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**2024 Tomato campaign:**

**Low yields, record quality, but high farming and processing costs.**

**IO's point on the campaign in Northern Italy with Councilor Alessio Mammi**

*Parma, Wednesday September 4th* – This morning, members of OI Pomodoro da Industria Nord Italia, and Emilia-Romagna Regional Councilor Alessio Mammi. The meeting took place in Parma, at OI’s headquarters, and was an opportunity to take stock of the progress of the 2024 campaign.

**Data and prospects for the 2024 campaign**

The tomato harvesting campaign in Northern Italy is underway, but it is experiencing some difficulties, which have arisen as early as transplanting, which started in the spring. Farmers, in May, had to deal with persistent rain; many transplants were postponed in June, meaning that the harvest would continue into late September. June, on the other hand, was characterized by very unstable weather, which exposed the seedlings to the risk of pathogens. The great heat, which characterized mid-July and August, then hampered growth.

By the date of September 4th, slightly more than 50% of the contracted tomatoes had been harvested, a lower percentage than the average trend for the last five years in the same week. Both farmers and processors are coping with low yields, which, according to producers’ organizations are at an average of 60 tonnes/ha, compared with an average of 74 tonnes/ha recorded by OI Pomodoro da Industria Nord Italia over the last five years.

The quantity of tomatoes harvested is lower than expected, which suggests a shortfall at the end of the campaign compared to the quantities contracted. However, the quality of the tomatoes is high, with a Brix value of 5.12 (a record value never before registered in northern Italy).

In this scenario, farmers have had to incur high costs in the field to protect tomato plants from potential diseases, but production yields remain low, resulting in a loss of income for the farmers. At the same time, the small quantity of tomato reaching the industry does not allow companies to run their lines at full capacity, which means low processing performances and increased costs.

A quite large number of hectares are therefore scheduled to be harvested in September, a month in which the production outcome is highly uncertain. In fact, if the weather continues to be stable, the harvest could continue, while if the weather does not allow the tomatoes to ripen and be harvested, there could be a further shortfall.

**President Tiberio Rabboni’s considerations**

“*The 2024 campaign is conditioned by two critical issues: rainfall and the absence of a Area Framework Contract.* *The rainfall has led to high costs and low yields in the field that are causing an imbalance between costs and revenues for agricultural producers; at the same time it has caused an increase in industrial costs for processing. This is occurring at a time when the international market is saturated with tomato derivatives and prices are expected to decrease -* declares **Tiberio Rabboni, President of OI Pomodoro da Industria Nord Italia –** *despite the absence of the Area Framework Contract, the common rules of OI still allowed the supply chain to obtain all the necessary information to tackle the campaign in an organized way. Yet, I believe it is crucial that the dialogue between the parties starts immediately after the end of the harvest campaign in order to reach the 2025 Area Framework Agreement as soon as possible. In this context, given the adverse and unpredictable weather conditions that have characterized recent years, a different approach to the insurance cover mechanism would be desirable. It would be useful if a state of emergency were to be declared in relation to the weather events punctually documented by the POs. Furthermore, in order to support the competitiveness of our sector on international markets, the coupled premium for processing tomato producers should be implemented.”*

**Councillor Alessio Mammi’s declaration:**

*“Tomato supply chain is having a difficult year, but representing the Region we want to help the sector establish itself and consolidate even more in the future-* **Alessio Mammi, Regional Councillor for agriculture** declares *- For this reason, I confirm my willingness to implement a strategy to give a perspective to a supply chain that is irreplaceable for Emilia-Romagna, through the introduction of tenders and funding for both the agricultural and industrial sectors. We will also promote policies to support the tomato supply chain, by proposing an increase in the coupled tomato premium. We are also planning several projects aimed at increasing water storage in the Region. In any case we must strive, by working together at an international level, to enhance the distinctiveness of our tomatoes and our products, which are good, safe and sustainable from a social and environmental point of view.*

*In this sense, the cohesion of the supply chain is fundamental to its credibility, and it is important to start working on the 2025 Area Framework Contract right from the end of the campaign.”*

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