

## Abruzzo: A Region Focusing on Agriculture

L. A. (July 21, 2011)



Abruzzo had a significant presence at this year's The Fancy Food Show. It can be said that Abruzzo's economy is once again based on agriculture despite the devastating earthquake there two years ago. We interviewed Commissioner of Agriculture of the Region of Abruzzo Mauro Febbo who was accompanied by industry experts

What does the region of Abruzzo region bring to the Fancy Food Show this year?

We are perhaps the second or the third region with a considerable number of Italian companies that produce typical, regional products which are being successfully exported. These are gourmet products such as wine, pasta, cheese, sweets, olives and related products, and some organic products such as honey, for example. Abruzzo has some large companies that are well-established in the U.S. market (such as De Cecco pasta), but it also has small to medium companies that only recently have emerged in the Canadian and American markets.



Abruzzo, during the global economic crisis, has also faced many problems as a result of the earthquake that devastated L'Aquila. How is it going in those areas?

Sorelle Nurzia, a company which produces nougat, is one of the best examples of how well L'Aquila has rebounded after the 2009 earthquake. The earthquake has inevitably created an obstacle in the region's economy, a block that L'Aquila still struggles with today. However I can say that, paradoxically, despite the destruction and disaster the earthquake of 2009 seems to have helped Abruzzo to be discovered abroad.

Describe today's Abruzzo in a few words. Is it still the land of shepherds?

The region of Abruzzo has an extraordinary variety of landscapes: the sea and the mountains live together harmoniously and create products that are favored by this contrast. With the end of transhumance Abruzzo has gradually lost a strong culture of sheep farming, however it still continues to produce excellent cheeses.

Abruzzo has reconciled with the past by focusing on new initiatives and agriculture has become the primary sector on which Abruzzo's current economy is based.

How do you promote your products?

The strategy of promoting regional products, above all, is to concentrate on the quality of our products. We organize and participate in events designed to sponsor these products by highlighting their unique characteristics and their long tradition, paying particular attention to niche products. European funding has played an important role in Abruzzo's economic recovery. In this case, however, the notion still persists that these funds were not were not used properly, which must be discredited.

Does the United States still remain an important market for Abruzzo region?

We are attentive to American consumers and strategic in our growth. In our region, the figures related to exports are among the best in the country, with a positive upward trend that gives us hope. The trend also coincides, obviously, with the increased number of jobs. The evident economic and financial crisis present in our region has caused an increase in unemployment but the agricultural sector has gone against the trend. Focusing our efforts abroad is very important to us.

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