



ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN HORTICULTURAL REGIONS



**ACTIVITY REPORT
2024**



ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN HORTICULTURAL REGIONS

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EDITORIAL BY SIMONA CASELLI AND JEAN-LOUIS MOULON

This general assembly of April 2025 marks the end of our third term at the head of AREFLH. It has been a stimulating and extraordinary experience, one that we did not expect to lead directly for so long, but for which we had outlined a strategy and vision from the very beginning.

Indeed, in 2016, AREFLH adopted the **strategic project** we called '**AREFLH 2025**', the objectives of which were:

- More collegial, more participative and better connected operations, with a concentrated number of committees.
- A better positioning, with: reinforced lobbying, a greater number of member regions, European projects, the development of synergies with other European networks, and appropriate financial and human resources.

After these 9 years, we can say that these objectives have all been achieved: by tightening the priorities around the CAP and the CMO, research and innovation and promotion, we have made great progress on the issues concerning these strategic priorities and given AREFLH high visibility in Brussels.

On the **CAP/CMO** issue, **AREFLH** obtained the following results:

- definition of the conditions for applying the integrated production technique in the CMO regulation,
- flexibility in the operational programmes (to deal with market crises or the consequences of natural disasters that have affected our producers),
- adoption of retroactive regulations,
- financing of the mutualisation fund,
- role of the regions in the new CAP.

The importance of the CMO and operational programmes for fruit and vegetables was emphasised and presented in 2017 in the CMO White Paper, which will be updated in 2025.



On the topic of **Research and Innovation**, we initiated a European Task Force bringing together several organisations advocating for the priorities of producers to be taken into account in the Horizon 2020 and then Horizon Europe framework programmes. As an extension of this work, the EUVRIN network was created to bring together European research centres specialising in vegetables. All these actions have given us visibility and credibility among research stakeholders, enabling us to join consortia. Since 2016, AREFLH has been a partner in 8 research projects.

As for **Promotion**, the Regio'com guide, updated in 2018, highlighted the good practices and actions carried out in our regions and member organisations to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables. We have also joined the international alliance AIAM5 as an associate member, which allows us to participate in the exchanges and synergies between the actors involved in the promotion of fruit and vegetables.

From the point of view of the **association's operations**, a big step forward has been taken with the establishment of a permanent office in Brussels, which now has two employees. A small and committed board of directors and regular meetings of the Bureau have also enabled us to be responsive and achieve our objectives.

The **representativeness** of AREFLH has also increased: today our members are present in 15 European countries, compared to 6 in 2016.

These successes have enabled us to strengthen our position vis-à-vis the European institutions by becoming a top-level stakeholder. AREFLH is a recognised interlocutor of the institutions and is present in 5 Civil Dialogue Groups, 7 market observatories and expert groups of the European Commission and in the EU CAP network.

The use of technologies that enable remote working, the updating of the website and the presence of AREFLH on social networks have enabled greater **participation** of members and a good level of institutional **communication** that has consolidated the positive image of the organisation.

We have been through some very difficult times, having to deal with the increased frequency of natural disasters linked to climate change, the Covid epidemic, the return of war in Europe; thanks to the motivation of the members and our structure, we have done our best to meet the demands of the sector in these turbulent times.

We are handing over to the new Board of Directors an established AREFLH, politically strong and ready for a **new multi-year strategy**, which will enable it to fulfil its role in a complex future, which will be dominated by new technologies, artificial intelligence, a new European Vision of the Future of Agriculture (hopefully without trade wars) but which, we believe, will be able to bring positive results to our members, thanks to the joint work within AREFLH and the feeling of belonging to our European Union!

Good luck with your work, and long live flowers, fruit and vegetables!





ABOUT AREFLH

Objectives and missions

The Assembly of European Horticultural Regions is a European association created in 2000 on the initiative of a group of Spanish, French and Italian regions. It represents the voice of Europe's fruit, vegetable and horticultural producing regions and their producer organisations.

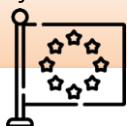
The AREFLH's strength lies in its original structure. It is made up of **three Colleges: the College of Regions, the College of Producers and the College of Associate Members, advisors and experts.** The complementary nature of these three bodies means that the regions and producer representatives can work together to develop common positions.

Our missions:

- Represent and defend the economic and social interests of the fruit, vegetables and flowers sector in dealings with European and international institutions.
- Encourage exchanges of experience, partnerships and joint projects between members.
- Be a driving force behind proposals on the main policies affecting the fruit and vegetable and horticulture sectors.

Priority themes and working groups

Common Agricultural Policy and CMO



Working groups

- CMO
- Water

Research and innovation



- Climate change
- Promotion

Promotion and education on healthy eating



- Crop protection
- F&V school scheme

Governance



PRESIDENT

Simona Caselli,
Delegated by the Emilia-Romagna

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jean-Louis Moulon,
President of IDfel Val de Loire

BUREAU

President : Simona Caselli
Vice-President: Jean-Louis Moulon
Treasurer: Manel Simon, Afrucat
Secretary: Loles Vidal, Valencia

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Members of the Regions' College

Basilicata: Raffaele Beccasio
Catalonia: Joan Godia
Flanders : Timo Delvaux
Central Macedonia: Katerina Zografou
Nouvelle-Aquitaine: Jean-Pierre Raynaud
Valencia: Loles Vidal

Members of the Producers' College

Afrucat: Manel Simon
Assomela: Giovanni Missanelli
Cerafel : Marc Kerangueven
DPA: Wim Rodenburg
FINAF: Lisa Martini
VBT: Luc Vanoirbeek
APFeLSO: François Lafitte (*deputy*)

REGIONS' COLLEGE

PRODUCERS' COLLEGE

COLLEGE OF ASSOCIATE
MEMBERS / EXPERTS

Administrative team



PAULINE PANEGOS
General Secretary

s.general@areflh.org



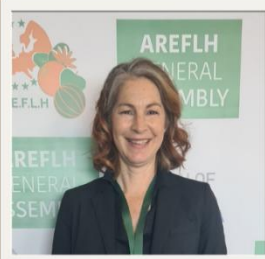
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MICHELE GENTILE
EU policies officer

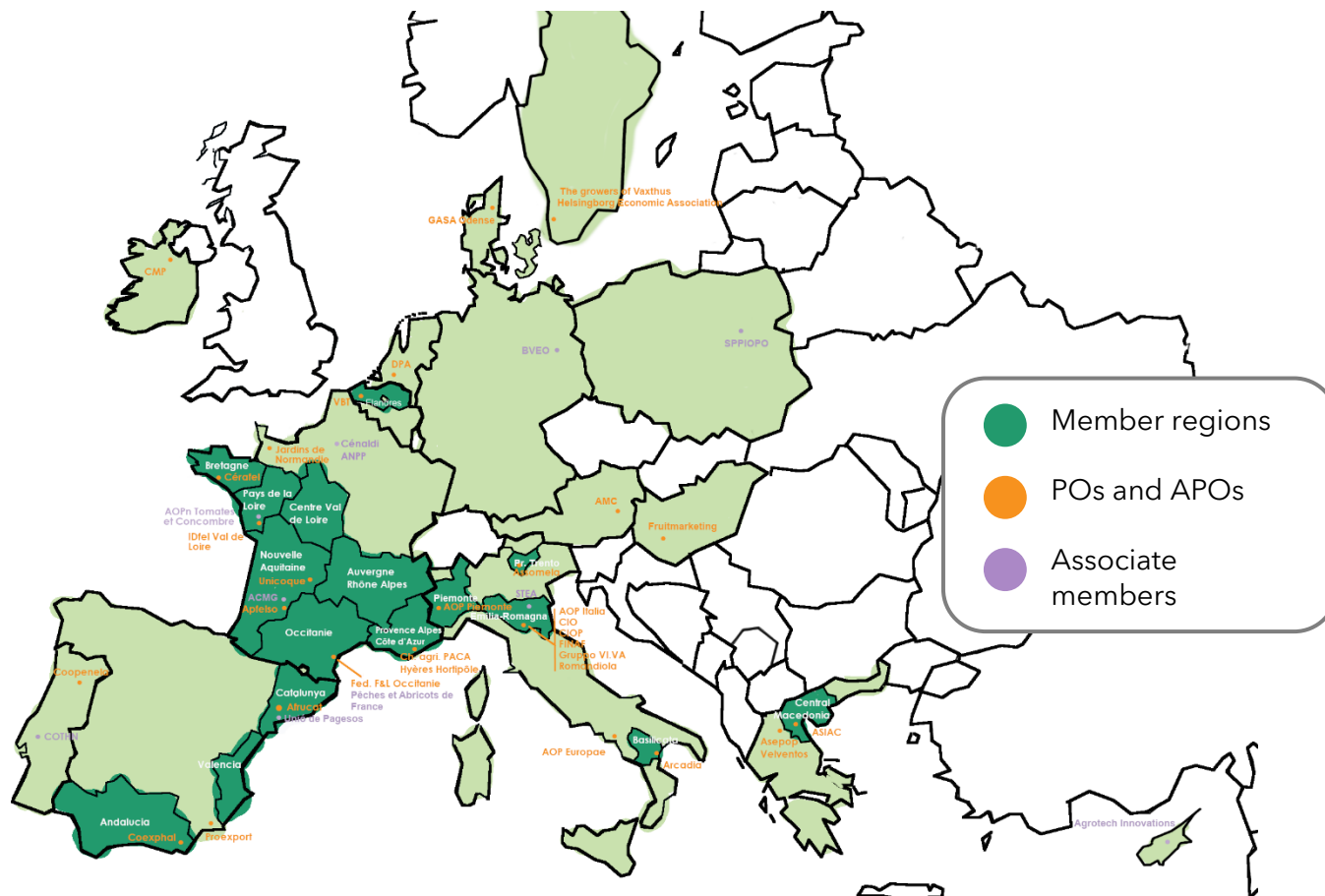
eupolicies@areflh.org



LAETITIA FORGET
Communication officer

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Our members in 2025



Regions' College

Belgium

- Flanders Region

France

- Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes
- Région Bretagne
- Région Centre-Val de Loire
- Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine
- Région Occitanie
- Région Pays de la Loire
- Région Sud (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur)

Greece

- Central Macedonia Region

Italy

- Provincia Autonoma di Trento
- Regione Basilicata
- Regione Emilia-Romagna
- Regione Piemonte

Spain

- Generalitat de Catalunya
- Generalitat de Valencia
- Junta de Andalucía

Producers' College

Belgium

- VBT (Association of Belgian agricultural cooperatives)

Austria

- AmcAUSTRIA (Interest group of Austrian fruit and vegetable producer organisations)

Denmark

- GASA Odense (PO)

Spain

- Afrucat, association of fruit companies from Catalonia
- Coexphal (APO)
- Proexport, association of F&V producers and exporters from Murcia Region

France

- Jardins de Normandie (APO)
- APFeLSO (APO)
- CERAFEL (APO)
- Chambre d'Agriculture PACA
- Fédération des Fruits et Légumes d'Occitanie
- Hyères Hortipôle - Florisud (network of horticultural companies)
- IDfel Val de Loire (association of economic operators in the F&V sector)
- Unicoque (PO)

Greece

- ASEPOP Velventos (PO)
- Association of Agricultural Cooperatives of Imathia

Hungary

- Fruitmarketing (APO)

Ireland

- CMP International (mushroom producers' organisation)

Associate members / experts

Germany

- BVEO (Federal association of fruit and vegetable POs)

Cyprus

- Agrotech Innovations (SME)

Spain

- Unio de Pagesos de Catalunya (Catalan Farmers' Union)

France

- Pêches et Abricots de France (APO)
- Tomates et concombres de France (APO)
- Association Climatologique de la Moyenne Garonne - ACMG
- Association Nationale Pommes Poires - ANPP
- Cénaldi (APO of field vegetables for processing)

Italy

- Stea srl (economic and management consultancy in the fruit and vegetable sector)

Italy

- AOP Arcadia
- AOP Europae
- AOP Italia
- AOP Piemonte
- Romandiola (APO)
- Assomela (association of apple producers)
- CIO (association of processing tomato producer organisations)
- CIOP (APO)
- FINAF (transnational APO)
- Gruppo VI.VA. (APO)

Netherlands

- DPA (Dutch Fruit and Vegetable Association)

Portugal

- Coopenela (PO)

Sweden

- The producers of the Vaxthus Helsingborg Economic Association

Poland

- SPPIOPO (Association of greenhouse tomato and cucumber growers)

Portugal

- COTHN (National operational and technological centre for fruit and vegetables)



2024 IN FIGURES



2 new members

1 new country

Poland



14 in total



4 European projects

LowInFood • Novasoil
Waste4Soil • LivingSoiLL



4

European events



- Conference on water at the Committee of the Regions
- Public Conference of the General Assembly
- Interpera
- AREFLH Annual Forum

10

Meetings of the market observatories and expert groups

of the European Commission



- Stone fruit
- Tomatoes
- Pip fruit
- Citrus
- Fertilizer
- Food security crisis preparedness
- Agri-food chain

12

Civil Dialogue Group Meetings



- CAP and Strategic Plans
- Environment and climate change
- Organic farming
- Quality and promotion
- International Aspects of Agriculture

2

Position statements



Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture

Promotion policy



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1st FEBRUARY Conference on the use of water in agriculture

AREFLH organised a hybrid conference on the use of water in agriculture at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels and online. The event brought together a large number of stakeholders from the sector: political decision-makers, project leaders, researchers, technical directors, agronomists and consultants.

The panel of speakers included representatives of the institutions (Committee of the Regions, European Commission, Regions), scientists and experts.



21 FEBRUARY Consultation on resilient water management

Luca Contrino and Eriselda Canaj took part in the consultation on resilient water management organised by the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.

This public consultation provided an opportunity to hear the positions of several European institutions on the subject of water management. Stakeholders expressed their views on the issues at stake and the key points to be taken into account.

21 MARCH

General Assembly and public conference

As part of its General Assembly, AREFLH organised a public conference in Thessaloniki, in the region of Central Macedonia, to discuss the changes underway in Europe with regard to the **CAP and the new strategic horizon for the agricultural sector**.

Three representatives from the host region opened the event. Georgios Kefalas, Vice-Governor, and Bane Prelevic, Vice-Governor for External Relations, stressed the *"need for exchange and discussion to build the future of our industries in our regions"*. Katerina Zografou, Vice-Governor of the Chalkidiki regional unit, stressed that in this troubled context, *"organisations like AREFLH are more important than ever to enable farmers to speak with one voice to the European institutions"*.

APRIL

Strategic dialogue on the future of EU agriculture

AREFLH was one of the stakeholders invited to send their contributions to the Strategic Dialogue launched by the European commission in January 2024.

Read more on page 16.

The public conference programme was structured around 3 sessions:

- **Strategic Dialogue on the Future of European Agriculture**
- **The Common Agricultural Policy : the progress of sectoral intervention in the fruit and vegetable sector**
- **A round table on water and soil management**



25-27 JUNE

Kick-off meeting the LivingSoiLL project

The 1st project meeting took place from 25 to 27 June 2024 in Vila Real, Portugal. The three-day event provided an opportunity for the partners to meet and discuss the project's overall strategy. Read more on page 23.



JULY

Michele Gentile, new European Policies Officer

Michele Gentile joined AREFLH at the beginning of July 2024 as European Policies Officer, replacing Luca Contrino.

He studied economics and public policy. Alongside his studies, he worked in the field of European affairs, this included a traineeship at the European Parliament.

In July and August 2024 Michele undertook a series of meetings with four AREFLH member organisations: DPA (The Netherlands), the VBT (Belgium), IDfel (France), APFeLSO (France).

Organised around company presentations and field visits, these meetings were an opportunity for him to gain a better **understanding of the specific challenges facing the fruit and vegetable sector.**



19 JULY

Exchange with the Andalusia region

AREFLH's Brussels team met with delegates from the Andalusia region in Brussels, to take stock of the association's activities and strengthen the region's involvement in our European network.

2 OCTOBER

Event on water management in agriculture at the European Parliament

AREFLH took part in the event organised by MEP Do Nascimento Cabral at the European Parliament. It addressed the main challenges and opportunities related to water resource management in agriculture. Following this meeting, AREFLH reactivated its working group on water to step up efforts to raise awareness of the importance of its sustainable use.

OCTOBER 8 & 9

Fruit Attraction in Madrid

Fruit Attraction is an essential meeting place for players in the fruit and vegetable sector, and it was an opportunity for the AREFLH team to get together with several members of the association, thereby strengthening the links with our partners. These meetings enabled us to share our current initiatives and identify new synergies between members.



6 NOVEMBER

AREFLH Annual Forum in Brussels

In 2024, AREFLH launched the **first edition of an event meant to become annual**. It was devoted to the agricultural policy in the new European legislature. The high level of participation from representatives of European institutions,

"The AREFLH Annual Forum, a successful opportunity for dialogue between the European institutions and the fruit and vegetable sector".

producer organisations and horticultural regions was a positive omen for this very first edition, which enabled a constructive exchange to take place between all these stakeholders.

Discussions focused on the **Strategic Dialogue on the future of agriculture**, the **importance of CMO for the fruit and vegetable sector**, as well as **sustainability and water management**.

Discussions also addressed the **regulation of packaging waste**, underlining the need for a harmonised framework.

AREFLH President **Simona Caselli** welcomed the initiative as a decisive step towards strengthening the link between producers and the European institutions.



12-13 NOVEMBER - European Mission Soil Week

The European Mission Soil Week was a Brussel-based event, organised by the European Commission's DG Agri. It aims to promote the Horizon Europe mission "A Soil Deal for Europe". The idea was to raise awareness of the importance of soil health and encourages action to protect and restore it.

As a partner in 3 European projects linked to soil health, it was important for AREFLH to take part in this conference in order to:

- **Find out about** the Mission's latest achievements and **future opportunities**
- Find out about the **top 25 living labs**
- **Find out about the funded projects** and their results
- **Drawing on** examples of sustainable management
- **Network** with soil communities in Europe and beyond
- **Discuss current initiatives** to monitor and improve soil health in Europe.

18-20 NOVEMBER - ICOP in Portugal

Michele Gentile represented AREFLH at the International Conference of Fruit and Vegetable Producers' Organisations (ICOP 2024), organised in Vilamoura, Portugal by GFA consulting.

During this flagship event, Michele Gentile took part in a discussion with Kristine Bori from Unit B.1 of the European Commission's DG AGRI. Together, they discussed the implementation of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and legislative changes. They stressed **the importance of sustainability, innovation and competitiveness for the future of the fruit and vegetable sector.**

10-12 DECEMBER - Agri-Food Days in Brussels

Simona Caselli accompanied our Brussels team, Eriselda Canaj and Michele Gentile, to the Agri-Food Days.

The event brought together farmers, policymakers, businesses, academics and civil society to explore the future of European agriculture. It served as a key platform to discuss **agricultural trends, food security, sustainability and innovation.**





WORK THEMES - ACTIONS IN BRUSSELS

Strategic Dialogue on the future of agriculture

On 5 April 2024, AREFLH contributed to the stakeholder consultation as part of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of agriculture launched by the European Commission.

IN BRIEF: AREFLH's contribution

- **The retail power is highly concentrated**, the influence of Producer Organisations (POs) on the supply chain is too weak. POs from different Member States are unable to work together for social, legal and economic reasons, so the number of APOs and transnational APOs is very low.
- **Consumer demands are high**, but they are unwilling to pay producers for their produce, despite increased demand for fruit and vegetables due to changes in diet on the EU market.
- Producers do want to make the **transition to sustainable production**.
- **Climate change** is radically altering the whole of the EU's production, with the majority of producers unable to cope for financial, technical or biological reasons.

The questions asked at the stakeholders in this consultation were the following:

How can we offer farmers and the rural communities in which they live better prospects, including a fair standard of living?

The Producer Organisation (PO) system is a good opportunity for the fruit and vegetable industry to get a better perspective and should be supported in the future, even more than before. However, certain constraints in the legislation need to be observed and studied:

- How can **the position of POs** and their members in the EU retail chain be **improved**, and how can POs from different Member States work together without undermining the 27 different competition laws?
- The **creation of transnational APOs should be supported** by a reduction in the administrative burden and single legislation.
- EU could support **fruit and vegetable inter-branch organisations** and **transnational inter-branch organisations** to work together to implement programmes, promotional programmes, etc.

How can we support agriculture within the limits of our planet and its ecosystem?

- By the possibility of implementing **new genomic techniques** (NTG) as soon as possible in regions where climate change is having a devastating impact. By the support, under operational programmes, for plant material obtained using NTGs that can cope with climate change, while producers commit to meeting consumer demands for environmental sustainability.
- By the continued activation of the use of **integrated pest management**, the implementation of EU **prevention programmes** at Member State level, the promotion of **sustainable plant protection products**, the **acceleration of their official registration** and the possibilities for using these products in the Member States.



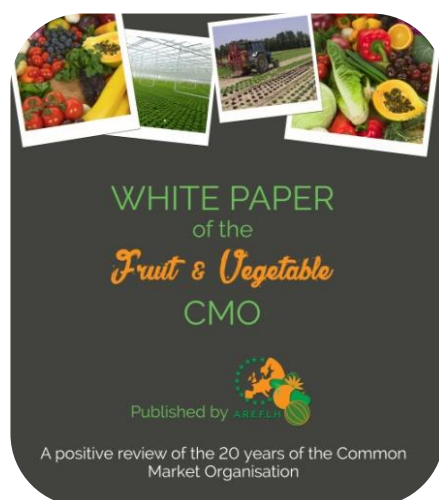
How can we better exploit the immense possibilities offered by knowledge and technological innovation?

Many farmers work on a small scale and are virtually incapable of overseeing the possibilities of automation and digitalisation. Producer organisations, APOs and transnational APOs can make enormous progress under the operational programmes. Certain constraints at national level should be resolved, with a reorientation to form part of a European approach in the fruit and vegetable sector.

How can we promote a bright and prosperous future for the European food system in a competitive world?

- The EU fruit and vegetable production and industry is a **thriving sector in relation to the changing diets of EU consumers**. However, affordable and sustainable fruit and vegetables should not be driven solely by the lowest price for the producer. EU citizens want a wide and healthy range of fruit and vegetables in their diet.
- Within EU POs, **food safety** and **sustainability are guaranteed** at the highest level.
- Some European legislation should be amended accordingly to **improve the (financial) situation** of producers.

Common Agricultural Policy and the fruit and vegetables CMO



During 2024, AREFLH members discussed the **first year of implementation of the new programming period** in their respective countries. Some points required meetings with DG AGRI departments for clarification.

The members of AREFLH CMO expert group also decided to update the CMO White Paper, seven years after we presented it on to the European Parliament.

On 10 December 2024, the European Commission published a proposal to amend Regulations 1308/2013, 2021/2115 and 2021/2116 on strengthening the position of farmers in the supply chain and a proposal for the application of Directive 2019/633 on unfair commercial practices.

In response to this publication, AREFLH launched an **awareness-raising campaign targeting key contacts in the European Parliament and Council to ensure that our members' concerns are heard.**

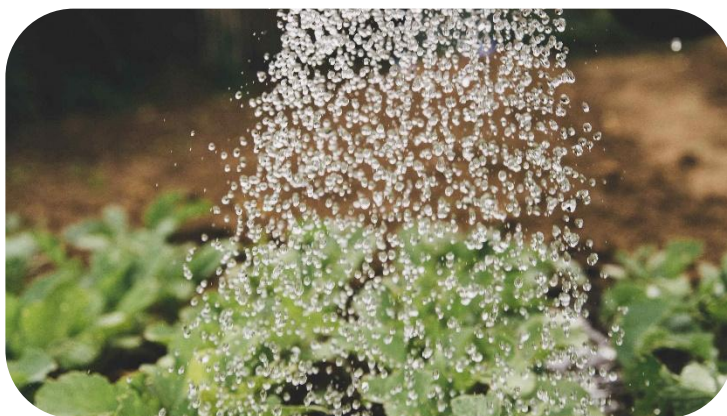
In addition, AREFLH's group of CMO experts has met to draw up a summary document as a matter of urgency. This document will set out AREFLH's position in 2025, clearly highlighting the risks of unintended market disruption arising from certain new provisions in the proposal, with the aim of preserving the cohesion and competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

Water management

Following the creation of an internal working group on water in 2023, AREFLH continued to work on this issue in 2024.

Conference on water use in agriculture: key challenges, best practices and next steps

On 1 February 2024, AREFLH brought together in Brussels a large number of actors from the sector: political decision-makers, project developers, researchers, technical directors, agronomists and consultants. The panel of speakers, made up of representatives of institutions (Committee of the Regions, European Commission, Regions), scientists and experts, aimed to advance the debate on the serious water situation in Europe and its impact on the agricultural sector.



"No food without soil and water" was the message from Pedro Narro of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), who introduced the conference. Luca Perez, from the European Commission's DG Environment, then stressed **the importance of having a debate based on facts and a holistic approach to water resilience.**

Global action is needed on water, which is not just a problem for Europe but also for neighbouring countries, that has a direct impact on human rights, conflicts and immigration.

The second part of the conference provided an overview of local initiatives, projects and technological innovations in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and around the world.

In her conclusion to the event, President Simona Caselli stressed the **importance of innovation** and her conviction that the young farmers of today and tomorrow will find it increasingly easy to make use of it. She pointed out that the essential tool for meeting the challenges and gaining access to this innovation is for **producers to aggregate** in producer organisations, associations of producer organisations or cooperatives.

She also mentioned that it is important to create collaborative infrastructures in the field of research, innovation and technology in order to integrate them into the development of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Round table discussion on good water and soil management at the AREFLH AGM in March 2024

During this event, the speakers presented their current projects and actions to preserve water resources in European regions. Representatives from the regions of Valencia (Spain) and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (France) gave details of their support to producers in their efforts to use water sparingly, thanks to **irrigation robotics** and **constant attention to farmers' needs**. Simona Caselli expressed the idea that *"we need to plan the use of water and invest in the modernisation of infrastructures as well as in operational programmes"*.

Promotion policy

In April 2024, AREFLH co-signed a letter with other organisations from the agri-food sector addressed to the permanent representatives for agriculture of the Member States concerning the **budget for the promotion of agricultural products**.

The European Council's decision of 1st February on the revision of the multiannual financial framework for 2025-2027 will lead to a redeployment of €1.1 billion of European funds from the CAP and cohesion policy to support Ukraine. It has not been ruled out that promotion activities under direct management (multi-programmes) and measures at the initiative of the Commission be affected.

The signatory organisations are very concerned about the impact this could have on the funding of the annual work programmes (2025-2027) and, more broadly, on promotion policy.

In this letter, they underlined the following points:

- **The agri-food sector has welcomed the "flexibility clause"**, which would allow unused funds from a multiple programme to be reallocated to a single programme. Applicants for single programmes on the reserve list whose applications are two or three times greater than the budget allocated to them can benefit from this "pass-through".
- **Interest in politics remains as strong as ever.** The drop in applications, mainly observed in calls for multiple programmes, is mainly due to the "continuation rule" (a one-year break is compulsory after having carried out promotion programmes on two consecutive occasions) and the inherent complexities involved in finding partners, establishing trust between eligible potential applicants, and lightening the administrative burden.
- The promotion policy budget is an **effective measure against market disruption**, which is countered by sending a positive and confident message to consumers. It provides producers with the tools to ensure that EU agriculture remains competitive, while supporting them in the transition to greater sustainability.
- The EU's promotion policy has succeeded in achieving its initial objectives of **boosting the competitiveness of EU agricultural products**.



Research & innovation / European projects

LOWINFOOD

The LOWINFOOD project works on “Low-waste Food value chains through the demonstration of INnovative solutions to reduce FOOD loss and Waste”. It supports the **reduction of food loss and waste** in the European Union using a multi-actor approach that involves stakeholders throughout the value chain.

In collaboration with Harokopio University and the Hellenic Mediterranean University, LOWINFOOD's partners organised the **ReTaste** conference in Archanes, Crete, in September 2024. One of the highlights of the event was the presentation of the social impact assessment of the S.I.R. platform, an innovative software developed by the government of the Emilia-Romagna region in Italy.

The S.I.R. platform facilitates the donation of surplus food to qualified charities by producer organisations (POs) and associations of producer organisations (APOs), by providing regulated prices for withdrawn products.

The platform has proved highly effective in fighting food waste and promoting sustainable practices.

In order to amplify its impact across Europe, AREFLH's role in LOWINFOOD was to identify a partner capable of implementing this model in a new context.

The University of Bucharest (Romania) and the producers' organisation Valea Topologului Agriculture Cooperative have jointly assumed responsibility for adapting and replicating the S.I.R. platform. The aim of this strategic replication is to extend the innovative Emilia-Romagna model throughout Europe.

For more information, visit www.lowinfood.eu.

This project is funded by the European Union's "Horizon 2020" research and innovation framework programme under grant agreement no. 101000439.



ReTaste 2024 conference in Archanes, Crete

For the first time, LOWINFOOD researchers have assessed **the social impact generated by the S.I.R. platform**. This assessment has revealed the value created by the recovery of fruit and vegetables for the various players in the food recovery chain, including producers and POs, charities, public administrations and other stakeholders. In other words, the study calculated how many euros of social value are generated for each euro invested in the operation of the S.I.R. platform.



This research is helping to expand knowledge about the effects of food recovery and donation efforts, highlighting **the critical need for a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach** to fully understand the real benefits offered by these programmes.

NOVASOIL

The NOVASOIL project focuses on **"innovative business models for soil health"** in Europe. Its overall aim is to highlight the **benefits of investing in soil health for society and the environment**.



For the duration of the project, an **online platform, the NOVASOIL HUB**, is available at <https://novasoilhub.com>. It is designed as a **resource and knowledge centre** for farmers, agronomists, horticulturists and soil enthusiasts.

About the NOVASOIL Hub:

This knowledge platform aims to **study, structure and provide recommendations for linking existing and new knowledge** concerning the redirection of financial streams and policy support

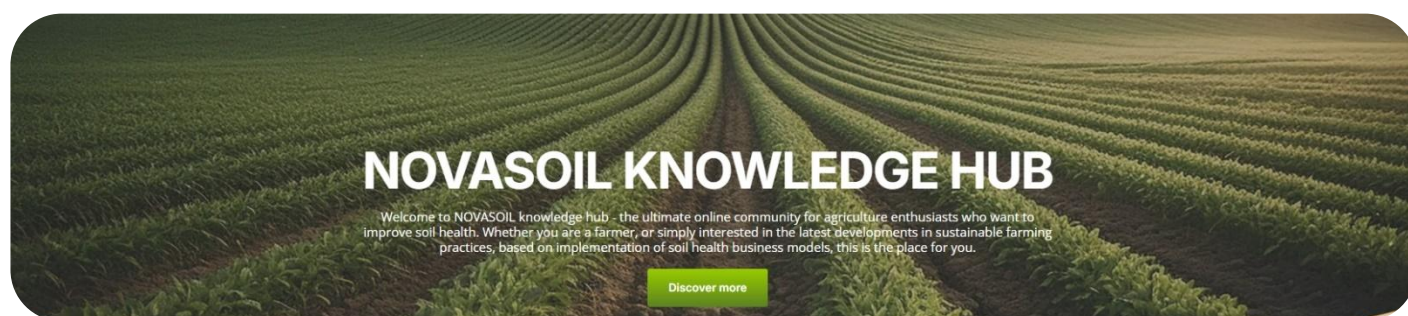
measures for the provisioning of innovative soil health business models for producing safe food. It will collect and exchange information to stimulate the development and improvement of existing business models related to soil health.

Throughout the project, the NOVASOIL knowledge centre will support the creation of new business models related to soil improvement.

The hub contains 4 sections:

1. **Soil health business models**
2. **Soil health practices**
3. **Soil health policies**
4. **Soil health projects**

Each of these 4 sections has a library containing **information in 10 languages** on soil at EU and world level.



For more information, visit <https://novasoilhub.com>

This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101091268.





The Waste4Soil project aims to **"turn food waste into sustainable soil improvers for better soil health and improved food system"**.

It was launched in June 2023 and it is funded by the European Commission as part of the Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe"

The project is setting up **living labs in seven European countries**: Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Spain.

What is a living lab?

It is a new approach to innovation in which users become key players in their real environment.

They are dedicated to exploring innovative technologies and methods for **recycling agricultural and food industry by-products into high-quality, local soil improvers**.

Spain: Anaerobic digestion reduces dependence on fertilisers

In Catalonia, researchers are harnessing the power of **anaerobic digestion**, a technology that **uses bacteria to break down food waste and produce biogas** and a nutrient-rich by-product called **digestate**.

This innovative approach not only reduces waste, but also offers a sustainable alternative to chemical fertilisers, potentially reducing dependence on them by 80%. By working with private and public players in the food sector, the project guarantees immediate benefits for local communities.



Slovenia: Recycling olive oil by-products

On the Istrian peninsula, renowned for its top-quality olive oil, Slovenian researchers are working with local olive oil producers to **reuse olive pomace** (a by-product containing skins, stones and pulp) **to transform it into environmentally-friendly soil improvers**. With the region's olive-growing industry expanding as a result of global warming, this initiative promises sustainable growth.

Finland: From fish waste to fertiliser

The Living Lab in Päijät-Häme is targeting the **fish farming industry** to recover nutrients from fish residues. Anne-Marie Tuomala, senior lecturer at LAB University of Applied Sciences, highlights that fish waste, rich in essential minerals like nitrogen and phosphorus, is ideal for creating **nutrient-dense fertilizers**.

A collaborative approach to sustainable solutions

The success of the project lies in its **strong collaborative framework**. Researchers, farmers, industry, public authorities and civil society players co-create and test solutions under real conditions.

Project coordinator Panopoulos emphasised the initiative's potential to tackle the growing problem of food waste. By transforming food waste into valuable resources, Waste4Soil offers **innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture, healthier soils and improved local food systems**.

For more information, visit www.waste4soil.eu

This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101112708.



LivingSoiLL

AREFLH is a partner in the **LivingSoiLL** project, "**Healthy Soil to Permanent Crops Living Labs**", funded by the European Commission as part of the EU Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe".

For the duration of the project, The LivingSoiLL project will establish five Living Labs (LLs) across **Portugal, France, Spain, Italy, and Poland**, focusing on 5 permanent crops: **vineyards, olive groves, chestnuts, hazelnuts, and apple orchards**. These labs will include at least 50 demonstration sites and 10 lighthouses, engaging over 2,000 local stakeholders.

LivingSoiLL's ambition is to **co-create, implement and co-test innovative solutions** (including digital tools) by promoting innovations adapted to the local context, disseminating sustainable soil

Main objectives of the living labs

- **Reducing soil erosion and improving soil structure**
- **Minimising the environmental impact of the intensive use of fertilisers and pesticides**
- **Improving water storage capacity**
- **Enhancing soil biodiversity and its overall resilience**

management practices and improving soil knowledge.

AREFLH is taking part in various activities within the project

- **Designing and supporting business models and exploitation strategies**
- **Communication, dissemination, and stakeholder engagement efforts.**
- **Policy recommendation**

The LivingSoiLL consortium brings together more than **46 institutions** from **6 European countries**. The project will last four and a half years, with **results expected in 2028**.



Launch of the LivingSoiLL project in June 2024

For more information, visit www.livingsoiLL.eu.

This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101157502.



Products: pear and hazelnut



Interpera - international pear congress

The Interpera 2024 congress was held in Obidos, Portugal, on 26 and 27 June. The event attracted the largest number of participants in the last 10 years. Around 200 producers, researchers and national and international companies from the sector gathered in the Oeste region, the cradle of Rocha pear production, to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing pear production. Interpera is a rare opportunity to network and exchange multicultural experiences.

The Portuguese Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, José Manuel Fernandes, honoured the event with his presence, closing with a message calling on all professionals to work together to meet the challenges facing the sector, and emphasising the need to develop and invest in research to combat pests.

For more information: www.areflh.org/fr/thematiques/interpera

Hazelnut: Group Corylus Europae

The Corylus Europae Group is made up organisations representing the 3 main hazelnut-producing countries in Europe (Italy, France and Spain). It represents nearly 80% of European hazelnut production and has set itself the following objectives



- To be a **network for the exchange of information** on all matters relating to the European hazelnut
- To take **joint action**, in particular with the European Union, to support the hazelnut production industry in Europe
- To build a **common identity** and promote **sustainable, high-quality hazelnut production in Europe.**



AREFLH has woven a continuous communication with its members, partners and stakeholders in the fruit, vegetable and flower sector through a variety of channels:

- The **website** www.areflh.org.
- Weekly emails (**AREFLH Flashnews**) reserved to members of the association, with news from the sector and the European institutions.
- The monthly public **newsletter**, sent in French and English to members and subscribers. It includes a review of the association's activities, information about our members, news from the sector and the EU, and an agenda of fruit and vegetable events in Europe.
- **Social networks**: LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/areflh and X [@areflh](https://twitter.com/areflh).
- The **monthly online members meeting**, during which current issues, projects in progress and upcoming meetings are discussed. It is a time for exchanging ideas, and members can also talk about an event or a particular issue their organisation is facing.

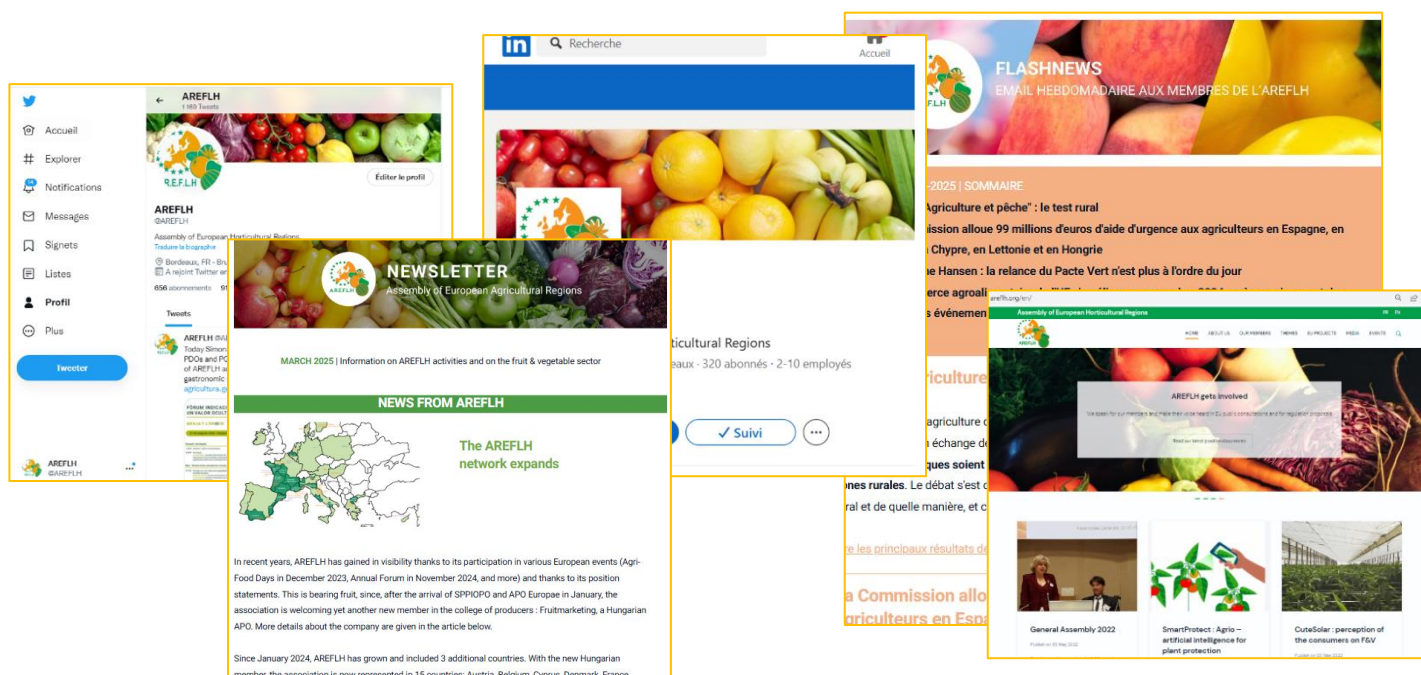


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