



EU GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND NUTRITION LABELLING: CAN A SCORE PROVIDE MEANINGFUL INFORMATION TO CONSUMER?

In the framework of the Farm to Fork strategy, the European Commission has announced several actions aiming to facilitate the shift towards healthier and more sustainable diets. Particularly, in order to empower consumers to make healthy food choices by understanding labelling information, **the EC intends to establish a harmonised mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPNL).**

AREPO agrees with the European Commission that one of the biggest challenges ahead is to be able to consume and eat within planetary limits and preserving health. However, we do not believe **that FOPNL alone can engender such an ambitious long-term change.**

As a matter of fact, fighting off **unbalanced nutrition**, recognised as cause of obesity and several lethal diseases, **requires nutrition education and better communication on the importance of a diversified and balanced diet and an active lifestyle.**

Healthy diets should include a wide variety of foods taken in different amounts and forms. In this respect, EU Geographical Indications (GIs) provide an essential part of this variety, being often alternatives to highly standardised forms of diet dominated by conventional foods.

Dietary diversity, encompasses different categories of food, tastes, seasonality, freshness, culture and skills. EU PDOs and PGIs fit in this context.

It is worth noting that many GIs are associated with specific diets recognized for their interest in terms of nutrition, as proved by the renowned example of the Mediterranean diet. The traditional ways of cultivating plants and raising animals, the influence of natural conditions, the human practices as well as the traditional methods of processing and conservation, are crucial in the nutritional quality of GI products.

Furthermore, it cannot be forgotten that EU Geographical Indications (GIs) are often **associated with the production of public goods**, considered in terms of sustainable rural development, growth and employment, diversification of rural economy, protection of natural resources and landscape, welfare of farm animals, food security, food safety and traceability¹. As a result, **they contribute in several ways to sustainability** (social, economic, environmental) **and to sustainable food system, representing pivotal instruments to meet the objectives at the heart of the Farm to Fork strategy.**

Additionally, they are a **guarantee of safe, traceable and high-quality product**, their production strictly complying with the conditions and standards detailed in the product specification.

Concerning the options of nutrition labelling currently under evaluation by the EC, AREPO firmly believes that a system like the Nutri-score, currently in place in several EU Member States, will not be fit for the purpose of providing clear and accurate information to consumers **due to the oversimplification of information provided**, especially with regards to GIs and traditional products. Besides the **limited information provided on nutritional balance**, this system ignores the hedonistic and cultural dimension of products under EU Quality schemes. Cognitive sciences show that the **taste and pleasure** associated to the quality of food, bring important health benefits. To this, we should add that GIs are expression of their territories of origin and are associated with the **sense of belonging to cultural communities** where they play an important role.

¹ [AREPO Position Paper on European Commission Evaluation of Geographical Indications and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed Protected in the EU](#), January 2020



As a result, AREPO would like to organise this public conference to enrich the debate at EU level concerning nutrition labelling. Particularly, we would like to seize this opportunity **to present to the European Institutions and relevant EU stakeholders the concerns and the perspective of EU Regions and producer associations dealing with quality products.** In addition, we would like **to consider possible ways forward to enhance the value of geographical indications in EU dietary patterns, without forgetting their primary role as tools for rural development.**