



**PRESS RELEASE**

## AREFLH elected a new governance in Valencia

The AREFLH General Assembly, marking 25 years since its first meeting, focused on the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food, the revision of the CMO and CSP\* regulations, and water resilience. The Assembly also elected a new President and Vice-President, namely Ramón Fernández-Pacheco Monterreal (Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development of the Andalusia Region) and Lisa Martini (Director of the Italian APO F.IN.A.F).

Ernesto Fernández Pardo, Director General of Industry and Agri-Food Chain of the Valencian Region, opened the discussion by welcoming the participants, highlighting that: "Valencia is proud to host AREFLH 25 years after its first meeting in this city".

The first part of the conference was devoted to the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food. Ricard Ramon i Sumoy, acting head of unit A.1 of the DG AGRI (EU Commission) stressed the importance of this strategic document in the new policy cycle, which will lead to the reform of the CAP in the next financial framework. The representatives of local authorities and producers expressed their point of view and concerns regarding the future of EU agriculture. They all agreed on the importance of "preserving a dedicated CAP budget while promoting new market-based sources of income".

The second panel was about the recent proposal to amend the CMO and SPR regulations. The two representatives of the Commission Fabien Santini (Head of the unit E.1 at DG AGRI) and Luc Berlottier (Senior expert and Coordinator at unit B.1 of DG AGRI) stressed that "Fruit and vegetable sectoral interventions must prioritise market aggregation. The recent efforts to foster simplification and investments should enhance long-term viability for all actors in the chain". Two MEPs also participated in this exchange: Eric Sargiacomo (vice-president of the AGRI Committee), and Céline Imart (rapporteur of this legislative file in the AGRI Committee). The speakers pointed out that "it is necessary to amend the proposal to prevent undesired harm to POs and APOs, such as the limit of 33% of national production for APOs or the new provisions regarding unrecognised POs".

The third panel of the conference focused on water resilience in the fruit and vegetable sector. Martin Adams, Head of the Environment Department, European Environmental Agency and author of the EU 2024 State of Water Report, called attention to the fact that "appropriate water storage solutions and restoration of wetlands can be tools to help mitigate the flood impacts, support biodiversity and store water for drier periods". He exchanged with several AREFLH experts, representing both regions and producers. José-Vicente Benadero García-Morato, Deputy Director General of Hydraulic Planning and Infrastructures in the Regional Government of Valencia, stated that "what Valencia has suffered should serve as a wake-up call for the EU to take this issue seriously".

The newly elected president Ramón Fernández-Pacheco thanked the Valencian Region for generously hosting this meeting and concluded that 'for Andalusia it is a great opportunity to be able to represent and promote the entire fruit and vegetable sector and the excellence of its fresh produce'. Also, the new vice-president Lisa Martini declared that "AREFLH is ready to combine commitment, skills and enthusiasm to face the challenges and seize the opportunities for the next three years".

Finally, they announced that the next General Meeting will be held in March 2026 in the region of Andalusia.

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## \*CSP: CAP Strategic Plans

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The mission of AREFLH, the Assembly of European Horticultural Regions, is to:

- Represent its members: regions, APOs, Pos, and expert members from 15 European countries.
- Defend the economic and social interests of the fruit and vegetable sectors in Europe.
- Encourage exchanges of experience, partnerships, and joint projects between regions and professional organisations.
- Be a driving force behind proposals on the main issues affecting the future of the sector's production in Europe.

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