revision.

[Click here](#) to read the detailed description of the structure of AREPO Scientific Council.

### IV. Partner organisations

**Partner organisations** are organisations that share the same interests as AREPO and with which AREPO collaborates regularly.

This collaboration is not formalised by a partnership agreement as is the case for associate members. However, partner organisations that are interested may be associated as AREPO associate members at a later stage.

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► AREPO partner organisations are currently the following:

<b>Agriregions</b>		Support to the maintenance of the role of Regions as managing authorities in CAP Strategic Plans and cooperation on the Farm to Fork strategy.
<b>AREFLH</b>		Cooperation on promotion policy and on the Farm to Fork strategy.
<b>AREV</b>		Collaboration on the GI review.
<b>Copa-Cogeca</b>		Collaboration on the GI review and on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy
<b>EFOW</b>		Collaboration on sustainability and the GI review, collaboration on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy.
<b>Euromontana</b>		Exchange and collaboration concerning the optional quality term "mountain product". Collaboration on the response to the EC public consultation on Promotion policy. Collaboration in the framework of two EU projects.

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European  
Countryside  
Movement



Collaboration and exchange of information on the Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas ([RUMRA](#)).

FAO



Collaboration and exchange on GIs and GIs sustainability, especially with the Food and Nutrition division (ESN). AREPO is often invited at FAO conferences to present the role of local actors in the development and strengthening of GIs.

IFOAM



Cooperation in the field of organic farming.

OriGIn



Collaboration on the development of sustainable strategies and tools for GIs. Collaboration in order to defend together geographical indications at EU level, adopting a common position and lobbying strategy concerning the CAP and cooperating on the GI review. In addition, collaboration on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy.

Qualivita



Cooperation for the promotion of new Geographical Indications.

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## V. Executive board

On June 14th 2023, following the regional elections in Spain, the regional government of Extremadura Region changed and **Ms Begoña García Bernal** resigned from her role as Regional Minister of Agriculture, thus resulting in **the end of her mandate as President of AREPO**.

As indicated in AREPO Statutes, the vacancy was briefly covered by **the Treasurer, Ms Patricia Picard**, until the new Regional Minister of Agriculture of Extremadura Region was appointed

In August 2023, **Ms Mercedes Morán Álvarez** was appointed by the new Regional Government of Extremadura **as Regional Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Sustainable Development and took over as President of AREPO**. She will remain in charge until October 2024, end of the three-years mandate of Presidency of Extremadura region.

A meeting of AREPO Executive Board was held on October 31st, 2023 in order to introduce the members of the Board to the new President of AREPO and to discuss the activities realised in 2023 and planned for 2024. In particular, the members of the Board shared views on the proposal to increase AREPO membership fee 2024 in order to counter the impact of inflation, on the election of the new Executive Board (October 2024) and on the organisation of AREPO General Assemblies in 2024 ([Click here to read the report](#)).



**Ms. Mercedes MORÁN ÁLVAREZ**  
President of AREPO  
and Minister for Agriculture of Extremadura



### President

**Ms Mercedes MORÁN ÁLVAREZ**

President of AREPO

and Regional Minister for Agriculture,  
Livestock and Sustainable Development  
of the Regional Council of Extremadura

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**Vice president****Mr Nicola BERTINELLI**

Vice president of AREPO for the College  
of Producers' Representatives  
and President of the Parmigiano  
Reggiano cheese Consortium

**Treasurer****Ms Patricia PICARD**

Treasurer of AREPO  
and Technical Advisor  
for Agriculture to the President  
of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region

**VI. Our team****► Office in Bordeaux****Secretary general****Mr Laurent GOMEZ**

Secretary general of AREPO  
and Technical Advisor for Agriculture to the President  
of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region



+33 (0)6 10 13 11 89



secgen@arepoquality.eu

Spoken languages: FR | EN

**Administrative assistant****Ms Alexandra DURIEZ**

Assistant of AREPO  
in charge of administrative activities  
and assistant for the Agriculture Dept.  
of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region



+33 (0)5 56 56 01 34



alexandra.duriez@nouvelle-aquitaine.fr

Spoken language: FR

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X: @arepoquality\_eu

## ► Representation office in Brussels

Policy officer	Policy officer
<b>Ms Giulia SCAGLIONI</b>	<b>Ms Francesca ALAMPI</b>
<p>Policy officer of AREPO in charge of quality, CAP, organic and Research and Innovation</p> <p> +32 (0)498 73 22 03</p> <p> <a href="mailto:policyofficer@arepoquality.eu">policyofficer@arepoquality.eu</a></p> <p>Spoken languages: IT   EN   FR   ES</p>	<p>Policy officer of AREPO in charge of quality, promotion, trade policy and communication</p> <p> +32 (0)498 73 22 03</p> <p> <a href="mailto:info@arepoquality.eu">info@arepoquality.eu</a></p> <p>Spoken languages: IT   EN   FR   ES</p>

## ► External staff

EU projects consultant
<b>Ms Anne CLERMONTTE</b>
<p>EU projects consultant for AREPO and manager of ACL Stratégies, agri-food strategies consulting firm specialised in EU quality schemes</p> <p> +33 (0)6 88 62 24 08</p> <p> <a href="mailto:eu-projects@arepoquality.eu">eu-projects@arepoquality.eu</a></p> <p>Spoken languages: FR   EN</p>

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EUROPE



**European policies**

## Part 2 | European policies

### I. EU quality policy

The **revision of the EU quality schemes** is finally **coming to an end**, after years of tireless work for AREPO to protect and strengthen EU Geographical Indication system.

#### ► Overview of the legislative process and AREPO strategic actions

Legislative process	Year	Main AREPO actions
November 2019 – February 2020: <a href="#">Roadmap and public consultation</a> on the <b>Evaluation</b> of EU Quality schemes  EC High-level Conference <a href="#">“Strengthening geographical indications”</a>	<b>2019</b>	<a href="#">AREPO feedback</a> to the roadmap  <a href="#">AREPO position paper</a> on EC Evaluation of GI and STG protected in the EU
	<b>2020</b>	AREPO Secretary General was invited as speaker in the <a href="#">Closing Plenary of the EC online conference</a> , where he presented AREPO position on Strengthening EU GIs
Roadmap and Public consultation on the <b>Revision</b> of the EU GIs system	<b>2020</b>	<a href="#">AREPO feedback</a> on the roadmap
	<b>2021</b>	<a href="#">AREPO position paper</a> on the Revision of the EU GIs system
<b>European Commission</b>  March 2022: EC adopted regulation proposal	<b>2022</b>	<a href="#">Joint open letter</a> to the EU Institutions on EUIPO's role  <a href="#">Analysis of the proposal</a> for AREPO members  2 Meetings with EUIPO (AREPO technical group + President bilateral meeting with EUIPO Executive Director)
		Working group on GI review with oriGIN, EFOR, COPA-COGECA and AREV -> Common position shared with De Castro  <b>AREPO working group on GI review drafted 50 amendments</b> to the EC regulation proposal  AREPO presented its set of amendments both to <a href="#">COMAGRI</a> and <a href="#">JURI</a> reports
<b>European Parliament</b>  <b>COMAGRI</b>		

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October: MEP De Castro published a working document on the revision

November: COMAGRI draft report & amendments

JURI (shared competence on EUIPO)

October: JURI draft report

November: amendments

### Committee of Regions

Appointed Ms Karine Gloanec Maurin as rapporteur

December 2022: CoR adopted opinion by unanimity

Work within the EP Intergroup on Wine, spirits and quality food stuffs.

AREPO appointed as CoR **expert** on GI revision

June 2023: EP Plenary adopted its position on the revision

Start of the trilogue

**October 2023: Public agreement between the European Parliament and the Council**

**2023**

Joint letter to AGRI MEPs on EUIPO's role

Joint letter to Agricultural Permanent Representatives on EUIPO's role

**Conference on GIs and AREPO promotional event in Brussels, 30 March**

February 2024: Formal adoption by the European Parliament and the Council

March-April 2024: entry into force

**2024**

**Next steps**

AREPO conference

## ► Overview on AREPO joint achievements

The AREPO technical working group dedicated its efforts to crafting 50 amendments for the GI revision. Notably, these proposed changes found **substantial recognition** as COMAGRI rapporteur **De Castro incorporated 24 of them into his report**, with an additional 32 out of his 122 amendments reflecting the influence of AREPO's suggestions.

Following the De Castro report presentation, AREPO continued its active role by introducing more amendments in November 2022. These subsequent proposals, well-received within the European Parliament's Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (Agri Committee) through support from various MEPs, signify a continued and collaborative effort to shape the GI revision.

Furthermore, **AREPO's engagement as an expert in shaping the Committee of the Regions' Opinion** on the GI revision has been **instrumental** in extending the reach and impact of its actions.

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## Achievements

- The creation of a **single regulation** covering agricultural products and foodstuffs, wines and spirit drinks, while maintaining some specific provisions on wine in the CMO regulation;
- **Faster procedures** for registration and amendments;
- **Strengthening the role of producer groups** and introducing more powers and responsibilities for recognised producer groups. The agreement maintains the provisions on recognized producer group already existing in some Member States, making it optional for other Member States to establish a recognition system;
- **Improving GIs protection**, especially **online** and on **domain names**. This will be enforced using geo-blocking and will be aligned with the Digital Services Act;
- Extension of **protection to GIs used as ingredients**. To use a GI name when it is an ingredient in other products, processors are required to inform the relevant producer group in advance and it is now mandatory for them to indicate on the label the percentage of GI product used. Those Member States that wish to do so may also provide for a requirement of written authorisation by the producer group;
- The **recognition of GIs commitment towards sustainability**. To better valorise GI producers' actions regarding economic, environmental and social sustainability, GI producers can agree on sustainability practices, that can be voluntarily showcased in a sustainability report or included in the product specification. Furthermore, the text agreed upon by co-legislators introduces a non-exhaustive list of sustainability practices, as requested by AREPO;
- The **central role of DG Agri** in the management of the GI system, supported by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) on administrative issues.

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## II. Farm to Fork strategy



### ► Sustainable food system framework

A legislative proposal for a framework for sustainable food systems (SFS) **was supposed to be published by the end of 2023**. However, due to delays, **it won't be published during the current EU legislature**.

The SFS framework was intended to be one of the flagship initiatives of the Farm to Fork Strategy with the aim to accelerate and make the transition to sustainable food systems easier, promote policy coherence at EU and national level, mainstream sustainability in all food-related policies and strengthen the resilience of food systems. It should have also included a sustainable food labelling framework.

Here's a list of **key recommendations** presented in [AREPO's position](#) on the topic:

- Urge the SFSF to acknowledge and highlight the existing contribution of GIs to the transition towards a sustainable food system.
- Advocate for the SFSF to support ongoing sustainability efforts of GI producers through a voluntary approach, recognising sustainability as a continuous improvement process that should be encouraged and accompanied.
- Recommend a holistic and multidimensional approach to defining a sustainable food system, encompassing all three pillars of sustainability, including economic and sociocultural aspects, beyond health or nutrition considerations.
- Call for coherence and consistency with other F2F initiatives.
- Advocate for a just transition by supporting costs incurred by producers transitioning to more sustainable models with adequate accompanying measures, with a priority for small producers.

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In 2023, AREPO developed the following **strategic actions** with partner associations:

- 12 May 2023 – [Joint letter to Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski, and Sinkevičius](#) on the need for an increased dialogue with united EU food chain to ensure a robust and enforceable Framework Legislation on SFS.
- May 2023 - **Working group with other agri-food organisations**, coordinate by COPA-COGECA, for defining common principles for FSFS. The group elaborated a **working document** shared for feedback with AREPO members.
- 15 June 2023 – [Joint Letter to Commissioner Kyriakides, Commissioner Wojciechowski, Commissioner Sinkevičius](#) Presenting a **common proposal** shared by several EU agri-food organisations on **basic principles** for the Framework on Sustainable Food Systems (FSFS)



### ► Front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPNL)

The proposal to review the rules on food information for consumers, including a new Front-of-pack-nutrition labelling system, was supposed to come out in early 2023. However, due to delays, **it won't be published** during the current EU legislature.

#### ➡ Overview of the legislative process and AREPO strategic actions

Legislative process	Year	Main AREPO actions
Roadmap on <b>Food Labelling rules</b> and Roadmap on <b>Facilitating healthier food choices</b>	<b>2020</b>	AREPO feedback to the <a href="#">Roadmap on Food Labelling</a> and the <a href="#">Roadmap on Facilitating healthier food choices</a>
	<b>2021</b>	27 October 2021: AREPO online conference " <a href="#">EU GIs and Nutrition Labelling: Can a score provide meaningful information to consumers?</a> "  December 2021: AREPO participated in <b>online focus group</b> organised by ICF consulting, contracted by DG SANTE to carry out an <b>external evaluation study</b> on the revision.
December 2021 – March 2022: Public consultation on <b>revision of EU Food Labelling rules</b>	<b>2022</b>	<a href="#">AREPO position paper</a> on revision of EU Food Labelling rules  March 2022: participation in a <b>targeted survey</b> and an <b>interview</b> on FOPNL led by ICF.  November 30th 2022: 15 EU Regions and AREPO held <a href="#">an event on nutrition labelling at the EP</a> hosted by MEP Paolo De Castro.

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The core messages presented in AREPO's position on this topic recommend:

- **Attention concerning the Impact on EU Quality Schemes:** AREPO voiced concern that proposed actions for FOPNL may harm EU GI products.
- **Caution Against Oversimplified Nutrition Information:** we opposed an oversimplified FOPNL system, like Nutriscore, as it may misrepresent information and negatively affect products like GIs.
- **Emphasis on Nutrition Education:** we emphasised the need for education and communication on balanced diets, advocating for a focus on consumer understanding of the role of GIs and quality products.
- **Alternative Communication for EU GIs:** If mandatory FOPNL were to be implemented, AREPO suggested alternative communication strategies for EU GIs, including budget allocation for promotion and increased scientific research.



### Achievements

The **European Commission** publicly declared that is not going to propose the **Nutri-score** as the new EU-wide food labelling scheme.

Even if the EC didn't exclude that the future labelling system could be a 'traffic light' label, at least it will not be the Nutri-score as it is now.

In fact, the EC recognised that there is room for improvements, concerning the elements to be included, and that it can be adapted to the findings and criticisms of recent scientific opinions (e.g. opinion provided by EFSA: Nutri-score does not ensure correct and complete information to consumers).

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AREPO regularly participates in the Civil Dialogue Group of DG AGRI on promotion, as well as in the **Infoday on the promotion programme** ([click here](#) to see the presentations of the 2024 virtual event), in order to update its members.



Moreover, every year AREPO updates and shares with members the descriptive note on promotion policy. Find [here](#) the **note on 2023 calls for proposal** and [here](#) the latest version presenting **priorities and calls from the work programme of promotion policy for 2024**.

AREPO also continues monitoring the process of **revision of EU Promotion Policy** ([click here](#) to consult the position submitted to the related public consultation). The legislative proposal was expected to be published in June 2022. However, due to delays, **it won't be published during the current EU legislature**.



In January 2023, **AREPO** and other 16 organisations representing the agro-food sector **sent a joint letter to Mr Frans Timmermans**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, **and Mr Janusz Wojciechowski**, Commissioner for Agriculture. The letter expressed stakeholder **concerns over the delay in the publication** of the EC proposal on the revision of EU Promotion Policy.

The core message presented in AREPO's position on this topic recommend an **inclusive approach that does not discriminate** against any type of EU agricultural product or sector and includes red and processed meat and alcohol drinks in the list of products eligible for funding.



**This position was reiterated** in a [joint letter](#) sent to the Agricultural Permanent Representatives to the EU in October 2023, ahead of the in the committee for Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets, to present agri-food sector's views on the 2024 Annual Work Programme.

### IV. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)



European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen announced during her annual State of the Union speech on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the launching of a "**strategic dialogue**" on the **future of agriculture in the EU**, aimed at reducing polarisation in the agri-food policy debate. This dialogue, promoted at the EU Agri-Food days on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, began in January 2024. 30 stakeholders from diverse sectors of the agri-food

industry were invited to address key questions such as improving perspectives for farmers and rural areas, supporting sustainable agriculture, leveraging knowledge and innovation, and promoting a thriving future for Europe's food system.

#### AREPO

14 rue François de Sourdis  
33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
Website: [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)

#### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
Email: [info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)  
Phone: +32 0498 73 22 03

#### Social networks

Facebook: [@arepoquality](#)  
LinkedIn: AREPO Quality  
X: [@arepoquality\\_eu](#)



Alongside the Strategic Dialogue, the Commission has started to organise a series of [5 technical workshops](#) through which it will consult Member States' experts and key stakeholders represented within the Civil Dialogue Group on CAP Strategic Plans, to identify challenges and to assess needs in agriculture with a view to gather input for future policy developments, particularly the future CAP whose proposal should be ready in Autumn 2025.

The workshops will focus on five topics: [Resilience; Food Security; Sustainability; Solidarity and Rural Area; Governance and performance.](#)

As a member of the DG AGRI Civil Dialogue Groupe on CAP strategic plans, [AREPO is formally invited to participate in all this workshops' cycle](#) that started in December 2023 and will finish in April 2024.



The first workshop on **Resilience** was held in a hybrid format on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. It was centered on exploring the economic, social, and environmental aspects of farming resilience. The event sought to gather [insights on the stability of farming by examining its adaptability, robustness, and transformability, including its role in the broader food system](#). Discussions delved into climate change adaptation, water resilience, risk and crisis management, and innovation. Read the presentations [here](#).

## V. Geographical Indications for craft and industrial product

For several years AREPO has been following the developments at EU level in the field of non-agricultural GIs, calling for their recognition and laying stress on the importance for all GIs to be protected. In this framework, AREPO has been collaborating with the **French Federation of Industrial and Artisanal Geographical Indications (FFIGIA)**, by [supporting the setting of a lobbying strategy at EU level](#) to put forward the demands of the sector in front of EU Institutions. This cooperation was further consolidated through a partnership agreement, [making FFIGIA one of AREPO associated members](#).



The European Commission published the [legislative proposal](#) on 13 April 2022 to address the lack of a common EU legal framework for non-agricultural GIs. We monitored actively the development of the legislative process, [aligning our efforts with the work undertaken by FFIGIA and providing updated information and detailed analysis](#) to our member Regions and producers ([Click here](#) to read AREPO analysis).

Following an informal interinstitutional agreement reached in Spring 2023, the European Parliament and the Council approved the **new Regulation (EU) 2023/2411, published in the EU Official Journal** on 27 October 2023. The new regulation entered into force on 16 November 2023 and it is expected [to be fully applicable by 1 December 2025](#), two years after its publication.



The new regulation builds upon the existing GI system for agricultural products, but it is **tailored to the specificities of craft and industrial products**.

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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Email: [info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)  
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### Key points

- ➔ It covers **PGI** which may be labelled, on a **voluntary** basis, with the **same EU logo** currently used for EU agri-food PGIs.
- ➔ It foresees a **two-step registration process**, involving the national level and then the EU level through EUIPO.
- ➔ **National authorities will perform controls** and make sure products respect their specifications.
- ➔ It includes **robust protection rules**, mirroring those existing for agricultural GIs.
- ➔ It will grant non-agri GIs **protection under EU trade agreements**.

## VI. Regulation on packaging and packaging waste



In November 2022, the European Commission published [its proposal for a new Regulation on packaging and packaging waste](#), to replace the existing framework established in 1994. Its main aim is to foster circularity and eco-friendly packaging, addressing the whole life-cycle of packing, and to set ambitious targets for companies and Member States to reduce waste and enhance recyclability. Especially, **it requires all packaging placed on the market to be recyclable by 2030**.

AREPO monitored the legislative process since the regulation took into account an **exemption for GIs concerning packaging performance criteria**, particularly at **Whereas 40 and Article 9.2**.

Ahead of the beginning of the interinstitutional trilogues, in December 2023, AREPO and AREFLH alerted the Environment Permanent Representatives to the EU (click [here](#) to read the joint letter), on the need to grant an explicit **exemption for PDO and PGI fruits and vegetables** from the banning of single-use packaging for fruit and vegetables weighing less than 1.5 kg.

This exemption for quality schemes is necessary because of the need to provide consumers with the compulsory information on certification and the logo. Moreover, the absence of this information on packaging would increase the risk of deliberate fraud or clumsy communication about the true origins and quality of labelled products.

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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## VII. EU trade policy

AREPO usually monitors EU Trade Policy as concerns the trade agreements signed between the EU and third countries. Its approach focuses especially on the [chapter dedicated to the list of GIs protected through the trade deal](#).

**AREPO tries to update yearly its Report on EU trade agreements.** An update was made in 2023 to include the signing of the agreement between EU and New Zealand as well as the state of play of the rounds of negotiations between EU and other third countries. Click [here](#) to consult the report.



### Working groups

- ➞ Members often request to set up **technical working groups on specific topics**, directly or indirectly related to quality schemes and product of origin.
- ➞ AREPO usually takes care of the **logistic organisation of the meeting and contribute to the exchange with its expertise on EU policies and legislative processes**, as well as any other developments at EU level.
- ➞ The region which proposed the topic is asked **to animate and moderate the group**, so that the agenda setting follows the interests and practical needs of the members.
- ➞ We have set up at the end of 2023 a **working group on regional quality schemes**, chaired by Euskadi and moderated by AREPO, whose meetings began in 2024.

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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X: @arepoquality\_eu



# Strategic cooperation with EU institutions

## Part 3 | Strategic cooperation with EU institutions

### ► European Commission



#### ➞ Civil Dialogue Groups of DG AGRI

With the new programming period of the Common Agricultural Policy, the DG AGRI renewed the structure of the Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs). [In the new system, AREPO seats in the CDGs:](#)

- Quality and promotion
- Organic farming
- Rural development

In June 2023, we launched an internal call for experts to give AREPO members the possibility to follow these meetings. As a result, we drafted a list of regional experts and producers from 15 AREPO member Regions, setting up an alternating system in order to give everyone the possibility to intervene as experts in the discussion with DG AGRI and other stakeholders. There is also the possibility [to follow the meetings as observers](#).

Our membership in the CDG on CAP strategic plans gave us direct access to [the technical workshops](#) organised by DG AGRI to discuss about [the future of the CAP](#).

#### ➞ CAP network



On October 2022, the European Commission launched the new EU CAP Network, merging the European network for rural development (ENRD) and the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) network, into one single EU-level network.

As a member of the CDG on CAP strategic plans, [AREPO is also a member of the EU CAP network Assembly](#). This gave us the possibility to appoint a representative in order to

#### AREPO

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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Brussels representation office  
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participate in two sub-groups, namely on **CAP Strategic Plans implementation** and **Innovation and knowledge exchange**.

### ➡ Civil Dialogue Groups of DG Trade

AREPO participated in the **Civil Society Dialogue of DG TRADE** to monitor the evolution of bilateral free trade agreements, with particular attention to the protection of GIs.



AREPO has been regularly invited to high-level conferences of DG AGRI. Furthermore, **Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Janusz Wojciechowski**, participated in the 5th Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products organised by AREPO, in the framework of the AGROSMARTglobal project.

### ► European Parliament



## European Parliament

The European Parliament **reacts positively** to our demands.

AREPO has established solid relations with several MEPs of the AGRI Committee sensitive to the topic of quality (Clara Aguilera, Eric Andrieu, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Herbert Dorfmann, Martin Häusling, Norbert Lins, Anne Sander, Irène Tolleret).

Proof of this solid relationship is the objectives achieved in the revision of the EU Geographical Indications system. In fact, **many of AREPO amendments were included by rapporteur De Castro in his report** (24 out of 50), while 32 of the 122 amendments presented by MEP De Castro **were inspired at least in part by our proposals**.

**MEP Paolo De Castro (S&D)** and **MEP Anne SANDER (EPP)**, Quaestor of the European Parliament, participated in the 5th Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products organised by AREPO, in the framework of the AGROSMARTglobal project.

Furthermore, **AREPO is a member of the Intergroup on wines, alcoholic beverages and quality food**, chaired by **MEP Irène Tolleret (Renew Europe)**.

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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► **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)**



## European Committee of the Regions



**Ms. Karine Gloanec-Maurin**

CoR rapporteur on the revision of the EU GI system

AREPO is **often involved in contributing to the work of the NAT Commission** of the Committee of the Regions, providing its expertise on several topics.

AREPO Policy Officer, **Francesca Alampi**, has been appointed as an expert to assist **Ms. Karine Gloanec-Maurin**, the CoR rapporteur for the opinion on the revision of the EU Geographical Indication (GI) system. In this capacity, AREPO supported the rapporteur during meetings with other institutional actors and stakeholders. Additionally, they played a crucial role in the elaboration of the draft opinion,

formulating amendment proposals and offering policy recommendations on the European Commission's text. This work was informed by AREPO's internal research and collaboration with other GI stakeholders at the EU level. This opinion was [unanimously approved by the CoR plenary](#) at the end of November 2022.



### AREPO

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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► **European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)**



Despite defending the importance of maintaining the management of the EU GI system under the DG AGRI of the European Commission, AREPO has actively engaged in an **open dialogue** with EUIPO, with the aim to understand and discuss the competences that EUIPO has developed on GIs as well as its relation with DG AGRI.

We started this dialogue in March 2022, when AREPO organised a **technical meeting with EUIPO** ([click here](#) to read the report), followed by a bilateral meeting between AREPO President, **Ms Begoña García Bernal**, and EUIPO Executive Director, **Mr Christian Archambeau**, to discuss the concerns raised by AREPO on the involvement of EUIPO in the management of the EU GI system.

Since then, AREPO is regularly **invited to participate in the stakeholder public consultation** concerning the update of the Guidelines on Trade Mark Practice and Guidelines on Designs Practice.

**In 2023**, we continued working in order to **strengthen this cooperation**, in particular:

- In March 2023, **EUIPO took part in AREPO conference organised in Brussels** in the framework of the 5th Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products, represented by Ms Katarina Kompari, IP legal specialist.
- On 30 November 2023, we accompanied the CoR's rapporteur on GI review in a **bilateral meeting with new Executive Director Joao Negrao**. This was the occasion to present AREPO and express our interest in strengthening our cooperation, setting up a regular dialogue between AREPO and EUIPO.



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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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X: [@arepoquality\\_eu](#)



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European projects

## Part 4 | European projects

### I. AGROSMARTglobal | Interreg Sudoe 2014-2020

AGROSMARTglobal was a 3.5-year EU co-funded project that [started in October 2019](#) and [ended in March 2023](#).



The [AGROSMARTglobal project](#) “Space for the competitiveness, promotion and intelligent international expansion of agri-food cooperatives in the Sudoe rural areas” was co-funded by the Interreg Sudoe Programme 2014-2020 under Priority Axis 2: Stimulating the competitiveness and internationalisation of SMEs in South-West Europe.

AREPO's primary objective was [to create a 'best practice' guide](#) tailored for GI consortia, producer associations, and agri-food cooperatives within the EU. This guide is designed to equip them with [practical tools for safeguarding their geographical indications \(GIs\) on the Internet](#). Currently, there is a lack of robust protection for GIs in the realm of domain name allocation. The proposed new approach by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) poses a threat to their protection. Safeguarding against internet fraud is crucial in upholding the rights of both producers and consumers.



You can [download here](#) the [AREPO Practical Guide on the Protection of GIs on the Internet](#), in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese!

The University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), with AREPO's assistance, has also been tasked with drawing up a “best practice” guide for GI consortia, producer associations and agri-food cooperatives in the EU, aimed at improving their knowledge on how to promote their products that benefit from EU quality schemes (PDOs, PGIs, TSGs and organic farming) on the Internet, to take better advantage of their added value on international digital markets.

You can [download here](#) the [UTAD Practical Guide on the Promotion of EU Quality Schemes on the Internet](#), in French, Spanish and Portuguese!



AREPO also played a key role in [disseminating the results of the project](#), notably at the 5th edition of the European event on quality and origin products, organised specifically for the needs of the AGROSMARTglobal project and held on 30 March 2023 in Brussels. The [European Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI](#), did us the honour of concluding the conference and opening the tasting! Click here to see the [video of the event](#).

#### AREPO

14 rue François de Sourdis  
33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
Website: [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)

#### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
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## II. MOVING | Horizon 2020






MOVING | MOUNTAIN Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth is a Horizon 2020 project (2020-2024) coordinated by the University of Córdoba, gathering 23 partner organisations. The project will build capacities and co-develop policy frameworks across Europe. It will establish new or upscaled value chains to contribute

to the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas to climate change.

The project is rolling-out its research activities and actions engaging relevant stakeholders through Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) in 23 mountain regions from 16 countries. These regions represent the wide diversity of mountain areas in Europe and neighbouring countries.

AREPO is contributing to this project by involving regional/local authorities and producer associations in the mountain areas of its member Regions, providing its expertise in policy evaluation and its experience in promoting and disseminating the project's results. In particular:

- We participated in the **5<sup>th</sup> MOVING Steering Committee meeting** that was held online on 7 and 8 February 2023, to present the progress achieved during the first half of the project and discuss the steps ahead.
- In collaboration with Euromontana, **we elaborated, run and analysed a survey on the implementation of the optional quality term (OQT) mountain product**, addressed to regional authorities and producers. The results of the survey will be used to update and expand [Euromontana report on OQT's implementation and impact](#) (2020), that will be published in 2024. 
- AREPO took part in the [Workshop 'Unlocking the Power of Mountain Value Chains'](#) (Inárcs – Hungary, 6-8 November 2023), intended to foster connections and facilitate knowledge exchange among around 100 mountain representatives spanning 16 countries and 22 diverse mountain ranges. **We facilitated two sessions of the workshop dedicated to Cluster V on Value and quality products**, focused on addressing common challenges and collaboratively developing shared solutions ([find here](#) all MOVING Clusters). 
  - AREPO played a pivotal role in drafting a **MOVING report that conducted cross-case comparison and benchmarking** of value chains (VCs) in 23 mountain regions. The report analysed their contributions to sustainability and resilience, pinpointing challenges and trade-offs, and proposing solutions. AREPO specifically contributed to the section on **Value and quality products in Cluster V, focusing on VCs under quality schemes**. 
- We drafted as well a **Policy Brief summarising the outcomes of Cluster V**, emphasising key challenges and elaborating policy recommendations to enhance VCs contribution to sustainability and resilience of mountain areas.
- AREPO regularly published, both on our website and on MOVING Blog, **several articles on geographical indications and quality schemes that might be of interest of the project and provide further inputs to its research activity**.

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
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X: [@arepoquality\\_eu](#)

### III. GI SMART | Horizon Europe

**The project proposal we actively contributed to for the GI SMART project has been approved by the European Commission and will be funded.** This is a Horizon Europe aiming to delve into the topic of the sustainability of geographical indications.

The project should **start in the first trimester 2024 and will last for 4 years**. Currently, the grant agreement is under preparation.

The GI SMART project will undertake **research and demonstrative activities** (innovative pilot actions) and provide **evidence-based recommendations to enhance the contribution of the GI system to sustainable development**.

Specifically, GI SMART aims to assess and strengthen the contribution of GIs to the Farm to Fork strategy for sustainable food systems in Europe, contributing to:

- improving the understanding of the contribution of GI systems to sustainable development;
- enhancing the perception of GI sustainability by consumers, local communities, and society in general; and
- improving the design and implementation of quality policy to promote the contribution of GIs to sustainable agriculture and fisheries, healthy and sustainable diets, and sustainable food systems.

The **project budget** is approximately **3 million euros**, fully funded (thus no expenses are expected from AREPO, as all activities will be 100% financed).

The **consortium** consists of 17 partners (15 beneficiaries and 2 associated partners), spanning 10 countries. The partners include leading universities, NGOs, and stakeholder organizations in the GI sector, aiming to provide a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure the project's objectives are achieved with maximum impact. The consortium is **coordinated by INRAE**, the French agricultural research institute. Several members of AREPO's scientific committee are involved in the project.

Additionally, AREPO has engaged various partner organizations: Euromontana, oriGIn International, and EFOW.

**AREPO main role will involve leading communication and dissemination work and stakeholder engagement, in collaboration with Euromontana.**

Among other tasks, AREPO will be responsible for creating and coordinating a **European multi-actor network of stakeholders from the GI sector** including producers, certification bodies, consumers, and public administrations (at national and regional levels). The aim of the network will be to monitor and contribute to project activities.



Furthermore, AREPO will contribute to **policy analysis** of GI at regional level and develop **policy recommendations** based on project outcomes. As responsible for stakeholder engagement and coordination, our intention is to involve our member regions and producers as much as possible so they can contribute to and benefit from the project activities.

AREPO will have a budget of 220,000 euros distributed over the 4 years to carry out these activities.

#### AREPO

14 rue François de Sourdis  
33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
Website: [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)

#### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
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## Events

## Part 5 | Events

### I. AREPO events

#### ➡ AREPO General Assembly in Cáceres | Extremadura, 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023



Participants at the AREPO General Assembly in Cáceres, Extremadura, March 2023

The General Assembly took place on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, in the Sala Malinche at Complejo Cultural San Francisco. The President, Ms **García Bernal**, presented the activity report, resuming all the activities carried out by AREPO throughout the first year and a half of Extremadura Presidency, especially stressing the commitment in the ongoing revision of the EU GI system.

**Mr Roberto Berutti**, member of the cabinet of the European Commissioner for Agriculture, **Janusz Wojciechowski**, attended the assembly in Cáceres contributing with an overview of the various Commission initiatives underway of interest to GI regions and GI producers, focusing particularly on EU Promotion policy. His presentation was followed by a debate with AREPO regions and producers.

[Click here for the full report.](#)

#### ➡ Meeting of the board of producers | Extremadura, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

In occasion of the board of producers meeting, **Mr. Guglielmo Garagnani** representing AREPO's Vice-Presidency, launched a discussion on the European Commission's sustainability initiatives for agri-food productions and GIs and how to further include GIs in tourism strategies at regional level. Extremadura producers' representatives, including Mr. **Ángel Pacheco Conejero** (PDO **Torta del Casar**) and Mr. **Raúl Muñiz Cimas** (PGI **Cordero de Extremadura CORDEREX**), presented regional GIs and voiced concerns and priorities of regional GI producers.

[Click here for the full report.](#)

#### AREPO

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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#### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
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X: @arepoquality\_eu



## ➤ 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the EU event on quality and origin products | Brussels, March 2023



**Ms. Begoña GARCÍA BERNAL and Mr. Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI**  
During the AREPO EU event on Quality and Origin products

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, AREPO held in Brussels the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the “[European Event on Quality and Origin Products](#)”, organised in the framework of the Interreg Sudoe project AGROSMARTglobal, to raise awareness on the importance of quality and origin products for EU agriculture and to stimulate the discussion on the challenges ahead for the sector. [The European Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI](#), did us the honour of concluding the conference and opening the tasting!

The 2023 edition of the Event on Quality and Origin Products showcased products from **26**

**AREPO member Regions from 6 different EU countries and from 3 unions of agri-food cooperatives** from the AGROSMARTglobal project – AGACA, LCANA and CONFAGRI. This event, gathering together more than 350 participants, allowed to witness to the diversity and quality of EU agri-food products and wines under PDO, PGI, QQT “Mountain Product” and Organic Farming.

[Click here for more information.](#)

## II. Other events involving AREPO

### ➤ **Origen España General Assembly** | Murcia, 15 June 2023

AREPO was invited to contribute to a round table on the revision of EU GIs together with the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and oriGIn, to present its perspectives on the legislative proposal and comment on the state of the negotiations.

### ➤ **International Conference “Climate Change and New Societal Expectations: Agroecological Transition in Geographical Indications”** | Angers, 11-13 October 2023

AREPO participated in the conference and was asked to report the conclusions of the Workshop on [Agroecology as part of the supply chain logic within the Organismes de défense et de gestion \(ODG\) and producer groups](#) during the final session of the conference.

### ➤ **MOVING clusters workshop: Unlocking the power of mountain value chains** | Budapest, 6-8 November 2023

This workshop was organised as part of the cross-case comparison of value chains within WP5. AREPO contributed to its organisation by acting as facilitator of some tables of discussion as well as of the sessions dedicated to Cluster V on value and quality products. Read more [here](#).

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33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
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➡ **EU foresight workshop (MOVING) | Brussels, 11 January 2024**

AREPO dealt with the organisation of this event as of summer 2023. This workshop brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss scenarios and policy options for mountain areas at the European scale. Read more [here](#).

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**AREPO**

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# Communication strategy

## Part 6 | Communication strategy

AREPO constantly work to enhance the visibility and promotion of its initiatives and actions through a communication strategy thought to connect with and engage its members as well as a wider audience belonging to the agri-food sector. [This communication effort involves a living website and an increased focus on active participation across social media platforms.](#)

### I. AREPO website



A new website was [published in April 2022](#). A more catchy and dynamic graphic design for a more user-friendly site where members could stay up to date and find all the news concerning AREPO activities and the EU policies followed, as well as being able to share it on social networks.

We also created a section dedicated to a series of tools for GIs where you will find:

- [AREPO publications and studies](#);
- [Bibliography](#) on studies on Geographical Indications and related issues;
- [Map on training offers of universities of our member regions](#), providing courses entirely dedicated to geographical indications and quality schemes;
- [Existing databases related to GIs](#) and EU quality schemes.

#### AREPO

14 rue François de Sourdis  
33000 Bordeaux, FRANCE  
Website: [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)

#### Contacts

Brussels representation office  
Email: [info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)  
Phone: +32 0498 73 22 03

#### Social networks

Facebook: [@arepoquality](#)  
LinkedIn: AREPO Quality  
X: [@arepoquality\\_eu](#)



## II. AREPO social networks

AREPO social media promote the activities of the Association among its members and towards external audience. They give **priorities to news on GIs and EU quality policy**, as well as on **EU agricultural policy and all related issues**. These channels are also used to further **disseminate activities and key results of the EU projects** in which AREPO is involved as partner.

In general, we experience a good engagement rate on social media, considering that AREPO's actions generally target a very specific agri-food audience. Social media interactions typically involve other organizations and institutional accounts, particularly EU Institutions and Members of the European Parliament and the official accounts of our member regions.

Social networks		Find us	Followers
	Facebook	<a href="#">@arepoquality</a>	742 followers and 709 likes
	Linked In	<a href="#">AREPO Quality</a>	673 followers
	X (formerly Twitter)	<a href="#">@arepoquality.eu</a>	348 followers

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# AREPO

## Activity report

### 2023

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January - December 2023

AREPO | **Association of European Regions for Products of Origin**



#### **Head office**

14 rue François de Sourdis, 33000 Bordeaux

#### **Representation office in Brussels**

Rue Montoyer 21, 1000 Bruxelles  
[info@arepoquality.eu](mailto:info@arepoquality.eu)



[@arepoquality](#)



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[www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)