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The European Chestnut sector showcases its economic, social and environmental assets to the European Parliament

Thirty representatives from EUROCASTANEA showcased the many assets of the European Chestnut Network to the European Parliament on the 4th December 2019.

On the 4th of December, chestnut sector representatives from France, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Austria had the opportunity to present the strengths and weaknesses of European chestnut producers to the members of the Parliament. MEP Pina Picierno (S&D), who hosted the event, highlighted the importance of chestnut orchards and its occupancy of rural territories, also focusing on the high nutritive value of this particular fruit and on the strong potential of its interesting gluten-free composition.

The other MEPs who took the floor at the meeting to share their views in support of the European Chestnut sector were MEPs Isabel Carvalhais (S&D), Álvaro Amaro (EPP) and Paolo de Castro (S&D). All MEPs present agreed on the **multifunctionality** of the chestnut both as a fruit tree and a timber tree. Their interventions underlined how chestnut orchards are essential in the rural landscape because the trees often grow where no other production could be harvested. The orchards also contribute to the fight against climate change thanks to their determining role in carbon sequestration (carbon stock and flux) in ligneous biomass. Furthermore, the MEPs noted that the old chestnut trees are home to an exceptional biodiversity in their cavities.

These facts are well detailed in the [White Paper of the European Chestnut](#), a report published by Eurocastanea and AREFLH that was presented during the meeting and which identifies all the assets, challenges and market data of the chestnut production across Europe.

The chestnut producers present at the meeting took the opportunity to share with the European Parliament's AGRI-Committee representatives the importance of fostering research programmes to fight against pests which cause important damages to the production. Jean-Louis Moulon, Vice-President of AREFLH, mentioned the upcoming creation of an AREFLH working group dedicated specifically to tackle challenges for shell fruits (chestnuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc.)

The producers also insisted on their wish to relaunch the chestnut production by planting 40 000 Ha of trees in order to retrieve the production levels of the 1960's (400 000 tonnes) by strong, proactive and coordinated actions between the producing countries. The representatives of the sector also backed up their [presentations](#) with numerous figures and charts on today's European production.

In his speech on the economic opportunities for the chestnut sector, Luc Berlottier, member of the European Commission (DG AGRI) directed the attention of the audience on two main tools that are currently available to producers : the EU's promotion programmes, whose budgets increased in the past years, and the fruit and vegetable CMO, with its operational programmes.

In conclusion, there is still much to be done on the producer's side to relaunch chestnut consumption and increase production. Nevertheless, as highlighted by MEP Isabel Carvalhais in her concluding remarks, the European chestnut sector has so far demonstrated a strong degree of resilience but must be supported through production planning, economic investment and research and innovation.

More information :

- [White Paper of the European Chestnut](#)
- [See the slides presented at the meeting with the members of Parliament](#)
- www.eurocastanea.org

The **EUROCASTANEA** network has the following missions:

- to represent, defend and promote the common interests of producers, manufacturers and commercial operators of the chestnut sector in the European and world economy
- to foster dialogue, consultations, studies and joint action among its members
- to strengthen the representation of the chestnut sector to the European institutions, regional and national public authorities.
- to promote the renovation of the European chestnut orchards
- to organise the yearly European Chestnut Congress

www.eurocastanea.org



The European Chestnut Network is headed and animated by [AREFLH](http://areflh.org), the Assembly of European Horticultural Regions.

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