

# Fiere di Parma

Our interview with the president Domenico Barili  
 Nostra intervista al presidente Domenico Barili

**I**n Parma and Sao Paolo, preparations are in full swing for Cibus Brazil, the fair of the made-in-Italy agri-food and agri-business to be held from 20 to 24 November in the economic capital of this vast South-American country.

This event represents the first example, on an intercontinental scale, of the "export" model of the new Italian fair marketing, with Fiere di Parma (already ranking fourth together with Rimini in terms of importance and turnover in Italy, following Verona Fiere, Bologna Fiere and Fiera Milano) playing the lead role in this new way of understanding the mission of exhibitions.

In view of the forthcoming event which will directly affect not only Brazil, but also a dozen other Southern American countries, at just a few hours' distance by plane, with a market of over 320 million potential users, we wanted to point out together with Domenico Barili, Fiere di Parma's president since 1998, the philosophy, objectives and strategies of the fairgrounds of the Ducal city.

**Mr. Barili, what was the target you planned to achieve when you were appointed President of Fiere di Parma?**

"My first commitment was not only that of intensifying the fair events in Parma, by increasing the number of scheduled exhibitions, but especially that of making the whole exhibition system take a qualitative leap in cultural terms. On occasion of the most important events, in fact, we have undertaken to supplement the traditional exhibition of goods and services with collateral shows on specific subjects and the organization of conferences and round tables to discuss and exchange ideas. From this point of view, a very special role as a liaison between "product" and "culture", in the widest sense of the term, has been played, since its inauguration with increasing success, by the new multi-purpose PalaCassa arena. In fact, thanks to its unique architectural layout as a theatre-pavilion, the expos can make full use of the scenic and set-technical aspects, owing to its

having a pit with a seating capacity of 3,500 and state-of-the-art audio-video technological systems. This enables us to alternate events of high level entrepreneurial communication through workshops and conventions by multinational groups and important public bodies, with events of great artistic value."

"To underline the extent to which Fiere di Parma makes culture" Domenico Barili says, "it is sufficient to mention the sensitivity, creativity and spirit of innovation that have always been used in organising the collateral exhibitions of Mercateinfiera's spring and autumn editions, which attract thousands of aficionados from all over Italy and the world every time. Not to mention the key appointment represented by Gotha, the expo that, since 1994, has been gathering a highly prestigious collection of the best of the best of European antiques: an aesthetic and artistic heritage of inestimable value. In this respect, I would like to anticipate that for this year's edition, which will be held from 30 November to 8 December, our master Pier Luigi Pizzi has decided to give an extra touch of charm and functionality to the by now traditional, refined and impressive scenery of Farnese inspiration".

**How was the Cibus Brazil project born?**

"The driving idea that led to the development of the great Cibus Brazil project", President Barili explains "is simple. Cibus is Italy's most important food fair and amongst the leaders in Europe; it is the most representative showcase of Italian food in the world. The Fair

system is an important tool to make our products known abroad, upon condition that by abroad we do not only mean France and Germany or areas slightly above or below. These products need to be taken to other countries, like South America, which is the continent with the largest population of Italian origin, where food habits are very similar to ours and where Italian food products enjoy a very high level of appreciation. It is wrong to believe that they cannot pursue the path of export or internationalisation. We must be aware of the fact that not only finished products can be exported, but also enterprises, and we must take into account that the global market offers an opportunity including to small-sized enterprises having ideas and knowledge, because there is enough space for them to grow and become successful in developing countries".

**In the light of the economic results of recent years, how does Fiere di Parma rank in the Italian and international fair scenario?**

"The increases shown in last year's balance sheet (plus 26.3% turnover and plus 13.5% operating profit) are remarkable and become even more so if one considers that they have been achieved in a context of widespread recession worldwide, with a drastic reduction of operators' mobility caused by September 11, which strongly affected the last quarter of 2001.



Furthermore, Fiere di Parma, though operating in a highly competitive context at the national and international levels, succeeded in maintaining its leadership in the sector of antique fairs, whereas in the agri-food sector, it ranks amongst the world's most significant fairs, preceded by Anuga in Cologne and Sial in Paris, which begin to look at Cibus as a growing competitor."

**What are your expectations for the future?**

"Despite the non-flourishing trend of the national and international economies, based on the events scheduled for this year, we forecast to reach a turnover of about 24 million Euro by December, with a 11.51% increase. One element is certain, i.e. that fairs increasingly establish themselves as the most important marketing tool to increase sales and business opportunities. Above all, the future lies in fairs which are specialised and destined solely to sector operators. With Cibus Brazil we have achieved a first concrete example of the made-in-Italy fair product with a vocation for being exported and entering the process of market globalisation."