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COMUNICATO STAMPA

Multiple Uses: The Flowering of Agriculture

A study of the features and potential of new activities in a rural setting was presented at ExpoGreen, suggesting that farms will be involved increasingly in the high-income speciality of services for the maintenance of parks and gardens.

The new frontier for agriculture in many EU countries must include handling services for green maintenance and the management of the environment and territory, according to a study unveiled at ExpoGreen at the Bologna fair.

The multiple future functions of farms were introduced by the EU as it sought to wean farmers off agricultural support payments, attempting to shift the stress from traditional farming to a whole range of new activities concerned as much as anything with maintaining the rural environment.

The study, *Agricultural Services between Landscape and Market* was edited by Corrado Ievoli, a lecturer in Agro-Food Economics at Molise University. It includes essays by economists and experts in the field.

The study analyses how the regulatory framework has evolved, the economic dimensions involved and the type of management model that should be linked to multiple use in farming. Ievoli pointed out that while technical and legal aspects are fundamental for getting the phenomenon into focus, a clearer idea can only be obtained of how it is growing as a response from farmers to an increasingly important effective demand.

Ievoli reported that services of the kind envisaged are highly profitable. In 2008, park and garden maintenance in Italy was worth €1.3 billion out of the €5.3 billion spent on connected services, up from €4.2 billion in 2000.

Addressing the event, Emilia Romagna's assessor in charge of agriculture Tiberio Rabboni stressed that the multiple use concept offers a good mediation between the political need to reduce the system of agricultural subsidies and the practical need for active defence of green areas in terms of an effective market demand.

The effects of the new approach can be seen on the evolution of agricultural technology as well as on farms as such. Massimo Goldoni, the president of UNACOMA, which groups Italy's farm and earth-moving machine makers, confirmed that the new functions outlined for agriculture will need specific equipment guaranteeing the same safety and reliability already achieved in traditional machines. He added that multiple use on the farm is more than anything a transformation of the farm itself, which means that all the professionals involved must have occasion to learn, analyse and verify the new course.

The managing-director of UNACOMA Service, Guglielmo Gandino, picked up this ball on the bounce by pointing out that fairs such as ExpoGreen and others organised by the company he runs are not just a showcase for products, but are also a chance for didactic and formative "dissemination". He added that UNACOMA's two main fairs in Italy, ExpoGreen and EIMA International, will become occasions for monitoring the issues involved and updating professionals on how they are evolving. At this edition of ExpoGreen, there is already a specific space for multiple uses in farming, the Future Farm, one of the most attractive exhibits in the whole fair area.

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