

Italy elite draw up growth recipe at food forum

Posted on March 30, 2026 by Alina Trabattoni

MANDURIA, Apulia — Italy's top food, wine, and agriculture figures met in Apulia this weekend and drew up a recipe for growth, committing to invest in quality, back young producers, and cut bureaucracy to capitalise on Italy's newly awarded UNESCO culinary heritage status.

The *Forum della Cucina Italiana* (Italian Food Forum), organised by veteran Italian journalist and television presenter Bruno Vespa with Italian export agency ICE and public affairs consultancy Comin & Partners and held 29 and 30 March at Masseria Li Reni in Manduria, Apulia, opened with a striking set of data. A Deloitte study put the global value of Italian cuisine at 251 billion euro, with 300 billion within reach if recent growth rates hold. Agri-food exports already hit a record 71 billion euro in 2025, up 5.2 percent on 2024, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said, with total Italian exports reaching 643 billion euro and a government target of 700 billion by end of 2027.

The opportunity ahead is illustrated Italian cuisine generating around 80 billion euros in restaurant revenue in China, yet actual Italian food exports to that market stand at roughly 20 billion. Coldiretti president Ettore Prandini called it a signal of untapped potential, and prescribed shifting food logistics from road to rail and sea to get more original product into markets where imitations currently fill the gap.

European parliamentarian Dario Nardella put a geography on the opportunity, pointing to new trade agreements with Mercosur, India, and Australia as key enablers. Tajani was equally forward-looking on US tariffs. "I am not pessimistic," he said, "because the door is always the quality of our product."

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/italy-food-elite-draw-up-growth-recipe-2/



Forum della Cucina Italiana (*Credits: Forum in Masseria*)

Quality, bureaucracy, youth

Salvatore Amura, CEO of Valore Italia, was direct when Italy Now asked what would drive that growth. “We need to invest in quality, in certifications, in the supply chain,” he said. “The product must always tell the story of its link to the territory.” ICE Agency president Matteo Zoppas agreed. ”We now have the opportunity to tell the story of Italian cuisine’s values ever more widely and ever more effectively,” he said, “values that are becoming soft power.”

Two words continued recurring across the two days. Nicola Fiasconaro, the Sicilian pastry maker who exports *panettone* to 70 countries, was direct. “*Deburocratizzare* needs to become the watchword,” he told Italy Now. “If we manage to cut bureaucracy, it will be far easier to reach new goals well within reach of the Italian system.” Albiera Antinori of the Antinori wine dynasty closed with a broader reflection. “Wine is evolving in terms of tourism, of storytelling, of helping people understand the whole world behind a bottle.” On the UNESCO effect: “I think it will give definitely a boost of attention and translate into practical numbers.”

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