

Lollobrigida on food tourism, hidden places

Posted on April 18, 2026 by Alina Trabattoni

ROME — Italian agricultural minister Francesco Lollobrigida spoke to Italy Now in Rome during the annual Federalberghi meeting in Rome. He made the case for food as the country's most powerful tool for spreading tourism beyond its overcrowded art cities. One in two tourists now comes to Italy primarily to eat, he said, and the recent UNESCO recognition of Italian cuisine as intangible heritage could bring as many as 18 million additional visitors a year to destinations that have rarely featured on the classic itinerary.

Q. Italy already attracts enormous numbers of visitors. What is the opportunity for the parts of the country that tourism has not yet reached?

"We need to spread even further Italy's capacity to attract visitors, not only to the places that are already well known, but across the entire national territory, from north to south. The offer is very broad."

Q. Food keeps coming up as a driver. How significant has it actually become?

"Today one in two tourists comes to Italy to eat. Before, they came to eat as well, but they came to visit monuments, to discover the surroundings. Today they come to eat. And food is a great attractor. Italian cuisine, as UNESCO heritage, will bring around 18 million more tourists a year to Italy, to places not classically visited by tourism. It will also be a return tourism, linked to Italian communities abroad, who will come back to visit places that are often connected to products. If someone tastes the burrata from Andria, they become curious and go to visit Andria. If they taste the hazelnuts of the Langhe, the same thing happens."

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/lollobrigida-on-food-tourism-italys-hidden-places/

Q. So food tourism can actively reduce pressure on the main cities?

“There is an attraction that opens up new prospects and spreads tourism horizontally, without burdening the art cities even further, but instead distributing tourism and extending the season. That is another important element, because if someone wants to follow the seasonality of products, they have to travel at times that are often not the peak period for classic tourism.”

Q. What is being done at a policy level to support these newer forms of tourism?

“Wine tourism is growing. We are investing a great deal, together with the minister of tourism, in wine tourism, in agritourism, and in tourism linked to craft beer. We amended the Coltivo Italia framework with a specific provision dedicated to these three new forms of organised tourism, which also strengthens the agricultural system, because the multifunctionality of farms – their capacity to offer high-quality products with added value while also providing hospitality – is a major result.”

Q. Can tourism also help reverse the depopulation of rural communities?

“Tourism is fundamental, obviously. Income is the answer. Income comes from agriculture linked to tourism, because tourism adds value to products. A product that is intrinsically good but arrives on the market without that added value cannot sustain its costs. This is what allows even remote areas to be repopulated.”

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