

Italy targets food growth at Apulia Forum

Posted on March 29, 2026 by Sabina Castelfranco

MANDURIA, Italy — Italy must do more to defend and promote the quality of its food products globally, Agriculture Minister Francesco Lollobrigida said on Sunday opening the inaugural Forum of Italian Cuisine in the southern region of Puglia.

“So-called ‘Italian sounding’ products are often cheaper than the originals,” Lollobrigida told participants. “We must help consumers understand why authentic Italian products cost more – they respect environmental and labour standards that imitations often do not, and they guarantee a higher quality.”

He also addressed the ongoing Xylella crisis affecting olive groves in Apulia, calling for stronger coordination and oversight. “There is an amendment proposed by centre-right political forces, which I support and helped draft, in agreement with the regions, to appoint a commissioner who can put an end to the lack of strategy,” he said.

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/italy-targets-food-growth/



Agriculture Minister Francesco Lollobrigida *(Credits: Forum in Masseria)*

Global market opportunity

The two-day forum, held at Masseria Li Reni and promoted by journalist Bruno Vespa, brings together institutions and industry leaders following the recent recognition of Italian cuisine as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Organised in collaboration with Agenzia ICE and Comin & Partners, the event aims to turn that cultural recognition into economic growth at a time of rising costs and global trade uncertainty.

Research presented at the forum by Deloitte estimates the global value of Italian cuisine at €251 billion, with potential to reach €300 billion if current growth trends continue. A significant share of that value is generated abroad, particularly in the United States and China, which each account for roughly €80 billion linked to Italian-style dining. However, much of this turnover does not rely on authentic Italian ingredients — a gap that industry representatives say must be addressed.

Authenticity challenge

“One of the most interesting findings is that the largest share of value comes from restaurants inspired by Italian cuisine abroad,” said Giordano Emo Capodilista, vice president of Confagricoltura. “The real challenge now is to increase this value and, above all, strengthen the presence of Italian products, so that the benefits return to our country and our agriculture.”

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Capodilista added that imitation products remain widespread but should not be viewed solely as a threat. “It would be better if only authentic Italian ingredients were used, but this is already a solid base from which to build,” he said.

The forum is also addressing broader challenges including sustainability, water resource management and the economic role of the hospitality sector, a key driver of employment.

Italy’s Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli are expected to speak on Monday, as the event continues to position itself as a key platform for discussing strategies, innovation and the protection of a heritage that represents not only culture, but also economic development and national identity.

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