



MAY 2022, 25th – 27th

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SOILLESS AGRICULTURE: THE REVOLUTION GROWS 25% PER YEAR

Cultivations in a controlled environment are growing all over the world and finally they are spreading in Italy as well. The new edition of the annual global survey within the sector, the regulatory changes in Italy and the growing interest in venture capital also in Europe will be among the themes of the show NovelFarm, 25-26 May, Pordenone exhibition center, Italy.

Pordenone, 27 January 2022. The data are not yet definitive but the estimation of the value of the agriculture in a controlled environment market (hydroponics, aeroponics, aquaponics) of the past year indicates that globally the turnover has exceeded 4 billion dollars only considering the equipment, the work and the consumables (seeds, fertilizers, substrates).

It is an average of 25% per year, very high for a hard sector where investments largely go into "physical" things. It seems the pandemic has not affected the growth or investors' confidence. According to data from PitchBook, an innovation investment market analysis company, in 2020, during the pandemic, 1.86 billion dollars were invested in indoor farming. The trend accelerated in 2021: between August 2020-August 2021, investments totaled 2.71 billion. The second half of the past year did not stop the trend and in mid-December the news of the first European unicorn in the sector arrived: Infarm, based in Germany, reached the valuation of one billion on the basis of a "round D" loan of 200 million dollars.

Even on smaller dimensions, the enthusiasm of the market is consolidated. This is certified by the new edition of the world survey on indoor growers, edited by the consulting company Agritecture, which will be presented at the third edition of NovelFarm 2022, taking place at Pordenone exhibition center from 25th to 26th May 2022.

An interesting data: about half of the participants of the survey believe that if they were to start now after years of experience they would do things differently. A testimony both of the youth of the sector, currently ten years old, with a steep learning curve, and of the belief that the road is the right one.

And what about Italy? After years of experimentation, several vertical farms are now operational: Planet Farms, one of the mayor in Europe on the outskirts of Milano, the aeroponic systems of Agricooltur, Fattoria di Pol and FruitHydroSinni, the Milanese veterans of Agricola Moderna and the plant under construction in Capriolo, in the province of Brescia, by Zero from Pordenone, which uses an existing building. The entrepreneurial energies are now mobilizing, even in the absence of a risk capital sector remotely comparable to the one existing in other countries. From a regulatory point of view, however, conflicting signals are arriving.

At the end of October, Lombardy recognized with a regional law voted unanimously the legally agricultural nature of vertical farms, even built in urban and peri-urban areas and in existing buildings. From the market rumors, it appears that other regions - headquarters of important districts of cultivation in a controlled environment even if



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traditional (like greenhouses) - are thinking about following the Lombard footsteps. The regions are Campania (in the Sele area there are now about 3000 companies specialized in greenhouse cultivation, including hydroponic ones) Veneto and Marche. Let's see whether local legislation will follow a common scheme. At national level, instead, a draft of an interministerial decree was finalized at the end of October. It adopts an European directive that regulates a specific market sector regarding vertical farm, the one of IV range. According to the draft decree, shortly sent to Brussels for an expected approval, to make everyone agree, a division has been invented between IV range (ready-to-eat washed leafy vegetables), I range "evolved" (vegetables ready to eat but to be washed) and vertical farming products (unwashed ready-to-eat vegetables). IV range products from vertical farming (even if it is not certain) should be differently labeled and placed in compartments clearly divided from the others showing explanatory panels for the public and cannot be enriched with other ingredients (therefore it will not be possible to use the lettuce from vertical farming to make mixed salads with corn, for example). This is a bit surreal and the explanation comes from the resistance to innovation within the food sector.

During NovelFarm opening session – taking place in Pordenone exhibition center on May 2022 - representatives of manufacturers and users, as well as experts will discuss together about the status of regulations on culture in a controlled environment, facilitations and available financing (for example the Italian support decree of last May).

*NovelFarm is the most important Italian event entirely dedicated to **new cultivation techniques**, soilless and vertical farming. Co-located with AquaFarm, the international conference and trade show on **aquaculture and sustainable fishing industry**. This year supported by AlgaeFarm, the event dedicated to technologies and applications in **algaculture**.*

For more info please check:

AquaFarm www.aquafarmexpo.it

NovelFarm www.novelfarmexpo.it

AlgaeFarm: www.aquafarm.show/en/algafarm-algaculture-event

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