



2nd Forum for the Future of Agriculture - Regional Event  
Milan, May 18, 2009

Soil and new investments for productivity, environment and energy

The Forum proceeded in Milan and “The Earth and the New Investments between Production, Environment and Energy” was the main area of concern. Guiseppe VISCONTI, President of the Friends of the Countryside introduced the activities and invited participants to focus on the balance between three fundamental elements: food, energy and environment.

Francesco BRIOSCHI, Professor of Economy and Finance at the Polytechnic University of Milan invited the speakers to help participants rediscover the central role of agriculture for food production, protection of the environment and energy efficiency, with realism and scientific rigour for the sustainable development of our planet.

Dario CASATI (Pro-Rector University of Milan) stated that “The crisis is served (...) the earth is a special good and it is indispensable for the survival of the human species. Economic logic must be applied to the production process in agriculture”.

“In order to increase food availability it is necessary to increase the productive yields, a not easy objective, but possible thanks to agriculture technologies”. According to Michele Pasca RAYMONDO (General Director Regional Policy, European Commission) “Two elements are of particular importance in agriculture: the demographic vulnerability and the vulnerability to the climatic change. And for the first element we need to create new job opportunities for the development of the territory, the integration of the agricultural companies, and the diversification of the agricultural activity (multi-functionality).”

As stated by Robert FLIES (Councilor DG Environment, European Commission) “Nature is a cultural capital, supplying us with goods and services. The challenge is on the balance between economic development and protection of nature. The antagonism between economic development and protection of the environment is a false problem. In reality the two requirements can cohabit, indeed they need to be integrated”. Flies continued, “Obviously all this can not happen in an easy way but the Professional Associations should provide their message to society on the fact that they are supporting the nature”.

Alessandro ORTIS (President of the Authority for Energy) subsequently argued that, “In the attempt to protect production and the environment, the investments in agribusiness represent a meaningful node”. For ORTIS, agriculture is essential for consumers but he explained that it is also an energy provider. Signor ORTIS then argued that it would be crucial to ensure that energy, notably “one of the concomitant causes of the crisis”, becomes a positive driver in the future of sustainable agriculture.

Syngenta’s Romano DE VIVO consequently argued that we will need 50 per cent more food by 2030 due to water shortages and the continuously changing climate. However, there is a lack of land on which to cultivate without threatening natural habitats. Nonetheless, technology is essential as it will enable us to achieve this sustainably.

In order to demonstrate the enormous potential of agriculture, Federico Radice FOSSATI, farmer and entrepreneur, concluded the meeting by introducing the participants to the recently inaugurated production site for biodiesel, right at the heart of his multifunctional farm.