



## Italian Agriculture on TV

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*Rick Gush*

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Photo by Rick Gush I don't usually watch sports on the weekends much here in Italy, because the soccer matches are all on closed circuit. But what I do get to watch is spectacular, and that is a smorgasbord of wonderful agricultural shows that focus mostly on Italian small farmers.

These shows take viewers on tours of locations engaged in all the various phases of food production, from the fields and barns of small farmers and producers, to the warehouses of the farmers cooperatives, to the kitchens of the local chefs, to the omnipresent vegetable market and family owned stores where the products are sold and finally to the tables of the consumers who enjoy eating the products.

The production values on these shows are very high. They use a lot of helicopters to show fields full of crops and enchanting views of the Italian landscape, and the writing is well-researched and quite informative.

Photo by Rick Gush All these shows give a lot of publicity to the small farmers here, and the programs make a big deal out of promoting the values of all the niche products.

Italy is a country of niche products, and each area has its own registered group of varieties and processing methods. There are thousands of officially recognized products in Italy, known by their titles of DOC, which means the product is grown only in that area, and DOP, which means the product is only produced in that area.

For example, Italy boasts several thousand registered types of fruits, grains and vegetables, perhaps two hundred registered types of salami and almost four hundred types of cheese, all produced by small farmers and family-owned businesses.

The television shows are fascinating, they are widely available and the weekends are particularly packed with agricultural based shows. Even the daily news programs often feature local agricultural production segments where the reporters go out into the fields and learn about the products and methods of the local food product producers.

Everything from wine to olive oil to salami to every vegetable and plant crop under the sun is shown at some point, including snails, hemp-based automobile parts, and nonpolluting small gas engines. This country is completely crazy for organic and sustainable culture and the staples on the television shows are organically grown fruits, grains and vegetables and organically raised animals such as cows, sheep, goats and pigs.

I've been forming an idea to put together a project to take my favorite programs, like Linea Verde, AgriSapori and Mele Verde, and dub their dialog into English. If I could make these shows available to the English speaking countries like the US and UK I think the awesome charm of these programs would find really appreciative audiences outside of Italy.

Italy is a really screwed up place politically and bureaucratically, but it is enthusiastically pursuing the support of small farming in a way toward which all the other nations on the planet should aspire.

At least this part of Italy is extremely healthy.

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