

ITALY WORLD NUMBER ONE IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Italy is among the leaders in organic production worldwide.

We are the world's top producer of citrus fruits (27% of all Italian land for the cultivation of citrus fruits is organic), Europe's leading grower of olives (more than 20% of the nation's olive groves are organic), fruit (almost 25 thousand hectares, over 11% of the national total) and vegetables (55,000 hectares, almost 11% of the total). We are in second place in the world when it comes to organic vines (over 105 thousand hectares and 15.8% of the national total), and the world's second producer of cereals (after China). 10 hectares in every 100 under cultivation are organic and we are in first place in Europe for the number of organic companies.

"These records in the sector of agricultural production," added Roberto Zanoni, president of AssoBio, the national association of companies involved in the transformation and distribution of organic products, "are flanked by the global leadership of companies that transform organic products: more than 18,000 companies of every dimension, i.e. more than 3 thousand more than their German and French counterparts and 15 thousand more than Spain. We are the European Union's top exporter of organic products (with over 2 billion euros of exports) and the second worldwide after the United States. Italian organic products can be found on the shelves of specialised stores and supermarkets in around eighty countries, testament to consumers' faith in, and appreciation of, the quality of products made by Italian companies."

"These figures," continued Mr Zanoni, "are on one hand are very pleasing to us, but on the other they bestow on us great responsibility for our role as representatives of the most dynamic and best-performing sector in Italian agro-food production, which is increasingly seeing new players emerge alongside the sector's pioneers."

"The task is not only to maintain our continental leadership in exports, but simultaneously to increase the share of national consumption. Italy is in fifth place in the world and third place in Europe for the size of its domestic market but per capita spending is still limited: we're talking about 52 euros per year or less, alongside Belgium, more than Spain's €42 or the €35 of Great Britain, but very little compared with €288 in Switzerland, €278 euros in Denmark or €237 in Sweden."

The tools to accompany and encourage the growth of the internal market?

"Continuously improving quality controls, working on research and development to respond to and anticipate consumer demand, upgrading the system of controls with new technological instruments, such as platforms for tracing transactions. But also focusing increasingly on the information side, as SANA has been doing for over 30 years. The commitment to information and promotion must involve the business system and, ideally, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policy and Tourism. The European regulations recognise that organic production performs a dual social function, not only responding to consumer demand for natural, genuine and reliable products, but also providing public goods that contribute to protecting the environment, the wellbeing of animals and rural development. Agriculture Minister Gian Marco Centinaio has expressed his conviction that organic production is one of the most effective tools for safeguarding the immense wealth of our biodiversity. We are counting on seeing a National Action Plan that contributes to reinforcing awareness of organic products and their environmental and social benefits, thus fortifying a sector that is based on sustainability and one that provides "clean" jobs."