



## WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE

### FINAL DOCUMENT

Agrinio, 29th April 2009

#### *Preliminary introduction*

The Workgroup President Mr. Jago Lasić opens the proceedings expressing his thanks to participants and reminding that the Workgroup on agriculture has been particularly active, as many projects have been successfully organized since the setting up of the Workgroup in 2004 so far. The Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce has consolidated its importance and the event is now internationally known. The participation of all Eastern Adriatic and Ionian countries confirms the fact that the cultural, social and economic relations between both shores of the Adriatic-Ionian area have been consolidated. These relations are increasingly based on friendship and reciprocal project collaboration and have over time enabled the success of several projects proposed within this Workgroup. The possibility of cooperation between countries of a single geographical area is very important in this period of delicate international crisis.

The Workgroup on agriculture has agreed to mainly discuss issues related to the wine and olive oil sector; hence this will be the focus of today's discussion. The President then leaves the floor to the Workgroup participants.

The reference person for the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona has reported on the activities carried out in 2008-09, which were agreed on the occasion of the Split Forum in Croatia in April 2008. In this period the Workgroup activities have mainly focused on the organization of two professional training courses for olive oil tasters: a first-level course (training course on the physiological eligibility for the tasting of virgin olive oils) and a second-level course (certification sessions), which both took place in Croatia (in Split and Zadar) in compliance with the requirements foreseen by community and Italian norms. Over 40 professional extra-virgin olive oil tasters were trained on these occasions, which both turned out to be very successful.

#### *Strategic guidelines*

The discussion within the Workgroup has started from the interesting project implemented for the training of virgin olive oil tasters and focused on the possibility to organize further actions for the olive sector. This sector is currently growing and in Greece there are high quality productions, too: special attention is paid to niche productions and consumption. Participants have agreed on the need to stimulate all the activities, which are targeted to enable consumers to recognize a quality extra-virgin olive oil, as well as on the need to incentivate behaviours aimed at increasing the quality of productions. Global competition can be won only with better awareness of the added value that is brought by quality products.

Hence the firm belief to carry on with the olive oil tasting projects started in 2009 in Croatia with further related actions. To this end, an official and effective working panel is required and promotional actions should also be undertaken. Against this background, the idea has been expressed to involve all territories of the Adriatic-Ionian area in a far-reaching international event that makes it possible to make producers more visible and promote olive oil, with promotional and cultural actions foreseen by this event.

The debate moves on to address the wine sector. It is pointed out here that an interesting territorial marketing project has already been implemented for the joint promotion of Verdicchio wine producing areas, i.e. the "European Network of Green Wines". The project, which was started in 2006, involves Italy and Spain and has recently been shown a large interest to participate also by Slovenia and Austria. It could be an opportunity to extend activities to the Adriatic-Ionian area, Albania and Greece, with the possibility for these areas to be involved in the integrated promotion of their own production territories with a strong focus on the association between wine and culture.

In order to strengthen the cultural and social relations between both shores of the Adriatic and Ionian seas, attention is paid to the possibility of setting up a Documentation centre-Diffused Museum of the Adriatic and



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Ionian civilization as a reference centre and a centre for the comparison between the historical and current links of the populations currently leaving in Adriatic and Ionian Euroregion.

Finally, the tasting of Italian and Greek typical products, like extra-virgin olive oil, wine and cold cuts and cheeses has turned out to be particularly interesting and appreciated – the tasting was organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona in collaboration with the OLEA (Laboratory Organization of Experts and Tasters) and the wine producers association ASSIVIP. Among its strategic and programming guidelines, the Workgroup has proposed to continue such actions and to choose the yearly meeting of the AIC Forum as the main moment of encounter with products and producers.

### *Conclusions (concerted actions)*

After a long discussion, participants in the Workgroup for 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 and Ionian 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**

Second-level course (certification sessions) for those who already possess the first-level certificate (certificate of physiological eligibility for the tasting of virgin olive oil) and Third-level course for professional olive oil tasters (for those who already possess the certification sessions certificates), with the aim of setting up a functioning and effective 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;

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.

Enlargement of the European Network of Green Wines: The project activity aims at stimulating the development of the wine sector and, more generally, at favouring a far-reaching territorial marketing strategy, which should be based on the collaboration with other producing areas of the Adriatic-Ionian area.



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### Objectives:

- Joint initiatives in the wine growing, food and wine, tourist and cultural sector for the dissemination of the wine culture;
- Promotion of actions aimed at increasing the value of the territory and the development of tourism linked to local productions;

Organization of crossed tasting events and displays of typical food products within the framework of the annual AIC Forum meetings, as moments of cultural exchange 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 territorial cooperation projects co-financed by the European Commission, summary information sheets will be published on the AIC Forum official website providing data on the new tools available, like e.g. IPA, SEE, ENPI and MED.

### Objectives:

- Stimulation of a widespread community programming activity;
- Stimulation of the knowledge of European policies as an opportunity for local development.

Possible participation in the planned setting up of a Documentation centre –Diffused Museum of Adriatic and Ionian civilization, which should start from Ancona and network cities and towns in any country member to the AIC Forum (see proposal by the Workgroup for Tourism).

### Objectives:

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

As regards the project activities described so far, an adequate territorial partnership network should be created and the necessary 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.