



ITALY

**GIVE US THIS DAY  
OUR DAILY BREAD**

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Piedmont. Riso Rizzotti. Luca Rizzotti helps his father Fabrizio prepare the fertiliser to ready the soil for sowing the rice.

## **How the agri-food sector is grappling with the coronavirus epidemic**

Italy covers less than 0.5% of the planet's land surface, and yet it boasts the highest number of edible plant species, as well as fish (10,500 species), native grape varieties (1,200), species of olive (533), wheat (140) and types of cheese (487). The country's biodiversity is unique and the agri-food sector plays a significant role in its economy.

The coronavirus epidemic has dealt a severe blow to this sector, due to the closure of restaurants, canteens and bars. Many small/medium-sized farms, which used to supply the catering industry with quality products, have seen their turnover cut in half. Most of these companies are trying to fall back on e-commerce channels with home deliveries either by courier or their own staff.

The major producers, on the other hand, are faced with an increase in demand from supermarkets as Italian families stockpile food for the lockdown. If demand were to outstrip supply, large-scale distribution suppliers would paradoxically find themselves in difficulty, as it would be too expensive to turn to small suppliers.

The slowdown in the engineering and construction sectors makes it difficult to find spare parts for the machinery and materials necessary for the maintenance of farm buildings. Seasonal labour from abroad has also been blocked with the closure of borders.

In spite of all these difficulties, farmers and stockbreeders continue to work hard and to plan for the future. Never before has the Italian population been so aware of the effort and sacrifices behind the products on the shelves of its food shops. And if the availability of products in these shops has remained constant, then it is thanks to the food supply chain, which hasn't stopped working for a single day since the lockdown began.



Lombardy. Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. Tomato plants are positioned to encourage their vertical growth. The cultivation of many fruits and vegetables requires manual work that cannot yet be replaced by technology.



Lombardy. Andrea Ottolina, Managing Director of Molino Colombo. "I am proud of my staff who in this difficult moment are contributing to ensuring a primary resource like flour. The main problem will be to maintain the financial flow of the production chain: every operator will have to take advantage of the initiatives provided by the government to support companies and enable us to respect the hashtag #iopagoifornitori (I pay my suppliers)".



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola Cirenaica. Sandro Passerini in the drying room. With the restaurant sector shut down, the farm is focussing on supplying rest homes, direct sales through the farm shop, online sales and supplying ethical purchasing groups.



Piedmont, Vanzetti Holstein. In order to avoid pathologies caused by bacteria or viruses, all calves are placed in quarantine as soon as they are born due to their lack of immune defences.



Piedmont, Riso Rizzotti. Luca Rizzotti uses the computer to check the details of a consignment due for collection.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola I Dossi. "Those involved in farming do it because they like it, it's a passion", says Cesare Mariano Bazzano as he describes the hard work in the fields.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. Egg-laying hens in the henhouse.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola Cirenaica. Sandro Passerini examines one of the wells that provide water to the irrigation canals. Unfortunately, some have broken and the building sector shutdown has involved some construction wholesalers. In order to repair the wells, Sandro has had to purchase sacks of cement from three different retail outlets, at a far higher price.



Lombardy, the courtyard of Molino Colombo. The company continues to supply mainly bakeries. In order to stay in business, the emergency has forced food retailers to offer services such as home deliveries.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. Inside the farm shop, situated in the central courtyard of Cascina Pizzo, fresh produce is sold directly in spite of the reduced customer numbers. Precautionary measures are respected such as the required distance between people and the use of masks and gloves.



Lombardy, Cascina Alberona, Azienda Agricola di Luigi Ferraris. The rice is destined for small and large retail distributors, while some will be sold directly in the farm shop or online on the company's website.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola I Dossi. Cesare Mariano Bazzano examines the tractor that he would have used to spray herbicide in a field of maize. In this period a mechanical breakdown or fault can jeopardise the harvest months down the line.



Lombardy, the A4 motorway at the Milano Laghi exit, which is usually congested with traffic, is almost completely deserted. Most of the traffic on the motorways consists of delivery vehicles and lorries transporting foodstuffs.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. Immigrants from North Africa regularly hired as farm hands, at work in the greenhouses where tomatoes are grown. The immigrants are placed with the farm by an NGO involved in reception and integration.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. Sergio Scotti's son and nephew check the order receipt. Home delivery takes place thanks to other members of the Scotti family in order to ensure a rapid service for customers during this period of emergency.



Piedmont, flooded rice fields in the Novara area.



Piedmont, Vanzetti Holstein. Marco Vanzetti checks the health and productivity parameters of his cows using a smartphone app and electronic devices positioned on the animals' collars.



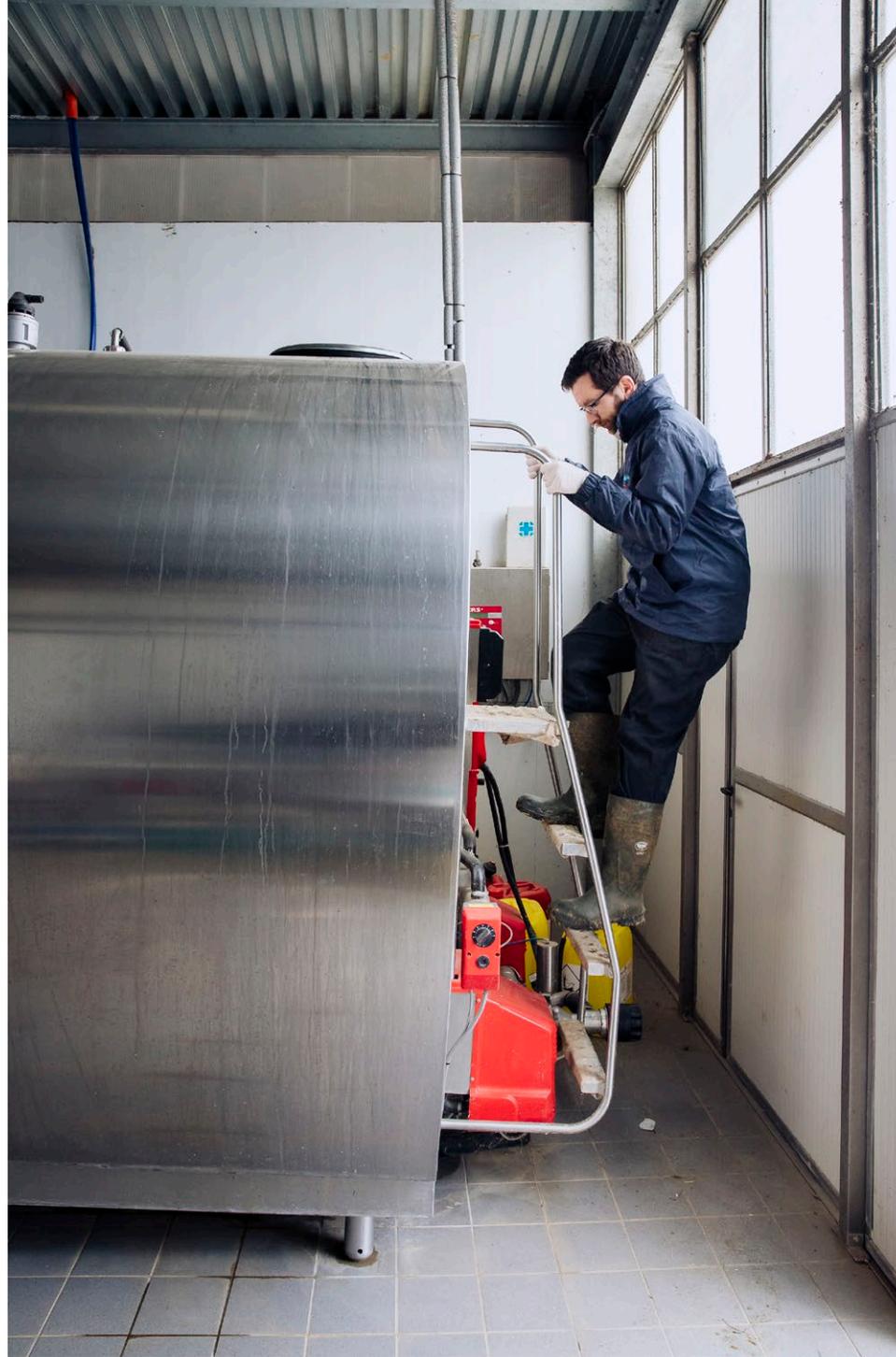
Lombardy, Azienda Agricola Cirenaica. The salami production has three full-time staff and one part-time assistant. All four are currently required for work.



Lombardy, Molino Colombo. In the company's farm shop a member of staff deals with e-commerce orders.



Lombardy, Azienda Agricola F.lli Scotti. A member of staff of Asian origin drives a tractor through fruit trees. The farm works with farming cooperatives from Romania, Poland and India but many people are blocked in their countries by the current closure of national borders, this is a problem that needs to be resolved due to the imminent seasonal harvest.



Piedmont, Vanzetti Holstein. Marco Vanzetti climbs down from the milk tank after carrying out a check. The milk extracted by the automatic system is then pumped through pipes to the main tank after its characteristics have been analysed by the automatic milking machine.



Piedmont, Vanzetti Holstein. Automatic robotic milking machines. The cows, which are free to move around the cowshed, on the first days after giving birth are brought to the automatic milking machine and soon learn to use it when they need, independently. The system boosts the animals' wellbeing and simplifies the work of the farmers.



parallel zero

via Donatello 19/A Milano - [info@parallelozero.com](mailto:info@parallelozero.com) - [www.parallelozero.com](http://www.parallelozero.com) - +39 02 89281630