



# ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN HORTICULTURAL REGIONS



## ACTIVITY REPORT 2025







# ACTIVITY REPORT 2025 SUMMARY

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## EDITORIAL BY PRESIDENT RAMON FERNANDEZ-PACHECO



### The strength of walking together

With less than a month to go before completing my first year as President of the Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH), I would like to express my satisfaction with everything we have achieved during this time. This result is undoubtedly the fruit of the work carried out by former President Simona Caselli and former Vice-President Jean-Louis Moulon, whom I would like to thank for their dedication and commitment during their nine years of their terms.

As the voice of European fruit and vegetable producing regions and their organisations, we are aware of the enormous responsibility we bear and the importance of making decisions that defend a sector that is strategic today and will continue to be so in the future.

The fruit and vegetable sector is one of the most important pillars of the European agri-food sector, the basis of our Mediterranean diet, which is essential for our health. Fruit and vegetables that are of excellent quality, but above all, that offer the best guarantees of food safety.

We defend a sector that is strategic for millions of Europeans, guaranteeing food sovereignty, but which also faces numerous challenges. These challenges include plant health, the configuration of the new multiannual financial framework and the international trade scenario.

In view of this situation, our greatest strength must be to work together so that, between us, we can defend a sector that is also strategic for territorial cohesion in Europe. Our position is clear and will remain so: the defence of a sector that is vital for European agriculture and that can be more sustainable and competitive.

To do this, we need the support of the European institutions and the policies that are implemented here. On the one hand, we are clear that the European Union's Common Agricultural Market Organisation (CMO) is a key pillar for the viability of our fruit and vegetable sector, which is why we defend its European, stable and predictable nature without losing the consistency of the last three decades.

This aspect must undoubtedly be included in the new multiannual financial framework, which will ensure fair competition and cooperation between producers, as well as the cohesion of the internal market. Naturally, all of this must be accompanied by a strong, independent, innovative and truly European CAP that can ensure the future of our agriculture and our fruit and vegetables.

In this regard, we cannot forget the need to have sufficient water for all regions to produce more and better quality food. In this sense, we welcome the fact that the European Water Resilience Strategy includes the need to raise water policies on the European agenda.

Water is undoubtedly essential for increasing the production of our fruit and vegetables, but we must not lose sight of the importance of biological controls to anticipate plant diseases, which have become so frequent in recent times.

Integrated pest management is one of the strongest shields we have to control pests and is a reliable guarantee that our products meet the highest food safety standards while also being sustainable. This working model differs from that of third countries, which reduces our ability to compete on equal terms. That is why AREFLH will defend trade agreements that apply the same rules to everyone. Competitiveness without unfairness.

The future of our organisation will be shaped by the decisions we make today. These decisions will often be complex, but I am confident that they will place us at the centre of the debate on European agricultural policy.

Having a greater presence in Brussels will help us to be a more ambitious and open organisation, capable of establishing alliances with other associations and sectors, as well as joining European projects that are essential for our regions and producer organisations.

We look to the future with responsibility, but also with determination. And this is what we will present at the 2026 General Assembly, a meeting point to find out where we have come from and where we are going. It will be the perfect moment to outline our plans for the future, always firmly defending the fact that the fruit and vegetable sector needs our commitment to ensure that our work is profitable, that we have the maximum guarantees of safety and that our products can be marketed in the best conditions.

European agriculture does not need less Europe, it needs a more coherent Europe, one that is more committed and aware of the strategic value and potential of our fruit and vegetable sector.

# ABOUT AREFLH

## Objectives and missions

The Assembly of European Horticultural Regions is an 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 flowers producing regions and their producer organisations.

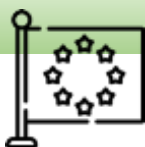
The AREFLH's strength lies in its original structure. It is made up of **three Colleges: the College of Regions, the College of Producers, and the College of Associate Members, advisors and experts.** The complementary nature of these three bodies means that the regions and producer representatives can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

## Priority themes and working groups

Common Agricultural Policy and CMO



Research and innovation



Promotion



### Working groups:

- CAP and CMO
- Environment / organic farming
- Trade & promotion

## Governance



### PRESIDENT

Ramón Fernández-Pacheco

Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries,  
Water and Rural Development,  
Andalusia Region (Spain)

### VICE-PRESIDENT

Lisa Martini

Director of APO FINAF (Italy)

### BUREAU

**President** : Ramón Fernández-Pacheco

**Vice-President** : Lisa Martini

**Treasurer** : Luc Vanoirbeek, VBT

**Secretary** : Loles Vidal, Generalitat Valenciana

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Members from College of Regions

- Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes : Patricia Picard
- Basilicata : Raffaele Beccasio
- Catalonia : Rosa Cubel Muñoz
- Emilia-Romagna : Alessio Mammi
- Flanders : Timo Delvaux
- Central Macedonia : Katerina Zografou
- Generalitat Valenciana : Loles Vidal

#### Members from College of Producers

- Afrucat : Manel Simon
- Assomela : Giovanni Missanelli
- Cerafel: Marc Kérangueven
- Coexphal: Juan Pérez Zamarrón
- IDFEL Val de Loire : Guillaume Rostoll
- DPA : Wim Rodenburg
- VBT : Luc Vanoirbeek

COLLEGE OF REGIONS

COLLEGE OF  
PRODUCERS

COLLEGE OF ASSOCIATE  
MEMBERS / EXPERTS

## Administrative team



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## College of Producers

### Austria

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

### Belgium

- VBT (Association of Belgian agricultural cooperatives)

### Denmark

- GASA Odense (PO)

### France

- AOP Jardins de Normandie
- APFeLSO (APO)
- CERAFEL (APO)
- Chambre d'Agriculture PACA
- Fédération des Fruits et Légumes d'Occitanie
- 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)

### Italy

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

### Netherlands

- DPA (Dutch Fruit and Vegetable Association)

### Spain

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

### Sweden

- The producers of the Vaxthus Helsingborg Economic Association

## Associate members / experts

### France

- AOP Pêches et Abricots de France
- AOP Tomates et concombres de France
- Association Nationale Pommes Poires - ANPP
- Cénaldi (APO of field vegetables for processing)

### Germany

- BVEO (Federal association of fruit and vegetable POs)

### Italy

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

- FEA consulting
- Origine consulting

### Poland

- SPPIOPO (Association of greenhouse tomato and cucumber growers)

### Portugal

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

### Spain

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



# 2025 IN FIGURES

 **14** EU countries represented

**6** new members



 **3** European projects

- Navasoil
- Waste4Soil
- LivingSoiLL



**16** Meetings of market observatories and experts groups of the European Commission 

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

**14** Meetings of the Civil Dialogue Groups

- CAP and National Strategic Plans
- Environment and climate change
- Organic agriculture
- Quality and promotion
- International aspects of agriculture



 **3** European events

- Public Conference of the General Assembly
- Interpera
- AREFLH Annual Forum

 **4** Position statements and responses to EU's public consultations

- On the amendments to the CMO
- On food safety and animal feed Regulation
- On the multiannual financial framework (MFF)
- On the European Strategy for Water Resilience



# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## JANUARY

### Position statement on amendments to the CMO and National Strategic Plans regulations

AREFLH drew up its proposals for amending the regulations (more details on p.18).

### 15 January – Marca Fresh trade fair in Bologna, Italy

In the final weeks of her term, Simona Caselli, President of AREFLH, and Mario Tamanti of the Italian APO Gruppo Vi.Va attended the Marca Fresh trade fair. She was asked to conclude a session on the *It's Bio* initiative, a European project aimed at promoting organic farming, particularly in the fruit and vegetable sector.



### 16 January – Innovation in the spotlight at a conference on the Loire Valley in Brussels, Belgium

AREFLH took part in the event organised in Brussels by the Centre-Val de Loire Region to celebrate the anniversary of the Loire Valley's UNESCO's world heritage integration. It had innovation issues taking centre stage.



Speakers from the European Commission (DG RTD – Research & Innovation) emphasised the importance of sectoral innovation and the development of regional ecosystems.

Indeed, regional collaboration plays a crucial role in addressing common challenges. By working together, regions pool their resources, share best practices and create synergies that benefit the entire community.



## FEBRUARY



### 3 February – Conference at the European Committee of the Regions, Brussels

Eriselda Canaj participated in the event 'Strengthening the position of farmers in the agri-food chain' at the European Committee of the Regions.

The meeting focused on targeted amendments proposed by the European Commission, including the Common Market Organisation (CMO) for agricultural products and the new regulation on the cross-border enforcement of measures against unfair trading practices.

These proposals aim to strengthen the position of farmers and restore trust between actors in the agri-food chain. Both initiatives directly reflect the main recommendations of the strategic dialogue on the future of EU agriculture and address some of the most pressing challenges facing the sector.



### 3 to 5 February – LivingSoiLL workshop

Michele Gentile took part in the 'Co-creating LivingSoiLL' workshop organised by QXote in Portugal.

The objectives were to:

- strengthen synergies and identify key interdependencies between work packages and tasks,
- and ensure consistent and effective implementation of the project.



### 14 February – Joint letter on the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

AREFLH co-signed a letter addressed to the President of the European Commission with 28 European organisations (see p.19).

## MARCH

### AREFLH contribution to the European Water Resilience Strategy

We submitted our proposals as part of the public consultation on the European Water Resilience Strategy (see p.20).

### 3 and 4 March – Ocean and Water Mission Forum 'Towards a water resilience strategy for the EU', Brussels

Eriselda Canaj participated in the Ocean and Water Mission Forum, where discussions focused on



building a more resilient Europe regarding water. Jessika Roswall, European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, highlighted the key actions we need to take to improve water management:

- promoting precision irrigation in agriculture to optimise water use,
- expanding smart metering to detect and reduce leaks,
- promoting dry cooling over traditional methods in industrial processes.

### 6 March – Conference on biocontrol, Brussels

Michele Gentile took part in a conference on biocontrol organised by MEP Stefan Köhler, in collaboration with the European Landowners' Organisation (ELO) and Agriodor, at the European Parliament.

The event highlighted the urgent need to speed up the approval of biological control solutions in the EU. While these natural alternatives offer safe crop protection, slow and complex regulatory processes continue to hamper innovation and limit farmers' access to effective tools.

### 18 March – Meeting of European regions 'Towards healthy soils', Brussels

AREFLH actively contributed to the 'Meeting of European regions - Towards healthy soils', organised by the European Office of the Pays de la Loire Region and the HuMUS project.

This event focused on the involvement of local and regional authorities in the European Soil Mission and highlighted interesting examples of citizen and stakeholder engagement led by regions and municipalities as part of the HuMUS project.

During the event, Eriselda Canaj presented AREFLH's main contributions to the Soil Mission initiative. She highlighted our active role in developing and implementing soil-related strategies through various ongoing projects (see p.22).



## 26 March – Debate on food sovereignty, Brussels

Michele Gentile took part in the debate organised by MEPs Eric Sargiacomo, Esther Herranz García and Elsi Katainen. This event highlighted major challenges for the future of our agriculture and reiterated the importance of:

- strengthening the position of farmers in the value chain,
- strengthening crisis management tools,
- combating unfair trade practices.

## APRIL

### 3 and 4 April – General Assembly in Valencia, Spain

AREFLH celebrated its 25th anniversary at its General Assembly in Valencia, Spain. On this occasion, Ramón Fernández-Pacheco (Vice-President of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development for the Region of Andalusia) was elected President and Lisa Martini (Director of APO FINAF, Italy) was elected Vice-President.

The members of the General Assembly also elected a new Board of Directors.

The public conference that followed the General Assembly addressed three main themes:

- the EU's strategic vision for agriculture and the CAP,
- the revision of the CMO regulations and Strategic Plans,
- and water resilience in the fruit and vegetable sector.

Several representatives of the European Parliament and the Commission, members of AREFLH and local representatives of the sector discussed the challenges and opportunities ahead, emphasising the need for a solid budget for Europe, rules adapted to POs and APOs, and concrete solutions to climate challenges.

### 7 and 8 April – NOVASOIL annual project meeting in Ferrara, Italy

This meeting brought together the project partners to contribute to the final business models for soil health, the operational and sustainability plan, thus ensuring a long-term impact beyond the project's life cycle.

The second day was devoted to reviewing the progress made in recent months and defining key actions for the final phase of the project.





## MAY

### 6-8 May – Networking at the MACFRUT trade fair in Rimini, Italy

Part of the AREFLH team had the pleasure of meeting up with many Italian members, as well as some European members who were present at the event. These direct exchanges are essential for gaining a better understanding of local realities, sharing news from the regions and professional organisations, identifying new roads for collaboration and strengthening ties with members.

### 8 May – Conference on the Vision for Agriculture and Food, Brussels

Eriselda Canaj and Michele Gentile participated in the conference on the Vision for Agriculture and Food. The event focused on 'Shaping the future of agriculture and the agri-food sector'. Participants included representatives from the European agri-food sector, the civil society, rural communities, think tanks, Member States and the European Parliament.



The objectives of the conference were:

- to continue to build consensus around the vision and its roadmap;
- to enable the Commission to gather feedback on the way forward, focusing on the key initiatives outlined in the vision;
- to engage in dialogue on the future direction of the CAP after 2027.

## JUNE

### 24 - 25 June – Meetings with MEPs on the revision of the CMO Regulation

As part of the legislative follow-up to the proposed amendment to Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 on the CMO, AREFLH held several bilateral meetings with MEPs involved in this dossier (see p.18).

### 25-26 June – Interpera congress in Hasselt, Belgium

The Interpera international pear congress was held in Belgium (see p. 26). For the 16<sup>th</sup> time we collaborated with a pear-producing organisation, in 2025 it was VBT. The congress rallied growers, researchers and stakeholders from all over the world.





## JULY

### 9 and 10 July – LivingSoiLL project meeting in Alba, Italy

LivingSoiLL develops living laboratories for permanent crops with healthy soils. The University of Turin hosted the consortium meeting, which provided an opportunity to reflect on the project's achievements during its first year and to strategically plan for the coming months. The meeting was also a way to forge links with our partners, share ideas and jointly define the next steps towards a common goal: healthier soils for a more resilient and sustainable Europe.

### 28 to 31 July – Meetings in French Région Sud on the themes of the CAP and water

The entire team travelled to Avignon (Région Sud / PACA) to meet with various organisations and members of AREFLH.



We met Bénédicte Martin, Vice-President of Agriculture for the region, Georgia Lambertin, President of the Regional Chamber of Agriculture, and their teams, to gain a better understanding of the reality on site. We coordinated efforts in view of the challenges facing European agriculture.

The Société du Canal de Provence also opened its doors to us for a session dedicated to water issues.



Together, we reflected on the strategy to be adopted with regard to the proposed CAP reform for the 2028-34 budget and the Multiannual Financial Framework as proposed by the European Commission in July 2025.

## SEPTEMBER

### 16-17 September – European Research and Innovation Days, Brussels

AREFLH participated in this key European Commission event on research and innovation. It brings together policy makers, researchers, entrepreneurs and citizens to shape the future of R&I in Europe.



## OCTOBER

### Position statement on OMNIBUS simplification

AREFLH responded to the European Commission's call for contributions on food and feed safety - omnibus simplification (see p.20).

## 1 October – Fruit Attraction trade show, Madrid

Part of the AREFLH team Fruit Attraction. Once again, it was an opportunity to meet with our members and to strengthen collaborations.

## 28 October – Final conference of NOVASOIL EU project, Brussels

The conference was co-organised with the Brussels delegation of the Junta de Andalucía. The complete partners consortium took stock of the actions carried out over the three years of the project.

## NOVEMBER

### 4 November – AREFLH Annual Forum, Brussels

The second edition of AREFLH Annual Forum brought together nearly 200 people in Brussels and online (see p.25).

### 24–26 November – Waste4Soil annual project meeting in Ravenna, Italy

This EU project focuses on turning food waste into sustainable soil improvers. The consortium of 28 partners met for its annual meeting (article on Waste4Soil on p. 23).

### 19 and 20 November – ICOP in Budapest

Vice-President Lisa Martini opened the conference with an inspiring speech on the role of fruit and vegetables in sectoral interventions in the new CAP and the future European Financial Framework. Her message was well received by all participants and set the tone for a forward-looking discussion.

## DECEMBER

### Position statement on the MFF and the CAP post-2027

Following the publication of the Commission's proposal on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, AREFLH formulated its proposals (see p.19).

### 15–16 December – EU Agri-Food Days

AREFLH took part in the European Commission's flagship event : EU Agri-Food Days. In 2025, the various sessions focused on the new CAP, data and innovation for food security, sustainability throughout the food chain and market prospects.





## ACTIONS IN BRUSSELS

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### Common Market Organisation (CMO) for fruit and vegetables

Between January and April 2025, AREFLH developed a **position aimed at amending the CMO Regulation** to preserve the current system of recognition of producer organisations and maintain the exemptions from competition law as they exist today. This position also advocates a proportionate contractualisation obligation framework, compatible with local practices and the reality of the sectors.

**In-depth discussions were also held with the Permanent Representations** to the EU of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria and Sweden.

In April, this position was formalised in the form of **amendments** sent to COMAGRI MEPs and to all the European Parliament.

AREFLH also held several **bilateral meetings with MEPs** particularly involved in this issue (Eric Sargiacomo, Céline Imart and Valérie Hayer).

During these meetings, AREFLH emphasised the **strategic importance of maintaining a clear, robust and secure mechanism for recognising producer organisations**. This mechanism is a fundamental pillar of the CMO for fruit and vegetables, providing a structured framework for the organisation of supply, the concentration of production and the strengthening of producers' bargaining power.

AREFLH expressed serious concerns about the risk that certain proposed changes could weaken the framework for recognising POs, by paving the way for unfair competition from non-recognised organisations that would benefit from equivalent treatment without being subject to the same obligations. AREFLH continues to monitor this issue closely, which is still in the interinstitutional negotiation phase at the time of writing.

## CAP and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

The 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework must place agriculture at the heart of the Union's budgetary priorities. AREFLH firmly believes in the European added value of a well-funded common agricultural policy, which is essential for :

- maintaining a resilient and competitive agricultural sector,
- strengthening the cohesion of rural areas
- and supporting the convergence of less developed Member States and neighbouring countries towards EU standards.

In September 2025, following the publication in July of the Commission's proposal on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, AREFLH published an analysis of the impact of the reform of sectoral aid, particularly for fruit and vegetables.

In November 2025, AREFLH then drafted a counter-proposal aimed at correcting the most damaging aspects of the Commission's proposal. This document was the subject of extensive internal discussion and unanimous approval. It was forwarded to the governments of all member countries represented within AREFLH as well as to the European institutions in Brussels.

In December, a letter was drafted for DG BUDG and DG AGRI proposing an alternative model for sectoral aid that is compatible with the reform and future national partnership plans. This letter was officially sent to the European Commission in December and shared with the Permanent Representations of the Member States' governments.



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In its position paper, AREFLH therefore proposes **two concrete options for amending the Commission's proposal**, both of which have no budgetary impact and are compatible with the new governance framework:

### **Option 1: maintaining 100% EU funding for sectoral interventions.**

Sectoral interventions do not constitute income support but are structural tools for market organisation. Maintaining full EU funding would ensure fair conditions for producers, regardless of national budgetary capacity, and would preserve a system that has proven its effectiveness over decades. This objective can be achieved by exempting sectoral interventions in the fruit and vegetable sector from national co-financing, without increasing overall expenditure.

### **Option 2 (a second-best but feasible alternative): accept national co-financing, but only with strict safeguards.**

If national co-financing is introduced, it must be accompanied by clear minimum and maximum levels of public support at EU level, a firm link to the VPC (Value of Marketised Production) to preserve proportionality, and a robust transition mechanism to avoid disrupting ongoing multiannual programmes.

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## Water – European Water Resilience Strategy

In March 2025, AREFLH contributed to the European strategy for water resilience as part of a call from the European Commission. We participated in several thematic workshops in Brussels, including the 3rd Annual Mission Ocean and Water Forum. Discussions focused on building a more resilient Europe in the face of water-related challenges.

AREFLH's contribution to the European water resilience strategy focuses on three points:

### Sustainable water management :

- AREFLH advocates for solutions adapted to local conditions, supporting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.
- A better data collection on water use in the fruit and vegetable sector is needed to develop effective policies.
- The importance of 'green water' is highlighted, as it contributes to photosynthesis and ecosystem regulation.

### Smart water use

- Water conservation must be combined with maximum efficiency, optimising use rather than reducing demand.
- Modern irrigation techniques, such as precision irrigation, help regulate temperatures and protect crops from frost.

### Water storage

- Water storage is vital to cope with increasing droughts, requiring methods such as soil retention and aquifer recharge.
- New-generation lakes and aquifer recharge systems improve water quality and increase water reserves.
- Fighting the overexploitation of groundwater resources is essential, particularly in regions at risk of desertification.



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## Food safety – Omnibus simplification

In November 2025, AREFLH published a contribution in the context of a possible Omnibus legal framework concerning Regulations (EC) No 396/2005 and No 1107/2009.

The document calls for **simplification and harmonisation of regulatory procedures**, while ensuring **high safety standards**, to guarantee fair access to crop protection tools in all Member States.

It emphasises that **biological control products should be considered as a complement to, rather than a substitute for**, conventional plant protection products.

A **balanced, innovative and harmonised framework is considered essential** to preserve

productivity, competitiveness and the unity of the single market.

## Hazelnut – Group Corylus Europae

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



- to be a network for exchanging information on all subjects relating to European hazelnuts;
- to implement joint actions, particularly with the European Union, in favour of the European hazelnut production sector;
- to build a common identity and promote sustainable, high-quality European hazelnut production.

In 2025, the working group conducted a comparative analysis of trends in hazelnut production, quality, prices and consumption in Italy, France and Spain, highlighting common inclinations and national specificities.

The work shows significant price variability, influenced by Turkish production and international dynamics, while demand remains strong in the agri-food industry.

Thanks to a renewed EU-Turkey trade, recurring concerns related to quality, pesticide residues and trade conditions were identified.

The Group Corylus Europae also analysed the main phytosanitary issues of the sector and prepared a letter to DG SANTE on the application of Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009, which is currently awaiting internal validation.



# EUROPEAN PROJECTS

## NOVASOIL

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

As an active partner in the project, AREFLH organised the final conference, which was held on 28 October 2025 in Brussels, Belgium. The event was hosted by the Delegation of the Junta de Andalucía in Brussels and was also held online.

The aim of the meeting was to present an overview of the results achieved during the 36 months of the project:

- **NOVASOIL toolbox:** an open-source digital decision system supporting incentives for soil health and the evaluation of innovative business models under local conditions.
- **Co-designed business models:** co-creation of scientifically sound and economically viable business models for soil health, that are validated by multiple stakeholders.
- **Policy recommendations:** guidance notes and innovation roadmap informing CAP policy development and the European Soil Health Mission.



Through its innovative tools, collaborative business models and policy guidance, NOVASOIL is paving the way for a future where investment in soil health benefits farmers, communities and the environment alike, promoting sustainable and resilient European landscapes.

For more information on the project, visit [www.novasoil-project.eu](http://www.novasoil-project.eu).



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

## Waste4Soil



The Waste4Soil project aims at "**turning food waste into sustainable soil improvers for better soil health and improved food system**". It was launched in June 2023. It is funded by the European Commission as part of the 'European Soil Pact' mission.

The project focuses on the **recovery of eight types of food processing residues**: meat, fish, dairy products, cereals, olive oil, wine, fruit & vegetables, and processed foods.

Waste4Soil has two objectives:

- **to reduce the percentage of food waste** in Europe by recycling food processing residues
- and to **transform them into soil improvers** for better soil health throughout Europe.

ITENE (*Instituto Tecnológico del Embalaje, Transporte Y Logística* - Technological Institute of Packaging, Transport and Logistics), a partner in the Waste4Soil project, has developed a **platform and application for farmers** to transform industrial agri-food waste into sustainable soil amendments to improve soil health and strengthen the resilience of food systems.

**Seven living labs** are testing this platform and application across Europe (in Greece, Finland, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia). It connects food waste generators with end users of soil amendments.

This **circular, multi-stakeholder and systemic approach** mobilises all actors in the food chain, closing regional cycles of nutrients, organic matter and water. Data on residues is collected manually or using project-specific sensors, ensuring proper monitoring and transformation into soil amendments.

Although it is being tested in seven countries, the methodology is designed to be replicated across Europe, improving knowledge of food processing residues and supporting sustainable soil management in other regions.

For more information, visit [www.waste4soil.eu](http://www.waste4soil.eu).



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

## LivingSoiLL



The **LivingSoiLL project's motto is "Healthy Soil to Permanent Crops Living Labs"**. It is funded by the European Commission as part of the Mission 'A Pact for European Soils'.

The project is setting up **five living labs** in Portugal, France, Spain, Italy and Poland, focusing on **vineyards, olive groves, chestnut trees, hazelnut trees and apple orchards**. These laboratories will include more than 50 demonstration sites and 10 "lighthouse" sites, involving more than 2,000 local stakeholders.

Its lifelong education and training projects will focus on **improving soil health and ecosystem services** through the co-creation, the implementation and joint testing of digital solutions aimed at:

- reducing erosion,
- improving soil structure,
- reducing the impacts of intensive fertiliser and pesticide use,
- increasing water storage,
- enhancing soil biodiversity,
- and developing overall soil resilience.



LivingSoiLL is developing a **community of practice (CoP)**, managed by AREFLH, to connect farmers, local communities, policy makers, researchers, businesses and the public, and to promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing on soil health.

In January 2026, **250 people** had already entered of the **LivingSoiLL community of practice**.

You can join the CoP by completing a short questionnaire available in six languages: English, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. Access it by scanning this QR code.

Join the LivingSoiLL network and help shape soil-related initiatives across Europe!

For more information, visit [www.livingsoiLL.eu](http://www.livingsoiLL.eu).



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



## EVENTS

### AREFLH Annual Forum

The second edition of the AREFLH Annual Forum was held at the Emilia-Romagna Delegation to the EU on 4 November 2025, in Brussels. It brought together regions, producer organisations and representatives of European institutions to discuss the major challenges facing the sector.

The opening speeches called on the EU to **take better account of regional realities and to defend a sector weakened** by climate change, labour shortages, increasing concentration in distribution and strict phytosanitary requirements. The debates highlighted concerns about the possible renationalisation of the CAP and the creation of a single fund, which are perceived as a risk of weakening sectoral interventions and **accentuating inequalities between regions**, despite the European Commission's assurances that a common and flexible regulatory framework for the sector will be maintained.

The second part of the Forum emphasised the **urgent need for innovation to ensure sustainable plant protection**. Discussions focused on speeding up the authorisation procedures for biological control methods, the development of new genomic techniques, and the need for harmonised implementation of European rules. Operational programmes were reaffirmed as essential tools for disseminating sustainable practices.

The Forum thus confirmed its role as a **platform for dialogue and for building concrete solutions** for the future of the European sector.



## Interpera 2025

The 16<sup>th</sup> edition of Interpera, the international pear congress, took place on 25 and 26 June 2025 in Hasselt, Belgium. AREFLH co-organised this leading event with the VBT (Association of Belgian Agricultural Cooperatives). Interpera has been bringing together international players of the pear sector since 2008.

As they do every year, the representatives from the six main pear-producing countries – Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal – gave a detailed review of the past season. Overall, it was a satisfactory for most countries, despite persistent obstacles that are making production conditions increasingly difficult:

- Orchard protection, which has been undermined by the **loss of certain active molecules with no effective alternatives** to replace them and fight the increase in diseases and pests.
- **Labour costs** and **labour shortage**, leading to growing interest in robotisation within the sector.
- **Water management**, which is a major concern; storage remains insufficient despite periods of rainfall, making availability irregular and difficult to anticipate.
- **Declining consumption**, particularly among young people. The appeal of pears needs to be rethought to attract new consumers.

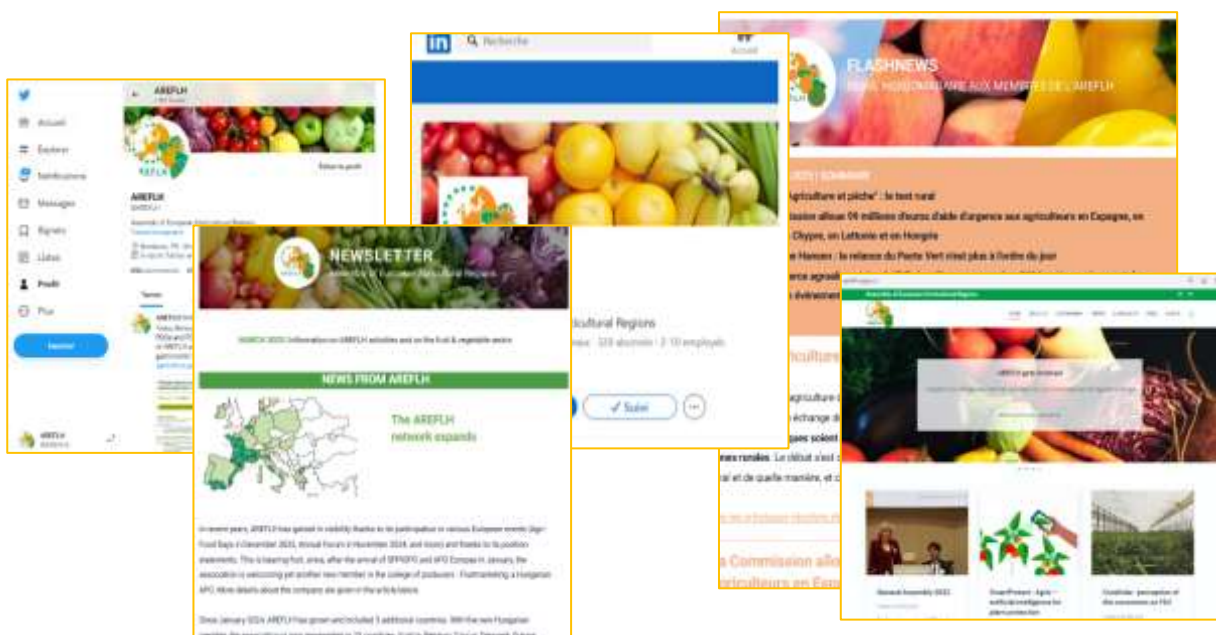


Learn more about Interpera by visiting [www.interpera.org](http://www.interpera.org).



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

- The **website** [www.areflh.org](http://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](http://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.
- **The intranet**: a platform reserved for members, which compiles reports, the latest working documents and the essentials from Civil Dialogue Groups and expert groups.



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## NOTES

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