

Bienvenue en France! -

12th International Conference of Producer Organisations for fruit and vegetables in Nantes (PT)

ICOP– the International Conference of Producer Organisations (POs) for fruit and vegetables – has been initiated 12 years ago. Founder and organiser of this platform for the exchange of information as well as for networking is the Austrian consultancy gfa-consulting gmbh. This year the event took place in the French city Nantes at the end of November. Co-organisers were the organisations IDfel Val de Loire and AREFLH. More than 150 participants from 17 European countries took part at this year’s Conference.

From November 22nd to 24th ICOP 2017 has taken place for three days and included a Conference day and two days of excursions and practical visits of regional companies.

On November 22nd the attendees got the opportunity to visit the vegetable producing PO Val Nantais as well as the PO SCAFLA, producing apples. Afterwards people met at the Centre Technique Interprofessionnel des fruits et légumes (Ctifl), a research station dealing with vegetable plants. A group of fifteen was welcomed at the same time at the “System U” centre nearby, a logistical base for fruit and vegetables. The excursions provided practical insight into the branch on site. A further issue on the agenda of the first day of ICOP was a sightseeing tour in the centre of the city of Nantes ending at a restaurant for dinner.

The actual Conference day of ICOP 2017 focussed on the three main issues “Climate change”, “Common Market Organisation (CMO) and “Best practice examples of POs”. The event was located at the Hotel de Région des Pays de la Loire. After the welcome address and introduction of the organisers gfa-consulting gmbh, IDfel Val de Loire and AREFLH different approaches to climate change and its impact on European agriculture were presented.

An Insurance agency, a climatologist, an expert on management of resources as well as the European Commission had their say in this matter. All speakers agreed on the fact that in Europe – as well as worldwide – climate change has an increasing impact on the production of food. If natural circumstances are about to change you have to think about what you can do about and against that and how you could minimize these negative consequences for agriculture and for all of us. Only if the sector adapts to the changing circumstances, a sufficient supply of the population can be possible.

The Common Market Organisation (CMO) is the political framework of all the activities and the funding of POs. In 2017 the CMO celebrates its 20th jubilee. Resulting from this fact the thematic issue on the CMO dealt intensively with an evaluation of the last 20 years of the CMO. The presentation of Luc Berlottier of the European Commission focussed on the reform of 2013 and the omnibus package that is about to be discussed within the political committees.

The challenges in line with the CMO are quite wide-ranging as well as its benefits. In the so-called White Paper that was published by co-organisier AREFLH this year and that was presented at the ICOP Conference as well, the period of 20 years of CMO was evaluated.

The keyword “BREXIT” defined Frank Corbally’s presentation, dealing with the consequences of the exit of Great Britain of the European Union on British and Irish POs.

To think outside the box and to try to learn from others was the aim of the thematic issue of “Best practice examples”. Presentations were done by the Fresh Produce Center (NL), as well as by the French POs Rougeline and Pom’Evasion and the organisation Sols Mesures.

ICOP 2017 intended to provide a programme of wide scope with practical and theoretical input. So the organisers decided to provide an approved mixture of a Conference day with theoretical presentations and discussion combined with practical visits of fruit and veg companies and Producer Organisations in the region of Nantes. On the third day of the Conference there were carried out three tours including interesting organisations and locations worth seeing.

“ICOP intends to connect people, ideas and experience with each other and to provide a precious mixture of information and networking”, Wolfgang Braunstein – CEO of gfa-consulting gmbh – pointed out.

This will also be the aim for the next ICOP taking place at the end of November 2018.

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A Producer Organisation – what is that?

Producer Organisations - abbreviated POs - are mergers of farmers for fruit and vegetables that have the following aims:

- to concentrate supply in order to strengthen the position of fruit and vegetable producers in the agri-food chain;*
- to plan production, to adapt supply to meet demand, as much for quality as for quantity and to prevent and manage crises;*
- to improve the competitiveness of production and marketing on the domestic and world market, by both controlling production costs and focusing more on the market;*
- to increase the value of commodities through processing and marketing*
- to increase the focus on fruit and vegetables in our diets;*
- to encourage production methods which respect the environment and landscape.*

(Source: Copa Cogeca)