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# F.I.CO. (FABBRICA ITALIANA CONTADINA)

F.I.CO. "Fabbrica Italiana Contadina" is a new project established in Bologna, the capital of the Italian Food Valley, which aims to create the "world's biggest center to celebrate the beauty of the Italian agri-food industry". The Italian word "fico" means the fig fruit, but it is also an exclamation meaning "cool".

**F.I.CO. is a collaborative project between the City of Bologna, CAAB Mercati and Eataly** (40% of which is owned by Coop Italia). The idea comes from Andrea Segrè (President of CAAB Bologna and Director of the Department for Agricultural Sciences at the Bologna University) and Oscar Farinetti, the founder of Eataly who is enjoying huge success in the USA with his stores in New York and in Chicago.

CAAB Mercati Bologna is the fresh fruit & vegetable wholesale market located in North Bologna in an area of about 80.000 square meters and which has been used far beyond its capacities

for years. The numbers of the company CAABMercati as of today are:

- 400 million Euro turnover per year
- 19 wholesale companies based in CAAB
- 5 associated cooperatives grouping 290 fruit & vegetable producers
- 100 farming companies
- 2 organizations of producers
- 1 store
- 2.000 customers
- 64 countries suppliers of fruit & vegetable products
- 78.000 square meters covered surface

- 11.000 square meters offices & services
- 20.000 square meters of storage space in common

The idea is to create a new destination of use for existing infrastructures, in an area that has the biggest photovoltaic plant in Europe (16.000.000 Kwh), by converting it to a big Italian Agri-Food Park with commercial and educational areas.

There will be an Eataly store, as well as further special Italian food stores, themed restaurants, events and educational activities to explain the production chain of the various food items and of the Italian excellence from the field to the table. A real farm with cows, milk & cheese production, as well as fields for fruit, vegetable and wheat cultivation is also planned.



MILANO

The opening is planned to coincide with the closing of EXPO 2015, in order to provide a sense of continuity with the topic of Expo 2015 which is "Feed the Planet. Energy for Life" (Nutrire il Pianeta. Energia per la Vita). Expo 2015 will be used to present and promote





this project on a world-wide visible platform.

The feasibility study of F.I.CO. were supposed to start under the following two conditions: the raising of the necessary economical resources until December 31, 2013 and the definition of the contractual agreements connected to the project with Eataly and with all the companies presently working in the CAAB.

By mid December 2013, 38 million Euros had already been raised through private finance (banks, CAAB, and others). Also involved in the project are the association of the retailers (Confcommercio), as well as the Chamber of Commerce of Bologna.

In addition to the commercial partners, the cultural organizations of Bologna such as the Genus Bononiae managing the network of Museums of Bologna, as well as the Cineteca of Bologna, one of the most important collections of Italian and International movies in Italy, including a highly specialized organization for the restoration of movies are involved as well.

They seek to create a strong network of activities around Italian food excellences and to attract numerous Italian and International visitors, tourists



and shoppers. Hopes are that between 5 to 10 million annual visitors interested in Italian Food Culture would create a very positive impact to the territory of Bologna. And not just in terms of qualified tourism, but also employment: the expectations are to create of about 5,000 new jobs around F.I.CO. (inside the area and through connected activities).

The official presentation of F.I.CO. was celebrated in Bologna on December 6, 2013 and has provoked a huge discussion: some called it "the Disneyland of Food", some were critical about the possibility to feature the real authentic Italian agri-food excellences in a project involving big players such as Eataly, and thus Coop Italia, some were critical about the financial resources and the timelines indicated in the presentation.

Certainly, F.I.CO. is a ambitious project, a real challenge with a complex plan and strong innovation potential. Bologna has long been considered the capital of Italian Food and the city has a long tradition of innovative approaches to food production and management. For example, the Banco Alimentare and the Last Minute Market, a non-profit organization which collects food with remaining short shelf life from food producers and from supermarkets, to distribute it to the poor, making Bologna the European reference in the battle against food waste.

So, it is likely that the F.I.CO. project can work out, if all involved players will manage it with care.

We will monitor and update about the progress. **GRB**