

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Italy

**Post:** Rome

### **Agricultural News for Italy EU and World March 2012**

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

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**Report Highlights:**

Report contains agricultural news items of interest for Italy, the EU and the world for the month of March 2012.

## General Information:

### FAS Rome Italy Agricultural News March 2012

#### ITALY

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##### **Economic Crisis Forces Italians to Shop and Eat Creatively**

Italian per capita consumption of food and drink is at its' lowest in almost 30 years. In 2011, Italian families spent €2.400 on food related expenses. The rise in food prices and the decline of the Italian family's purchasing power has encouraged thefts of vegetables from local farms. According to Italian Farmers Union Coldiretti, thousands of artichokes and heads of lettuce are disappearing from the fields, plucked at night and resold on the black market, or brought home to eat. The economic crisis has also forced Italian households to re-think some of Italy's cheap, traditional recipes using horsemeat, and pig lungs. After all, the secret of Italy's low cost, old-style cuisine was the use of leftovers. *Coldiretti website*

##### **Former Minister of Agriculture to be Tried on Mafia Charges**

The former Minister of Agriculture, Saverio Romano, accused of conspiring with the Mafia, must stand trial. Prosecutors in Sicily will prosecute him on mafia-related charges alleging that Romano "put his position at the disposal of Cosa Nostra, contributing to the organization's criminal plan aimed at gaining power and influence over political and administrative institutions". *ANSA*

#### THE EUROPEAN UNION

##### **GM Crops - Still no Agreement Regarding "Opt Out"**

Environment ministers have failed to reach a political agreement on the latest proposal from the Danish presidency for the EU to allow Member States to "opt-out" or restrict cultivating biotech products approved in the EU based on socio-economic criteria. Despite the countless efforts made by the Danish Presidency to rally the reluctant parties to a compromise, seven delegations forming a blocking minority (France, United Kingdom, Germany, Slovakia, Belgium, Cyprus, and Bulgaria) opposed all compromise. Among reasons given for not rallying to the text is the fear that the internal market would fragment the risk of potential conflict with WTO rules, and risk of seeing EFSA's scientific expertise rendered fragile. *Agence Europe*

##### **Efficacy of EU's 'Green' CAP Reform Questioned**

Farmers' organizations worry that the European Commission's plans to make the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) more environmentally friendly could leave producers drowning in paperwork, while simplification of incentive schemes to encourage sustainable agriculture may not achieve the desired results. The EU spends some €5.5 billion on incentives to promote conservation. The Commission

proposes to reform the CAP in order to introduce more sustainable practices by giving farmers financial incentives to change the way they operate. It proposes to make 30% of the overall direct payments to farmers who meet specific environmental requirements, such as organic farming, crop diversification, and creating ecological focus areas. The plan would define and fund mandatory green standards for the whole of the EU and ecological focus areas would help to preserve biodiversity and quality. *Agra Europe*

<b>Anti-insect wheat trials underway</b>		
The first experiments with GM plants modified to repel aphids are under way in the UK. Researchers are developing wheat engineered with a gene from a peppermint plant that emits a particular pheromone signaling an alarm to warn off an attack by predators. Researchers hope that this will act as a "no parking sign" to keep pests at bay without the use of insecticide. There is widespread opinion among plant scientists that the challenge of feeding a global population of seven billion requires GM modification. BBC News		
<b>FEATURE ARTICLE</b> <b>Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food</b>		



Are you interested in regionally produced food, have you ever wondered how local and regional food systems can help your local economy, are you interested in learning more about where your food comes from? Now you can learn more about USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" by accessing the on-line multi-media website. The Initiative, launched in 2009, portrays USDA's support for local and regional food systems. The "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" site is a valuable resource documenting the innovation, entrepreneurship, moreover, influence of local food systems across the country. It is driving job growth, keeping farmers and on the land, and keeping wealth in

rural communities. We invite you to dive deep into this new tool, and be inspired by the stories it tells and the ideas it can spur for you and your community.

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF\\_COMPASS](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_COMPASS)

## A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

### GM a "Cautionary Tale" for Nanotechnology

According to a new study by the International Food Policy Research Institute, hearts and minds need to be won in the battle to commercialise nanotechnology, if it is to avoid going the same way as GM food. Public acceptance of this new technology being introduced to the food and agriculture sector is a major challenge for stakeholders. The report, identifies three main policy challenges; funding and investment, risk governance, and public acceptance. Public acceptance is seen as "critical" and researchers have emphasized the importance of delivering the right message from a trusted authority. However, GM food rejection in certain countries provides an illustration of what needs to be avoided. Nano food products may face the exact same consumer rejection as GM food; therefore, the industry needs to proactively communicate transparently on the use of nanotechnology in food. Nanotechnology-enabled products are defined as those derived or issued from materials at scales measuring less than 100 nm in at least one dimension. They are being developed and commercialized for improved processing and nutrition. Total investment in Nanotech was estimated to be at least several billion dollars in 2010, and globally, more than 400 food companies are active in research and development. Examples of commercially available nano products in the EU include food additives such as lycopene. As of 2011, only the EU has adopted a mandatory labeling regulation requiring food ingredients to be listed as "nano" if they fit with their definition of engineered nanomaterials.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919212000024>

## FAS REGIONAL REPORTING

IT1203	EU-27 Annual Wine Report and Statistics
IT1204	Agricultural News for the month of February
IT1206	Italy's Food and Agricultural Import Requirements Report
IT1208	EU Geographic Indications Scheme Poorly Designed and Managed
GR1201	EU-27 Annual Cotton and Products Report
HR1204	Croatia Trade Policy Monitoring Report
HR1205	FAS Zagreb Opens Croatian Market to U.S. Beef Exports
BK 1201	Bosnia and Herzegovina Agricultural Biotechnology Update

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