In Italy recently private actors in the food chain (the Coldiretti Farmers’ Union) launched a plan aimed at opening farmers’ market in the major cities. The initiative is intended at increasing farmers’ revenues, while providing citizens with fresh, seasonal products, and more in general, with an access to more varied diets.

The scope of the present poster is to stress how citizens, as sampled inside the markets belonging to the “Campagna Amica” initiative, perceive such markets and the ability to fit them inside their overall purchasing patterns (including other retail channels). Another goal of the research is to better understand how farmers’ markets are contributing to reshape diets in complex urban environments, their impact on the consumption of several food items assumed as key for a healthy diet (i.e., fruits and vegetables, non processed foods, etc), and the relative weight of the factors which can explain such dietary shifts (i.e., price, quality, ethical factors, environmental issues, etc).

The cost of obesity is around 8 billion Euros, the 6.7% of the National health expenditure and excluding indirect costs (Globesity: strategia di interventi). A previous report from the Centro di Farmaconomia of the Milan University proposed for the year 2000, 22.8 billion of Euros in indirect costs only (SPESA study). If the estimations are not easy to perform, there is a general consensus about the negative economic effect of food-based ailments discharged onto the society as a whole.

In Italy actually there is a food program under the Ministero per le Attività Produttive, called Social Card. The card is released to persons in difficult economic conditions and provide some 40 euros per month. Despite of the increasing attention on a global scale about nutrition programs (centered around both socioeconomic and nutritional efforts), in Italy there is a gap to be filled with regard to a possible support of the functions carried out by Farmers’ Market initiatives. A broader consideration of the full range of functions that a FM generally encompasses could lead to a more proactive public involvement and support of such initiatives in the near future.

The example of USA for private-public partnership, and federal-regional level of interaction should be considered in detail and possibly replicated in Italy with in mind a public health goal of improved access to healthy food.

A coupons-system with sort of tickets to be spent in FMs could help addressing socioeconomic but also nutritional goals.

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