

## AREPO contribution to the definition of priorities in the Annual Work Programme 2026 concerning promotion of agricultural products

The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) brings together 35 European regions and more than 850 associations of producers for over 60% of European GIs. AREPO aims to promote and defend the interests of producers and consumers in European regions committed to promoting quality agri-food products.

As member of the Civil Dialogue Group on Quality and Promotion, AREPO welcomes the Commission's request for inputs from stakeholders to the definition of priorities in the Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2026 concerning the promotion of agricultural products.

**AREPO welcomes the inclusion of the Promotion Policy among the Commission's priority actions within the Vision for Agriculture and Food.** Promotion is a strategic tool for enhancing European consumer awareness and increasing the valorisation of European products. By supporting the competitiveness and visibility of EU products, the Promotion Policy not only strengthens the agri-food sector but also generates positive economic impacts in the regions where these products are made.

**The benefits of these programmes extend throughout the entire value chain**, from production to distribution and retail, but also encompassing related services. By investing in promotion, the EU is not only supporting farmers but also processors, distributors, retailers and service providers, ensuring that the entire agri-food ecosystem remains competitive in an increasingly challenging global market.

Although the Vision does not outline specific measures or concrete actions related to promotion, **we strongly urge the Commission to continue defending this policy in a tangible manner, particularly by safeguarding its budget.** Ensuring adequate funding is essential for the effectiveness of both simple and multi programmes, which play a critical role in supporting European producers and reinforcing the sustainability and competitiveness of the EU agri-food sector.

Furthermore, investing in promotion today rather than responding to crises later is **a cost-effective approach** that helps the EU avoid the need for large-scale emergency interventions in the future. **A well-funded Promotion Policy reduces the likelihood of having to draw on crisis reserve funds**, strengthening the long-term resilience of the sector and ensuring continued market access and stability for European producers.

As with the previous year, AREPO acknowledges that the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2025-2027 may impact the Promotion Policy's budget. However, **it is imperative to prevent further budget reductions and to maintain at least the same level of funding allocated for the AWP 2025, both for simple and multi programmes.** While AREPO recognizes the need for EU financial support in response to global challenges, we urge the Commission to continue prioritizing the Promotion Policy and minimizing any potential cuts.

Furthermore, the growing geopolitical tensions and the uncertainties surrounding global trade dynamics,

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particularly with the United States, pose significant challenges to the EU's agri-food sector. The risk of losing established markets due to these uncertainties makes it all the more critical to secure new opportunities for European producers. In this context, the EU Promotion Policy becomes not just a tool for marketing, but a key instrument in **trade diplomacy** opening doors to new markets. The Promotion Policy serves as an essential lever for ensuring that European products, especially those linked to Geographical Indications and other quality schemes, remain visible and attractive to international consumers. By supporting these programmes, the EU strengthens its diplomatic presence and enhances its competitive edge in key regions worldwide.

In addition, AREPO emphasizes the importance of **aligning budget allocations with market realities and previous AWP submission data**. In particular, **it is essential to maintain robust support for EU quality schemes on the internal market**. AREPO welcomed last year's budget redistribution, which allocated an additional €2 million to simple programmes promoting EU quality schemes within the internal market, and **urges the Commission to safeguard this allocation in the future**.

An analysis of 2024 submission statistics for SIMPLE calls highlights that demand for funding for EU quality schemes exceeded available resources by more than four times. With a demand rate of 442.63%, this category has one of the highest competition levels for funds. This underscores both the strong interest in promotion programmes linked to quality schemes and the pressing need for increased financial support.

Maintaining a substantial budget for the promotion of EU quality schemes is also essential to achieving the objectives outlined in the Vision for Agriculture and Food, particularly in **promoting further uptake of Geographical Indications**. These initiatives should therefore remain a priority within the 2026 AWP.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2026 AWP

In light of the aforementioned, AREPO calls on the European Commission to ensure that the 2026 AWP:

- ▶ Secures a robust budget for Promotion policy, to ensure continuity and effectiveness of promotional programmes both in existing and emerging markets;
- ▶ Expands promotional activities to target new markets, particularly in emerging regions where demand for quality European products is expected to grow
- ▶ Allocates the budget available where most demanded to simple programmes, mirroring market realities and previous AWP submission statistics;
- ▶ Safeguards at least the current budget allocated to promotion of EU quality schemes, even if the requested grants for GI campaigns last year significantly exceeded the available budget;
- ▶ Avoids discrimination against specific products or sectors, such as red and processed meat, or wine and spirits, ensuring the current list of eligible products is maintained;
- ▶ Specifically includes the EU Optional Quality Term (OQT) “mountain product” as an eligible scheme under the EU Promotion Policy. To enhance the promotion of this term at the EU level and raise awareness of its characteristics, AREPO suggests that the European Commission highlight the OQT “mountain product” in future Annual Work Programmes.

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