

Food and Education in Italy

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Abstract

In 2007, organic food was present in 185 million meals in Italian schools. It's an important result, and we have been discussing this theme in the 2008 Rimini Fair (Mostra Internazionale dell'Alimentazione—MIA) at the annual meeting about organic catering in school. According to the Bio Bank report, there are 683 organic refectories in Italy, with 924,000 meals served every day. Organic food is a reality more and more in Italy today, especially in school. At the 2008 Mostra Internazionale dell'Alimentazione (Rimini Fair), a special meeting was dedicated to "BioCatering."

It's a conference that has been promoted by the Consorzio Controllo Prodotti Biologici (CCPB) during the last eight years, in order to get an exact picture of the Italian situation. The theme for the year is "Organic Food in School: An Occasion for Education/ " "The growth of the number of schools that serve organic meals is still continuing," said Maria Rosa Bertino, the speaker of Bio Bank, during the presentation of the 2008 report. "From 69 units in 1996, the year we began our first overview, we arrived at 683 units on December 31, 2007. Emilia-Romagna is the first region in the national classification with 127 refectories, followed by Lombardia with 121, and by Toscana with 82." For the first time, this report showed figures on a provincial level and related to the number of habitants. The first place among the provinces that have the largest service of organic meals has been assigned to Gorizia with 8 units per 100,000 habitants, followed by Udine, Pordenone, Forli-Cesena, Trento, Siena, Modena, Bologna, La Spezia, and Ascoli Piceno.

The MIA meeting also revealed some interesting experiences, especially what has been done by town councils in order to involve children and families in increasing the organic food in school meals: cooking lessons for children and parents and a National Championship of Food Production in School, organized by the town council of Genoa; organic meals only with products that come from very near (we call it "zero kilometers"), proposed by the town council of Meldola; a special referendum proposed by the town council of Sesto San Giovanni in order to overcome problems that don't permit people to know what organic food is. The Associazione Consumatori Utenti (ACU) expressed the need to consider the gap between real quality and the level of perception, and suggested working around a model of sustainable food production that considers organic ingredients but also its preparation, time, and ways of consumption, and the service that is offered to children.

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