



WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE

FINAL DOCUMENT

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Introduction

The Chairman of the Workgroup, Jago Lasić, opened the proceedings reminding everyone that the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea has obtained, even this year, the important support of the European Parliament. This proves how well known this event has become. The big participation of all the east Adriatic and Ionian Countries strengthens the cultural, social and economic relations between the two shores of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. These relations have been increasingly characterized by friendship and fruitful project collaboration, thus ensuring the success of numerous projects that have been proposed by this Workgroup over the years. In the last days the Steering Committee of the Forum has met and discussed the Adriatic Ionian initiative while, today, each Workgroup will start debating the topic it has been assigned in order to elaborate the 2008 activity plan.

The Workgroup on Agriculture has mainly been focused on issues related to the olive and wine sectors. Therefore today's discussion will essentially deal with these topics. The chairman leaves the floor to the Workgroups' participants.

The point of reference of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce has reported about the activities carried out in the year 2007-08, agreed upon at the Forum held in Portonovo (Ancona) in May 2007. The activity of the Workgroup has mainly been focused on the organization of a training course for olive oil tasters which was held in Croatia, in compliance with the Community and Italian regulation requirements. Twenty-two extra virgin olive oil professional tasters have been trained and the initiative has been quite successful.

Strategic guidelines

Drawing inspiration from the interesting project regarding the training of extra virgin olive oil tasters, the Workgroups' discussion was focused on the possibility of carrying out some actions in the olive growing sector. This is a rising sector in the east Adriatic and Ionian area where there are indeed very good productions, although consumption shows some criticalities. In particular, it is essential to foster all those activities aiming at giving consumers the necessary tools to recognize a good quality extra virgin olive oil. Furthermore it is necessary to stimulate all those actions that contribute to the improvement of the production quality. We can beat the global competition only if we become further aware of the added value that a quality product brings with it. More specifically we focused our attention on the following criticalities:

- Lack of information among consumers of the Adriatic Ionian area on the organoleptic and nutritional properties of olive oil. It is fundamental to be able to recognize a quality olive oil in order to foster its consumption and encourage producers to improve quality standards, through suitable production, making and preservation techniques.
- Lack of highly skilled figures such as the **panel leaders**, capable of working in this sector certifying the quality of the oils produced.



- Necessity of exploiting the potential of the oil growing sector by offering specific package tours.

Therefore we believe it is essential to have a follow-up to the project carried out in **Zadar** in March 2008 by taking related actions. Furthermore the foundations to extend the intervention to the promotional sector have already been laid down. We would like to involve all the territories of the Adriatic Ionian area in a wide-ranging international event that can allow a greater visibility of the producers. Furthermore we want to enhance the **olive assets** by carrying out promotional and cultural activities.

The remainder of the discussion regarded the wine sector and on this point everyone was reminded of an already ongoing and quite interesting territorial marketing project aiming at jointly promoting the territories where the Verdicchio is produced, the so called "European Network of Green Shaded Wines". This project was initiated in 2006 and involves Italy and Spain; recently both Slovenia and Portugal have shown interest in joining it. The debate highlighted the opportunity for the countries of the East Adriatic and Ionian area that produce wine with Verdicchio-like characteristics to take part in the project: these areas could be involved in an integrated promotion of the corresponding production territories based on the combination of wine and culture.

Conclusions (agreed actions)

After a long discussion, the participants in the Workgroup agreed on the general guidelines concerning some actions that shall be carried out. Such actions share a general objective, namely the territorial cooperation between the two shores of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. They are also aimed at fostering a high quality production agriculture in an area which is becoming increasingly "common": the Adriatic Euroregion. The high production standard combined with **food safety** are indeed essential elements for the sector growth that shall be more competitive on a market which is becoming increasingly global.

There are two main actions that shall be taken:

Description of the interventions:

- 1) **International competition of extra-virgin olive oils:** the project idea that was discussed can be seen as a starting point for deliberation, an exchange of opinions and experiences as well as an opportunity to develop a common strategy to meet the olive sector requirements and prioritize a changeover to quality. This is a fundamental value to face the challenge of safeguarding olive-growing as well as the economy and culture of the production countries in the common Adriatic area, in a Europe whose enlargement is increasingly shifting to the East.

Objectives:

- The main goal is to foster **food education** related to the consumption of olive oil, thus boosting the sector growth in those countries such as the east Adriatic and Ionian area which have a strong tradition in its cultivation and good prospects for its economic development. In this context it is possible to seize the opportunity of the tourism exhibition that will take place in Budva – Montenegro in November / December 2008 and will be focused on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro. We suggest a show of quality oils and a short course on oil properties, primarily addressed to consumers, restaurant managers and hotel keepers.



- To involve and enhance the olive assets and the sector workers of the two shores of the Adriatic Sea in order to identify a valid action paradigm.
- Creation of a “**Panel**” **group** of expert tasters with the aim of **identifying professional figures** that shall certify the oils quality.
- Combination with local dishes and traditional wine of the competition participants.
- Possibility for the winners of taking part in an important Italian trade fair.
- To emphasize the **international character of the cultural, entrepreneurial, institutional relations** between the Italian and the Balkan producing Countries realities.
- **Know-how exchange** of good practices among entrepreneurs, institutions and stakeholders of the Adriatic- Ionian area.

2) Enlargement of the European Network of Green shaded wines: the project action aims at fostering the development of the wine sector and, in broader terms, a wide-ranging strategy of territorial marketing based on the collaboration with other production realities of the Adriatic Ionian area.

Objectives:

We suggest to enlarge the existing network by involving the wine producers in:

- **Joint initiatives** in the wine-growing, food-and-wine, tourism and cultural sectors;
- The promotion of **actions aimed** at enhancing the territory and fostering local productions related tourism;
- The **enhancement** of “green shaded wines” as a typical element of the territories belonging to the network ;
- The **promotion of experiences exchange** in the wine production and promotion;
- The collaboration in the spreading of the **wine culture**;
- The **joint participation** in trade fairs on wine and wine-and-food tourism.

As for the two project actions that have been described, it is recommended to create a suitable territorial partners network and to find the necessary funding channels. The workshop participants showed great interest in such actions and are willing to take steps aimed at achieving such objectives.