**The three winning ingredients for the success of organic fruit and vegetables: proximity to production, selection, effective communication.**

The workshop organized as part of the activities of the European project It's Bio co-financed by Aop Gruppo Vi.Va and, in particular, by Almaverde Bio, Canova and Apofruit gave numerous ideas for discussion and in-depth analysis on the strategic aspects that give value to organic in fruit and vegetables .

In the last 10 years (from 2012 to 2023) the penetration of organic has reached 90% of Italian families, going from 13 to 23 million purchasing families. According to Nomisma data, presented at the last edition of Marca, the overall market for organic products reached €5,754 million (a.y. July 23), marking a +7% in value in home consumption (€4,207 million) and €1,268 million € (+18%) in away from home. On the contrary, in the period January - September 2023, according to CSO Italy data, sales of organic fruit and vegetables reached just under €520 million, marking a +2% in value and -7% in volume compared to 2022.

Despite the slight countertrend in food in general, organic fruit and vegetables recorded a contraction in consumption. The 2024 consumption trend, as reported by the Coop Winter Report, sees a marked improvement in the propensity to purchase fruit and vegetables with 45% of the sample of consumers who will be guided in their 2024 purchase by the choice of healthy products. Well-being and respect for the environment are the two main drivers for purchases of organic fruit and vegetables, according to data presented by Claudio Scalise of SGMARKETING.

The research presented by SGMARKETING on the propensity to purchase organic products by Italian large-scale retail trade generally highlights a defensive perception on the part of the buyers interviewed who see the sector still in difficulty even in the medium term. Given this experience, a segmentation of the category is highlighted with the presence of 3 different consumer groups, heavy, medium and light consumers, towards which differentiated sales policies must be developed.

In particular, some strategies emerge from the research that the brands are implementing to enhance organic products in their offer, to relaunch consumption of the category. Among the main ones we highlight: the rethinking of the exhibition layout, the reorganization of the assortment giving greater emphasis to seasonal products, the reorganization of the department's communication to better highlight the value of organic products, the development of MDD and the reorganization of promotions.

These indications strengthen the choice of the Apofruit Group which, as highlighted by General Director Ernesto Fornari, has organic agriculture in its DNA. Apofruit started with organic production in 1993, founded Canova, the company specializing in organic fruit and vegetables, in 1997 and finally created, in 2000, the Almaverde Bio brand, leader in Italian organic produce.

The heart of the success of the Apofruit organic ecosystem is Canova, a highly specialized company which is certainly unique in Italy and has 4 dedicated Apofruit factories, a technological park for the processing of cutting-edge products. Numerous refrigerated cells and processing areas, 4 partners with operating platforms distributed throughout the national territory by O.P. Terra di Bari (table grapes), GULLINO (apples, kiwis), COOP. SOLE (strawberries, melons, salads), TERRE DELL'ETRURIA (vegetables).

Finally, there are 4 specialist platforms for fresh-cut and fifth-range products, dried legumes and cereals. “A specialization of this kind”, Ernesto Fornari remarks, “allows us to reach high volumes and above all to offer the organic consumer a continuity of assortment and a deep range of very high quality products because they are grown in the strategic and most suitable areas of Italian production. For Apofruit, organic farming, concludes Fornari, means enhancing production by supporting producer members also in experimenting with new production techniques in order to have a positive result. In 27 years we have developed organic production by making highly specialized tools and technicians and resources available to our members to make investments to improve production techniques in the field and post-harvest, without neglecting product innovation with the inclusion in organic production of new varieties such as yellow Kiwi, Candine® Bio, Kaki Maxim Seedless Grapes, new stone fruit, new organic citrus fruits such as Tango/Tangold".

“Organic, for us,” concludes Fornari, “is a commitment to giving value to production, guaranteed

also from the numerous certifications that we put in place, from the standards to those dedicated to biodynamic such as Naturland, Biosuisse, Biodynamic Agriculture (Verdèa)”.

The value of organic is the key word of the It's Bio workshop, a value that starts from the field and the direct commitment of production and reaches the point of sale which, for Almaverde Bio has an absolutely unique declination in the national panorama in the Islands, the branded spaces inside supermarkets.

Paolo Pari, Director of Almaverde Bio, talks about it, which presents very positive results for sales with 7.9 million euros in 2023 equal to + 17% both in value and volume compared to 2022, with the same network: “Today there are 58 Almaverde Bio Islands, distributed across the entire national territory. The winning formula,” Paolo Pari states, “is the organization of the offer capable of responding to the needs of different consumption approaches. We are able to offer the right products for high-spending organic consumers, thanks to the depth of the range, but we are also able to intercept occasional organic consumers who choose our very competitive offers because they are linked to seasonal production circumstances. The direct link with production makes the offer of the Almaverde Bio Islands elastic and with an excellent quality/price ratio.”

A winning element for giving value to organic production is communication and on this front the promotions communicated in the Almaverde Organic Islands lead with good evidence of the seasonal category as recently happened with the entire range of brassicas.

However, there is a higher level of communication that must always accompany organic products and support consumer choices and for this reason the three-year It's Bio project comes into play, the partial results of which were presented by Mario Tamanti, Director of Aop Gruppo Vi.Va .

“The results of the first two years of the It's Bio project,” Tamanti declares, “are extremely positive if we consider the number of users/consumers involved. Over the two-year period, 350 in-store promotional days were held, strengthened, in some cases by the presence of a promoter and in others by the presence of food influencers who created special organic cooking shows in the store. The It's Bio promotional campaign then developed in digital mode, with strong activity on dedicated social channels and on the YouTube channel where 330,000 views of the 12 informative videos created for the project were achieved".

“Aop GRUPPO VI.VA”, concludes Tamanti, “is the organization to which the European Union has entrusted this project and is a national reality with 23,000 cultivated hectares of which 10% are organic. The It's Bio project has a fundamental task and that is to communicate the values ​​of organic products to consumers and operators, values ​​which can be summarized in three points: the healthiness of the products, environmental sustainability and the certified guarantee of the production method. Winning requirements for consumers who are increasingly sensitive to their health and well-being and to protecting the environment".

The video summarizing the results of It's Bio presented by Mario Tamanti on the results of the project activities can be viewed at this link: [https://youtu.be/bXISKcXNosY?si=yOFIk\_C0JMNwfFec](https://youtu.be/bXISKcXNosY?si=yOFIk_C0JMNwfFec )

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Find out more on [www.itsbio.it](http://www.itsbio.it)