



WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE FINAL DOCUMENT

Ancona, 27th May 2010

Foreword

The President of the Workgroup, Jago Lasić, opens the proceedings by thanking participants, reminding everyone that the workgroup for agriculture is particularly active and that there have been many projects carried out over the course of the years, from its start in 2004 to today. The Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has consolidated its importance and the event is now internationally known. The participation of all the countries of the eastern Adriatic-Ionian confirms the strengthening of cultural, social and economic links between the two shores of the Adriatic basin. These relations are increasingly based on friendship and reciprocal project-based collaboration and have over time enabled the success of several projects proposed within this Workgroup. The possibility of cooperation between countries belonging to one and the same geographical area is very important at a time of a particular international economic crisis such as the current one.

The workgroup on agriculture has decided to deal mainly with themes concerning the olive-growing and wine-producing sectors; it is essentially, therefore, with such topics, that today's discussion will deal. The President leaves the floor to the workgroup participants.

The representative of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce described the activities carried out in 2009, agreed at the time of the Forum held in Agrinion (Greece), in May 2009. The workgroup's activities in this period were concentrated on the organisation of professional courses, at various levels, for olive oil tasters: a first level one (course on the physiological eligibility for the tasting of virgin olive oils) which took place in Split and two second level ones (certification sessions), which both took place in Croatia (in Split and Zara) in compliance with the requirements laid down by Community and Italian regulations. 50 professional extra virgin olive oil tasters have been trained and such initiatives have earned a notable success.

Strategic guidelines

The workgroup discussion, taking its starting point from the interesting project carried out for the training of extra virgin olive oil tasters, concentrated on the possibility of implementing further actions within the olive-growing sector. This is a growing sector and production in the Adriatic basin is of notably high quality: particular attention was paid to the production of niches and the aspect of consumer use in terms of making people aware of high quality oils. There is agreement on the fact that all those activities aimed at enabling consumers to recognise a good extra virgin olive oil should be encouraged and that quality of production should be raised. Those behaviours aimed at making consumers more aware and responsible should be encouraged, so the consumer can be more active in the market. Quality is the solution to overcoming the international economic crisis and global competition can be faced only through a better awareness of the added value entailed by a quality product.

One of the elements specific to the agricultural sector is represented by the very close link of production with the region: a quality product can only be produced by quality land. The added value of sustainable production guarantees environmental sustainability and with this the preservation of biodiversity. The protection of the countryside is one of the results of good production processes and represents an important resource, in which to invest to boost forms of rural tourism, giving agricultural enterprises the opportunity to diversify and thus increase their own competitiveness in a market which more and more requires multi-functionality.

From a project point of view we intend to continue the oil-tasting projects implemented previously in Croatia with further actions. In particular it has been shown that there is a need to create an official working panel, to broaden the intervention also into the promotional sector. Within such a context, the idea took place to involve all the regions of the Adriatic-Ionian in an international event: a far-reaching "International Competition of extra virgin olive oil", which will enable a greater visibility of the producers and will enhance the value of the olive-growing heritage. It is also suggested, within this, that there are promotional and cultural activities.

With the aim of strengthening cultural and social links between the two shores of the Adriatic and the Ionian we recall the project to set up a **diffused museum of Adriatic and Ionian civilisation as a reference centre and for a comparison of historical and current links of the population** living in the Adriatic and Ionian Euroregion.

Finally, particular interest has been shown this year to the workshop entitled "*Common Agricultural Policy after 2013: Future prospects and opportunities*" which took place in the Polytechnic University of the Marche, School of Economics, and was organised by Mr. Roberto Esposti.



Conclusions (concerted actions)

After a long discussion, participants in the Workgroup on agriculture have agreed on the general guidelines of some possible actions. These actions pursue the common objective of territorial cooperation between both shores of the Adriatic and the Ionian and aim at supporting an agricultural activity based on high-quality productions in an increasingly "common" area, i.e. the Adriatic Euroregion. High production standards, combined with food safety appear to be the essential elements to guarantee a competitive growth for the sector in an increasingly global market.

The following actions have been proposed:

Description of actions

Level III course (Panel Courses) Level III course for professional oil tasters (for those in possession of the second level certificate – certification session certificates) to form a functional and working panel.

Objectives:

- Creation of professional profiles for the olive sector and a panel of olive oil tasters who are expert and officially recognized;
- Stimulation of forms of collaboration for the diffusion of an awareness culture in the consumption of olive oil;

Professional courses for the training of ham tasters. Such a product, as a matter of fact, brings together the countries of the Adriatic basin and the training of professional figures to work in the sector can contribute to the growth and development of the producing regions.

Objectives:

1. The creation of professional figures working in the pork sector and of an officially recognised panel of professional expert tasters;
2. The encouragement of forms of collaboration for the spread of an awareness culture regarding such products;

International competition of extra-virgin olive oils: the project assumption under discussion can be the occasion for reflection and for an exchange of opinions and experiences, as well as the opportunity to build a common strategy to meet the needs of the sector and set the important priority of quality as a fundamental value to safeguard olive growing and, together with the sector, the economy and culture of producing countries in the common Adriatic area against the background of a European Union which is increasingly enlarging towards the East.

Objectives:

- Food education targeted to the consumption of olive oil, actions to speed up the growth of the sector in countries, which have traditionally been important olive oil producers and offer good prospects for the sector economic development;
- Involvement and enhancement of olives and olive oil products and of all those players involved in the olive oil supply chain on both Adriatic and Ionian shores, in order to identify good models for actions to undertake.

Organisation of organised tasting sessions and exhibitions of typical products within the Forum when they meet annually. The host countries can also organise cultural exchange sessions between participating countries.

Objectives:

- Increased focus on the international dimension of the cultural, entrepreneurial and institutional relations between producers of the AIC Forum countries;
- Exchange of experiences and know-how between institutions, entrepreneurs and producers interested in the food and wine sector.

With reference to the possibility of implementing *regional cooperation projects* co-financed by the European Commission, summary reports will be available, on the AIC Forum official web site, to explain the new measures such as: IPA, SEE, ENPI and MED.

Objectives:

- Stimulation of a widespread tendency to draft and present EU projects;
- Stimulation of the knowledge of European policies as an opportunity for local development.



Possible participation in a constitution of a *documentation centre – diffused Museum* of Adriatic and Ionian civilisation which, starting with Ancona, sets up a network of offices in every country belonging to the Forum, with regard to agricultural activities (see the suggestion of the Tourism Workgroup).

Objectives:

- Diffusion of Adriatic civilization culture and traditions;
- Setting up of a centre for cultural and experience exchange;

A further *project has been suggested for the promotion and spread of awareness of the therapeutic and curative use of ancient medicinal herbs.*

Objectives:

- the spread of the cultivation of medicinal herbs;
- the creation of a workgroup for the spread of medicinal herbs.

With regard to the planned actions described, an appropriate partnership regional network will be created and specific funds identified. Participants in the Workgroup have expressed their interest in said actions and expressed their willingness to implement actions aimed at achieving the above objectives.