



WORKGROUP ON AGRICULTURE FINAL DOCUMENT

Budva, 12th May 2011

Foreword

The Workgroup president Mr. Jago Lasić opens proceedings by thanking participants and reminding that the Workgroup for agriculture is particularly active and that many projects have been implemented over these years since the start of its activities in 2004. The Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has consolidated its important and the event is now internationally known. The participation of all 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-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 for Agriculture decided to mainly address topics related to the olive oil and wine sectors, although this year interesting new developments have concerned medicinal herbs and their various uses; the meeting will therefore mainly discuss olive oil and wine related issues. The President reminds participants that Bosnia started a very interesting olive production with major investments in the sector; hence the need to comply with clearly defined environmental constraints in line with European ones in order to achieve high-quality production.

The representative of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce describes the activities carried out in 2010, agreed at the time of the Forum held in Agrinion (Greece), in May 2010. The workgroup's activities in this period focused on the organisation of professional courses, at various levels, for olive oil tasters: in particular, the panel leader course took place in Split (Croatia) in September 2010. The course saw the participation of over 25 people and concerned the training of panel leaders for the management of Tasting Committees for the tasting of virgin and extra-virgin olive oils. This course will make it possible for the panel group, which includes the professional profiles trained through the training courses organized in recent years, to carry out their activity. Additional second level courses for olive oil tasters were also organized, with training provided to totally about 75 professional extra-virgin olive oil tasters at various levels. All these initiatives turned out to be extremely successful.

The President leaves the floor to the workgroup participants.

Strategic guidelines

NETWORKS and QUALITY were the keywords of the Workgroup discussion - networks between agrofood businesses and institutions, and quality productions. These are the elements that should serve as the basis of the international relations established within the Workgroup, for which the Adriatic is to be intended as a common area uniting both shores of the basin (Adriatic Euroregion) that has common origin, although it boasts different popular, folkloristic and historical traditions that are peculiar to each individual country of the area. *Wine, olive oil and bread* are the basis of our Mediterranean diet. And this diet has unavoidable links with the areas where it is widespread, i.e. the Adriatic and Ionian basin. In this respect, a more organic view of project activities carried out by the Workgroup for agriculture is worth wishing for. This can be achieved through a common logical thread establishing a *continuum* between history, art, traditions and peoples. The proposal to provide the various local initiatives linked to territorial marketing and promotion with a more international flair originates exactly within this framework and focuses on a wider participation by the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian area.

The discussion starts from the interesting projects applied for the training of virgin olive oil tasters and moves on to address the possibility to implement further actions in the olive oil sector. This is a growing sector and production in the Adriatic basin is of notably high quality: particular attention is paid to niche production and the aspect of consumer use in terms of making people aware of high quality olive oils. Olive oil is the expression of the civilization producing it, as well as of an area and a country. As such, it serves as a means of "tourist production", as a product originating in a given territory provides imprinting and images that the tourist brings back home as memories. The training of professionals able to convey these aspects also to tourists is therefore essential for an effective high-quality welcome policy.



Another product that unites Mediterranean cultures is ham. Similarly to the olive oil sector, it can be noticed here too that awareness raising and information actions targeted to consumers are needed in order to make them aware of what they buy and therefore consume. This leads to the proposal to work on targeted training projects, which should be targeted to train professional profiles of ham tasters in the catering and welcome sector on the one hand, as well as to consumers on the other. These projects, designed to closely resemble what has already been done for olive oil tasters, aim at creating professional profiles able to present the product with all its nutritional aspects, as well as the values and traditions it embeds. Only those who have been trained and informed in-depth about the product can correctly transfer the knowledge that lies behind production.

In this context, there is unanimous consensus that targeted measures aimed at enhancing the quality of productions are needed, thereby also stimulating actions aimed at empowering consumers and making them more responsible, so as to turn them into active market players: 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.

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 agricultural sector in an increasingly global market.

The following actions have been proposed:

Description of actions

1) Courses for professional olive oil tasters (also in new production areas, like Bosnia-Herzegovina)

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;

2) 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:

- creation of professional figures working in the pork sector and of an officially recognised panel of professional expert tasters;
- encouragement of forms of collaboration for the spreading of an awareness culture regarding such products;



3) *International competition of extra-virgin olive oils*: this initiative can represent a moment for reflection, the possibility to exchange opinions and experiences and an occasion to build a common strategy to cover the needs of the olive oil sector and the priority to opt for quality as a fundamental value to win the challenge of safeguarding olive oil production.

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.

4) *Extension of the "Pane Nostrum" initiative* to the countries member to the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area. The initiative is aimed at the promotion of the art of bread-making in the entire Adriatic basin. The next edition is scheduled to take place in mid-September 2011 in Senigallia (Ancona) and will see the participation of a baker from Split. The aim of the initiative is to increase the number of bakers coming from the Balkans to provide the event with a more international flair:

Objectives:

- exchange of experiences and know-how between institutions, entrepreneurs and producers interested in the food and wine sector;
- promotion of bread and typical products.

4) *Organization of tasting events and display of typical products* within the framework of the Forum annual editions: hosting countries can organize 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.

5) In combination with the tasting, *medicinal herbs* will be presented to promote and spread knowledge on the use, also in cuisine, of ancient medicinal herbs.

Objectives:

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

6) *Extension of the "Fish Wines" competition* dedicated to the promotion of white wines going well with fish dishes. This could become an important occasion to continue the actions implemented with the "European network of green wines" project, aimed at the promotion of Verdicchio wines at a European level. The aim of the competition might thus be to promote wines that can be served with fish dishes for the entire Adriatic basin.

Objectives:

- exchange of experiences and know-how between institutions, entrepreneurs and producers interested in the wine sector;
- promotion of the products of the Mediterranean diet (bread, olive oil, wine).

With regard to the planned actions described, an appropriate territorial partners' 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.