

# Assessing the Strategies of Local Italian Food for Promoting Food Policy in Developing Countries

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**Abstract**—The importance of local food products and their promotion are drivers for economic growth. Entrepreneurship is one of the most important tools for development, which puts its most important effect on the way of increasing business in society. The purpose of this paper is to assess the breadth of food strategies in Italy toward to promoting local Italian foods in order to present useful food policies for developing countries. The methodology of this paper is based on qualitative analysis. In order to achieve such objectives, a literature review is carried out by employing documenting study. In this research, at first, we seek to present compliance's concepts and definitions. Then, after examining the dimensions of the three strategies, we access to the indicators and compare their effects in order to present some useful policies and guidelines for developing countries. Despite of the limitations like inaccessibility, performance of companies in exporting local foods and lacking perception of awareness and experience of people, the study offers possible ways for future, as an example for Middle East countries to promote Italian local foods. The finding of this paper evaluates the three strategies in order to promote local food entrepreneurship in Italy and developing countries.

**Keywords**—Local food, Italian food, Italian strategy, food policy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE local food literature has broadly documented the importance of local food products as a driving force of economic growth. Mak et al. emphasize on the important role of food in the symbolic, economic, and social aspects of life as a way to identities, and cultural meanings [10].

This paper aims to fill the empirical gap by showing the breadth of food policy in Italy, literature review of Italian strategy and local Italian food to promote and present policies and guidelines for further upgrading of these local products. According to this issue, this research is one of the first works examining the state of the art in this field, based on a qualitative methodology.

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The paper is organized as follows. Section II includes literature for the study of the local food, local Italian food, and also describes Italian strategies for promoting local food, Section III and IV include discusses and conclusions. The main implications for food policies and practices are outlined

in conclusion section.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Local Food

Study in the field of food, is not the study of food itself, it also related to the connection between culture, society and food or related to area of study like agriculture science, culinary and gastronomy of food [11]. Bessiere & Tibere defined food as a vehicle for self-discovery; discovering the other and discovering a location. It is enough that the production can be seen as "local", because this information is heightened awareness of the issue of product. In addition, food can be a component to give holiday experience or can be an image and reputation of the locality but less than culture sites [1].

During last decade, there was significant increase in in supply of food productions, with a huge interest in local food [5]. According to Beltran et al., local food could give values to the destination and in this way, it can help competitiveness with another [8]. Local food can transform meaning of the authenticity, identity, culture value and nostalgia [9].

### B. Local Italian Food

The discovery of local foods in Italy dates back to the 1930s, according to the first gastronomic guides provided the public to discover regional specialties. However, it is over the past 20 years that the practice has increase significantly, with emphasizes on healthy cooking and living [12]. According to this, Italy with strong cultural background has high rank in food industry. Moreover, according to European Commission Geographical indications, Italy has the best performance in food products with 261 quality labels [3].

According to figures of 2012, from one side, the foodstuff accounted 5,1% of the total exports of which represents a total of 25,6 billion in the food industry exports, and from the other side, the gastronomic Italian products have experienced a growth of 23% [12].

As Italian people are motivated by local food experiences, people in other countries can target Italian food TV programs, blogs and journalists with a sense of experiencing something new [7].

### C. Italian Perspective of Food Promotions

There are strong strategies to promote food from Italy to abroad. Italian National Biodiversity Strategy is the first strategy evaluated in this research. It has been implemented from 2011 and it will be continuing until 2020. The national Strategy is structured around three key issues, which are

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illustrated in: 1) Biodiversity and ecosystem services, 2) Biodiversity climate change, 3) Biodiversity and economic policies. According to the agriculture area of this strategy, the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) defines agricultural biodiversity as: “all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and all components of biological diversity that constitute the agro-ecosystem, the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes” [6]. Thus, this strategy, as an important tool for food production, creates a good potential for new job opportunity. In addition, in the context of agriculture, this strategy follows objectives such as promoting agriculture systems, decrease of the effect of chemical impact in the soil and supporting the green infrastructure. In summary, biodiversity is a common good that can be used for reducing poverty and defined development plans for poorer countries. Italy has implemented many “best practices” whose results represent an interesting and effective example to be followed by strengthening and expanding them [6]. Apart from this, some organizations that obey this strategy are:

- The Department of Rural Development of the MIPAAF has set up a National Plan on Agricultural Biodiversity (NPAB),
- The NPAB has called for the establishment of the Committee on Genetic Resources,
- The District Basin Management Plan, which provides guidelines and (CIPE) (Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning) [6].

Despite this policy, there are challenges in the agricultural sector. For example, not paying attention to traditional agricultural practices and forgetting them over the time, economic disparities between rural areas and market demands, which do not comply with the principles of sustainable agriculture [6]. Moreover, according to Italian bio-economy Strategy (BIT), by using renewable biological resources, food products can be promoted in the last years [2]. This strategy, with the main aim of more sustainable and locally routed value chains, creates already EUR 2 trillion worth annually and accounts for more than 20 million jobs [13].

It is a good opportunity for promoting Italy in sustainable growth in Europe and Mediterranean area. In addition, according to the four macro-sectors of these strategies (agri-food, forestry, bio-based industry, marine bio-economy), production and use of renewable bio-resources and their conversion into value added products, can make businesses more economical and sustainable in long terms [13]. In addition, according to the agriculture sector that mentioned in this strategy, accessing to the business innovation with local value chains is a good opportunity for the future of this plan [3]. Some entities involved in its implementation are:

- Ministry for Economic Development (co-coordinator)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- Ministry of Education, University and Research
- Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea
- Committee of Italian Regions

- Agency for territorial cohesion and Italian Technology Clusters for Green Chemistry agri-Food and Blue growth [2].

Despite this policy, there are challenges in the agricultural and food industry sectors; such as, lack of training of forest company managers in new business opportunities and lack of expert in this field, a significant increase in of product counterfeiting, poor connection with the first production sectors and not good packaging size of product. Apart from this, Milan Urban Food Policy Pact launched by the Municipality of Milan on the occasion of the 2015 Expo “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” was another document that we evaluate in this research. This strategy targets Milan city because of its over population and also it is a center which can manage economic, politics and culture innovations and also has a strategic role to play in promoting sustainable local foods. Moreover, this strategy summarized its important aim as “sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimizes waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change” [4]. Also, according to this, they have aim to develop sustainable food systems by protecting of biodiversity and also, to increase coordination between local and government sectors to integrate urban food policies and encourage other cities to join this food policy action. Apart from this, the Municipality of Milan and The mayors and representatives of local governments are organizations that obey this strategy.

According to Forster et al., there are some challenges like: overly ambitious goals to start with; political situations and lack of capacity, lack of participation, engagement and support of critical actors within and outside local government; national policies that restrict, limit or contradict municipal authority or jurisdiction; lack of effective multi-sector, multi-actor and multi-level engagement mechanisms [4].

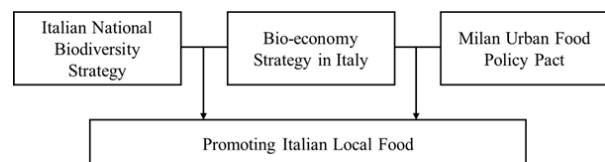


Fig. 1 Schematic representation of the relationship between, strategies and increasing of local Italian food

### III. DISCUSSION

This section presents the comparison between three mentioned strategies in order to find the positive and negative impacts. In Table I, the first column contains indicators defined according to the objective and main idea of each strategy. The second and third columns describe positive and negative impacts based on the literature review of the strategies.

By comparing the contents of Table I, the following results are obtained: Looking at the indicators for each policy, we find the main idea of all three policies based on the use of

renewable resources and ecosystem conservation. Moreover, comparing between positive and negative effects of strategies indicates that, their performance scale is different and the comprehensive of the second policy is more. Apart from this, one of the important positive factors related to the Italian National Biodiversity Strategy is to decrease the poverty and it can be useful for developing countries in the future. In addition, in the Bio-economy Strategy, the use of agricultural land has increased while focus on education and training the expert was reduced. In addition, this strategy introduced more Italian markets to other countries. On the other hand, during the implementing of Italian National Biodiversity Strategy there were economic disparities between rural areas and the market. Moreover, there are ways to pay more attentions to traditional agriculture in this strategy.

TABLE I  
EVALUATION THE STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Italian National Biodiversity Strategy	
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renewable Biodiversity resources</li> <li>- Protection the environment</li> <li>- Create a job opportunity</li> </ul>
Positive impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreases the poverty</li> <li>- Promoting the use of lands</li> <li>- Collaborate with policy makers and the central government</li> <li>- Use of unsustainable farming practices</li> </ul>
Negative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In contrast with the principles of sustainable agriculture and requirements of market</li> <li>- Increase in product counterfeiting</li> <li>- Transfer of diseases from rural to wilderness areas</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Bio-economy Strategy in Italy	
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making sure from food security</li> <li>- Overseeing on sustainable resources</li> <li>- Reducing reliance on non-sustainable assets</li> <li>- Adapting to environmental change</li> <li>- Increasing the export of the local food</li> <li>- Increasing job opportunities</li> <li>- Increasing value added</li> <li>- Make a business more economical and sustainable</li> <li>- Increasing the surface area of forests</li> <li>- Business innovation with local value chains</li> </ul>
Positive impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create connection between networking among small industries and value chains at regional or multi-regional level</li> <li>- Entering new markets also embracing emerging and developing countries</li> <li>- Big-data access for improving agronomic techniques</li> <li>- Setting up Italian economy business models and products as global benchmark</li> <li>- Increased integration with other economic sectors</li> <li>- Lack of training the expert in the agri-food sectors in new business opportunities</li> </ul>
Negative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in of product counterfeiting</li> <li>- Problem related to the packaging size of product</li> <li>- High risks connected to possible imports and exports</li> <li>- Poor connection with the primary production sectors</li> <li>- Price volatility</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Milan Urban Food Policy Pact	
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feeding the Planet</li> <li>- Energy forever</li> <li>- Collaborate with another city to join our food policy practices</li> </ul>
Positive impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create connection between Mayors and their departmental staff</li> <li>- Demonstrate the breadth of food policy in Italy</li> <li>- Food waste prevention, reduction and management</li> <li>- Promoting sustainable diets and nutrition</li> <li>- Lack of participation - and therefore engagement and support - of critical actors within and outside local government</li> </ul>
Negative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absence of viable multi-division, multi-performing artist and multi-level commitment systems</li> </ul>

Milan Urban Food Policy, which is accomplished in smaller scale, considered the local institutes and local community. In addition, this strategy considered different dimensions in different countries. Therefore, it can be generalized for another city in the other countries. In addition, according to the diagrams in the report of the BIT strategies, the turnover related to the food industries, beverages and tobacco of national account in Italy was in high level, and considering this, the job opportunities are also higher than others. Also, the reports related to another two strategies indicate the increasing of the job opportunities.

Based on above paragraphs, awareness and experience of people regard to local Italian food as a guideline can be considered for future, especially in developing countries. Moreover, it is better to use public participation before the implementation of strategies and also create a campaign for education and training people in different ages.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Our evaluation offers several important contributions to the literature on the Italian strategies of food promotions. First, the results show that existence a strong strategy plays a significant role in promoting. Second, according to the gaps of inaccessibility, the impact of this strategy can help in the performance of companies. We contribute to fill the gaps about better promoting of local Italian foods in order to present useful food policies for developing countries. We underline that developing different dimensions of strategies, which can play an important role in local food identities, have the potential to grow under globalization.

This type of research would be useful to inform the development of effective strategies for promoting food products, especially in developing countries, as well as serving as a basic for economic growth. Finally, this research can be useful for further researches relevant to local foods and its gaps in these strategies.

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