



AREPO POSITION ON THE ROADMAP FOR “FARM TO FORK” STRATEGY

The [Association of European Regions for Products of Origin \(AREPO\)](#) is a network of Regions and producer associations that deals with products of origin and EU quality schemes. It represents 33 European regions and over 700 associations of producers for over 50% of European GIs.

Agriculture and the agri-food industry are essential pillars of our regional economies and they are rooted in our culture and identity. These two sectors play a major role in maintaining economic and social activity in rural areas and are therefore crucial in preserving the territorial balance at regional level. However, agriculture and the food industry also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and they are particularly concerned with the challenges related to mitigating the effects of climate change.

In this context, **AREPO advocates the emergence of a truly sustainable European food policy, that guarantees access to high-quality and sustainable food to all EU citizens, while ensuring food security and sovereignty, the protection of our environment and a decent living for farmers.**

AREPO considers that the “Farm to Fork” strategy and the New European Green Deal represent an unique opportunity to promote more equitable, democratic and sustainable agricultural and food systems, capable of tackling climate change and contributing to the preservation of the environment, by pursuing a bottom-up approach and thus renewing the link between farmers and consumers.

REGIONS AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD TRANSITIONS

All the initiatives related to sustainable agricultural and food transitions are the result of local experiences and practices. It is crucial to establish a common framework and a set of tools at European level, just as it is fundamental to be able to support and adapt these approaches to the needs of the territories in order to achieve change on a broader scale.

Our regions have long been involved in these processes of transforming agricultural and food systems, in particular through the management and implementation of Regional Rural Development Programs. This decentralization also goes in the direction of a democratisation of EU policies and tools and makes it possible to better meet citizens’ expectations by encouraging multi-stakeholder dialogue at local level.

- **AREPO asks the European Commission to be associated in the implementation of the F2F Strategy**, especially in the framework of the forthcoming consultations, but also in the different governance bodies and forums that will be launched at EU level.
- **AREPO regrets the lack of a truly territorial and regional dimension in the Commission’s proposals for the CAP post-2020.** The objectives of the future F2F strategy cannot be achieved without the reintroduction of this territorial logic in the future CAP, which is key for the deployment of the multiple approaches to sustainable agricultural and food transitions.
- **AREPO calls for the reintroduction of the notion of Regional Management Authorities** for the implementation of rural development interventions and **requests the full association of Regions to the drafting of the National Strategic Plans** and to the coordinating bodies set up by the European Commission.

EU QUALITY POLICY: A PILLAR OF FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

EU quality policy is a public policy aiming at delivering **public goods** to the whole European society. As such, it should be considered a **major pillar of the Farm to Fork (F2F)** strategy for a transition towards a European sustainable food system.

In fact, EU quality policy already contributes to several fundamental objectives of F2F strategy: addressing citizens demand for traditional products with the **highest possible standards of food safety and quality**; ensuring economic sustainability thanks to conditions of fair competition and **higher producers income**; ensuring **sustainable food production** through the protection of rural landscape and sustainable management and reproduction of natural resources; and providing **clear communication to consumers** concerning product characteristics and origin. Furthermore, geographical indications (GIs) traceability and protection mechanism represent an important and efficient tool to **combatting food fraud**.

Finally, GIs protection is often associated with the production of public goods, such as conservation of **biodiversity**, contribution to **animal welfare**, protection of **cultural heritage**, socio-cultural and rural **development** and reduction of poverty, in particular in mountainous and remote regions, where the farming sector accounts for a significant part of the economy and production costs are high.

Nevertheless, GIs potential in delivering public goods is still underutilized in the EU. A renewed attention from policy makers is needed to strengthen EU quality policy and maximise its contribution to F2F strategy. Hence, the EC should work to:

- **Strengthen the role of GI producer groups** in particular with regard to supply regulation;
- **Ensure that future CAP strategic plans provide the right support for GIs producer groups**, including financial aid for certification and promotion activities; for operating costs of producers groups; for ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of a registered GI impact; for the surveillance of the enforcement of the registered GIs protection; and for coordinated and collective activities aimed at strengthening the supply chain;
- Assure credibility of GI system and consumer trust **improving enforcement and harmonise controls in MS**;
- **Strengthen protection** to cover more effectively attempts by third parties to abuse the GIs reputation, including protection against any bad faith registration in second-level domain names;
- **Improve consumer awareness of GI logos** also by maintaining a sizable budget covering promotion of EU quality schemes;
- **Improve EU quality policy transparency and information for consumer**, creating an online tool with easier access to readable information concerning product specifications and characteristics;
- **Ensure further simplification and harmonisation of EU Quality Policy**, namely implementing the simplification of amendment procedure for products' specifications, while ensuring a level playing field between the different MS through the adoption of common guidelines for the competent national authorities;
- **Overcome the lack of harmonisation among MS providing** for trainings addressed to the national authorities involved in the process of GIs registration and publishing EC guidelines on the interpretation of GIs regulation concerning internal evaluation criteria for GIs registration and amendments;
- **Clarify labelling rules for processed products using a GI as an ingredient**;



- **Reconsider the place of GIs within EU trade policy**, systematically ensuring their total protection in all bilateral and multilateral agreements;
- **Include EU quality schemes in EC strategic approach to EU agricultural R&I**, defining specific priorities and increasing funding and dedicated project calls for strengthening their contribution to public goods creation;
- **Financially support the creation of new formative offers to train GIs experts** with knowledge on local and traditional products, with a transversal multidisciplinary approach.

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