

## ITALIAEUROPA - LIBERI DA OGM (GMO free)

National Consultation  
15 September - 15 November 2007

From 15 September to 15 November 2007 the "ITALIAEUROPA - LIBERI DA OGM" Coalition, which for the first time brings together 28 leading organisations representing farmers, cooperatives, large distribution, small and medium sized businesses, consumer, environmental, scientific, cultural and international cooperation interest groups, will be promoting and organising a **National Consultation** on the question "Do you want the agro-food sector, foodstuffs and their authenticity to be at the heart of development, which includes people and regions, health and quality, and that it be sustainable and innovative, based on bio-diversity and GMO free?".

In the thousands of events and initiatives that will take place across Italy, citizens will have the chance to vote for a quality agro-food model. Citizens can participate in meetings, conventions, seminars, shows, cultural events, wine and food fairs to take a closer look at questions relating to the world of food and health. All these initiatives will take place on a local, national and European level, and will be organised by the promoting associations and their regional committees, which have gone on to form a far-reaching organisational network.

The preparation for this initiative has taken some four months of work in coordinating and establishing the coalition, setting up the organisational structures and meetings with political and institutional representatives and the media. Meetings were in fact held with the leaders of the two Chambers of Parliament, with Government representatives, the majority and opposition parties, Regional Ministers, editors of the main newspapers and television stations, and the Chairman of RAI's [public television broadcaster] Regulating Committee. Debates have also taken place with the leaders of economic sectors that were not called to take part in the coalition, such as the organisations representing the big industry.

The organisational structure of the coalition is set up at different levels, with one working group (responsible for the political standpoint) consisting of the chairpersons of the promoting organisations, another one with the 'plenipotentiary' directors (appointed to oversee the organisational details), and a third one for the media. Regional coalitions with their own organisational structures have also been established in the 20 regions of the country, (the various local interest groups not represented on a national level can join these).

A record will be kept of all events promoted by the Coalition, noting the number of participants, the matters discussed, and opinions expressed. The consultation process will make use of the attached 'ballot paper', similar to the one used in Italy during referendums: these 'ballot papers' will be handed out to the public during events and

collected afterwards. 3 million votes is the ambitious stated numerical goal of the Consultation. They will be collated and stored at a regional level, and once the two month public debate period is over, they will be handed over to the national Coalition for future political use.

The [www.liberidaogm.org](http://www.liberidaogm.org) web site will be updated in real time, indicating the progress of the various initiatives, publishing voting results, the calendar of events, as well as information material, files on specific topics and making it possible to vote on-line.

The press conference on **24 July** at the offices of the Promoting Committee of the Coalition in Rome [c/o Genetic Rights Foundation] has set things in motion. The internet site of the initiative is on-line from that day.

This will be followed in Rome on **10 September** with a national assembly of the 600 national and local directors of all the promoting organisations, in order to share the objectives and spirit of the Coalition, and fine-tune the multilevel organisational structures required before consultation.

On **15 September** 5 large events in Milan, Bologna, Florence, Bari and Naples will simultaneously mark the official launch of the National Consultation.

**Between September and November**, the associations representing each sector - agriculture, environment, consumers, craftsmanship and international cooperation - will hold discussions with their European and international counterparts. A number of these events have already been scheduled:

- 12 October - international meeting of the co-operative sector
- 16 October- (on World Food Day) Food Sovereignty Day, organised by the development NGO's
- 23 October - Artisanship Day
- 31 October - Environmental Day
- 8 November - European debate on organic farming

A debate entitled: "Food sovereignty and politics" will be held on **8 October** involving the political institutions. The leaders of the main majority and opposition political parties have already agreed to take part in this .

At the same time, over the 62 days of consultation, thousands of single events will be taking place at a local level, either initiated specifically for the consultation drive, or which will be making the most of existing events.

From the launch of the national consultation, we will occasionally be sending out updates in English on the progress and impact that the consultation is having on the political and social life of the country. We shall however be available should you consider the Italian mobilisation drive useful beyond our national borders.

Luca Colombo