

Nello Musumeci "USA first market for Sicilian agri-food"

Letizia Airos Soria (January 22, 2020)



Interview with the President of the Sicily Region, highly anticipated speaker at the first edition of the Italian Export Forum in New York, which opens January 27, 2020 with a panel entitled "Italy: Exporting Beauty".

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Why is it important to discuss Exporting to the US?

"The United States represents one of the most important markets in the world, from various perspectives. On the one hand, it is an important reference for exports, but it is also an important hub for attracting investments, not to mention an example of business innovation particularly regarding innovative startups. In 2018, the region of Sicily exported about 680 million euros worth of products and services to the US, 37% more than the previous year. Speaking from a regional perspective, the US is the primary market for Sicilian food, with encouraging prospects. The year 2018 ended with a +18% for regional export (98 million euro) and the partial data for 2019 signal an



additional +18% from the previous year. The recent protectionist policies, which brought the US to raise tariffs on products from certain countries, call for an additional push towards that market by providing institutional backing and support to our businesses."

Italy has an often underrecognized secret weapon: small-to-medium businesses. How can this resource be utilized in the US?

"Competing on international markets takes competitive products but also adequate personnel and technology. Small businesses looking to export are able to grasp more opportunities when they can work together, creating networks through associations, forming consortiums, etc. On the other hand, they are also able to be more flexible than large international players in adapting their products to market demands. The open-mindedness of Southern European populations is also an advantage, which allows them to immediately grasp shifting market trends. The increased use of digital exporting strategies along with the role of social media helps shorten distances and allows for faster exchanges with faraway countries."

What do Americans expect from Italian products, in your view?

"Americans associate Italy with a healthy Mediterranean lifestyle and fashion, design and luxury products. It is important to note the role played by the region of Sicily within the national food industry. Sicilian wines are increasingly recognizable partly thanks to the promotional campaigns carried out by the producers themselves - together with extra virgin olive oil and organic products just to cite a few. The opening of wineries to enogastronomic tourism, the many UNESCO heritage sites present on our island, the high percentage of Italian-Americans with Sicilian origins are all factors that have helped to improve the perception of Sicily and of our regional products, so much so that several publications are singling it out as a most beautiful place to visit."

What are the paths that the region of Sicily plans to undertake in the coming months with regards to internationalization?

"The region of Sicily is involved in internationalization plans using both European funds and regional resources, sometimes in collaboration with national institutions. Such actions include the realization of foreign promotion projects to help Sicilian businesses to participate in international trade fairs (the so-called "Po Fesr 3.4.1"). The implementation of another promotional action ("Po Fesr 3.4.2") is also underway, financing projects up to 80% to regional businesses that intend to promote themselves abroad through an integrated internationalization plan.

We have participated in the last few editions of the Summer Fancy Food Show, an extremely important event for the food industry taking place in New York and San Francisco. This year, for the first time, we will be participating in the most important biotechnology event, which will take place in San Diego, to push this strategic sector, which has first-rate representatives in Sicily who are often involved in international partnerships with American universities. We also collaborate with national institutions to manage programs dedicated to the promotion of Italian wine in non-EU countries."

Attendance to the "Italian Export Forum" is free-of-charge

January 27th 2020
from 4.00 pm to 6.15 pm

Please RSVP team@youritalianhub [3]



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