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MAY 2024

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Dutch tulips

MYPLANT & GARDEN

AUTHOR: RACHEL WAKEFIELD

Organisers of the 8th edition of Myplant&Garden – held between 21-23 February 2024 – tell us it was a success. It was jam-packed with a growing number of exhibitors taking over the 50,000 square metre space of the Fiera Milano-Rho exhibition grounds in Italy. People from all over the world travelled to Milan to check out the new innovations, not only in the pavilions but also in the many stands, and there was strong participation in the meetings. Let's hear from the organisers and exhibitors about their thoughts.

Valeria Randazzo MyPlant Exhibition Manager

“We are really pleased with this eighth edition, which demonstrates the growth of the event. More exhibitors (over 760), 50,000 square metres occupied, and more visitors. The exhibitors are happy, and so are we. Every year we present a Myplant different from the previous one. This year, the theme was 'Natural Evolution', naturally relating to the exhibitors, but it can also relate to MyPlant. Our trade exhibition is a natural evolution in this sense. We were born small, we consolidated, we grew, and now Myplant stands as the leading Italian fair, offering a comprehensive representation of the industry. From landscaping to machinery, garden maintenance, to floriculture, decoration to cut flowers, and the beauty of the flower, Myplant encompasses all that operators in the sector need. This comprehensive approach has led to rapid growth in both exhibitors and visitors, making Myplant a one-stop destination for the industry. Our team's passion and enthusiasm have been the driving force behind the success of Myplant. We created this fair with all our strength and passion, and we believe that this genuine enthusiasm is our most powerful strategy, surpassing any marketing operation. We hope to inspire you with our dedication and love for what we do. MyPlant & Garden takes place next year from 19 to the 20 February. We're already filling our spaces with exhibitors. The next step for us next year is to increase the exhibition space, consequently increasing the number of visitors and international visitors. Our aim is to occupy more and more of the Fiera Milano venue, and we will continue with the quality of exhibitors.”



Marco Orlandelli MyPlant Founder and owner of Organizzazione Orlandelli

“Behind the scenes of this trade show, is a dedicated team and a vibrant industry fuelling its success. MyPlant & Garden's exponential growth is a direct result of the horticultural industry's unwavering support and participation. This trade show is a living testament to the entrepreneurial spirit and passion that propel this industry forward. I'm one of the founders of this trade show. My company is a garden and landscaping company. We design and manufacture garden centre shop fittings, trolleys, and display solutions for flowers and plants. The other founder, who also plays a crucial role, comes from a background in horticulture and owns a nursery that produces pot plants and herbs. We believe this diversity of experience and expertise has contributed to the trade show's success. One of the factors contributing to the success of the horticultural industry, and by extension, our trade show, is the 'green trend'. More and more people are interested in having plants, growing vegetables, and cultivating gardens. At our booth in MyPlant we have joined forces with Orto Mio to focus on the 'AgriGarden' concept, a vision we believe is the future of garden centres. Our booth, spans 800 square meters, to showcase this innovative idea.”

Cristiano Genovali

AFFI-Associazione Floricoltori e Fioristi Italiani

"AFFI is a trade association that was founded in 2020, right after the pandemic outbreak. Our members include cut flower growers, florists, and floral designers. Some major Italian cooperatives of cut flower growers (Del Golfo, Tre Ponti, Florexpert, and Flora Pompei) are among our 1,600 grower and florist members.

AFFI is linked to the trade union Coldiretti, and we have an office in its headquarters in Rome's Palazzo Rospigliosi.

AFFI is known for its comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of commercial cut flower growing and retailing in Italy. This includes sector promotion and lobbying for policies and legislation that support the industry. By advocating for the needs of our members, AFFI plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the Italian floral industry.

Unfortunately, the Italian floral market is currently facing several challenges. There is a decrease in product availability and a low demand for products. The unseasonably warm weather in December and January further impacted product availability, destabilising the sector.

AFFI's membership is expanding notably among florists. We aim to put Italian flowers on the map using our 'Made in Italy' tagline. It works to create a better understanding between the industry, government, and the public, recognising that floristry is an exciting career but requires much professionalism. This is an important reality but easily overlooked in Italy. So, we work at the ministerial level to earn more recognition for our vibrant industry. Because within the EU, Italy is one of the few countries where the incredible work of florists has not earned the recognition seen elsewhere.

The Italian floral industry is grappling with significant challenges. Climate change is disrupting the seasons, affecting the supply and demand for seasonal flowers. Additionally, ongoing EU legislation, such as the ban on certain crop protection products, is adding complexity to the job of flower growers. These factors, along with sluggish demand, are placing

a heavy burden on the industry, necessitating adaptation and support. Today's Italian consumer is more informed and discerning, often seeking out unique blooms.

However, floral purchases are often made in haste, with a wide variety of flowers sourced globally. AFFI is advocating for the use of in-season flowers from both ethical and climatic perspectives. By promoting sustainable practices and local sourcing, AFFI aims to attract environmentally conscious consumers and contribute to the industry's long-term viability. As the Italian consumer becomes more informed and attentive, it is our responsibility to meet their evolving demands. They are increasingly seeking unusual blooms but also show a preference for seasonal flowers grown within Europe. We believe that even future generations, such as millennials, will continue to prioritise ethically grown flowers and plants, underscoring the importance of our industry's sustainability. The future will not be easy. This industry requires considerable investments, whether in marketing or agtech. So, it is vital to join forces domestically and at the European level. Then, I can still see a blossoming future ahead. However, the reality is that in the past two decades, the number of companies has dramatically gone down. The Liguria region, for example, 20 years ago, hosted 15,000 companies, of which today only 9,000 continue. It's an ongoing struggle to maintain critical mass in production, and many companies have ceased operations altogether, impacting the livelihood of many families. So there is a need to revitalise the sector by benefitting from economies of scale so that we can better respond to the needs of the market, which today is no longer Italian but truly European, in particular when it comes to the wedding market."



Michel De Rijke

Sales Director at Hamiplant

"It's always great to be in Italy. You can feel the positive atmosphere and energy at MyPlant & Garden. Everyone is eager to work at the start of the season, and there are many clients here. Additionally, there are numerous beautiful plants to see, making it a fantastic environment.

Hamiplant was founded in 1986. We started in Westland, Holland, and later expanded to France and Italy. Today, we're the largest exporter of houseplants and garden plants across Europe. Our products are available at wholesale garden centres, supermarkets, and DIY stores from sunny Spain to frosty Finland.

We export two million plants each week, all year round. We work with province and market specialists, which means we have a large team of experts who focus on delivering plants to Italy, and they understand the country's needs. We also export many plants from southern Italy and deliver them to our customers in the UK, Scandinavia, and Germany."



Luca Lanzalaco

Manager at L'Ortofrutticola di Albenga

"L'Ortofrutticola, situated in the Albenga plane, stands as the largest fruit and vegetable area in Liguria. Our roots trace back to 1941, when a collective of producers of potted fresh herbs, patio plants and houseplants, also fruits and vegetables, came together to establish our cooperative.

L'Ortofrutticola is a cooperative that sells the products grown by its members, which are now more than 600. We have three sectors of commercial activity: that of potted herbs and patio plants; finally, we have the sale of agricultural products, therefore soil, pots and all the production accessories necessary for members to grow the plants which are then resold by the cooperative.

Albenga is located in Liguria and is characterised by its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea but is also protected by a mountain range which allows for a mild climate in the summer and winter periods. It's a great microclimate but our great critical issue is that of water shortages. To address this, we are implementing [specific eco-sustainable practices] to optimise the use of water at a production level and ensure that the cultivation of plants is increasingly eco-sustainable with our water usage.

At L'Ortofrutticola, we take pride in our commitment to eco-sustainability. Almost all the plants grown in Albenga are Global GAP certified, ensuring an extremely limited use of pesticides and chemical products during cultivation. This not only makes our products more eco-sustainable and



eco-compatible but also friendlier to the environment.

At L'Ortofrutticola, we understand our customers' needs and strive to meet them. We recognise that our customers seek healthy and resilient plants, but also plants that embody the unique climate and territory of Albenga. We are dedicated to delivering on these expectations.

The greatest criticality at a commercial level is the transport of plants. This is especially challenging for a region as decentralised as Liguria and in particular to reach those countries that are the most important for us, such as North Europe, England, France and Eastern Europe.

MyPlant is not just an event for us, it's a cornerstone of our growth and future plans. It's a platform where we meet our valued customers, understand market trends, and exchange ideas with other industry leaders. This event plays a crucial role in shaping our strategies to face the challenges of the coming years."



Claudio Vazzola

Product Manager at GRUPPO PADANA

"Gruppo Padana, is a proud Italian family company, it has been a significant presence since 1915. Our journey began with the establishment of our first greenhouse, and over the years, we have steadily grown in the market. Today, we stand tall in the second generation, with the grandsons of our founders just beginning to join the business, carrying forward our legacy of excellence. Padana is not just a leading young plant producer in Italy and Europe, but also a beacon of innovation.

We specialise in producing seed-raised or vegetatively propagated young plants, and our unique breeding project within the company allows us to constantly offer exciting novelties, keeping our clients and partners at the forefront of the industry.

Giorgio and Paolo Gazzola founded Gruppo Padana in 1988 when they took over their father Albino's 8,500m² nursery. Since then, the business has grown by

leaps and bounds, operating from different sites in Paese and Gaiarine near Treviso. Their combined greenhouse space spans 350,000m², and they produce a wide range of plug plants – raised by seed or cuttings – for professional bedding plant growers in Italy and abroad. Exports make up 50 per cent of their business.

Our clients demand two key things from us: high quality and innovation. Our vision is to not only be a major player in the young plant business, but also to lead the way in the broader world of breeding. We strive to meet and exceed our clients' expectations by consistently delivering high-quality, innovative products.

At MyPlant, we were thrilled to see our booth bustling with enthusiastic visitors all day. We were proud to showcase our latest novelties, such as 'Top-Tunia', and pot Carnation and many new ideas – as you can see at our booth. We believe in fostering strong connections between clients and suppliers, and we are excited to continue offering innovative solutions to meet our clients' needs."