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Letter of Intent for participation in ERIAFF network

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Considering the following:

- a. The European Region for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ERIAFF) network was constituted as an informal partnership at the initiative of a core group of 17 European Regions, led by the Regional Government of Tuscany, which met on September 20th 2012 in Florence. In this first Conference the joint declaration constitutive of ERIAFF was launched with the support from 24 European Regions.
- b. On October 2nd 2013 in Brussels, during the second ERIAFF Conference, the Regions reiterated their engagement to continue their action to facilitate the integration of European policies in favour of innovation in agriculture, food and forestry areas.
- c. The European Commission considers ERIAFF to be a relevant and useful network.
- d. ERIAFF has allowed its partners to work on themes of common interest, reaching the aggregation of 71 Regions from 28 European Union Member States.
- e. ERIAFF is able to make a considerable contribution to the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) Agrifood Platform launched by the European Commission.
- f. After almost 5 years of activity, there is a widely felt desire to guarantee the future of the ERIAFF network by renewing the commitment, particularly in terms of a governance model that can ease the coordination of a consistent amount of partners and answer more efficiently to the rising number of actions of common interest.

By renewing their commitment within the ERIAFF Network, the undersigned regions agree on the following functioning principles:

1. Core principles

The targets agreed with the Florence joint declaration of 20th September 2012 are confirmed, reiterating the aim of identifying the needs and the priorities of innovation, as well as sharing the best practices and respective programmes and projects, in order to ease synergies between actors of the territory and improve the participation in projects and European initiatives.

ERIAFF network is kept as an informal partnership, which remains open to new adhesions based on two different levels:

- Member: Regions (or other regional institutions whereas there is no government at regional level) that participate to the Network with a formal adhesion letter.
- Observer: Regions that ask for entering the ERIAFF mailing list without sending an adhesion letter.

The network coordination and his activities are sustained through a Steering Committee and a Technical Secretariat.

Network activities are organized in thematic working groups, led by at least one member region.

Any formalization of a statutory initiative will be further assessed after the Steering Committee will be in place.

2. Partnership

ERIAFF network partnership is composed by Regional Governmental Bodies. In countries without a regional governmental body the partnership can be joined by other Local Governments (at least NUT3 level) or national governmental structures which are equivalent (e.g. Governative Agencies, Territorial Development Authorities, etc.).

ERIAFF partners, divided in members and observers, can suggest actors of their own territory to be added in the contact list and various activities, including a delegation to represent the partner in network activities.

3. Working groups

ERIAFF Network works through working groups which coordination is assured by at least one partner region. Working groups can be started at the proposal of a member, with assessment and approval of the Steering Committee.

They can be ended any time upon communication of the coordinator to the Steering Committee.

ERIAFF partners can join every working group on a voluntary basis by informing the coordinator and the secretariat of the Network.

The active working groups and their coordinators are listed in the **annex A** attached to this letter.

4. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) is the decisional body of the network. It meets at least twice a year. It is composed by the region that holds the role of secretary general, the Region that hosts the annual Conference and the regions that coordinate the working groups. In order to guarantee a fair geographical representation of the partnership and, at the same time, keep manageable the meetings and the decisional system, the SC can include other Regions, until a maximum equal to 28.

The SC decides about the inception of new working groups and the annual work programme. It can establish specific task forces in order to analyse relevant themes for the partnership and the functionality of the network.

The SC is coordinated by the ERIAFF member which hold the role of Secretary General.

Initial Steering Committee members are:

- Tuscany ;
- Zuid-Holland;
- Noord-Holland ;
- Andalusia;
- South Ostrobothnia;

- Central Macedonia;
- Extremadura;
- North-East Romania

5. Technical Secretariat

The Technical Secretariat (TS) assures:

- the support to the Steering Committee,
- the overall coordination of Network activities and working tools;
- internal and external communication;
- the website management;
- the representation of the network in event organized by the European Institutions and third parties.

The TS is coordinated by a Secretary General (SG). The SG represents ERIAFF before the European Institutions and with third parties. The SG reports to the SC about ERIAFF activities and proposes the annual ERIAFF work programme.

During its mandate, the Region in charge for the Secretary General role is making available an office in its premises in Brussels as ERIAFF headquarters and as a temporary office for staff from other Regions.

The Regions involved in the SC also support the activities of the TS by providing administrative and organizational workforce for at least the following needs:

- Communication efforts and daily management of website contents and social media tools;
- Policy officers for following up technical and political dossiers;
- Logistic support for event and meetings in Brussels and, if necessary, in other EU countries;
- Event manager for supporting the organization of ERIAFF events;
- Trainees interested in sectors relevant for the Network.

6. Working tools

- a. Annual Conference
- b. Website
- c. Working Groups
- d. Technical Meetings of the Steering Committee
- e. Events and Workshops
- f. European Projects
- g. Cooperations with third parties
- h. Development of the future governance of ERIAFF
- i. Organizing subnetworks on
 - Forestry
 - Horticulture
 - Arable
 - Live Stock

7. Renewal of the governance

The ERIAFF organizational model can be modified at the proposal of the Steering Committee and approval at the Annual Conference on the basis of a written answer from ERIAFF members.

The undersigned declare to:

- be an active partner of the Steering Committee of the network of the European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry and will do the utmost to build an European network that has an important function as a platform and will act as an authority on research and innovation aspects of agriculture.
- provide the necessary administrative and organizing workforce;
- represent the ERIAFF network, with written and personal dedication, when asked for by the member regions or by the European Union;
- provide a task force for development of the future governance of ERIAFF;
- organize the establishment of ERIAFF working groups.

This letter of intent will be valid until the ERIAFF Annual conference of 2020 and will need a renewal at the ERIAFF Annual conference of 2020.

Thus agreed and signed at the 2017 ERIAFF conference on June 30, 2017.

The region and its representative	Endorsed responsibility for at least three years
Region: Representative: Signature:	-
Region: Representative: Signature:	-
Region: Representative: Signature:	-
Region: Representative: Signature:	-

<p>Region: Tuscany (It)</p> <p>Representative:</p> <p>Signature:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assure the role of Secretary General in the person of Marco Remaschi - Assure the coordination of a Working Group on High Tech Farming under the S3 AGRIFOOD Platform - Assure a temporary office in Brussels
<p>Region: Noord-Holland (NL)</p> <p>Representative: J.H.M. Bond</p> <p>Signature:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping of the horticulture clusters in the EU
<p>Region: Zuid-Holland (NL)</p> <p>Representative: A.W. Bom-Lemstra</p> <p>Signature:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize the establishment of the cluster subnetworks (e.g. forestry and horticulture)