

Biologico.parma.it: a Direct line with the Parma organic products

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The Web site www.biologico.parma.it aims to support agroenvironmental initiatives and projects regarding organic farming and help consumers get information about organic products, companies, and the Parma region (Emilia-Romagna, Italy)

The Web site is a promotional initiative of the Parma Council of Agriculture (70 farms have currently joined it) and it represents the online mirror of the Italian Food Valley. Its goal is to make local farms closer to purchasers in order to advise the latter that they may buy organic products as well as get useful information: an important sub-area of the Web site provides news, events, links, and useful addresses.

The portal design is based on two criteria: easy researching and rational placement of numerous technical and commercial details. Azienda Agraria Sperimentale Stuard, (www.stuard.it), an Agro-Experimental Farm in Parma supported by the Council of agriculture, carried out this initiative financed by the Emilia-Romagna Region (Regional Law n. 28/98). The experiment Biologico.Parma originates from the resolution to create easy-to-use Web tools and to involve farms so that the Internet becomes a suitable and useful instrument for making their (often unique) experience known.

The high number of local certified organic producers—currently over 600—may be misleading: the market is still difficult to reach and producers are not properly assessed. In recent years, this issue has brought a lower number of producers and, by contrast, a slight, yet significant, increase in processing firms.

Since 1999, the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Parma has been actively encouraging the introduction of information technology equipment on farms, contributing to ongoing projects. With Biologico.Parma.it, the Province of Parma is trying to link Web-oriented consumers and organic producers in the Parma region, a remarkable online mirror with a wide range of products, approximately 30 available organic categories.

Local organic associations have plain organic features (i.e., Neviano Organic Oasis, Valtaro Valceno Organic Quality Cattle Breeders Consortium, and Organic Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium).

A geographic database, also including local organic farms, will be set up in the coming months. It will help consumers get information on farm holidays, organic producers, and farmers' markets in the local area. The main objective is to make Biologico.Parma a tool to support direct sales through a short-supply chain. Certified raw material transferred to processing firms, belonging to the area, may be a mutual process and produce integration among firms on a provincial and national scale.