

OPINION PAPER

ITALY on the spotlight: EXPO MILAN 2015 and Italian Journal of Food Science

P. FANTOZZI^{a*}, M.F. CABONI^b, T. GALLINA TOSCHI^b, V. GERBI^c,
A. HIDALGO^d, V. LAVELLI^d, G. PERRETTI^a, P. PITTIA^c, C. POMPEI^d,
K. RANTSIOU^c, L. ROLLE^c, M. SINIGAGLIA^f and B. ZANONI^g

^{a*}Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences (DSAAA),
University of Perugia, Via S. Costanzo n.c.n., 06126 Perugia, Italy

^bDepartment of Agricultural and Food Sciences, Alma Mater Studiorum,
University of Bologna, P.zza Goidanich 60, 47521 Cesena (FC), Italy

^cDepartment of Agricultural, Forestry and Food Sciences,
University of Torino, Largo Paolo Braccini 2, 10095 Grugliasco (TO), Italy

^dDepartment of Food, Environmental and Nutritional Sciences (DeFENS),
University of Milan, Via Celoria 2, 20133 Milan, Italy

^eFaculty of Bioscience and Technology for Food, Agriculture and Environment,
University of Teramo, Mosciano Sant'Angelo (TE), Italy

^fDepartment of the Sciences of Agriculture, Food and Environment,
University of Foggia, Via Napoli 25, 71122 Foggia, Italy

^gDepartment of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Systems Management (GESAAF), University
of Florence, Via Donizetti 6, 50144 Florence, Italy

*Corresponding author: paolo.fantozzi@unipg.it

The year 2015 will certainly be remembered as the Year of the Universal Exposition (EXPO) hosted in Milan, Italy, focusing on a hot theme in the current scenario: "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life".

This event has drawn a wide international attention towards Italy as a country with peculiar and valuable food traditions, thus strengthening its reputation as "gastronomic capital of the world" rich in protected designation of origin products (PDOs) and characterised by a long-standing food culture.

EXPO 2015 has been a global platform to showcase a vast range of food traditions, as well as a unique opportunity to appreciate different cultures through food practices, thus reflecting on the values that bring people together. EXPO 2015 was a chance for scientists, regulators, industry representatives and buyers, to meet and share cutting-edge knowledge and opinions, and to start fruitful collaborations and networks.

Meetings and conferences scheduled within the EXPO 2015 calendar encompassed various themes, with particular focus on sustainability

- Keywords: Expo 2015, Feeding the Planet, Food Safety, Food Security, Nutrition, Shelf Life, Biodiversity -

of the agri-food system, conservation of biodiversity, protection of environment and its natural resources, such as water, land and soil. Emerging agri-food technologies were also recognised as essential for understanding natural phenomena, monitoring production factors, tracing food products, managing emergency and crisis, ultimately leading to improvement of well-being and prosperity worldwide.

Scientists involved in the fields of agriculture, environment and food processing are challenged by these emerging themes with the task to advance their studies in order to have an impact on education, training and future policies of the agri-food sector.

The Italian Journal of Food Science has been deeply involved, in the last two years, in the diffusion of new ideas and exchange of knowledge on the topics of EXPO 2015.

A primary EXPO 2015 subject was product sustainability, i.e. new and alternative methods of agricultural production aimed to reduce the environmental impact of food production. Accordingly, Lo GIUDICE *et al.* (2013) proposed different approaches to lessen the production impact of Sicilian blood oranges on the environment through the application of the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodology, while GIORDANO *et al.* (2013) studied the influence of cropping conditions on volatile fingerprint and mechanical properties of Muscat blanc (*Vitis vinifera* L.) grapes grown in the north-west mountain region of Italy.

Another relevant EXPO 2015 topic was nutrition and biodiversity, in the awareness that lesser-known species rich in bioactive compounds can play an important role in human health. Thus, the research presented by JURIKOVA *et al.* (2014) tackled at the same time sustainability, nutrition and biodiversity, assaying the antioxidant properties of selected cultivars of interspecific crosses of rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia* L.), a thrifty species with high frost resistance. On the other hand, TRIPALDI *et al.* (2014) com-

bined tradition and new consumer requirements by evaluating traditional and reduced dry salting methods of an Italian valuable PDO product, Pecorino Romano cheese.

The development of new technologies in food science was fostered by MURA *et al.* (2014), which focused on the advances of nanotechnology in food and animal science, as this emerging multidisciplinary field can potentially improve the nutritional value, quality and shelf life of several food products, leading to crucial advantages in terms of consumer safety. The concept of food safety was approached by YASAR and BOSELLI (2015) in a survey on perception and awareness of European Union food safety policy by different socio-demographic groups of consumers.

IJFS strives to promote the advancement of Food Science: therefore, we would like to acknowledge all the Authors for their contribution and the Reviewers for their valuable advice.

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