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Italy’s food exports hit a record 72.5 billion euros

Officials at Tuttofood said the agro-food sector remains a pillar of the economy despite tariffs and global turmoil

Monday, May 11, 2026



At Tuttofood, the food and beverage trade fair that opened Monday at Fiera Milano Rho and runs through May 14, Italy’s agricultural and food sector was presented as one of the country’s strongest economic engines, with exports above 70 billion euros and a broader supply chain value estimated at 707 billion euros by Coldiretti. The message from ministers, trade fair organizers and export officials was consistent: the sector remains central to the Italian economy, but its growth depends on closer coordination among companies, industry networks, institutions and trade fairs.

The event comes as the market for food is changing quickly, with new consumer trends, pressure on supply chains and rising competition in foreign markets. The official debut of the Food Manifesto, introduced in March, was part of that discussion. The document is meant to frame priorities for a sector that has become a key symbol of made in Italy and a major source of jobs, investment and exports.

In a written message to the fair, Adolfo Urso, the minister for enterprises and made in Italy, said agro-food remains one of the five main pillars of Italian excellence and is recognized abroad for quality, identity and innovation. He pointed to several indicators of strength: exports above 70 billion euros, European leadership in agricultural value added, and a global lead in protected-designation products. He said there are about 900 certified products that together generate more than 20 billion euros in value and more than 12 billion euros in exports. He also cited the recognition of Italian cuisine as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

Urso said the trade fair system is especially important for smaller companies that want to enter new markets. He referred to the agreement between Aefi, the association of Italian trade fairs, and It-Ex as an example of how fairs can serve industrial policy. He also said the government supports innovation, supply security and expansion abroad through the Transition 5.0 plan, which is designed to help companies with digital and green investments.

Francesco Lollobrigida, the agriculture minister, said protecting Europe’s and Italy’s wealth means defending an agro-food heritage that is both cultural and economic. He said protected geographical indications are a concrete sign of environmental sustainability, biodiversity protection and an authentic production model that could struggle without stronger safeguards in a more competitive global market. Lollobrigida described Tuttofood as an international showcase where producers, processors, distributors and foreign buyers meet. He said it helps promote exports and create new business opportunities.

The fair itself reflects a partnership between Fiera di Parma and Fiera Milano. Parma brings decades of experience from Cibus, while Milan contributes international reach, business connections and logistics. Franco Mosconi, president of Fiere di Parma, said

building an international platform for food and beverage companies is both an honor and a responsibility. He described the Parma-Milan-Cologne axis as linking two of the European Union’s most important manufacturing areas through cooperation among public and private actors.

Carlo Bonomi, president of Fiera Milano, said that in a global economy marked by geopolitical instability and fragmented markets, companies need international platforms that can support growth and expansion abroad. He said Tuttofood 2026 has become a global reference point for agro-food and made in Italy because it encourages innovation, relationships and new opportunities on foreign markets.

The event also builds on a long-standing partnership between Parma and Koelnmesse, organizer of Anuga in Cologne, one of the largest food trade fairs in the world. Another key partner is Ice-Agenzia, Italy’s trade promotion agency, which handles incoming buyers from abroad. Matteo Zoppas, president of Ice-Agenzia, said 2025 confirmed the structural strength of Italian agro-food exports even amid geopolitical tensions and uncertainty. He said exports rose 5% from the previous year to a record 72.5 billion euros.

Zoppas said UNESCO recognition for Italian cuisine has strengthened the sector’s image abroad and works as soft power for made in Italy. But he also pointed to problems. The conflict in the Middle East has affected energy costs and raw materials prices. U.S. tariffs have also had an impact: exports to the United States fell 21.9% in the first two months of 2026.

He said the government is trying to open new commercial channels through what Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani has called growth diplomacy. Ice-Agenzia supported more than 2,200 Italian companies in agro-food alone in 2025 and brought more than 2,000 foreign operators to Italy on missions. At Tuttofood this year, Ice brought more than 200 operators from 36 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Canada, China, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Indonesia and Singapore.

For 2026, Ice has planned 258 Food & Wine initiatives that include e-commerce projects, agreements with international retail chains and participation in trade fairs in Italy and abroad. Zoppas said these efforts are meant to help sustain a sector that

accounts for 15% of Italy’s gross domestic product.