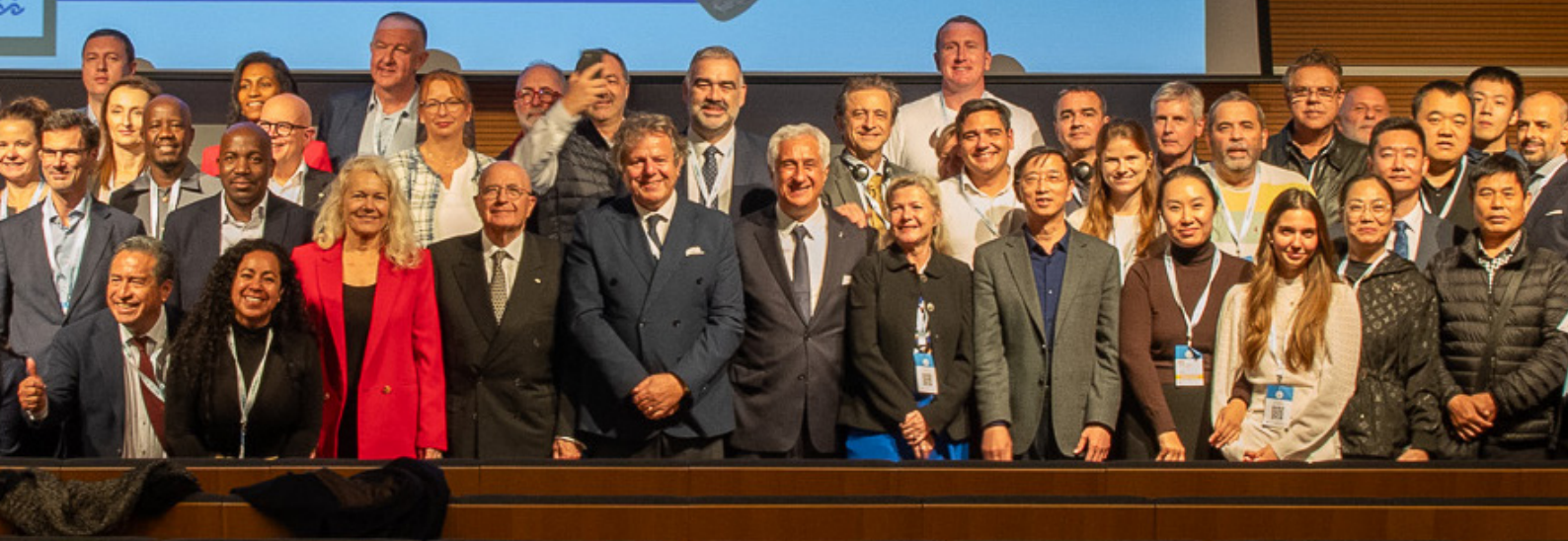


30 October - 1 November 2024
wuwmrimini2024.com



2024 Rimini Conference Report





Wholesale Markets and the Food of the Future: Insights and Opportunities for the Agri-Food Sector”

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Rimini, Italy

30th October – 1st November 2024



Foreword

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The WUWM Rimini 2024 conference was the first WUWM conference organized in Europe in over three years, and a highlight for our network. Bringing together more than 200 delegates from across five continents, this event reaffirmed the unique and indispensable role of wholesale markets in the future of food systems.

Held under the theme *“Wholesale Markets and the Food of the Future: Insights and Opportunities for the Agri-Food Sector”*, the conference provided a platform for reflection and dialogues. Together, we explored how wholesale markets can drive innovation in logistics and digitalisation, foster closer ties between producers and consumers, and lead the transition toward circular, low-carbon, and inclusive food systems.

From Italy’s dynamic regional models to initiatives from Mexico, Ukraine, China, and beyond, the discussions in Rimini demonstrated that our markets are not relics of the past, but strategic assets for the future, places where sustainability meets solidarity, where economic performance serves social value, and where tradition work for innovation.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Italmercati, the Rimini Wholesale Market (CAAR), and all our Italian partners for their exceptional hospitality and professionalism. My deep appreciation also goes to our institutional partners, including the FAO and MIT, whose continued collaboration strengthens our shared mission to combat food loss and waste and to promote access to healthy, affordable food for all.

Let us continue to build upon the momentum created in Rimini, advancing together toward a stronger, more sustainable, and more connected world of wholesale markets.

Stéphane Layani
Chairman, World Union of Wholesale Markets



Executive Summary

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From 30 October to 1 November 2024, Rimini hosted the first WUWM conference in Europe in over three years, bringing together more than 200 delegates from five continents to explore the theme “Wholesale Markets and the Food of the Future: Insights and Opportunities for the Agri-Food Sector.”

Organized by WUWM with the Rimini wholesale market, in collaboration with Italmercati, and held under the patronage of Italian national and regional authorities, the event provided a unique platform to examine how wholesale markets can confront some of today's most pressing global challenges, ranging from food waste and malnutrition to climate change and rapid urbanisation, while positioning themselves as drivers of innovation and resilience.

Discussions centred on rethinking market models to strengthen transparency and shorten supply chains, integrating more closely with B2C and HoReCa sectors, and developing value-added services that reinforce resilience in the face of crises. Delegates underscored the transformation of logistics as essential to this vision, calling for investment in efficient, renewable-powered infrastructure, improved last-mile delivery, and the creation of urban farming hubs, with the Emilia-Romagna region presented as an exemplary case of regional promotion and service differentiation.

The conference also addressed shifting consumption trends, particularly the worrying decline in fruit and vegetable intake among younger generations. Participants advocated targeted marketing strategies, greater use of organic and innovative varieties, and secure supply networks to safeguard access to quality produce. In parallel, food loss and waste emerged as a central priority, with solutions focused on upgrading storage, logistics, and processing capacities; deploying digital tools such as the FAO's FLAPP app; and embracing circular models that prioritise prevention, reuse, and recycling, alongside consumer education and strengthened partnerships with food banks.

Public health featured prominently, with experts reaffirming the decisive role of fresh produce in reducing non-communicable diseases and urging policy shifts that align with WHO recommendations for daily fruit and vegetable intake, while promoting sustainable, climate-conscious diets. On a global scale, the need for substantial investment in perishable logistics and intelligent distribution, particularly in developing economies, was coupled with calls for balanced public-private coordination and regulatory frameworks to ensure the long-term sustainability of wholesale market investments.

Through case studies from Italy, France, Spain, Ukraine, Mexico, China, and the USA, the conference demonstrated wholesale markets' unparalleled ability to connect producers with consumers, safeguard food supply chains during disruptions, and lead in sustainability, innovation, and social responsibility. It concluded with a shared commitment, alongside partners such as FAO and MIT, to advancing wholesale markets as modern, efficient, and equitable hubs at the heart of a resilient global food system.

“ Wholesale markets are central to building resilient, sustainable, and equitable food systems. The WUWM Rimini Conference 2024 showcased global strategies to modernise supply chains, transform logistics, reduce food waste, and promote healthier diets, positioning wholesale markets as innovation leaders in the face of climate, nutrition, and urbanisation challenges.”





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Welcome ceremony



Mr. Giovanni Indino, Chairman of the Centro Agro Alimentare Riminese SpA (CAAR), opened the conference by expressing deep appreciation to the co-organizers, acknowledging the significant challenges involved in bringing such an international event to Rimini.

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Giovanni Indino extended special thanks to WUWM Chairman, **Stéphane Layani**, who believed in Rimini as the host city for the 2024 conference, as well as to ItalMercati Chairman, **Fabio Massimo Pallottini**, Rimini's Mayor, **Jamil Sadegholvaad**, regional authorities, and the large delegation of Italian market directors. He highlighted Rimini's position as one of Europe's leading destinations for sea tourism and trade events. He outlined the key topics for debate during the conference, including business development, internationalisation, digitalisation of operations, sustainability, and the green transition.

Rimini's Mayor **Mr. Sadegholvaad** welcomed the initiative of hosting the 2024 WUWM Congress in Rimini, underlining the opportunity it offers to address one of the major global economic challenges: the food supply chain.

“ We are proud to host such an international event, following the editions held in Abu Dhabi and Bangkok.”

Mr. Jamil Sadegholvaad

“ Integrated logistics, energy savings, waste reduction, diet improvement, nutrition, and health will be among the challenges linked to sustainability and the green transition discussed today.”

Mr. Giovanni Indino





Mr. Pallottini, Director of CAR Rome, Chairman of ItalMercati, and European Group Chairman of WUWM, began by expressing his friendship and respect for the representatives of the Rimini market and his deep gratitude to the WUWM delegates for choosing Rimini and Italy for the 2024 conference. He noted that the Italian wholesale sector is highly dynamic, with an annual turnover exceeding €11 billion. While the European wholesale sector is a vital and long-standing pillar of the agri-food supply chain, it still does not receive the level of recognition it deserves from European institutions.

Mr. Pallottini highlighted that the Italian wholesale sector has been allocated €250 million under the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility to modernise infrastructure, enhance digitalisation, strengthen logistics, and reduce food waste. He expressed hope for stronger synergies with the logistics sector to unite their voices and achieve greater impact.

“ We want the Italian markets to become hubs for logistics operators and perishable goods distributors.”

Mr. Fabio Massimo Pallottini

The WUWM Chairman, **Stéphane Layani**, officially opened the second WUWM Conference of 2024 in Rimini, warmly welcoming delegates from across the globe and expressing gratitude to the Italmercato network and the Rimini wholesale market for hosting. This marked the first European WUWM conference in over three years. The Chairman emphasized the theme of the conference: “Wholesale Markets and the Food of the Future: Insights and Opportunities

“ Wholesale markets are uniquely positioned to play a role in shaping the future of food. By serving as hubs for the distribution of fresh produce, connecting farmers with consumers, and facilitating efficient trade, they can contribute to a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system.”

Mr. Stéphane Layani



for the Agri-Food Sector.” He acknowledged the vital role wholesale markets play as historic and evolving pillars of food distribution, especially in the face of global challenges such as urbanization, climate change, and food insecurity. Key themes included the need to strengthen the link between farmers and markets to address rising food prices and ensure affordability, as well as the importance of food quality, safety, and traceability.

The Chairman highlighted the potential of wholesale markets to lead in sustainability and innovation through direct relationships with producers, reduced intermediaries, and the adoption of technologies such as artificial intelligence. In conclusion, he called on the sector to embrace leadership, performance, and transition, and urged participants to use this conference as a springboard to reinforce the central role of wholesale markets in shaping a more resilient global food system.

Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), emphasized the critical role wholesale markets can play in reducing food loss and waste (FLW) and improving food accessibility. He cited FAO

data showing that 13.2% of global food is lost between harvest and wholesale, especially perishables like fruits, vegetables, and meat. With 733 million people facing hunger in 2023 and nearly 2.8 billion unable to afford a healthy diet, addressing FLW is urgent.

He highlighted wholesale markets as key actors in transforming agrifood systems, calling for innovation, digitalization, and inclusivity – especially for women and youth. **Mr. Dongyu** also referenced FAO’s longstanding support for wholesale markets, including training and data tools like the FAO Food Loss App.

Finally, he linked this agenda to the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, underlining the need for financing and collective action to achieve better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all.

“ We need to prevent and reduce food loss and waste in wholesale markets, to ensure more contribution to food availability, accessibility and affordability”

Mr. Qu Dongyu



Morning sessions



Keynote 1. Challenges and new perspectives for wholesale markets: sustainability, city hubs, food policies, waste reduction

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Speakers: Luca Lanini, from Sinloc and Cibusalus (Padua), Paolo Merci, vice-President of ItalMercati and Director of Verona Wholesale Market

Luca Lanini from Sinloc and Cibusalus (Padua) and **Paolo Merci**, vice-president of ItalMercati and director of Verona Wholesale Market, gave an overview of the Italian wholesale sector.

Italmercati counts with 22 associated markets, 26,000 workers and €11 billion-euro annual turnover, with the distribution of more the 7 million tons of fresh produce. **Paolo Merci** confirmed that €270 million of EU funds of Recovery and Resiliency (NPRR) are currently being allocated for modernisation and logistics facilities. **Luca Lanini** detailed the four-pillar strategy of the Italian market: more efficiency towards innovation, last mile logistics and city services, fighting food waste, food urban policies.

Paolo Merci shared the core values and mission of "Well-Being" of the markets: "Our Mission, Our Job Day by day". He also reminded the strategic roles of the market linked to the business activity like distribution and storage,

daily pricing and statistics reports. Other strategic roles are also important and linked to the community. ItalMercati works on a digital platform, measuring its commercial impact and providing sustainability reporting.

Mr. Lanini also reminded ItalMercati's roles such as institutional representation, fostering partnership and joint projects, setup strategies and apply financial tools to improve market structures.

“ Other strategic roles of the markets are linked to the community like waste reduction, food education, training and sport initiatives”
Mr. Paolo Merci

Keynote 2. The role of wholesalers in the agrifood system: challenges and future perspectives

Speaker: Mr. Valentino Di Pisa,
Fedagromercati-Confcommercio chairman

Fedagromercati-Confcommercio chairman **Valentino Di Pisa**, the Italian federation of wholesalers and retailers. *"We are also here to protect consumers and ensure transparency of product prices"* explained Valentino. He shared a recent survey of his members being typically family-owned businesses. He confirms the need for more selling space, despite the average age is between 51 and 60. Wholesale customers are

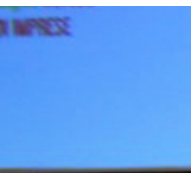
for 28% retailers, 23% wholesalers, 17% street vendors, 22% GDO (Grande Distribuzione Organizzata), 8% Horeca, 2% abroad. Valentino also revealed many operators are exporters and their business rely primarily on the product quality.

He insisted on today's opportunity to transform the markets into green, poly-functional and digitalized platforms, not only to generate new sales, also improve services from product sourcing, packaging or logistics. AI will no doubt play an increasing role with it. Fedagromercati also promotes transition from nightshift to dayshift markets, it will require structural changes.

“ We are at a crossroad of tradition and innovation, we have to better explore the data available on the market to see trends and leverage logistics”

Mr. Valentino Di Pisa

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Special Recognition Award: Valter Vannucci former CEO of CAAR market

A special recognition was awarded to **Valter Vannucci** in honour of his 13 years of leadership at the Rimini Wholesale Market (CAAR), during which the market experienced exponential growth. The award was presented by **Giovanni Indino**, Chairman of CAAR, and **Jamil Sadegholvaad**, Mayor of Rimini.

Valter Vannucci began his career in the private agrifood sector, where he worked for 18 years before joining the Rimini market in 2005. Stepping into a new role within a public institution with both economic and service-oriented objectives, he dedicated himself to supporting the development of the agri-food system and the local community.

Despite being diagnosed with a serious illness in 2019, **Valter** remained committed to his goals, showing determination and resilience both personally and professionally. This award recognises his outstanding contribution and lasting impact on the wholesale market sector.

“ I realise that people and organisations are very grateful and positive to me, and I feel gratefulness today”

Mr. Valter Vannucci





Panel 1. The role of efficiency and innovation in the new organizational models of the markets

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Speakers: **Dan Carmody**, CEO of the Eastern Market Corporation of Detroit (USA); **Juan Félix Soriano Cruz** from CONACCA Mexico; **Duccio Caccioni**, market director of the Agriculture and food Centre of Bologna (CAAB); **Luca Lodini**, commercial department of Fruttital in Bologna (Italy); **Marco Core**, president of The Agriculture and Food Centre and Logistic Consortium of Parma (CAL); **Roberto Ferrara**, area director of Parma Social Cooperative or retailers (Italy); **Alessandro Giunchi**, president of FOR Fruit and Vegetable Chain in Romagna (Cesena); **Fabio Gardenghi** from LEM Market cash & carry in Cesena (Italy); **Giovanni Indino**, Chairman of the Agri and Food Center of Rimini (CAAR); **Roberto Calugi**, general director of the Italian Federation of Public Establishments (FIPE).

PUBLIC MARKET'S ROLE IN SHORTENING AND DIVERSIFYING SUPPLY CHAINS, SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMERS.

Dan Carmody highlighted the vital role of public markets in shortening and diversifying supply chains, supporting local farmers, and serving as a resilience mechanism in times of crisis. He presented the Eastern Market in Detroit as a case study of a hybrid market model that blends wholesale (B2B) and retail (B2C) operations. Founded in 1891, Eastern Market still operates from its original downtown location.

Managed by a non-profit corporation, it consists of two main areas:

- The Public Market, with five structures and 16,000 m² of selling space, open three days a week to 5,000–8,000 shoppers.
- The Market District, home to 125 food businesses that benefit from clustering and proximity to the city.

Originally a dominant platform for local agricultural products, Eastern Market saw wholesale activities decline with the expansion of the U.S. food system. By the late 2010s, just 25 growers

remained, moving 30 million pounds of produce. However, a renewed focus on local food sparked a turnaround. Eastern Market supported value-added crop processing for Michigan-based farmers, such as frozen seasonal vegetables and fresh-cut products (fries, salads, coleslaw), helping offset labor shortages and retail-level costs. Public schools were also required to source local produce, strengthening regional demand.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the market's agility and relevance. Eastern Market stepped in where large retailers struggled, preparing and delivering up to 20,000 food boxes per week to vulnerable families. When restaurants closed, a drive-through system was swiftly implemented to maintain consumer access to fresh food.

“ We help grow the next batch of food makers – it’s vital to keep the food system alive in the heart of the city.”

Mr. Dan Carmody



In 2022, a new 5,000 m² distribution center was launched with three major growers as part of a pilot program. Further expansion is planned for 2026, supported by a \$12 million state grant. The market also empowers urban farmers with less than 1 hectare of land, offering them space in the upcoming Shed #7 (pavillon), along with access to new food box programs. Eastern Market runs an incubation and food business acceleration program, offering shared-use kitchens, co-packing services, and technical and business support to emerging food entrepreneurs. A \$4 million grant will soon fund a city grain mill and a B2C bakery dedicated to organic grain growers.

“ Shortening supply chains is challenging due to thin profit margins, but as a non-profit, we can attract funding to support pilots and innovation.”

Mr. Dan Carmody

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN WHOLESALE MARKETS OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS

Juan Félix Soriano Cruz presented the significant transformation of Mexico's wholesale markets, led by the Confederation of Mexican Wholesale Markets (CONACCA). Over the past four decades, 67 markets have been restructured and modernized into integrated food supply centres, reinforcing their role in the national food system. Mexico's current wholesale infrastructure was developed in response to the challenges of the 1980s, including rapid urban population growth, an agricultural crisis, declining food security, and rising urban poverty. Strategic investments were made to anticipate demand for the next 20 years, including the construction of modern buildings, internal road networks, parking facilities, extended business hours, and overnight accommodations for transporters. Since 2014, over \$739 million have been invested in upgrading existing markets, and four new expansion projects are underway to create nearly 1,500 new commercial units. Looking ahead, **Mr. Soriano Cruz** emphasized that logistics transformation will be CONACCA's next major area of investment, aiming to further improve efficiency in food distribution across the country.

“ Logistics transformation is our next step of investment.”

Mr. Juan Félix Soriano Cruz



SYNERGIES BETWEEN WHOLESALE AND LOCAL MARKETS: THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA CASE STUDY

The Emilia-Romagna region was presented as a leading example of innovation and collaboration between wholesale markets and local distribution networks, fostering both economic development and food system resilience.

Duccio Caccioni shared insights from the transformation of the CAAB Bologna market over the past 20 years into a modern commercial and logistics platform. He emphasized the importance of supporting wholesale markets as vital economic engines for smaller businesses and for ensuring food supply across city districts. While Bologna remains a night market, it has also opened a B2C area operating during the day to better serve the public.



“ At CAAB Bologna, our goal is sustainability. We’ve invested in 16MW of solar panels and upgraded our infrastructure to reduce our environmental footprint.”

Mr. Duccio Caccioni

Luca Lodini from Fruttital introduced the market’s new delivery service, CAAB Fresh, which covers the entire metropolitan area: *“This service has been a great success – it saves time for existing customers who can now place orders remotely. It also helps new entrepreneurs by removing the need for costly delivery vehicles, allowing them to focus on their core business.”*



“ We act as direct suppliers to B2B buyers, selecting the best daily offers. This system supports wholesalers in reaching new clients and allows buyers to get the best value per item.”

Mr. Marco Core

Marco Core spoke about ethical and efficient supply solutions implemented by the CAL Parma market. Deliveries are made using reusable plastic crates, reducing packaging waste and improving sustainability.

Roberto Ferrara from the Parma Social Cooperative of Consumers shared the benefits of working with the Parma market: *“Our members couldn’t manage to shop from various vendors on-site. Now, we simply collect pre-packed boxes ready for delivery”*. The cooperative supports 590 members and operates with a dedicated team of 15 workers, demonstrating the important social dimension of market services.

In Cesena, **Alessandro Giunchi** highlighted the excellence of products and services at the FOR Fruit and Vegetable Market, which provides a competitive advantage over traditional distribution centers struggling with operational efficiency.

Fabio Gardenghi described the journey of LEM Cash & Carry, which evolved from a small shop in the 1980s into a 15,000 m² B2B supermarket employing 60 staff. *“Our strong focus on fresh produce led us to establish within the Cesena market to secure premium product supply. This presence also attracted other businesses to operate near the FOR market.”*



Roberto Calugi, representing the Italian restaurant and bar services sector, provided an overview of HoReCa's major contribution to the national economy. With 331,888 businesses and 1.4 million employees, the sector generates €54.1 billion in GDP – exceeding that of agriculture (€40.5 billion) and the food industry (€36.7 billion). **Mr. Calugi** also highlighted the sector's educational role in shaping consumer habits and its demand for value-added products, such as fresh-cut fruit and salads.

“ We’ve launched promotional campaigns, such as encouraging fruit consumption in desserts and cocktails – even partnering with nightclubs, given Rimini’s tourism-driven economy.”

Mr. Giovanni Indino

“ Italy is known globally for its gastronomy thanks to the extraordinary ability of the HoReCa sector to elevate fresh Italian produce.”

Mr. Roberto Calugi



Giovanni Indino, Chairman of CAAR Rimini, emphasized the strategic partnership between the wholesale and HoReCa (Hotel, Restaurant, Catering) sectors. *“We need more public support due to our strategic role in the food supply chain and our broader social impact”*. He also underlined the wholesale market's role in supporting micro-entrepreneurs, ensuring food security, and generating local social impact.



Afternoon sessions



Panel 2. Last mile, city logistics and city services

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Speakers: **Paolo Bruni**, Fruit and Vegetable Services Centre (CSO) in Ferrara (Italy), **Roman Fedyshyn**, Founder and Head of the Supervisory Board of Shuvar Wholesale Market in Lviv (Ukraine), **Javier Esquillor Garcia**, General Manager Capillar IT in Zaragoza (Spain), **Sébastien Bensidoun**, CEO of Bensidoun Group (France & USA), **Assad Ait Chekdhidh**, Head of Department, Commercial Activities on Public Space, Paris City Council, (France), **Roberta Frisoni**, Councillor of the Municipality of Rimini for Urban and Territorial Planning (Italy).

CONSUMPTION TRENDS IN ITALY: THE ROLE OF WHOLESALE MARKETS AS A LEVER FOR IMPROVING PRODUCT QUALITY

Mr. Paolo Bruni provided a brief history of CSO Italy, an organization created in 1998 with Italy's largest producing organizations to focus on quality and market issues. He expressed his strong belief in the key role of fruit and vegetables at a European level, yet noted that the sector is facing unprecedented challenges today, including climate change, alien pests, and declining consumption. Consumption of fruit and vegetables in Italy has decreased significantly, with a loss of approximately 1 million tons. This represents an 18% reduction over the last four years, from 6.15 million tons in 2019 to 5.12 million

tons in 2023. Concurrently, the average retail price increased by 29%, from €1.87 to €2.41 per kilogram. Last year alone, 900,000 tons of produce were lost due to drought. **Mr. Bruni** noted that only a few fruits, such as apples, pears, bananas, and avocados, have maintained their consumption levels. All vegetable varieties have seen a reduction in consumption, with the exceptions of zucchini and cucumber.

The retail sector is the distribution channel that has experienced the lowest reduction in consumption, with its market share growing from 67% to 78% over the last four years. In contrast, the traditional retail sector suffered a significant loss, with sales volume decreasing by 48%, a trend also reflected in its value. Sales of organic products, however, have remained steady.



“ Consumers are not all same, some of them are sensitive to innovation, the younger generations in particular”

Mr. Paolo Bruni

Another major issue is the aging population. Consumers over 65 represent nearly half of Italy's consumption, but their consumption has dropped by 56% between 2019 and 2023, with a 12% decline in the last year alone. Raising consumption among younger generations remains a significant challenge, requiring more market research, innovation, and targeted marketing. The notable growth of yellow and red kiwi varieties serves as a clear example of how innovation can be a solution. **Mr. Bruni** concluded by stating, *“By focusing on quality products and innovations, wholesale markets can connect the past with the future consumers.”*

A RESILIENT FORCE IN UKRAINE'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR, SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WHOLESALE MARKETS

Mr. Roman Fedyshyn began by sharing the history of the Shuvar market, which he founded in 1991. The wholesale operation started in 2001, with produce being sold directly from trucks. Today, Shuvar covers all food categories, primarily perishables. The market operates across a 27-hectare area, hosts approximately 500 operators, and employs 5,000 people. It handles an annual transaction volume of 900,000 tons of fresh fruit and vegetables. The market's structure is matrix-based, with directors of each department reporting horizontally to the CEO. With the onset of the war, the market's management criteria shifted. Operations and human resources became the

top priorities, while marketing and financial objectives were reduced. Wholesale market pavilions were designed with shared cold storage areas for a more efficient use of space. Processing units are also available for smaller businesses and comply with international food safety standards (HACCP).

THE ROLE OF WHOLESALE MARKETS IN A CRISIS

Mr. Fedyshyn explained that in crisis situations, especially during conflicts, markets prove their critical role in ensuring food security. The Shuvar market continued to supply conflict zones more than 1,000 kilometers away, and a considerable amount of food was provided to the combat zone free of charge. Although Lviv was bombed, with several buildings destroyed and people killed, none of the market's tenants abandoned their businesses and continued to operate.



“ Despite the war, we keep with CSR objectives, and we hope to receive soon the WUWM representatives.”

Mr. Roman Fedyshyn

After production areas in the South were occupied in 2022, the market began sourcing from other regions in 2023 and 2024. During this conflict, Shuvar and other wholesale markets were essential in ensuring food supply, while the retail network was largely disrupted due to centralized supply chains. International companies completely halted their retail and production operations in Ukraine, which highlights the importance of small producers

and wholesalers who remained fully active and were essential to the supply chain. To ensure electricity during the winter of 2023, the market acquired 1.7 MW diesel generators. A 1 MW cogeneration plant is also under construction and is scheduled for delivery in 2027.

CASE STUDY: EU PROJECT OMICRON FOR "SMARTER LAST MILE"

Javier Esquillor presented Omicron as a platform for sharing knowledge and experience with WUWM members to develop better wholesale solutions using technology. The primary objective is to attract new types of customers who have been lost due to changing habits. He highlighted two key achievements: Califrais, a digital tool implemented at the Rungis market in Europe, and Apprecio, an app for retailers in Mexico. Both are examples of profitable and efficient solutions that can be replicated in other markets. Javier confirmed that the effectiveness of these new solutions can be measured. Pilot projects in Paris, Madrid, and Mexico have shown impressive results, including:

- Improving margins by up to 15%
- Reducing average prices by 10%
- Saving retailers up to 11 hours of work per week
- Cutting logistics costs by 50%



“Today’s challenge is also how we can scale up in the future the new digital and sustainable solutions we created”

Mr. Javier Esquillor Garcia

However, **Javier** also noted a significant challenge: *“Digitalization depends mainly on the people willing or not to embrace it; most of them still don’t.”*

MANAGEMENT OF FOOD MARKETS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE VENDORS

Assad Ait Chekdhidh explained the complex commercial environment of a large city like Paris, which has 60 food markets (both indoor and outdoor) and 3,000 retailers. Working with such a diverse profile of retailers at the end of the food supply chain presents many environmental and economic issues that need to be solved.



“We have sometimes to challenging situations like International events or strikes; cooperation is essential to solve issues and run the public markets properly.”

Mr. Assad Ait Chekdhidh

Sébastien Bensidoun from Bensidoun Group shared his experience managing 34 street food markets in Paris, two flea markets near Paris, and 18 “French Markets” in the U.S. between Chicago and New York. He acknowledged the immense amount of work required to deal with last-mile customers, which is a seven-day-a-week operation. The Bensidoun Group will soon expand to a third continent, with a new French Market opening in Dubai. The group also integrates other services, including the production of canopies for its retail customers and the recycling of waste (plastic, organic). *“We*



“ Our objective decided 28 years ago is to duplicate the French style street food markets in other parts of the world”

Mr. Sébastien Bensidoun

sometimes have to fine or even cancel licenses for vendors who don't comply with new regulations, like the ban on plastic bags,” Bensidoun said. Digitalization is also on the group's agenda, with plans to create an app to manage operations with vendors more transparently. The company is also planning a training program for vendors in cooperation with Rungis Academy, with the guarantee of a selling space in one of the public markets upon completion of the training.

HOW RIMINI IS REORGANISING INFRASTRUCTURE IN A TOURIST CITY

Roberta Frisoni began by highlighting the need for resilience and the ability to quickly adapt to both positive changes, such as major events, and negative factors, such as floods or conflicts. Sustainable transformation is a key focus today, particularly making the city greener and its operations more efficient.

Rimini is home to 2,000 hotels, 35,000 small businesses, 40 kilometers of beach, a 15-kilometer waterfront, modern trade fair and convention centers, an international airport, and two golf clubs. Its population quadruples from 150,000 to 450,000 people in the summer, which presents various challenges. These include cleaning the seawater, rebuilding historical buildings, improving pedestrian areas, creating new squares and sports facilities for young people, regulating city traffic, and increasing green public transport options like the electric “Metromare” trams and “Shuttlemare” buses.

Roberta Frisoni noted, “*Rimini became the Italian city with the highest rate of limited-traffic roads per inhabitant.*” New projects are also being tested to improve food logistics, such as the use of “Spotlog” cargo bikes and electric vans.



“ Transformations require changes of habit and sometimes difficult for people and operators to embrace, we daily talk and help them with it”.

Mrs. Roberta Frisoni





Panel 3. Fighting Food Waste and Fostering Solidarity

Speakers: **Cinzia Furiati**, Director of the Agri and Food Center of Rimini (CAAR); **Giulietta Magagnoli**, Director of Agricultural and Logistic Consortium Center (CAL) in Parma; **Furqan Khalil Syed**, researcher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge (Massachusetts); **Rosa Rolle**, Senior Officer and team leader of Food Loss and Waste of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome; **Melanie González Vivero**, CSR Manager at Mercamadrid (Spain); **Giannis Triantafyllis**, Vice Chairman WUWM; **Juan Félix Soriano Cruz**, CONACCA's Public Agenda Cabinet Coordinator and San Vicente Chicoloapan Wholesale Market's President.

Cinzia Furiati highlighted the strong presence of women leading wholesale market centres in Italy, noting the rarity of such representation on panels. She then presented a project born from the collaboration of the four centres of the Emilia Romagna Mercati Network: Bologna, Parma, Cesena, and Rimini. The initiative has delivered significant results in solidarity and the fight against food waste, two priorities strongly supported in the Emilia-Romagna region. She underlined the importance of the regional law adopted on 28 December 2023, which recognizes the central role of markets in promoting food recovery, environmental sustainability, waste reduction, and social solidarity.

Cinzia Furiati stressed that while all Italian wholesale centres already work to redistribute surpluses, this new project goes further. The

centres now act as logistics hubs, collecting fresh produce and channeling it through charitable organisations to people in need. This innovative approach, inspired by the Parma experience launched in 2021, has since expanded to include the other municipalities in the network. She proudly noted that the project has been recognised within COP23 sectoral initiatives, confirming its relevance and impact at both the regional and international level.

Giulietta Magagnoli underlined that social and environmental sustainability are central to the Emilia-Romagna wholesale market network, alongside gender equality, noting that two of the four markets are led by women. She thanked the presidents and regional authorities for their support in enabling these initiatives. She explained that while wholesalers are highly

skilled at limiting waste, excess production is inevitable, partly due to European market regulations. The network sought to turn this surplus into an opportunity by creating a “solid supply chain” that brings producers closer to beneficiaries. Markets have become solidarity hubs where excess products are collected, stored, and distributed through charity organisations. Every Tuesday, in centres located in Parma, Rimini, Cesena, and soon Bologna, these hubs provide food to around 20,000 people in need. The products, withdrawn from the market, are certified safe for consumption and maintain high quality. This initiative not only reduces waste but also ensures access to healthy food for vulnerable communities. Since its launch, the programme has redistributed 5,000 tonnes of produce, representing savings of €2.5 million, while significantly improving food security.

Giulietta Magagnoli highlighted the pride and satisfaction that come from seeing the direct impact of wholesale markets in supporting both sustainability and solidarity.



“ Every Tuesday, around 20,000 people receive fresh, high-quality food thanks to our solidarity hubs. This shows the true social value of wholesale markets: reducing waste while nourishing communities.”

Mrs. Giulietta Magagnoli

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“ Our wholesale markets are not only places of trade, they are also hubs of solidarity: turning surplus into support for those most in need, while fighting food waste and promoting sustainability.”

Mrs. Cinzia Furiati

CLOSING HUNGER AND FOOD WASTE GAP: DYNAMIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT NEEDED

Furqan Khalil Syed presented “A System Dynamics Approach to Analyzing Food Waste in Wholesale Markets.” He emphasized that establishing alliances and partnerships with food banks is fundamental to creating effective food recovery and waste reduction mechanisms. **Mr. Syed** presented a simplified model, noting that the full research study involved up to 70 different mechanisms. He displayed a chart illustrating how various interconnected variables influence food waste. *“The next step is how to create a better map and how the variables interact,”* he said.

The environmental variables highlighted in green on the chart were partnerships with food banks, supply from farms (stable or seasonal), product shelf-life (short or long), and the willingness to invest. **Mr. Syed** shared a model of a wholesale market with an established partnership with food banks and products that have a short shelf-life (2 to 10 days). This case study demonstrated that infrastructure investment is necessary to significantly reduce food waste.



“ Food loss can be avoided drastically if dynamic and adapted infrastructure investment is made.”

Mr. Furqan Khalil Syed

FAO ACTIONS AROUND THE WORLD TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE AT WHOLESALE

Dr. Rosa Rolle presented on the actions the FAO is taking to reduce food loss and waste (FLW) in wholesale markets. She emphasized that a lot more can be done, given the high volume of food waste, its environmental impact, and the ongoing issues of poverty and hunger. In 2023, approximately 11% of the world's population faced hunger, and 30% could not afford a healthy diet. Fruits and vegetables are the food category with the highest rate of loss, at about 32.7%, followed by root crops and nuts (12.6%), meat and animal products (12.6%), and cereals (7.6%).

Major causes of FLW that can be addressed at the wholesale level include inadequate infrastructure, logistics issues, oversupply, and damage from overripeness. Digital innovation is a key part of the solution, helping to better monitor production and transition to circular distribution models. This requires a shift from a “take-make-consume-throw away” mindset to “prevent-reduce-reuse-upcycle-recycle” actions.

The development of new, more climate-friendly crops with enhanced health benefits is needed to respond to new market opportunities, as is inclusive food processing. The long-term partnership between the FAO and WUWM aims to implement joint initiatives to reduce FLW and improve efficiency. One of the three

main areas of focus is meeting the SDG 12.3 target of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Other priorities include supporting smallholder farmers, sharing knowledge, and promoting innovative practices throughout the supply chain. The launch of the “International Day of Food Loss and Waste” has been a key action. The FAO also developed a useful app called “FLAPP” to collect data on food loss levels at wholesale markets. This data analysis is crucial for developing effective alternatives to FLW, such as food processing.



“ You need long run actions to educate consumers.”

Mrs. Rosa Rolle

MERCAMADRID: HOW TO BOOST SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CSR AND FLW MANAGEMENT

Melanie González Vivero described the work of Mercamadrid's CSR department, which operates with a clear objective: to contribute to the well-being of people by providing a public service, promoting healthy eating, and committing to environmental and socio-economic goals in line with the UN SDGs.

→ Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives

To support these goals, several awareness campaigns were conducted in cooperation with companies at Mercamadrid. Thirty waste collection points have been set up throughout the market, where waste is sorted on-site. The modernization of recycling facilities has been a huge success, with the share of recycled waste jumping from 11.5% in 2016 to 75% in 2023. The

total amount of waste processed also increased from 23,838 tons to 29,895 tons in the same period. The main byproducts from this waste are carton boxes, plastic bags, pet food, biogas, and compost. Mercamadrid has also embraced clean energy, installing solar panels with a production capacity of about 10 MW, which meets most of the market's electricity needs. Additionally, the fish market and all lighting systems have been modernized, and 15 charging points for vehicles have been installed.

→ Social and Community Impact

On the social front, 1,466 tons of fresh and frozen food were donated to food banks, which helped feed approximately 40,000 people in vulnerable situations through the cooperation of 130 partner organizations. A 560-square-meter warehouse is dedicated to this effort. Mercamadrid publishes a practical guide each year detailing its SDG actions, which have identified 18 management areas and 45 aligned actions.

→ Market Scale and Reach

Mercamadrid is the leading wholesale market in Spain and the first in Europe for fruits and vegetables. It ranks as the second-largest fish and seafood market in the world after Tokyo. Annually, it handles over 3.4 million tons of products. The market hosts 800 companies across its 220-hectare site, employs 9,000 workers, and sees 20,000 daily visitors. Mercamadrid supplies approximately 12 million people over a distance of 500 kilometers.



“ We are also part of Mobility for Europe project with other European partners to promote sustainable mobility solutions inside the market.”

Mrs. Melanie González Vivero

MISCONCEPTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES WITH FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

The WUWM Vice-Chairman, **Ioannis Triantafyllis**, explained that while we discuss “sexy” concepts like recycling, upcycling, and environmental protection, the core problem of massive food waste around the world persists. He highlighted the scale of the issue with compelling statistics:

- It takes three times the amount of water in Lake Geneva to irrigate the crops that are ultimately wasted.
- The carbon emissions from wasted food are six times higher than the total annual CO2 emissions from air traffic.



“ The arable land needed to cultivate the wasted food equals to the land mass of China.”

Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllis

The WUWM Vice-Chairman clarified the distinction between food loss and food waste: food loss occurs before food reaches the consumer, while food waste occurs at the consumer level. Food waste is more prevalent in developed countries, while food loss is higher in developing economies. He emphasized that wholesale markets play a crucial role as the most important connection between producers and consumers, thanks to their functions in storage, logistics, and marketing.

The EU has created a Platform on Food Waste (FLW), which includes a sub-group for food donation and waste. The WUWM recently presented the numerous initiatives its member markets are undertaking to combat food waste. These initiatives are also shared on the organization's website, www.wuwm.org.

MEXICO: HOW TO ERADICATE HUNGER AND MODERNIZE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

Juan Felix Soriano Cruz brought to light the stark paradox of Mexico's agricultural landscape, where it stands as a global powerhouse in production and exports, yet still grapples with significant issues of poverty and hunger. He cited UN statistics revealing that a staggering 40% of the world's farm products are wasted, a problem acutely felt in Latin America. While Mexico has made progress in reducing the number of people facing hunger, a substantial portion of its population remains in economic poverty. Despite this, the nation is celebrated for its incredible biodiversity and its high standards of food safety and quality.

The country's wholesale markets, he explained, are not merely commercial hubs but are actively fostering initiatives to combat these issues through food programs, recycling, and organic composting. Demonstrating a commitment to growth and development, he proudly stated that Mexico has built five new markets in just five years, far exceeding their original plan. He also touched upon the national challenge of achieving food security within the next six years, a goal pursued through a critical alliance between the public and private sectors, while also addressing



“ We setup a pilot project of food canteen every Friday in Mexico City, we plan to expand it on the 70 wholesale markets in the country.”

Mr. Juan Felix Soriano Cruz

the serious levels of obesity by establishing minimum dietary requirements in food canteens. His discourse underscored the multifaceted role of Mexico's wholesale markets as agents of both economic progress and social responsibility.



Panel 4. Food Urban Policies

Speakers: **Roberto Vettor**, University of Padua and President CibuSalus in Padua (Italy), **Siheng Mi**, Hebei Shouheng Agricultural and Sideline Products Co., Gaobeidian of Hebei Province (China)

FOOD AND GLOBAL HEALTH: THE DECISIVE ROLE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Roberto Vettor framed food as being at the very heart of the global risk landscape, viewed through a “one health” perspective. He argued that all evidence points to a necessary priority focus on food to achieve a resilient recovery from pandemics like the COVID-19 crisis and to prevent future ones. He made it clear that poor dietary habits and unsustainable food production systems are directly linked to global health risks. Specifically, he noted that agricultural expansion and the meat trade contribute to both increased carbon footprints and widespread healthcare issues.

To address this, **Roberto Vettor** stressed that a fundamental rebalancing of diets and food systems is required. He connected pollution and a lack of sustainable practices to the rise of non-communicable chronic diseases

(NCDs) like obesity, diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases, which are responsible for 74% of all global deaths – about 41 million people annually. Major contributors to these deaths include poor diet, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, obesity, and high glucose levels. Citing scientific studies, he highlighted that consuming 300 to 400 grams of vegetables daily can significantly reduce the risk of several chronic diseases, which is why the WHO recommends a daily intake of at least 400 grams of fruits and vegetables.

Mr. Vettor also referenced the EAT-Lancet Commission’s global “planetary health diet,” which advocates for a greater consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, and smaller portions of meat and dairy. He identified ultra-processed foods as a clear antagonist, with scientists having proven their direct link to obesity.

In conclusion, he called for a critical shift toward prioritizing sustainable food systems, with a particular focus on fruits and vegetables, for the benefit of future generations. He emphasized that policy adjustments are essential, particularly concerning food marketing, waste reduction, and subsidies for sustainable choices.



“ We need to focus on food if we want to avoid global risks on health like pandemics.”

Mr. Roberto Vettor

RATIONALIZATION OF THE NUMBER OF MARKETS: STRATEGIC CRITERIA FOR DEFINING WHEN A NEW MARKET IS NEEDED

Mr. Siheng Mi reflected on the need for public-private criteria to define when a market is strategic for a country, with the goal of rationalizing the number of wholesale markets. He began by presenting the Gaobeidian Xinfadi Agricultural Wholesale Market, the main market of Beijing and part of the Hebei Shouheng group. This market spans 300 hectares and hosts approximately 8,700 wholesalers, who trade over 400 food product categories. It serves 13 provinces in Northern China. He also introduced the Xiaogan market, another part of the Hebei Shouheng group. Established in 2023,

it covers a 250-hectare area and handles about 14,000 tons daily. In total, the group operates 11 wholesale markets.

Siheng Mi expressed his concern about the excessive number of markets in China, which currently has 44,000 agricultural markets, including 4,100 wholesale markets. He noted that more than 1,300 of these markets have annual transactions exceeding one billion yuan (€100 million), which he believes is likely too many, even for a population of 1.4 billion. To prevent this over-saturation, he advises that future wholesale markets should be a combination of public and private capital, balancing principles with flexibility and national will with social responsibility.

Siheng also mentioned the ambitious plans of JD.com, a leading Chinese e-commerce distributor, to create 43 major modern distribution centers, such as the Kunshan project. This 500,000 square-meter facility, established in 2023, is the world's largest intelligent logistics park, capable of sorting 4.5 million parcels per day.

He concluded by sharing his group's objective to build a three-level wholesale market system, scaled to the size of the city. He stated, *"We need to do something more to improve food supply chains, so both producers and consumers can be better served and be more happy about Chinese food."*

“ May be we need public or collective regulation with the creation of wholesale markets, we certainly have too many in China.”

Mr. Siheng Mi



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02:12

FOOD AT THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL RISK LANDSCAPE A ONE HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

- Food production and consumption are central to global risk, contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, and health crises.
- Agricultural expansion and meat trade contribute to new pandemics, with enormous economic costs
- Health Impact: Unbalanced diets increase obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases



2024 WUWM CONFERENCE 30 October - 1 November 2024
RIMINI - ITALY



CAAR
Centro Agroalimentare Romagnolo

ITALMERCATI
ITALIAN WHOLESALE MARKET NETWORK

Ente Romagna Mare
RIETE DI IMPRESA

WWF (COVID 19 – An urgent call to protect people and nature)

Conclusion



Handover with Johannesburg Market, South Africa, during the closing ceremony

The conference concluded on a high note, with the WUWM Chairman and the chairman of CAAR expressing their immense satisfaction with the fruitful and inspiring outcomes of the two-day event.

Over 200 delegates were deeply engaged for more than 10 hours of presentations and discussions, tackling the common challenges and opportunities that markets face today. The diverse group of speakers, who traveled from China, Italy, France, Mexico, Spain, Ukraine, and the United States, were met with a great applause, particularly the impactful presentations from the Ukrainian delegates.

Every presentation throughout the conference underscored the remarkable resilience and strength of wholesale markets, as well as their unwavering commitment to addressing pressing issues such as food loss and waste. Looking ahead, the WUWM pledged to continue its close collaboration with key partners like the FAO and MIT to drive these initiatives forward.

The key subjects that emerged from the conference were multifaceted, ranging from finding innovative ways to combat food waste through new partnerships with retailers and food banks, to the importance of cooperation with public authorities, as evidenced by the rapid developments in China. Discussions also centered on how wholesale markets can serve as catalysts for progress in agriculture, the economy, urban development, and the global community.

Ultimately, the conference was a powerful reminder of the need to foster sometimes forgotten values, such as solidarity, in the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable food system.

Tribute



In Memory of Giovanni Indino

The World Union of Wholesale Markets pays tribute to Giovanni "Gianni" Indino, former Chairman of CAAR – Centro Agro Alimentare Riminese S.p.A., who passed away suddenly in February 2025.

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Gianni carried out his work with dedication, passion, and a profound commitment to the wholesale market of Rimini. His leadership left a lasting mark on CAAR and on the wider wholesale market community.

A significant milestone of his chairmanship was the successful organization of the WUWM Conference in Rimini, which, for the first time, gathered more than half of the WUWM membership. This achievement reflected his remarkable ability to unite people and create an environment of collaboration and exchange.

But Gianni was more than just a member of WUWM. He was a true friend of our Union, appreciated by all for his kindness, his warmth, and his zest for life. He will be remembered not only for his professional accomplishments, but also for the human qualities that endeared him to everyone who had the pleasure to meet him.

His contribution will be remembered with gratitude within WUWM and the international wholesale market community.

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