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Agri-food cooperation in Emilia Romagna: a success story a future of challenges

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- It's a story that starts from far away and tells a path of emancipation,
- made by the commitment of generations of farmers, ranchers and fishermen,
- whose work has built a model that is behind the success of this economic sector and its important role in the regional economy.

- Cooperation is a production system that is spread and rooted in the region with percentages of production that exceed, in key sectors, 50% of total production.
- In the sector, Emilia-Romagna has a turnover of 13 billion Euro or 36% over a national turnover of more than 36 billion Euro
- In Italy agro-food cooperatives are over 5,000, 700 of which are based in Emilia Romagna.
- The national economic dimension amounts to 7.2 million euro per enterprise; in Emilia-Romagna this value rises up to 18.7 million (2013)

- Emilia-Romagna holds a record, in such a sector that is today considered to be strategic within a vision of sustainable development.
- It's a record with deep roots in the past.
- At the beginning of the last century where there was plenty of arms and shortage of work.
- Cooperation solved a critical situation while realizing an innovative and cutting edge system.

It worked mainly on three aspects:

- budget, to keep the wages high and maintain low consumer prices and low interest rates of banks and insurances;
- pensions, with subsidies in the event of injury, illness or old age
- human capital improvement, with courses for illiterate, professional training, creation of libraries and leisure clubs

- From the second half of the 80 's agro-food cooperation was affected by the liberalization of capital within the European Union, too.
- The sector achieved good economic performance but was characterized by a big fragmentation
- The market was in the hands of other operators that determined prices and policies.

- This situation required restructuring, rationalizing and internal merging actions to be more competitive and to better equipped on entrepreneurial basis.
- A change of model was needed to achieve economic, productive and organizational dimensions such as to compete at the same level, with multinationals.

- The rise of industrial clusters and the expansion of markets have been a stimulus to cooperation to develop new strategies to defend the producers' income.
- This decade, the nineties, was characterized by the use of innovative technologies, that the individual enterprise could not afford and by consistent support, consulting and training by high profile experts, that were able to direct the cooperators toward profitable choices.

- Cooperation has developed innovative strategies that have allowed the industry to grow and to look ahead, aiming confidently toward internationalization.
- Cooperative agrifood exports at national level are 13%, in Emilia-Romagna the value is 18%.
- The value of export co-operative Emilia Romagna is almost 25% of the overall Italian export (2012)

➤ Combining facts and values of the cooperative movement:

- ✓ local roots and internationalization
- ✓ focus on members and leadership recognition
- ✓ tradition and innovation
- ✓ sustainability and business
- ✓ protection of the producer and of the consumer
- ✓ quality with convenience
- ✓ ethical values and economic dimension
- ✓ social dimension as well as entrepreneurial dimension

- Today Emilia Romagna is one of the most advanced Regions in Europe with a modern agri-food system, of which cooperatives are an important component, investing in research, innovation and internationalization.
- The experience of cooperation, which focuses on the needs of people rather than on the profit and the accumulation of assets that are transmitted generation by generation, certainly responds to social challenges and environmental issues that we have to face to sustainably feed the planet.

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!**

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