

WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE FINAL DOCUMENT



Corfu, 11th June 2014

Introduction

In regards to this year's regulations for each Workgroup theme at the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Workgroup on Agriculture had to elaborate on a special theme, possibly one of the key themes for the future of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion: Mediterranean diet.

Thanks to the MEDDIET project, financed by ENPI CBC MED, we were able to widen this theme due to numerous exhibitions from partner institutions of the project, as well as from other experts in this field especially invited from various countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion (especially from Italy, Greece, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania).

This year's goal was the exchange of views in regards to this special issue, on one side by adding some instruments for raising awareness about the Mediterranean diet promoted by the MEDDIET project (guidelines for schools and local authorities and the quality brand MEDDIET for caterers), on the other side emphasizing the peculiarities of each country of the Macroregion through presentations of pilot projects and best practices.

Strategic guidelines

Various exhibitions resulted in specific themes partly addressed last year, also within the framework of the Workgroup on Agriculture. Namely, the Mediterranean diet is also strongly connected to the theme of quality, sanitary control and compliance with European and International standards for food products, as necessary preconditions, not only in regards to health and welfare of the consumers, but also for their greater competitiveness on the international markets.

Agreed actions

We will list, briefly, some of the topics exchanged by the participants of the Workgroup, with the aim to continue, in the near future, with the cooperation between different Chambers, but also other public and private institutions working in this sector:

- Identify the theme of the Mediterranean diet as one of the main issues towards which various initiatives should be directed on local and international level within the framework of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion, and wider across the entire Mediterranean area. Mediterranean diet, besides being part of the UNESCO's World Heritage, should be previously acknowledged and strongly confirmed as an intelligent culture model, which applies not only on the proper nutrition, but also on the quality of life, which should be more affirmed within the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion.
- A willingness was expressed for establishing communication between the already existing initiatives/projects and the promotion of new ones mutually, paying special attention to the territorial cooperation programs within the Adriatic and Ionian area and the Mediterranean. Of particular relevance is the initiative "Taste the Mediterranean", presented by the Croatian Medical Association



- and “Initiative of the Aegean Kitchen”, presented by the Chamber of Commerce of the Cyclades Islands.
- Mediterranean diet as a theme, with all of its health consequences, quality of agricultural products and the way of life, should also definitely have a positive impact on tourism, or it should become a promotional instrument for these areas. So, it is our duty to make the effort for the Mediterranean diet to become a value and an instrument which should be applied within the context of initiatives which refer to the 4th Pillar of the EUSAIR Strategy of the Macroregion, which is exactly about “sustainable tourism”.
- A need was stressed for projects such as MEDDIET to be useful also for sensitizing the politics for each individual country, as there are stronger interests on the market making the cheap and more accessible products prevail over quality. Negative health consequences are a result of such actions (the highest rate of obesity is found in the poorest layers of society). Therefore all Chambers of Commerce are invited to become one of the main proponents of this action, raising awareness as a national policy, regionally and locally.
- Another subject that came up is the one connected to the need for caterers, or at least all economic subjects willing to invest in the Mediterranean diet (including the adoption of a quality brand that relates to the Mediterranean diet), to find an economic and business interest which could be a positive influence also in the light of being recognised as being socially important towards the consumer (for example, there was talk about tax exemptions or favourable bank loans, and other kind of incentives).
- The issue of the high price of quality food products (km nula, BIO products, quality certificates, etc...), has diverted the attention of the Group towards innovation in agriculture and food chains. The countries of the Macroregion, with the aim of the Mediterranean diet becoming really a recognizable element of this area, need to invest not only in education and raising awareness, but also in new technologies related especially to this chain, in order to try and lower the costs of the end product keeping the end product not only high in quality, but also accessible to all.
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Conclusions

As part of this year's Round Table on Agriculture an important document of commitment was signed (MEDDIET declaration) by the Presidents of the Forum Chambers of Commerce present on Corfu coming from various different countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion, together with other partners on the project like the Greek Chamber of Commerce from Messiniana and the Cultural Foundation “Putevi maslina”, as well as other organisations that participated in the work of the Table, like the Croatian Medical Association and Vitaminoteka Nutrition Consulting (Croatia).

This document, which will also be signed by other countries within the framework of the future activities of the project MEDDIET, presents the first important joint commitment to work together on this theme, which will, we hope, become a priority within the framework of the future EUSAIR Action plan.

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