



PRESS RELEASE

6th AREPO European Event on Quality and Origin Products: Showcasing the Value of Geographical Indications across Europe

Brussels, 23 April 2026

On April 23, the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO), in collaboration with the Horizon Europe project [GI SMART](#), held the 6th Edition of the AREPO European Event on Quality and Origin Products at the common House of Hessen, Emilia-Romagna, Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Wielkopolska. The event opened with a high-level conference structured around two roundtables, entitled **“From research to action: guiding future EU policies to enhance territorial impact of Geographical Indication”**. It was followed by a sensory tasting experience, enabling participants to fully understand the deep connection between Geographical Indications (GIs) and their territories of origin. **The tasting showcased GI products from 24 AREPO member regions, complementing the policy discussions with a direct, experiential dimension.**

For more than 15 years, this event has served as a **key platform to raise awareness about the importance of quality and origin products for the agri-food sector**, while stimulating policy debates on its key challenges and priorities. This edition also marked the third meeting of the GI SMART EU MAP: representatives of the European Institutions, regional and national authorities, GI producers and GI SMART partners gathered to bridge the scientific evidence emerging from the project with EU policy design. For this purpose, each roundtable was introduced by a short presentation from the project, providing scientific insights to inspire the discussion among speakers. The debates focused on **identifying concrete, forward-looking proposals for the next programming period, with the aim of strengthening the value of Geographical Indications for territories.**

The meeting kicked off with a video message from the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reform of the European Commission, **Mr Raffaele Fitto**, who underlined that *“Geographical indications are not a marginal part of our policies; they embody our European identity, drive economic growth, and act as a bridge between regions, communities, and global markets”*. **He reaffirmed the European Commission’s commitment to strengthening and promoting this heritage across Europe and worldwide** *“Together, we can turn this momentum into a lasting impact for our regions and for future generation”*.

Mr Alessandro Beduschi, President of AREPO and Regional Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of Lombardia followed with welcome remarks, recalling that *“GIs are often called into question and subject to commercial pressures, which makes it all the more necessary to strengthen their recognition and protection. It is therefore essential to promote a shared approach that highlights their economic, cultural, and territorial significance”*.

The first roundtable **“From sustainability practices to consumer perceptions”** explored how sustainability practices adopted along the GI value chain are translated into concrete



outcomes, and to what extent consumers associate Geographical Indications with sustainability. Speakers discussed solutions to make producers' efforts towards sustainability visible and understandable.

Dedicated to “**Public policies supporting territorial development through Geographical Indications: lessons learnt and future strategies**”, the second panel brought together European and regional representatives, as well as key stakeholders. The debate focused on how policies at EU, national and regional level can effectively support Geographical Indications and enhance their territorial impact, notably in view of the upcoming EU Action Plan on GIs and the CAP post-2027.

Mr. César Saldaña, Vice president of AREPO and President of the Conferencia Andaluza de DOP e IGP (CADO) concluded the conference calling for the inclusion of Geographical Indications in the European Commission's strategic approach to agricultural research and innovation, as showed by the valuable example of GI SMART. *“More than ever, Geographical Indications require coherent, ambitious and well-coordinated public policies to fully deliver their long-term strategic value for European agriculture and rural areas.”*

He then joined **Mr. Alessandro Beduschi** (AREPO President), **Ms. Temanuata Girard** (AREPO Treasurer), **MEPs Benoit Cassart and Herbert Dorfmann**, and the Heads of Unit on Geographical Indications and on External communication and promotion policy of DG Agri, **Mr. Joao Onofre** and **Ms. Cristina Rueda Catry**, to the tasting of quality and origin products from AREPO member Regions.

The tasting once again proved to be a highlight of the event, attracting strong participation and interest from institutional representatives and stakeholders alike. By showcasing a wide diversity of GI products, it offered the opportunity for direct exchange with producers and further reinforced the event's objective of promoting the value of Geographical Indications for regional development and the EU agri-food sector.

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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.