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## Press Release

### AREFLH and AREPO join forces to reaffirm the key role of European regions in CAP implementation and rebuff disproportionate budget cuts

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On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, AREFLH (Assembly of European Horticultural Regions) organised a meeting of its College of Regions, which was also attended by AREPO (Association of European Regions for Products of Origin) representatives, with the objective of **defining a common position vis-à-vis the European Commission's legislative proposals on the future of the CAP post 2020 and the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the 2021-2027 period.**

Both regional networks expressed their growing concern towards the Commission's forecasted cuts to the agricultural budget, in particular for the second pillar, which appears to be in full contrast with its objective to achieve sustainable, developed, vibrant and youth-led rural areas. This means that the future CAP is expected to extend its scope and achieve both old and new objectives with a disproportionately reduced budget. This is an unacceptable principle that risks jeopardizing the future of EU agriculture, the common market organisation and rural areas. **In AREFLH's and AREPO's view, a strong, competitive and sustainable CAP, with common and simple rules across the EU, can only be achieved through a strong agricultural budget.**

Over the past few months, AREFLH and AREPO have strongly advocated for a future CAP that maintains a direct relationship with the rural territory through the active role of EU Regions, which play a crucial role when it comes to define and implement agricultural and rural development policies at local level. However, **in its current form, the CAP proposal tends to marginalise or even threaten the role and autonomy of European regions in the management of the CAP**, granting them with the mere task of implementing measures established at national level. Under this scenario, regional entities, which in many EU countries exert important legislative functions in the agricultural sector, would therefore be called upon to play the marginal role of an "intermediate body".

Consequently, **applying such organisational scheme to the EAFRD would risk disbanding a wealth of management experience gained over the years in many European regions** at a time when various realities are working to build forms of "reinforced autonomy", thus generating the impossibility of outlining the development of territorial systems and of grasping their local specificities. For this reason, the full application of the principle of subsidiarity proposed at EU level should not be applied only at Member State level but at the level of government that is most suited to successfully implement the different policies.

Therefore, **AREFLH and AREPO stand together to reaffirm the necessity of safeguarding the central role of European Regions in the definition and implementation of agricultural and rural development policies and increasing their role in EU decision-making processes.**

AREFLH's President and Regional Minister of the Emilia-Romagna region Ms. Simona Caselli and AREPO's President and Vice-governor of Crete, Ms. Theano Vrentzou-Skordalaki, saluted the result of their collaboration highlighting that this common initiative strengthens the voice of European Regions and should be enlarged to other regional networks dealing with agriculture and rural development.



Furthermore, Ms. Caselli highlighted the *"necessity that the CAP budget is not reduced if we are to respond to the challenges of the future through a sustainable and quality agriculture that can guarantee food security for consumers and an adequate income for farmers"*.

Ms. Vrentzou-Skordalaki stated that *"the future CAP should re-affirm and respect the principle of shared management for the European Structural Funds and the principle of subsidiarity. CAP objectives may only be reached through the regionalisation of the largest part of CAP instruments, respecting the distribution of powers within each Member State, notably in terms of the legal competences of the EU's Regions when implementing the policy"*.

**\*Attached: AREFLH and AREPO joint position paper on the CAP post 2020**

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The **Association of European Regions for Product of Origin (AREPO)** and the **Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH)** represent European regions and producers' organisations that deal with fruit, vegetables and ornamental plant production as well as products of origin.

The two networks gather together 40 regions from 9 different EU Member States, representing over 50% of Geographical Indications and 45% of fruit and vegetables and ornamental plant production in Europe.

Their common aim is to represent, promote and defend the interests of producers and consumers of European Regions involved in the valorisation of high quality food products.