**OI flies to Paris to enhance and promote the environmental and social sustainability of Italian tomato products through the two-year EU-funded Tomato SAUCE project**

A delegation from the North Italian Interbranch Organization of processing tomato will be attending the Sial in Paris, scheduled from the 19th to the 23rd of October 2024. The objectives are to engage with journalists, operators and opinion makers and to illustrate the rigorous environmental and social sustainability standards that characterize Italian production of processing tomatoes and related derivatives. The initiative is part of the wider two-year project (2023-2025) Tomato SAUCE - Sustainable Agriculture Understanding in Central Europe, funded by the European Union's Agrip call for proposals, which aims to promote and valorize in two target countries, Germany and France, the high environmental and social standards guaranteed by the certified production specifications used in the agricultural and industrial sectors for processing tomato in Northern Italy.

Following its participation in the Anuga 2023 fair in Germany, the IO continued its project activities throughout 2024. The OI participated in Cibus 2024 in Parma and produced the docuseries Truemato, comprising five short films available to view on the YouTube channel. The series employs a holistic approach to explore the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the processing tomato chain in northern Italy, through the voices of its protagonists and filming in fields and factories.

At the beginning of September, it organized a press tour involving French and German journalists and food bloggers to have a direct meeting in the field with farmers from the Producer Organizations and representatives of the processing industries. The guests were able to see first-hand how tomatoes are grown, harvested and processed in northern Italy, as well as the tools for saving water and the characteristics for having a low carbon footprint. This gave them the opportunity to understand the real added value of Italian tomato products.

OI’s participation in the important French trade fair, where its associated processing companies will also be exhibiting with their own stands, is aligned with the objective of the Tomato SAUCE project: to enhance consumer awareness and understanding of the high environmental standards applied to production methods in the European Union, bridging the attitude-behaviour gap and promoting specific knowledge on the sustainability of the various stages of the life cycle of canned red tomatoes produced by the Northern Italian processing tomato chain.

The 2024 harvest and processing campaign is not over yet, but it is certainly a very poor year in terms of quantities produced in the northern Italian production area, where in 2023 39,6% of the grown tomatoes were processed into pulp, 31,6% into concentrates, 27,4% into puree, 1,2% into ready-made sauces. Concerning land, 10% of it is certified as 'organic', based on the European specification, while the remaining 90% is certified as 'integrated production', a system of cultivation specifications that includes limited use of fertilizers, agrochemicals, water resources and, in general, the use of non-invasive agronomic techniques to guarantee healthy products for people and a reduced impact of crops on natural resources and the environment. Furthermore, tomato derivatives produced in Northern Italy are derived from agricultural raw material harvested using fully mechanized systems and are subject to internationally recognized voluntary certifications on social responsibility and respect for workers' rights.

France and Germany are the two target countries of the Tomato SAUCE project because they represent two important export markets for Italian tomato derivatives. Italy is by far the leading supplier of tomato derivatives to Germany, with a share of almost 60% in value for a turnover of 608 million euro, but it is also the leading exporter of tomato derivatives to France, with a value of approximately 274 million euro and a market share of over 46% (source: Eurostat; sum values for customs codes 200210, 200290, 210320, year 2023).