English version

AREPO report on the 2nd General Assembly of 2025

22 October 2025 | Barcelona

AREPO
ASSOCIATION DES RÉGIONS EUROPÉENNES DES PRODUITS D'ORIGINE

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

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Part 1 | Introduction

AREPO's second General Assembly of 2025 was held in **Barcelona** on **22 October 2025**.

This plenary meeting took place at the **Intitut d'Estudis Catalans**.

Interpretation was provided in **DE, EL, ES, FR, IT**.

The Thematic part held in the afternoon was dedicated to a Working group on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), to start discussing the Association's approach towards the new Multiannual Financial Framework and the CAP and building a common position.

From left to right: **Mr César SALDAÑA** | Vice-President of AREPO; **Mr Alessandro BEDUSCHI** | President of AREPO; **Ms Rosa CUBEL MUÑOZ,** Secretary for Food of the Government of Catalunya; **Mr Laurent GOMEZ** | Secretary General of AREPO.

Part 2 | Statutory part

AREPO Secretary General, **Mr Laurent Gomez,** presented the agenda of the day and introduced **Ms Rosa Cubel Muñoz**, Secretary for Food of the Government of Catalunya.

Ms Cubel Muñoz warmly welcomed AREPO members to Barcelona and to **Catalunya, designated World Region of Gastronomy 2025**. She underlined that this recognition celebrates the region's rich culinary heritage, the excellence of its products, and its strong commitment to sustainability. Ms Cubel thanked the President of AREPO and the Association's team for the organisation of the Assembly and for their close cooperation with the Department of Agriculture of the Catalan Government. In her remarks, she recalled that Catalunya boasts numerous Geographical Indications (GIs) which embody the identity, tradition, and hard work of local farmers. She stressed that being part of AREPO means strengthening the collective voice of the regions at a decisive moment for European policies, particularly in view of the future CAP and the strategies for quality and promotion, and expressed her hope that the Assembly would serve as a constructive and inspiring forum for the continued protection of GIs.

Mr Alessandro Beduschi, AREPO President, then took the floor to deliver his welcome address, thanking the Region of Catalonia for hosting the meeting during its year as World Region of Gastronomy.

He underlined the relevance of AREPO's mission in promoting quality products and highlighted the shared priorities with the other members of the Board: the Vice-president, **Mr César Saldaña** and the Treasurer, **Ms Temanuata Girard**.

He concluded by expressing his appreciation to the AREPO team for their daily work, their support in coordinating the Association's activities, and for the preparation of the Assembly. He also extended his thanks to the interpreters for their essential contribution during the meeting.

I. Intermediate activity report of the Presidency

AREPO President proceeded to present the intermediate activity report, summarising AREPO activities and results from January to June 2025 (click here to read the intermediate activity report).

He emphasised AREPO's commitment towards the drafting of a GI Action Plan and the achievements of the GI SMART project, recalling the conference held in Brussels in the month of June with the participation of the Commissioner for Agriculture, **Christophe Hansen**.

He also addressed the debate on the future CAP and the proposed EU Single Fund, starting to frame the discussion foreseen for the afternoon.

The President also reaffirmed the association's goal to expand membership and enhance visibility at the European level. On that note, he welcomed the **adhesion of the Region of Calabria** (Italy) to the Association.

Looking ahead, he announced the **sixth AREPO European promotional event to be held in Brussels on 23 April 2026** and informed members that the **second General Assembly of 2026 will be held in Lombardy.**

Among the key proposals for future activities, he launched the idea of organizing a **travelling event to promote Geographical Indications**, a sort of *"GI Expo"* to be hosted in iconic locations across the AREPO regions, featuring workshops, debates, and public awareness activities. The project, also presented to **Diego Canga Fano**, Acting Deputy Director-General F, H, I, of the DG Agri of the European Commission and to our partner association **oriGIn**, aims to build a shared brand identity for European PDO and PGI products.

The intermediate report was **unanimously** approved

II. Intervention by AREPO Vice-Presidency

Mr César Saldaña, Vice-President of AREPO, underlined the importance of the Association's dual structure, bringing together both regional authorities and producer organisations. This unique composition enhances AREPO's legitimacy and influence at EU level. He called for greater involvement of producers in AREPO's activities and **reminded all regions to designate official producer representatives** to ensure two-way communication and effective participation in AREPO's decision-making.

He stressed the role of producers in shaping EU policy priorities and encouraged their active engagement in the drafting of the forthcoming GI Action Plan, as well as in the debate on regional public quality schemes, and in defining AREPO's position on the future Common Agricultural Policy. He expressed concern about the CAP and the EU Single Fund proposed, noting that the current proposals fail to address the specific needs of the GI system, as producer organisations remain excluded from direct aid and lack new instruments for value creation or development.

Finally, he referred to initiatives under discussion at EU level aiming to enhance the visibility and sustainability of GIs across Europe, reminding the key role that producers' experience must play in them, such as developing cooperation agreements with retailers, the creation of a European GI Day, and the establishment of European GI Awards.

III. Presentation on the state of the provisional accounts 2025

Click here to consult all documents related to AREPO provisional accounts for 2025.

AREPO Secretary General, **Mr Laurent Gomez,** excused the absence of AREPO Treasurer, **Ms Temanuata Girard,** due to other institutional commitments and took the floor to comment on the state of the provisional accounts for 2025 as at 31 August 2025.

The presentation, not subject to a vote, showed stable and well-managed accounts audited by an independent accountant.

Expenditure for 2025 is estimated at **€225,000**, covering interpreting services for the two general assemblies, staff costs, consultancy for EU projects, and travel. Despite major events such as the June conference in Brussels and the General Assembly in Barcelona, spending remains under control thanks to careful expenditure management by the team, cost-sharing of the events with partners and the timely contributions of member regions.

Furthermore, he reminded that costs are under control also thanks to the agreement with the Emilia-Romagna region for the free use of the premises in Brussels, only entailing for AREPO insurance costs for property and persons, and the agreement with the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region for the free provision of the Secretary General's time, as well as the time of the assistant accountant **Ms Alexandra Duriez,** supporting the Secretary General in the financial management of the Association.

Revenue is projected at **€238,000**, mainly from 28 paid membership fees and the EU project funding (MOVING and GI SMART).

The expected result for 2025 is a **positive balance of around €13,000**, bringing reserves close to 10–11 months of operating capacity.

Given this solid financial situation, the **membership fee for 2026 will remain unchanged at €6,000**, ensuring continued financial stability for the Association.

IV. Vote on the contribution 2026

The General Assembly voted unanimously in favour of keeping **the annual membership fee at the current amount of € 6.000 for 2026**.
The payment request will be sent in January.

Part 3 | Cataluña World Region of Gastronomy 2025

Laura Ruana Pavón, Deputy Director General for Food Enterprises, Quality and Gastronomy, presented Catalunya's programme as World Region of Gastronomy 2025, coordinated by the Generalitat de Catalunya and the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT).

Ms Laura RUANA PAVON | Deputy Director General for Food Enterprises, Quality and Gastronomy, Generalitat de Catalunya

She introduced the flagship project "12 mesos, 12 paisatges gastronòmics" (12 Months, 12 Gastronomic Landscapes), promoting local products and seasonal gastronomy through monthly activities across twelve themed areas, from olive groves and vineyards to mountain pastures and deltas, supported by local grants. Other initiatives include the "Heroes of the Pantry" programme valorising traditional Catalan products, a Netflix-style culinary fiction series featuring Ferran Adrià, the Lladonosa Awards for young chefs, and

major international events such as the European Young Chef Award, the World Gastronomy Summit, and the Food Film Menu competition.

Overall, the 2025 programme aims to strengthen Catalonia's identity as a leading gastronomic region, fostering sustainability, local pride, and international recognition.

Click here to consult the full presentation.

I. Discussion

Following this presentation, some members asked to take the floor. **Mr Charalampos-Nikolaos Piteris** (Crete Region), announced a series of events planned for 2026 and invited the AREPO Presidency and Vice-Presidency to take part. He also encouraged to translate AREPO official documents into Greek language to strengthen participation of Greek members, noting that 50% of Greek regions are already part of the Association.

He supported the President's proposal to organise itinerant events and initiatives across all regions to send a strong message about what GIs truly represent. He also called for continued progress on the GI Action Plan and the introduction of a European GI Day as part of it. Connecting with the invitation of AREPO Vice-president to appoint representatives of producers for all AREPO member regions, he informed the Assembly that the President of the Dairy Products Association of Crete, who has expressed great interest in taking part in AREPO's work, was supposed to participate to the meeting in Barcelona. Mr Piteris will share his contact details to be included in the College of Producers.

President Beduschi then invited some regional ministers to take the floor.

Piemonte Regional Minister for Agriculture, **Mr Paolo Bongioanni,** thanked the organisers for their warm welcome and underlined the current challenges faced by producers, noting that global market shifts and trade barriers have affected even the most successful products. He stressed the need to diversify markets and strengthen promotion, supporting the President's proposal to enhance the visibility of GIs in Europe through a travelling promotional event, and called on the European Commission to maintain robust promotional support for the sector.

Mr Paolo BONGIOANNI | Minister for Agriculture of Piemonte Region

Mr Alessio MAMMI | Minister for Agriculture of Emilia-Romagna Region

Alessio Mammi, Regional Minister for Agriculture of Emilia-Romagna, expressed strong concern over the EU budget proposal for the CAP. He warned against the risk of renationalising agricultural policy, weakening its European dimension and reducing funding for rural development, crucial for GIs.

He called for a properly funded GI Action Plan (at least €1 billion) to promote products both inside and outside the EU and proposed the development of rules for public and private

catering that would encourage the use of PDO and PGI products. Mr Mammi also supported the President's proposal for an itinerant promotional event and the expansion of the AREPO network eastward.

Part 4 | Thematic part I

I. Public Regional Quality Schemes

Mr Raúl Pérez Iratxeta, Deputy Regional Minister for Food and Rural Development of Euskadi Region, presented the Basque public regional quality scheme, *Eusko Label*, established in 1989 as a symbol of trust and authenticity. The scheme currently encompasses 18 product families, 3,000 farms, and 400 companies, and is designed to complement PDOs and PGIs rather than compete with them.

Mr Pérez Iratxeta noted that public regional quality labels across Europe operate in a legal "grey area", despite their significant contribution to local economies, rural development, and consumer confidence. To strengthen their role, he proposed that public regional quality systems be structured as a three-tier pyramid, allowing producers to gradually enter the quality framework and use it as a stepping stone toward PDO or PGI recognition.

Mr Raúl PÉREZ IRATXETA | Deputy Regional Minister for Food and Rural Development of Euskadi Region

He suggested that these regional schemes should be governed by a set of key restrictions aimed at preserving their authenticity and local focus. In particular:

- Their market share should remain below 5%, ensuring they do not compete directly with national or international brands.
- At least 80% of their sales should occur within the region, reinforcing their local character.
- They must avoid any reference or confusion with EU-protected designations such as PDO, PGI, or TSG, thereby maintaining a clear distinction between regional and European quality systems.
- Regional brands should also demonstrate a proven track record, with a minimum number of years of continuous operation.

He proposed that AREPO should take responsibility for the management, control, and auditing of these regional schemes, ensuring full compliance with the established criteria and safeguarding the integrity of the regional label.

Finally, he called for the creation of a European Regional Quality Label, based on voluntary participation and common rules, to be coordinated and supervised by AREPO. Such a label would enhance the visibility, recognition, and protection of regional quality systems while respecting the diversity of local approaches.

To advance this initiative, Mr Pérez Iratxeta invited AREPO members to a dedicated meeting in Euskadi in spring 2026, to discuss the proposal further and experience the Basque model first-hand.

For further information, consult the presentation.

Following the presentation by Mr. Pérez Iratxeta, several AREPO members took the floor to share their experiences and views on regional quality schemes and brands.

From left to right: **Mr Vincent LABARTHE** | Vice-President of the Occitanie Region, in charge of Agriculture and Agricultural Education; **Mr Jean-Pierre RAYNAUD** | Vice-President of the Conseil Régional de Nouvelle Aquitaine, responsible for Agriculture, Agro-food, Forestry, the

Mr Vincent Labarthe, Vice-President of the Occitanie Region, in charge of Agriculture and Agricultural Education, noted that several French regions have already attempted to develop regional brands. Although this approach differs from traditional quality schemes, he found it particularly relevant in the current context, as it helps to safeguard the territorial identity of local productions. He expressed interest in exploring this topic further within AREPO and collaborating with colleagues from Euskadi.

Mr Jean-Pierre Raynaud, Vice-President of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, responsible for Agriculture, Agro-food, Forestry, the Sea and Mountains, recalled a long debate within his region on this matter. Over the past twenty years, several attempts to establish a territorial brand had failed, except for the most recent one. Initially, producers aimed to launch a *"Produced in Nouvelle-Aquitaine"* brand, but faced strong resistance from the region and professional bodies, who feared competition with Geographical Indications. The concept was therefore transformed into *"Signé en Nouvelle-Aquitaine",* with strict product specifications to ensure complementarity, not competition, with GIs. He confirmed his interest in working with Euskadi and supported efforts toward harmonisation at European level.

Mr Paolo Balocco, Director for Agriculture of Piemonte region, explained that the Piemonte Region is strongly committed to the promotion of certified quality products. A regional umbrella quality scheme has been created to harmonise communication and marketing while preserving the identity of each consortium and company. He also mentioned that Piemonte has set up a supervisory body dedicated to monitoring and controlling the region's quality products.

Mr Charalampos-Nikolaos Piteris (Crete Region) presented the regional label *"Crete – Land of Value"*, aimed at informing consumers about the origin of products, whether they are PDO or PGI. He argued that territorial brands add extra value to such products and raised a key point: while most consumers recognise the country of origin of famous products, few know their specific regional origin. For this reason, the Cretan label is an independent quality mark in its own right.

Mr César Saldaña, Vice-President of AREPO acknowledged the complexity of the debate, but underlined that AREPO is uniquely positioned to find a balanced solution, given its representation of both regions and producers. He emphasised that AREPO's work must ensure no competition is created with GIs, and expressed appreciation for the pyramidal system proposed by Euskadi, though he warned against the risk that producers might move downwards within the system, which could weaken AREPO's mission. He confirmed his intention to attend the meeting in Euskadi in 2026, stressing the need to clearly define the framework for future discussions.

AREPO Secretary General, **Mr Laurent Gomez,** concluded by recalling that the European Union is fundamentally a common market with free circulation of goods, and that reserving the origin of raw materials is the prerogative of GIs. However, he acknowledged that public regional quality schemes do exist, particularly in regions with legislative powers that allow them to establish such schemes. He noted that the European Commission is uneasy with these initiatives, but argued that AREPO faces a choice: either ignore the issue or engage with it constructively, as proposed by the Euskadi Region. He supported opening the debate to producers of GIs, notably through oriGIn, to demonstrate that AREPO's work is being done transparently and collaboratively, rather than in isolation.

II. Update on AREPO main policy priorities and activities realised in the first half of 2025

Ms Francesca Alampi, policy officer of AREPO reminded the areas of work followed by AREPO. Particularly, AREPO's activities focused on the future EU Action Plan on GIs, at the heart of the event organised in Brussels on 25-26 June. The event concluded with the initiative launched by AREPO President of a Europe-wide survey to assess the early implementation of the new GI Regulation.

She also commented the progress made on the topic of public food procurement, recalling the European Parliament's position adopted few weeks before the Assembly giving priority to local, seasonal, and GI products in public contracts, and noted that a formal proposal to revise procurement rules is expected in late 2026.

Ms Alampi also updated members on the EU Promotion policy, presenting the Commission's 2026 Annual Work Programme (AWP). It will foresee a reduced budget (€92 million for simple programmes) with the possibility to find further funds for multi programmes during the autumn revision of the 2026 EU budget. She recalled as well that AREPO presented inputs to the drafting of the 2026 AWP and to the process of simplification of the implementation of promotion programmes, calling for simplified reporting procedures, harmonised evaluation criteria, and extended deadlines to ensure accessibility for producers.

She concluded with the topic of tourism, highlighting AREPO's participation in the EUSAIR flagship initiative on the Mediterranean Diet as a driver of sustainable tourism and local development. The project aims to embed quality, local, and GI products into regional strategies and to serve as a model for future EU-funded initiatives.

For further information, consult the presentation and the Intermediate Activity Report to see the main policy updates and results achieved in the first half of 2025.

III. Information on the organisation of the 2026 European promotion event

Ms Giulia Scaglioni, policy officer of AREPO, provided a preview of the 6th edition of AREPO's promotion event dedicated to Geographical Indications, **to be held in Brussels, at the Common House of Emilia-Romagna, Hessen, Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Wielkopolska, on 23 April 2026**.

This event, traditionally held every 2-3 years, includes a conference followed by a tasting session. A call for expressions of interest of AREPO regions in participating was launched in October 2025 and it will be open until December 5th. An info session for member regions will be organised, as usual.

Regions wishing to take part will be asked to respond to the email for expression of interest by December 5th, designate a contact person, send the selected products and manage the presentation at their tasting table. Participation is free of charge; AREPO will cover all the organisational costs related to the conference and the tasting. Each region may showcase up to three products (including a maximum of two wines) and should prepare no more than 150 portions. Cooking will not be permitted onsite, just simple preparations such as cutting and display on a tray. AREPO encourages the selection of simple, easy-to-serve products, and to include also fruits and vegetables.

For further information, consult the presentation.

IV. Update on GI SMART

Ms Giulia Scaglioni, policy officer of AREPO presented an update on the **Horizon Europe project "GI SMART".**

Began in June 2024, GI SMART project will last 4 years with 100% funding of around 3 million euros. The main objective of the project is **to enhance the design and implementation of the GI system to support sustainable agriculture, healthy and sustainable food, and sustainable food systems**, in line with the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy.

The project, coordinated by the Institut National de Recherche sur l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement (INRAE, France), involves 17 public and private partners from 8 European Member States. Among them, academic partners with expertise in GI and members of AREPO Scientific Committee and international and EU networks representing stakeholders in food and wine GIs.

AREPO, with a total budget of **220 000 €**, plays a role in many of the research activities envisaged by the project and assists other partners in their tasks. In particular, AREPO is Work Package Leader for Communication, Dissemination, Exploitation, and Stakeholder Engagement, in collaboration with Euromontana, to ensure the uptake of the scientific research by GI producers as well as public administrations (regional, national and EU).

Ms Scaglioni gave a presentation on the current state of progress across the four key research pillars underpinning the project.

Then, she delved into the presentation of the main activities carried out so far by AREPO within the project and on its role in coordinating stakeholder engagement and the creation and development of the **GI SMART Community Platform,** a multi-actor platform structured around 9 National multi-actor platforms (MAPs) and 1 platform at the EU level (EU MAP).

Almost all national MAPs held at least their first meetings and the GI SMART Community Platform was officially launched with the conference organised in Brussels on 25-26 June 2025 in collaboration with EFOW and oriGIn EU *"A Producers' Vision for the EU Action Plan on Geographical Indications & Launch of the GI SMART Community Platform".*

She also presented the results achieved with this event as well as the impact it had on the registrations to the Community Platform. To date, over 320 stakeholders from 25 countries have joined the platform. In the coming months, the platform will host several events, including capacity-building sessions and online training for GI producers.

Please, consult the PowerPoint presentation of the GA and the Intermediate Activity Report to know more.

V. Update on GI SMART: Assessing Sustainability of Geographical Indications Wine Production Through Synthetic Indicators

The update on GI SMART continued with a presentation delivered by **Mr Jose Maria Gil Roig,** CREDA, one of the research partners in the project.

Mr Gil presented the project's ongoing work on assessing the sustainability of wine production under Geographical Indications, using the Catalan wine sector as a case study.

He explained that the research team aims to develop indicators capable of analysing all three pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) and to combine them into synthetic indexes. These tools are not designed to generate competition between different GIs, nor to rank producers against one another. Instead, they function as self-assessment instruments, enabling wine farms to track their performance over time, compare different years, and identify evolving sustainability trajectories.

The approach has been applied to the Catalan viticulture sector using data from the Farm Accountancy Network (FADN) for the years 2014–2022/23. Within Catalonia, the analysis distinguishes between only GI producers, mixed production systems, and non-GI producers. A total of 21 indicators were selected based on available data. Although these indicators are robust and professionally designed, Mr Gil noted that one of the main challenges remains the limited access to more diverse datasets.

Building on this methodological foundation, he showed that wine, despite globalization, remains strongly linked to its geographic origin, and that the EU's long-standing assumption that terroir-based practices naturally support sustainability is increasingly tested by climate change.

The synthetic indicators, weighted with input from 15 wine experts, were applied to an unbalanced panel of farms to explore how GI status interacts with economic performance, productivity, and environmental outcomes. The results indicate that differences across years and methodological approaches are more significant than differences between GI categories, and that GI specialization does not automatically deliver higher sustainability scores. Mixed production systems frequently display more balanced profiles, and the correlation between economic and environmental performance is only weakly positive.

Key messages included the importance of diversification, the promising performance of mixed systems (with around 10% achieving genuine "win–win" results), the need for adaptable analytical tools, and the potential drawbacks of over-specialisation in GI-only production.

For further details consult the PowerPoint presentation.

Part 5 | Thematic Part II - Working group on CAP

AREPO's Policy Officers, **Ms Giulia Scaglioni** and **Ms Francesca Alampi**, opened the debate on the new MFF and CAP proposals by presenting the key elements of the two legislative texts published by the European Commission. They stressed that AREPO's analysis must be framed specifically in terms of the impact of these proposals on Geographical Indications.

They also outlined the expected outcomes of the discussion with members, introducing the two complementary lines of work that AREPO will pursue:

1. **Overall assessment of the proposed MFF and CAP architecture:** providing inputs and reflections on the general design and functioning of the proposals. This will enable AREPO to

develop a consolidated position and foster cooperation and synergies with other EU regional networks such as Agriregions, AREFLH, Euromontana, and others.

2. **Targeted analysis on GIs:** gathering specific inputs on the implications for GIs—identifying potential impacts, opportunities, and areas requiring improvement. This work will support the development of an AREPO position aimed at strengthening collaboration with EU thematic networks on GIs, including oriGIn EU and EFOW.

Please, consult the Analysis on MFF and CAP proposals made by AREPO and the PowerPoint presentation of the GA to know more on this point.

I. Contributions from AREPO regions and partners

Ms Patricia Picard, Regional Councillor for the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, took the floor to present the AgriRegions network and outline its activities and views on future CAP.

She fully shared AREPO's analysis, adding that the AgriRegions are already mobilising, as the current proposals do not offer sufficient guarantees to ensure that regions can maintain their role in managing the CAP. Returning to a system based on national plans would represent a step backwards of two programming periods for France, and would be equally unacceptable for many other European regions.

Their core objective is to preserve the possibility of developing regional strategic plans, as the regional level remains the closest to producers and territorial needs. AgriRegions reacted to the two proposals presented by the Commission in a press release issued in July, which expressed strong disappointment at the proposal due to the risks it poses to regional governance. The merging of funds, combined with the proposed CAP budget, threatens the stability of agricultural support. Moreover, the new architecture risks undermining the "common" character of the CAP, potentially creating greater disparities across Member States and regions.

Ms Patricia PICARD | Regional Councillor for the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region

AgriRegions therefore called on the European Parliament and the Council to amend the proposals, ensuring that regions retain an essential role in both the design and implementation of the CAP.

Ms Picard supported the idea of working jointly with other networks to elaborate a positive programme. At this stage, however, AgriRegions had not yet formulated concrete amendments.

Following the intervention on behalf of AgriRegions, several members took the floor to react to AREPO's analysis of the new MFF and CAP proposals, expressing strong concern about the implications for regional governance, agricultural competitiveness, and the future of Geographical Indications.

Mr Alessio Mammi, Regional Minister for Agriculture of Emilia-Romagna, thanked AREPO for its thorough analysis and expressed full agreement with both the general CAP comments and the GI-specific considerations. He highlighted four main issues:

- Budget cuts: The reduction of more than 20% in the CAP budget is, politically, one of the most serious elements in the Commission's proposal. Funds removed from agriculture would be placed into a flexible national fund, covering sectors such as security, defence, infrastructure, and regional and municipal financing. Such a structure risks marginalising agricultural policies. For this, the Commission should restore the €80 million cut from the CAP.
- Risks linked to the single fund: The creation of a large, non-ring-fenced fund weakens agricultural policy. Splitting instruments, direct payments on one side and rural development in the unified fund, creates additional risks.
- Governance and the role of regions. Two major concerns emerge:
    - The proposal weakens the EU dimension of the CAP, encouraging Member States to adopt divergent policies, potentially putting countries and regions in competition with each other.
    - It sidelines regions, which are the authorities closest to territories and producers. Not all regions perform equally, and mechanisms should be found to reward those that are more efficient. However, removing regional involvement altogether would slow down processes and increase bureaucracy.
- A call for a specific action plan for GIs: Given the strategic importance of GIs, a dedicated framework is needed.

Mr Paolo Balocco, Director for Agriculture of Piemonte region agreed, recalling that regions had advocated for greater flexibility within the current CAP, as modifying programmes now takes up to a year. However, flexibility should not justify a reform that eliminates the common nature of the CAP. He stressed that income support alone is not enough; structural conditions must be created to make farms competitive. He also requested clarification on the timeline and whether a two-year transition period would be foreseen, as with the current CAP.

AREPO Secretary General, **Mr Laurent Gomez** added that the debate should also highlight the fundamental role of agriculture as a primary sector. He supported the proposal for an AREPO press release expressing disagreement with both the CAP reform and the single fund. He warned that national implementation of the single fund could result in Ministries of Agriculture losing control over the CAP, with responsibility shifting to Ministries of Economy or Finance.

Mr Alessandro Beduschi, President of AREPO and Minister for Agriculture of Lombardia Region, agreed with the points raised by Mr Mammi. He stressed that regions must remain firmly critical of the current proposals so that the European Commission clearly understands that the MFF package, in its present form, is not acceptable.

Mr Beduschi reiterated that defending food sovereignty must remain a central priority, as any departure from European and national self-sufficiency would pose a serious risk to security. He therefore called for a strong, united message to be conveyed to stakeholders and political actors at EU, national, and regional levels.

He also reported on a recent meeting he had with **Mr Diego Canga Fano,** Acting Deputy Director-General F, H, I, of the DG Agri of the European Commission who explained that the proposed budget cuts are partly driven by the need to allocate additional resources to defence. Nevertheless, the Commission's proposal contains several encouraging aspects, including the increase in the agricultural research budget from €3 to €40 billion, enhanced support for promotion and export activities, and a strengthened economic mandate for the CMO. While a complete reversal of the reform may be unlikely,

Mr Beduschi underlined that regions still have both the responsibility and the opportunity to improve the proposal wherever possible.

Mr Giorgio Trentin, Veneto Region, underlined that the reform represents a "Copernican revolution" in the management of EU policies, making a complete rollback unlikely. From a technical standpoint, he encouraged regions to identify opportunities within the proposal, for example, the lack of detailed constraints under Article 74 could allow regions to jointly develop innovative interventions. He also suggested that the merging of funds could enable agricultural policy to "contaminate" other sectors positively, provided that agriculture remains central.

He insisted that AREPO should ask the European Commission to clarify its governance model, including the territorial governance architecture and the practical mechanisms foreseen for implementing the new system. Without this information, regions cannot identify their interlocutors or understand their role.

From a technical viewpoint, he warned that drastically modifying the proposal might be unrealistic.

Ms Marie-Pierre Bianchini, Corsica Region, shared AREPO's concerns, particularly regarding the merger of the two CAP pillars, which inevitably pushes towards a national approach. Under the previous CAP, Corsica negotiated directly with the European Commission; in the current period, it must go through the national level, creating significant difficulties. Only the existence of a regional paying agency allowed Corsica to maintain direct dialogue with the Commission. **Ms Picard** complemented this highlighting the important issue of 50% national co-financing in the EAFRD, which remains a major concern for France.

Finally, **Mr Jean-Pierre Raynaud**, Vice-President of the Conseil Régional de Nouvelle-Aquitaine, responsible for Agriculture, Agro-food, Forestry, the Sea and Mountains, emphasised the need to identify allies and defend a shared vision. The European Parliament is expected to be more aligned with regional demands regarding the CAP proposal. He stressed that even in the current programming period, there are insufficient measures for GIs, and this issue must be addressed moving forward.

From left to right: **Ms Patricia PICARD** | Regional Councillor for the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region; **Mr Vincent LABARTHE** | Vice-President of the Occitanie Region, in charge of Agriculture and Agricultural Education; **Mr Jean-Pierre RAYNAUD |** Vice-President of the Conseil Régional de Nouvelle Aquitaine, responsible for Agriculture, Agro-food, Forestry, the Sea and Mountains

The debate ended with the agreement of issuing a press release. Please, consult it here.

Part 6 | Conclusions

Going towards the end of the meeting, the Secretary General thanked the AREPO team and the colleagues of the Department of Agriculture of the Catalan Government for organising and guaranteeing the smooth running of the Assembly, together with all the interpreters who allowed everyone to take the floor and follow the meeting in their own mother togues.

AREPO President, **Mr Alessandro Beduschi**, closed the General Assembly by thanking all participants for their active contributions and the richness of the exchanges and by welcoming the outcomes of the

Assembly. He noted that the discussions had reaffirmed the unity of the network and its shared determination to defend a strong CAP closer to regions and with opportunities for further developing the uptake of GIs. Looking ahead, Mr Beduschi renewed his call for members to designate a contact to support the organisation of the itinerant promotion initiative.

PRESS RELEASE

AREPO calls for a CAP that meets the challenges of European agriculture

Barcelona, 23 October 2025,

Numerous regional ministers and producers of geographical indications, members of AREPO, gathered for their second annual General Assembly in Barcelona, Catalunya, the World Region of Gastronomy 2025.

As European institutions prepare for negotiations on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), AREPO members expressed strong concerns about proposals marked by a significant budget reduction and an architecture that is difficult to interpret.

AREPO aims to engage in a constructive dialogue with European institutions to understand the motivations behind these announcements and to propose concrete ways to improve them. The European Commission presents the creation of a single fund and a new structure, replacing the two traditional CAP pillars, as a way to simplify the policy. However, AREPO members fear that this may ultimately lead to cost-cutting and dilution of resources, loss of cohesion, and a weakening of the common nature of agricultural policy.

Since the origins of the European Union, agriculture has represented one of the pillars of European construction and cohesion. A strong CAP is essential to preserve this role and ensure a balanced and sustainable development model for all territories.

César Saldaña, President of AREPO's College of Producers, emphasized *"the need for a CAP tailored to farmers' needs with adequate financial resources. The current proposals do not introduce any measures addressing the specific needs of the geographical indications system. Producer organizations remain excluded from direct aid, and no new instruments for the valorization or development of GIs are foreseen."*

AREPO President Alessandro Beduschi also reminded that *"the CAP is the guarantor of food sovereignty. We share with the European Commission the priorities of generational renewal in agriculture, adaptation to climate change, and the development of research. And concerning AREPO, we are fully aware of the need to ensure the sustainability of geographical indications. This cannot be achieved within a framework of a weakened CAP, reduced funding, and diminished clarity. On this matter, the discussion cannot be merely an accounting one."*

AREPO advocates for a CAP based on two pillars, not out of tradition, but because they have proven their effectiveness, and reaffirms the need for a new, more innovative yet coherent Common Agricultural Policy, capable of meeting today's challenges for European agriculture and preserving the European Union's food sovereignty.

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About AREPO

AREPO - the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin, is a network of regions and producer associations that deals with products of origin and EU quality schemes. It represents 35 European regions and over 800 associations of producers for over 60% of European GIs.