

REPORT ON AREPO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD VIRTUAL MEETING

1 February 2022

List of participants:

Members of the Executive Board

- **Begoña García Bernal**, Regional Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development, Population and Territory of Extremadura
- **Guglielmo Garagnani**, representing AREPO Vice-Presidency and Vice-President of Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano Reggiano;
- **Patricia Picard**, Treasurer of AREPO and Regional Councillor of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.

Other participants

- **Laurent Gomez**, Secretary General of AREPO;
- **Antonio Cabezas García**, Director General of Agriculture and Livestock of Extremadura;
- **Francesc Mestre**, Delegation of Extremadura in Brussels;
- **Victor Corvera Descalzo**, Delegation of Extremadura in Brussels;
- **Francesca Alampi**, Policy Officer of AREPO;
- **Alexandra Duriez**, AREPO Assistant and Competitiveness Department - Directorate for Agriculture, Agri-Food and Fisheries of Nouvelle Aquitaine region;
- **Matteo Ponza**, Intern at AREPO.

AREPO's Executive Board meeting was held in the afternoon of 1 February 2022. Due to COVID-19 and the emergency regulations currently in force, all board members participated via videoconference. The interpretation was provided in Italian, French and Spanish through the Zoom platform. The Secretary General, Mr Laurent Gomez, introduced the meeting by welcoming all participants and presenting the **agenda of the meeting**, which was made up as follows:

- Debate on the organisation of the 2022 General Assemblies.
- Update on the state of the accounts 2021.
- Update on AREPO activities and actions for 2022.
- Any other business.

The President, Ms Begoña GarcíaBernal, took the floor and welcomed the participants.

1. DEBATE ON THE ORGANISATION OF THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

SPRING GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Secretary General, Mr Laurent Gomez, and the Policy Officer, Ms Francesca Alampi, introduced the debate. After pointing out **that AREPO has collected the membership fees of 31 regions, registering a progressive growth over time**, they remind the Board that the association traditionally organises two plenary assemblies per year: one in Brussels, headquarters of the European institutions as well as location of the delegations to the EU of the great majority of AREPO member regions, and the other in one of AREPO member regions.

The proposed period for the spring General Assembly is 27-29 April. Specifically, the General Assembly is proposed for April 28th.

Sharing most of our member regions with the Agiregions coalition, it was decided to combine the organisation of our plenary meeting with the organisation of an Agiregions event in the same time period, in order to ensure the widest participation and representation of our member regions.

Three possible formats have been envisaged for the meeting:

1. **General Assembly in presence:** it will take place on a whole day and it will be divided into a statutory part and a thematic part (options for the thematic part are listed below)..
Moreover, a meeting of the Board of Producers and a meeting of the Scientific Council should take place either on the afternoon before or the morning after the Assembly.
2. **General Assembly as a hybrid event:** the GA will be held in presence in Brussels, guaranteeing a virtual meeting for those who cannot travel to Brussels.
Interpretation will be provided for both participants (in presence and remote) through the Interactio platform.
3. **Virtual General Assembly:** This format will be chosen only if the COVID-19 emergency will not allow to organise an in-presence meeting. The event would be of shorter duration (3h max) or divided in a morning session and an afternoon session. The options for the thematic part will be adapted to the online format and duration..

The Board expressed unanimously in favour of an in-person GA. AREPO President, however, suggested to keep monitoring the trend of the pandemic for a couple more weeks, before taking a final decision, while starting preparing the agenda of the meeting. In case the pandemic restrictions are still in force, the option of a hybrid format or a virtual meeting will be considered. The Secretary General guaranteed that a final decision will be taken within one month before the chosen date for the GA.

Proposals for the Thematic part of the General Assembly

1. **If the European Commission presents its proposal for the revision of the EU GI scheme (expected by the first quarter of 2022) in April at the latest,** the whole or most of the thematic part will be dedicated to a **debate with the officials of Unit F.3 on GIs of DG Agri and the MEPs** with the aim of discussing together the reform and the priorities of AREPO. Furthermore, the **Meeting of the College of Producers and of the Scientific Council could be dedicated as well to this topic**, to start identifying and structuring the amendments to the EC proposal that AREPO should present in the next legislative step with the MEPs.
2. **If the European Commission does *NOT* present the proposal for the revision of the EU GI scheme by April:**

The AREPO team will provide an **update on the EU policies of interest**, such as the reform of the GI system, nutrition labelling, the revision of the promotion policy the protection of the GI system for industrial and artisanal products. Other items on the agenda will be the presentation of the **conclusions of AREPO studies carried out in 2020 and 2021** (study on GIs as ingredients and study on the sustainability of small and medium GIs) as well as the new AREPO website.

3. If the EC does not respect its calendar or in case of a virtual GA, a **short thematic part** will take place, followed by a **seminar to present the FAO guide** of professors Giovanni Belletti and Andrea Maresscotti **on evaluating the sustainability of GIs.**

4. Further proposals from the Executive Board:

- Ms Patricia Picard, treasurer of AREPO, proposed an exchange on **the EAFRD** and the national strategic plans presented under the new CAP;
- Guglielmo Garagnani, as vice-president of AREPO, expressed the interest in organising the meeting of the Board of producers around the issue of markets and energy and how the rising global energy prices have affected GIs supply chains.

AUTUMN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Following AREPO statutes, one of the two GA can be held in one of the member regions. It's up to the regions themselves to propose to host the GA.

As a result, shortly before the start of the pandemic in 2020, the three German member regions of AREPO, **Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Hesse** informed us of the intention to **host the next AREPO General Assembly in Würzburg** (located in the northwest of Bavaria; quite close to the border of Baden-Württemberg and not far from the border of Hesse).

The dates currently under evaluation are included in the period from 4 October to 11 November 2022.

2. UPDATE ON THE STATE OF THE ACCOUNTS 2021

Ms Alexandra Duriez, working for the Directorate for Agriculture, Agri-Food and Fisheries of Nouvelle Aquitaine region and serving as administrative assistant to AREPO, was supposed to meet the chartered accountant at the end of January. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, this meeting had to be postponed.

As a result, the update concerning the state of the accounts 2021 did not differ from the presentation delivered at the last General Assembly in October 2021:

- Costs related to travel expenses in the pre-pandemic period have been replaced by virtual technical support and interpretation costs;
- This is the second year in a row that no delays have been recorded in the payment of membership fees (31 membership fees received).

The state of the accounts is solid, and it will be verified by the chartered accountant on 24 February.

3. UPDATE ON AREPO ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS FOR 2022

UPDATE ON EU POLICIES

Revision of EU GI system

The EC legislative proposal was expected in December 2021. Given some delays, **the proposal should be presented between March and April.**

Recently there has also been a **change of Head of Unit on Geographical Indications**. Mr Francis Fay has retired, leaving the position to Mr Joao Onofre, previously Head of Unit G2 of DG Agri on wine, spirits and horticultural products.

In November 2021, **we participated in the European Parliament Intergroup on "Wines, spirits and quality products"**. The President of AREPO presented the position of the Association, in front of MEPs, European Commission, EUIPO and other stakeholders.

AREPO is working jointly with EFOW and OriGIn to send a formal letter to the EU Institutions regarding the revision proposal.

Revision of regulation 1169/2011 and FOPNL

The public consultation on this issue will be open until 7 March. AREPO launched an internal consultation of its members to also collect feedback on origin labelling and date marking. **AREPO's objective is to present a position paper** together with its response to the public consultation. We also invited our members to reply to the online questionnaire of the public consultation.

AREPO was also involved by ICF (a consultancy under contract with DG Sante, that conducts an external study on this topic) to participate in a focus group on the subject in December. The exchange was mainly about the criteria to be taken into account in the impact assessment. The work of ICF will continue with targeted interviews for stakeholders. AREPO registered to participate and encouraged all its members to do the same.

Revision of EU Promotion Policy

On the 1st and the 2nd of February, **the Online InfoDay on the Calls for Proposals 2022 took place**. Presentations dealt with the ongoing revision and the discussions concerning the list of eligible products, as well as information on the new calls for proposals on promotion. AREPO will share a technical document on the promotion policy programmes for agricultural products 2022.

Industrial and craft GI system

The EC will make the legislative proposal to protect non-agricultural geographical indications in spring 2022.

On this topic, AREPO has partnered with AFIGIA (French association of industrial and craft geographical indications) following updates and improving the collaboration.

UPDATE ON AREPO 2022 ACTIVITIES

February 2022 - Study on the sustainability of small and medium GIs

In December, AREPO's team conducted interviews with producers, and in February, the study will be finalised to be shared with members after translations.

AREPO GA in April / Specific event on May-June 2022 - Seminar on FAO Guide

As previously announced, the intention is to organise a seminar on the FAO guide ["Guide to tailor evaluations for developing and improving geographical indications"](#).

The guide provides practical tools for practitioners and producers to assess and plan an impact assessment on the registration of a new GI. Either a seminar will be organised during the April General Assembly or a specific webinar will take place in May or June 2022.

5-8 July 2022, Montpellier - FAO-CIRAD International conference on GIs

The conference is entitled *"Worldwide Perspectives on Geographical Indications"*. In the conference framework, **AREPO was asked to coordinate a session on the governance of geographical indications and the role of regional and public actors**. The aim is to discuss the role of these actors in the protection of GI products and to exchange experiences and good practices at the international level.

To this end, we invited member regions to contribute to the topic, and many regions responded positively.

FAO&CIRAD coordinating committee will select among the contribution received.

The intention is to complement this scientific session with a side event with stakeholders to facilitate the exchange of practices.

14-15-16 November 2022, Vila Real - SYAL Congress

The SYAL - European Research Group is organising an international congress entitled ["Balancing food heritage, healthy diets and planetary resources"](#).

A call for contributions has been opened on all topics relevant to localised agro-food systems. **The organisers invited AREPO both to present a scientific paper on the topic and to present the association as a virtuous European-level initiative to exchange good practices.**

TBD - MOVING Webinar on quality schemes

The MOVING project has invited AREPO to organise a webinar on quality schemes. The webinar will be organised in the framework of MOVING European multi-actor platform to involve stakeholders of different nature from all over Europe. The seminar's theme will be focused on quality schemes and their contribution to mountain value chains.

4. CONCLUSION

Concluding the meeting, the Secretary General announced that one of the significant issues to be addressed in the coming months would be **carbon farming**. This theme is receiving increasing attention and plays a crucial role in shaping the green agriculture of the future.

Following a question on the wine topic, the AREPO team reiterated that the Association was born with competences on agri-food products, choosing to not deal with wines due to the existence of another network of regions, AREV (Assembly of European Wine Regions). Consequently, the Secretary General proposed the possibility to resume cooperation with AREV on agricultural issues relating to quality products. Considering that the Spanish region of Castilla La Mancha has the presidency of AREV, AREPO President agreed to facilitate contacts with the AREV Presidency in order to evaluate new possibilities for collaboration between the two associations without intruding on their respective areas of competence.

Ms García Bernal concluded the meeting, reaffirming the priorities on the revision of the EU GI system and Promotion Policy and reminding, for future activities, the very good relationship that the region of Extremadura has with MEP Clara Aguilera (S&D), member of the Agri Committee of the European Parliament.

Begoña García Bernal,
President of AREPO

P/O Laurent Gomez
Secretary General of AREPO