

The Study Areté underlines the ability of the EU sugar sector to overcome the recent phase of the price crisis; crisis that we can certainly affirm unprecedented. It should be noted that the sector still requires attention in order to maintain a balance over time.

The EU sugar sector is characterized by non-homogeneous sustainability and competitiveness among the various countries; Countries characterized by different structural conditions, different agricultural economies and different climatic conditions. Despite the persistence of different economic conditions between the supply chains of the different countries, it is in the common interest of the EU to outline a commitment aimed at maintaining the current production structure. it is necessary to avoid the risk of new closures, dramatic from a social and economic point of view. Therefore, It is necessary create the conditions to ensure participation in the sector of all production "chains", even if located in "fragile" EU regional areas: it is a heritage to be preserved.

NEED FOR INCISIVE MEASURES

The study lists some tools to face the "difficulties"; These tools are already available in the current regulatory framework. In this regard, the issues have also been dealt with in the past in the "High Level Group".

The study also points out that these regulatory tools do not have an automatic trigger mechanism; this is perceived by stakeholders as an obstacle to the implementation of "regulatory" tools.

The data contained in the study illustrate an "ante" situation in which the Italian sugar beet sector was not competitive.

The end of the quota system therefore represented an opportunity for the Italian sugar beet sector which prompted interventions in segments of the sector itself and made it possible to change its position in Europe.

The Italian delegation asks to continue the examination of the criticalities of this sector in the "High-level group", in analogy with the previous experience.

In this regard, it is recalled that the High L G was established also at the request of Italy. In that context, the action of the debate was an opportunity to analyze the problems of the sector and, at the same time, seek concrete solutions.

COSTS OF PRODUCTION IN ITALY

In Italy, after the end of the quotas, only one operator remained in business, the Coprob-Italia Zuccheri cooperative group, which made significant investments in its two sugar factories, innovating both agriculturally and commercially, guaranteeing the survival of a fundamental sector for the Italian food industry.

Today the Italian sector is competitive with production costs certainly comparable to those recorded in other SS.MM. In a nutshell, Coprob has activated technical-agro-cultural synergies that have made it possible to obtain a reduction in production costs of about 30%, compared to the survey period. The Italian delegation is ready to provide all the technical elements to support this statement.

Attention is drawn to the final considerations of the Study. In summary, the importance of developing and encouraging actions of: a) "diversification" and b) "process / product innovation" is emphasized.

This would contribute to improve the resilience of the EU sugar sector.

ITALY FOCUSES ON SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to economic sustainability, the Italian sugar beet sector has invested heavily in environmental sustainability

The Italian supply chain has started an important production of organic sugar since 2019, which currently affects 2,400 ha, in constant growth.

Furthermore, the Italian supply chain joins the SQNPI (National Integrated Production and Quality Production System, managed by the Ministry for Agricultural Policies) with the aim, by 2025, of involving the entire beet production, for an area of over 30,000 ha; so far this project, launched in 2020, counts on the participation of numerous producers for an area of 15,000 ha of beets.

This action has also led to a different characterization of the sugar produced which the market demonstrates to appreciate, with growing interest from both users and the final consumer.

HIGH LEVEL SUGAR GROUP

The institutions of the European Union have to continue monitoring the sector, working on the definition of shared tools and actions to improve the resilience of this strategic sector for all Member States, in order to prevent new dangerous crises.

The natural place to face an in-depth debate on such sensitive and important issues is certainly the High Level Sugar Group which can evaluate, in a more targeted way, the content of the Study and identify the most appropriate measures to suggest either to competent EU and to national authorities , in order to enhance harmonious action for the future development of this strategic sector.