

PRESS RELEASE

A new market in Tirana:

The cross-border initiative led by the Metropolitan City of Bari is officially launched.

*The Metropolitan City of Bari has presented the project “**Local Food Policies in Albania**”, funded by the Italian Cooperation. The initiative focuses on short food supply chains, small-scale producers and the fight against food waste.*

A **Farmers’ Market** to bring producers and consumers closer together, new opportunities for small local farmers, and a Food Waste Hub capable of turning food surpluses into resources for the community.

These are the main expected results of the project “**Local Food Policies in Albania: Sustainable Short Supply Chains and Farmers’ Markets**”, presented today in the Sala Giunta della of the **Metropolitan City of Bari**.

The 36-month initiative has a total budget of approximately €1.63 million. More specifically, it will involve 100 producers, support the creation or strengthening of 5 cooperatives, establish 1 Farmers’ Market and 1 logistics hub, train 10 public officials, and provide assistance to at least 1,000 vulnerable citizens.

The initiative is led by the Metropolitan City of Bari, alongside CIHEAM Bari, the World Farmers Markets Coalition, Fondazione Banco Alimentare, the Municipality of Tirana, the Tirana Market Administration Agency and Food Bank Albania. Together, they form a partnership bringing institutions, research, agriculture and social organisations around the same table.

Speakers included **Antonio Stragapede**, Metropolitan Councillor responsible for Productive Activities, the Promotion of Local Products, Agricultural Identity and Food Transition; **Raffaele Nicola Vitto**, Head of the Economic, Social and Cultural Development Promotion and Coordination Department, Sole Project Manager (RUP) and Project Manager; **Damiano Petruzzella**, Scientific Director of CIHEAM Bari; and **Genci Kojdheli**, General Director of the Municipality of Tirana.

«Food is history, identity, work, care for the land, and the ability to build fairer communities. Through this project, the Metropolitan City of Bari is strengthening its role in the Mediterranean by sharing with Tirana the expertise and experience developed in our territory and by building concrete cooperation among institutions, producers, the research community and social organisations.

Local food policies are one of the key challenges of our time: supporting small farmers, shortening the distance between producers and consumers, ensuring fairer access to healthy food and reducing food waste. These issues directly affect people's quality of life and the future of our cities. Bari and Tirana are two Mediterranean cities connected by a long history of relations and exchanges. Today, this closeness is being transformed into a concrete project capable of generating economic, environmental and social opportunities through sustainable policies.

I would like to thank all the partners involved, starting with CIHEAM Bari and the Italian Cooperation, for choosing to invest in a development model founded on sustainability and cooperation between territories.

Building fairer food systems also depends on this: the ability of cities to work together and care for their communities.» said the Mayor of the Metropolitan City of Bari, **Vito Leccese**.

*«An ambitious opportunity for the Metropolitan City of Bari, which is leading the partnership and sharing the expertise, networks and tools developed through its work on local food policies and the enhancement of territorial supply chains. – added **Antonio Stragapede**, Metropolitan Councillor - Our role goes beyond coordination: we are building a public governance framework capable of connecting producers, institutions and civil society. Through the Farmers' Market and the food surplus recovery system, we aim to turn cooperation into tangible, lasting results, while strengthening the role of the Metropolitan City of Bari as an operational bridge between Bari and Albania.»*

According to **Damiano Petruzzella**, Scientific Director of CIHEAM Bari, *«Local food policies are a concrete tool for building food systems that are more sustainable, resilient and rooted in their territories. The experience gained by CIHEAM Bari in Tirana and in numerous cities across the Mediterranean and Africa, thanks to the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the collaboration with the World Farmers Markets Coalition, shows that investing in farmers' markets and prioritising short food supply chains means strengthening the future of local communities.*

In recent years, through national and European projects, CIHEAM Bari has also contributed to the development of the Local Food Policies of the Metropolitan City of Bari and the cities of Taranto, Tirana, Rome Capital and the Metropolitan City of Rome. Today, we want to make this wealth of knowledge and experience available to support broader cooperation among Mediterranean cities.».

Speaking on behalf of Tirana, General Director of the Municipality of Tirana, **Genci Kojdheli**, said:

«For the Municipality of Tirana, this project represents far more than a single initiative: it is a concrete commitment to building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable food system. Supporting local producers, strengthening short food supply chains and promoting healthy, accessible food means investing in stronger communities and a better future for our citizens. Together with our partners, we are turning a shared vision into actions designed to deliver lasting results.»

A project that starts with food, builds connections, creates opportunities and strengthens the shared future of Bari and Tirana.

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