



## IMC joins the World Rural Women's Day

October 15, World Rural Women's Day. They are more than one-quarter of the global population and they represent a fundamental factor for the welfare of their families, for the rural economy development, for the food production and food security. In occasion of the women in agriculture global day organised by IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) in partnership with FAO and ONU, the Mediterranean Institute of Certification (IMC), joining the initiative, publishes the interview directed to three women who chose the organic agriculture and the certified quality.

### Francesca Petrini, Fattoria Petrini, Marche Region (Italy)



*Francesca Petrini, who is the principal of the company that has the same name located in the region Marche, which is specialised in the production of the organic extra virgin olive oil and who has just celebrated the twenty year of the family company.*

#### **Francesca, does a women's balance sheet exist after twenty years of agro food company?**

I make one every day, because every day "I plant a seed hoping in a better fruit". I believe in things that take time to grow, that follow the nature's rules, because they give the best results and last more, as it has been for the twenty year of my company which is the result of the past efforts but it is also well placed in the present and projected towards the future. The past represents my roots, my family, my never betrayed ideals, the experience, the quality joined during these years and also all the awards.

The present is the moment we are living in, not simple, crucial, but of course full of incentives that we have to capture and develop. The present also represents an harvesting of seeds we planted some years ago, as it happened for our PetriPlus®, the extra virgin olive oil enriched with D3, K1 and B6 vitamins (international patent) well known as anti osteoporosis olive oil that I can easily put in the profit balance as it has become a fundamental part (know-how, patent and research) of our company. This new product that is giving us incredible satisfactions, is the result of a nutritional research directed in collaboration with the Institute of Vitaminology of the Bologna University and the faculty of Medicine of the Marche region University. The PetriPlus® and many other initiatives that I secretly cultivate are my future, a period not well defined but full of expectations and dreams.... all dressed up with olive oil!

#### **What did the word innovation mean and what does it mean now for the Petrini's company?**

It is meaningful! We would not have this present without having innovated the company previously. In my and our case, the innovation caused big changes, even if gradual, both at agronomic level and nutritional. For example having chosen the organic agriculture method in 1989, when nobody believed in it or promote it, it represented a challenge and it had been the beginning of a real innovation process. Behind the innovation there is always a look beyond the present to catch the tendencies and new exigencies. World changes inevitably and we have to capture the new signals. In 1990 the first varietal selections arrived with the isolation, first of all, the "raggia" cultivar, which is typical of our region, and it is loved for its fresh fragrance of almond. The PetriPlus, has also been a very important example for us of a process of innovation, in fact it represents a product, an oil in particular, that can contribute to the human health assuring the absorption of the calcium in bones (clinically tested). This oil, which is unique in its genre, and has an international patent, permits to explore at a commercial level, the canal of the pharmaceutical distribution arriving directly to the pharmacists counters who receive the prescriptions from the doctors specialised in rheumatology, geriatrics and paediatrics.

#### **Your project for the future**

Working towards the quality way, still remain our priority and I confirm it will also be the same for the future. Today making the quality means creating in an honest way without sophistications, without chemical processes or addition of colouring, taking care of every step of the transformation process, from the harvesting to the final product, passing through the olive press. If there was the lack of only one step of the process, there would be very difficult to make a quality product and so giving the warranties. The creation of the oil identification card represents another target and also a second project that will finish by the end of two years giving more

characterization to the land where it is produced and cultivated. Finally the development of new products, as it was for the Petrini Plus®, represents a third target that will culminate with the extension of the Petrini's products range.

Loretta Di Simone, is the thirty years old owner of the farm La Turchina, located near Viterbo in the Lazio region whose origins go back to 1800. The enterprise is farm in the production of vegetables and cereals, based on the recovery of antique cereals from this territory such as emmer and the "Senator Cappelli" with which the farm flours are made.

### **Loretta di Simone, La Turchina, Lazio Region (Italy)**



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*In 2008 Loretta received the award "the most innovative young farmer" from the European commissary of the agriculture and rural development Marianne Fisher Boel for her effort in recovering the tradition and changing it in innovation.*

#### **Loretta, how long have you been involved in agriculture?**

Well, let say that I started since I was an infant, since I was born from two farmers families both from my father and my mother side. I collaborate in the enterprise from 10 years, from three I am completely absorbed in it with my sister Maria Lorenza, having created with her the new enterprise branch dedicated to the handling products, and from 18 months we became owner of our companies, "La Turchina" and "La Viola" since we succeeded to our parents.

#### **A positive women balance in the agro food enterprise experience?**

The agriculture is a very complicate sector, not easy at all, specially for a woman who finds her self completely plunged in a world that is historically a men's world, that also has difficulty in giving credibility to women's capabilities. The point is this: a woman who is also an entrepreneur stupefies everybody, even men, because she can perfectly do her work with a preparation, a strength and a passion that are endless. This is because, according to me, the agriculture and in particular the agro food sector, represent one of the few sectors in which women can express their best, having a sort of freedom that gives the possibility of having a family and a work in a quite peaceful way. The organic agriculture is the most natural choice for a woman: to be a woman means to be a mother as also for the land, that is the mother of all of us; for that reason the respect of the environment, of the nature of its seasonal courses and the respect of the land means the respect of all our sons and their well-being. It is also natural that a women decides to create the "food": so from farmers, my sister and I, we have become entrepreneurs in the agro food sector, trying to control our products from the land to the table, supervising all the steps of the production process. Together with my sister Maria Lorenza we started a difficult process that every day gives us great satisfactions, even towards our men colleagues.

Of course we are supported by our family, especially by our mother, who had been a pioneer in the women's entrepreneurial agricultural activity, and gave us, with my father's support, the love for the land, the honesty and the sense of duty that characterise our work. The agriculture is our world and I am proud to be part of it, and I was also proud to received the award as "More Innovative Young European Farmer", because it has meant a lot for me: first it gave me the confirmation that I am doing the right thing, than it has opened the way for women to have an important role in the agricultural sector, because it was the first time that an important award had been given to a woman, so I am very happy of having contributed with my presence, in giving prestige to our category that in last few years remained a bit unknown.

#### **What did the word innovation mean and what does it means now for La Turchina enterprise?**

The word innovation means a lot, it is the heart of all entrepreneurial activities: without the innovation we can not improve and we risk to stay out of the market. It is for this reason that we have to find always something new, that particular thing that allows you to face the market changes remaining competitive. That means to

study a lot, being updated and curious, following the technological changes and investing continuously, all with big sacrifices. In our enterprise we have been always alert towards the future: one of my uncles, at the beginning of 1900 decided to buy 130 merinos rams from Argentina trying to cross them with our sheeps in order to obtain taller animals that could be better adapted in our environment. In that period he risked, because it took three months to the foreign animals to arrive, 27 of them died during journey, but at the end he was right, because the stock farm improved, there were less deaths and the economical value grew up. 15 or 10 years ago the organic agriculture represented an innovation: and we choose to do it because we believed it was the winning choice, and so it has been. Today my sister and I, we bet on tradition, the ancient seeds of emmer and durum wheat "Senator Cappelli", trying to convert it in innovation using technological machineries for their cultivation, transforming them in specialities and selling these products on the net, creating a new enterprise branch and a place in the market. I would end saying that my name, Loretta, means " the one who moves forward the future" so how can I deny my nature not believing in innovation?

### **Your projects for the future?**

We are making our future: La Turchina has recently opened the enterprise store, that will be also the main point for the didactic that we will activate next year and we are increasing our stock farm with "amiatini" asses. My sister at La Viola company, realised a laboratory for the extra virgin olive oil packaging and a laboratory for the packaging of the company cereals and legumes, promoting in the market a new flour which is a mix of Spelta emmer and Dicocco emmer, that we are sure it will be appreciated by all women who love cooking. We planned to buy new machineries to improve the cultivation process of our cereals.

We are investing in our future with an enthusiasm which is typical of young people, trying to find new products and new process that allow us to remain in the agriculture world; in this particular economical situation, despite our little success, our activity is economically supportable because there are the Pac awards, that became essential in this moment where the agricultural products prices are so flexible, but this is another story..

We remain optimistic and we continue to go ahead with our women's companies.... Naturally organic!

Ms Aziza Majdoubi Ellouze , owner of the company Azza Biolives & Legumes that produces extra virgin olive oil located in Ghezala (Bizerte) Tunisia, celebrates 15 years of activity.

### **Aziza Majdoubi Ellouze, Azza Biolives & Legumes Ghezala (Bizerte) - Tunisia**

*Aziza Majdoubi Ellouze , owner of the company Azza Biolives & Legumes that produces extra virgin olive oil located in Ghezala (Bizerte) Tunisia, celebrates 15 years of activity*

### **Aziza Majdoubi Ellouze how long have you been involved in agriculture?**

I have started in this sector 15 years ago, because I came from a farmers family in the north of Tunisia and I have been always interested in agricultural life . After having passed my youth in Tunis with my parents who decided to go there trying to improve their social condition, I decided in accordance with my husband to go back to Ghezala (in the north of Tunisia) to create a company that could handle olives and produce vegetables sauces.

### **A woman balance in the agro food experience, what does it mean to be women in the agricultural world?**

The agriculture and the agro food sectors are very complicated here in Tunisia, few women have and manage their own company, they often work for companies as workers.

As a woman I found many difficulties, because this sector in Tunisia isn't well organised and there are many complications, for example the commercialisation of the agricultural products where this difficulty is bigger and more frequent when you have to make contacts with costumers. Despite this situation, with my determination I could impose my self and I gained the trust of my customers and my suppliers. I think women should have, in their countries, a more important role in this sector, because they can contribute to its development in a very strong way.

### **What did the word innovation mean and what does it means now for your company?**

The innovation is a very important concept for our company, in fact we have tried since the beginning of our activity, to be updated for what concerns technology and quality; we invested in infrastructures, in production machineries and in human resources trying to obtain a quality product.

We always updated our information about news in this sector and we try to adopt new techniques to improve our product. We gave a strong importance to our national norms concerning the hygiene, the quality and the environment. The choice of giving more values to our products, has been innovative too; for that reason we decided to certify our company following the organic agriculture standard, because we believe that, at present, the organic sector is the most promising sector and it constantly expands.

**Your projects for the future**

We are trying to extend our productivity and to double our production and we planned to certify our company following the ISO norms.

We think about improving the product packaging and increasing our exportations.

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