The OpenAgri Project
Journal N°1

Project led by the City of Milan

JOBS & SKILLS
IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY
The OpenAgri project

In line with the challenge addressed in the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact to make urban food systems more inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, the OpenAgri project seeks to improve the urban entrepreneurship context by fostering the creation of innovative firms and social enterprises focusing on the agri-food sector.

An "Open Innovation Hub on Peri-Urban Agriculture" will be created, integrating several food policy experiments in a single strategy, and operating as a living lab to foster innovation in the entrepreneurial, social, sustainable and technological dimensions of the agri-food sector. At an entrepreneurial level, the Hub will promote development projects involving SMEs and ‘startoppers’, and will experiment with innovative tools for increasing and transferring capacities. At the social level, community-led initiatives for inclusion, urban regeneration, social, and territorial cohesion projects will be implemented, aiming to change the “Porto di Mare Area” from what is currently a problematic suburb into a great experience of collaboration and sharing of new knowledge and opportunities, targeted, in particular, at young people, disadvantaged groups and migrants. At the sustainable and technological levels, the project will develop disruptive and innovative solutions for peri-urban agriculture based on new approaches and tools for food production.

As a result, besides its potential to increase food availability, while assuring food safety and improved eating habits, the project aims to develop the zone’s peri-urban agrifood sector in a way that will attract investments for further innovative processes. Last, but not least, the OpenAgri project will regenerate this peri-urban zone of the city by making it an example of social inclusion and innovation.

Partnership:

- Comune di Milano
- Camera di Commercio, Industria, Agricoltura e Artigianato - Chamber of commerce
- Fondazione Politecnico di Milano - Research Centre
- Fondazione Parco Tecnologico Padano - Incubator dedicated to technological companies and startups
- Università degli studi di Milano - University
- Politecnico di Milano - University
- Avanzi - Think Thank
- Cineca - Research Centre
- FUTURE FOOD INSTITUTE Trust (FFI) - Research Centre
- ImpattoZero Srl - Private Company
- La Strada Società Cooperativa Sociale - NGO
- Sunugal - NGO
- Poliedra - Centro di servizio e consulenza del Politecnico di Milano - Research Centre
- IFOA – Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali - Training Centre
- Mare s.r.l. impresa sociale - NGOFOOD PARTNERS SRL - Private Company
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1 Executive Summary (Editorial Note)

In our busy modern life, where routine is king and we barely have time to notice things around us, it is rare to have the chance to sit down for a while and contemplate changes underway. But during my recent visit to Milan on 22-23 September 2017, I had the unique opportunity to devote my working days to seeing and listening, and to interpretation, restitution and sharing of ideas about the aims, work in progress and next steps of OpenAgri, in light of the fact that this UIA project is rapidly changing the ‘Porto di Mare’ district. The programme encompassed several initiatives, including meetings with many local institutional actors, social and civil stakeholders, and project partners, who in some way have directly or indirectly contributed to consolidation of OpenAgri actions over recent months. The journey started on the morning of 22 September with an open discussion about the project’s restoration of the Cascina Nosedo area, construction of a greenhouse, the pilot project of an aquaponics system and rediscovery of the agricultural vocation of the 30-hectare area of agricultural land, available for innovative rural entrepreneurs. I met with representatives from the Departments of Agriculture and Urban Planning of the Municipality of Milan, the Politecnico di Milano – Dastu and ABC departments, and ImpattoZero srl, Poliedra, Sunugal, Cooperativa La strada and Mare srl.

During the afternoon, we focused on the Cascina Nosedo agricultural hub in the peri-urban south-east of Milan. The rediscovery of the relationship between agricultural land and the Cascina Nosedo zone underpins new business ideas that can foster greater proximity within the urban context and, at the same time, enhance this area’s agricultural vocation. The Hub’s future management model is based on strategies that will help the process and facilitate the creation of innovative entrepreneurial marketable ideas. In this journey of experience I was joined by representatives from the Municipality of Milan – Urban Economy and Employment; Milan Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture; Fondazione Politecnico, IFOA – Training Institute for Enterprises Operators, Cineca, Food Partners, Future Food Institute Trust, PTP Science and Technology Park, University of Milan – Agriculture.

On the second day, we visited the project area, where I had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Social Lab, a social innovation organisation, which promotes integration between cities and countryside, involving the community on environmental themes and sustainable consumption through social inclusion. The day’s programme also included the workshop “My neighbourhood from a reindeer perspective” which provided me with a better understanding of the philosophy and history of the area.

All in all, this was an impressive experience, which culminates with this first edition of the OpenAgri journal. I’m extremely glad to have this opportunity to share with readers what I have seen and learned and also offer an overview of the project’s concept, burning issues and progress and key learning points to date. Enjoy this first journey into the OpenAgri world!
2 Local and European Context

2.1 Europe and the agri-food sector

Exploring the Agri-food sector at the EU level we can identify five megatrends that will shape the future. These megatrends have a major impact on each link of the agrifood value chain. They can be used to explore the drivers of change as well as the long-term outlook for the agrifood sector.

For example, **accelerating urbanisation (1)** brings expanding cities and farming in closer proximity, shifting the sector’s focus, in terms of stakeholder management, from ministers to mayors. Cities also face logistical issues concerning how to bring food in – and waste out. **Technological advancements (2)** increase yields and reduce energy and water use, while food processing has extended shelf lives, reduced waste and expanded the variety of products. Logistics enable year-round availability of fresh products. On social media networks, consumers share recipes – as well as concerns about food safety. **Resource scarcity (3)** contests the way we produce, source and consume. Whether in terms of phosphates for fertilisers, energy for greenhouses, or cocoa for food manufacturers, abundance can no longer be taken for granted. We also need to rethink the way that we ship, store, sell and dispose of food. **Demographic changes (4)** lead to an older workforce and fewer students opting for a career in farming and food engineering. At the same time, consumers are spending less, and differently – for example on healthier foods, or smaller packages for singles. The **shift in economic power (5)** is increasing living standards in high-growth markets, providing opportunities for agrifood companies to further expand their non-European footprint.

These megatrends have an impact on companies throughout the agrifood value chain: from seeds, fertilisers, animal feed and milk robots to farmers, trading houses, retailers – and ultimately consumers. Each company experiences a different impact, depending on its exposure to each of the megatrends. To help companies formulate a response to their changing environment, initiatives such as **OpenAgri can make a difference**, by helping to create the right environment for all stakeholders, in particular startups in the agri-food sector.

The **business models** of many startups in the agri-food value chain will need to be adapted – if not fundamentally changed. They can opt for investing in a differentiated position in the market through **innovation**. Alternatively, they can strengthen their global presence through **consolidation** and aim for competitive pricing through **margin management**. Each of these directions has profound consequences on the **supply chain** of each startup, which is already increasingly challenged to meet a mounting set of requirements in terms of **regulations, risk management, sustainability and social responsibility**. Last, but not least, startups need to strengthen their **financial capital and human capital** in order to be successful in the rapidly changing agri-food sector.

**OpenAgri** has already taken a first step in this direction by launching an open call for pilot projects and ideas, as described in section 5.2 of this journal.
2.2 Milan and the agri-food sector

Milan is a polyhedral and creative city, a centre constituted by different streams of quality and excellence: it is home to innovative services, the manufacturing sector as well as agri-food production, in a favourable context of a high quality of life - the ‘Italian life style’.

Milan makes a significant contribution to the agricultural sector at the national level. Although this sector only represents 2% of Italy’s GDP, its importance derives from the fact that it directly involves around 21.7% of the Italian workforce. In this context, the Milanese food sector is responsible for 3.8% of Italy’s total exports and 1.2% of all enterprises operating in the agriculture-forestry-fishing sector. Indeed, the southern peri-urban area of Milan is the largest agricultural park in Italy and is located in the heart of the Lombardy Region which means that it has tremendous growth potential. The percentage of agricultural land in the metropolitan area is still quite high, as can be seen in the graph below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population (inhabitants)</th>
<th>Area (sq. km)</th>
<th>Agricultural land (sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>1,316,000</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>27 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Milan (Metropolitan area)</td>
<td>3,889,000</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>652 (41%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Municipality of Milan 2016.*

Notwithstanding this fact, the capacity of the Milan rural metropolis to act as a “magnetic pull” in favour of agriculture, is not fully achieved. However, there is an evident trend towards the growing power of the agri-food economy in Lombardy, that seems to involve more and more young entrepreneurs.

The city has a distinctive food culture and consumers’ orientation, with high sensibility towards quality level and purchase selection, and a profitable economic environment able to boost the sector. But the city lacks a more creative and courageous distribution system and an adequate logistic plan, and as a result the city is still largely affected by an inadequate infrastructural strategy and fragmentation/disorganisation among the actors involved.

Although this shortfall is a constraint, it nonetheless leaves space for many opportunities to develop smart and impactful urbanistic initiatives, involving the Public Administration, experts from the sector and civil society. Adopting a harmonious approach between urbanistic solutions and components of the agro value chain may well be the best outcome of the legacy of Expo 2015, which highlighted the role of Milan and Italy as far as food is concerned.

*Milan’s residents are certainly all for this!*

*By adopting (in Milan) a harmonious approach between urbanistic solutions and the agro value chain components, could very well be the best outcome of the Expo 2015 legacy.*
2.3 OpenAgri: sowing on fertile ground

Over recent years, the City of Milan has shown a growing interest in the field of agriculture and has started to develop general guidelines aimed at supporting and starting diverse initiatives in this area. The fertile ground on which OpenAgri has been sowed, is supported by several previous local and European initiatives, such as:

2011: Creation of the DAM Consortium (Agricultural District of Milan)

Since 2012: Introduction of guidelines and open calls for farmers’ markets, ethical purchasing groups (community supported agriculture), shared gardens and vegetable gardens;

Introduction of the Plan for the conservation of abandoned, rural, dismissed farmsteads (16 farmsteads)

2013: «Milan as a rural metropolis»: Agreement signed among the former Province of Milan, Lombardy Region and the DAM Consortium for a common strategy on urban-rural development www.agricity.it

Since 2013: Alimenta2Talent programme supports innovative start-ups in the agri-food sector and life sciences sector

2014: After the "Milan Urban Food Policy Pact" promoted by the Mayor in 2014 and signed by more than 100 cities from all over the world, Milan adopted its own urban Food Policy (MFP), which aims to achieve a more sustainable and equitable local food system.

2015: Publication of the Food Policy Guidelines 2015-2020 (Milan City Council) and of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (agreed by 90 cities worldwide)

May 2017: first edition of the Food City week

Food is now increasingly considered to be an emerging multi-dimensional policy challenge. In fact, it is linked to ecological concerns, social and public health problems, economic perspectives, spatial patterns as well as City planning. The key initiatives that are placing Milan at the heart of this challenge are the Milan Food Policy, that aims to develop sustainable food systems to deliver healthy and accessible food to all, protect biodiversity and combat food waste, and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact through which 132 cities from all over the world (a number that continues to grow!) are committed to making urban food systems more inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse. That’s impressive!
2.4 How OpenAgri is expanding Jobs and Skills

Almost one in five young Italians are not employed, job-seeking, or in full-time study, according to Eurostat statistics for September 2017. This Italian figure of 19.9 percent is almost twice the EU average of 11.5 percent, but represents a slight drop from the previous year’s figure of 21.4 percent. Nonetheless, Italy is still the country with the highest percentage of 15-24-year-olds classified as 'NEET' (Not engaged in education, employment or training) by the annual Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) review. Youth unemployment in Italy (in the under-35 age bracket) is extremely high - 37.8 percent.

Despite this gloomy picture, Milan has reasons to remain optimistic, given that the local context is definitely brighter, compared to national statistics. The youth unemployment rate is 28.6%, almost 10 percentage points below the national average, and the percentage of NEETs in the metropolitan area is 2 percentage points below the national figure, at 17.6%. There may be a rosier future for all these NEETs, given that the Italian Chamber of Commerce (October 2016) has stated that Milan’s startup landscape is by far the most flourishing in Italy, with around 935 innovative startups (14.69% of the national total). This compares very positively with the figures of 6763 startups in Italy as a whole, and 1382 innovative startups (21.72% of the national total) in the Lombardy region.

OpenAgri aims to contribute to this improved scenario, by experimenting with new forms of entrepreneurship in the agro sector (community supported agriculture, sharing economy, new markets for quality food producers) building on the “Policy Guidelines for Employment, Economic Development, Universities and Research in Milan” from 2012, which set out a system of measures on several fronts, based on support for microenterprises and self-employment, attracting and training human capital and support for innovation. OpenAgri will intervene intelligently within Milan’s overall approach, aimed at reducing land consumption through valorisation of peri-urban agriculture, in compliance with regional standards and in accordance with EU and national guidelines.

In short, this means that OpenAgri is a major opportunity for Milan. The proximity and the points of tangency with the Sharing Cities project¹ (focused on energy redevelopment and sustainable mobility) means that the OpenAgri project has critical mass and represents a capital of significant social and economic value for the territory. Moreover, the project represents the most fundamental and possible declination of the theme of the new urban economies. A topic that has long been of great interest to the community of Milan!

²⁸,⁶%: Youth Unemployment Rate (ages 14-24) in Milan

3 The OpenAgri Concept

3.1 The Aims

The project’s aims were shared during meetings and in the site visit, in a clear, logical and enthusiastic way by all stakeholders. The main aim can be expressed as “the creation of an open innovation centre dedicated to the theme of peri-urban agriculture and the agro-food chain, capable of attracting resources that can offer innovative responses to challenges that are consistent with the issues formulated in the Food Policy promoted by the City of Milan”.

Characterised by a principle of permeability and flexibility, this space will host innovative initiatives linked to the agri-food sector by proposing itself as a collector of ideas and experiences from the city and peripheral areas, particularly in the south of Milan. The Centre will be able to catalyse collaborative processes and open innovation by providing diverse services - ranging from business consulting and development to co-working and prototyping. The benefits for the city are clear:

- Some of the goals set by the Food Policy of the City of Milan will find concrete development opportunities;
- Milan will strengthen its international position in the field of agri-food policies;
- Another farmstead will be renewed and brought back to the city;
- Milan and its surroundings will benefit from a new integrated HUB that will offer services to enterprises, training and research, food culture, social relationships.

3.2 The Approach

As explained by Rossana Torri from the Milan Municipality, OpenAgri, connects 3 dimensions, through an approach which emphasises:

**Sustainability**: peri-urban agriculture can play a key role in achieving sustainable cities;

**Openness**: an open innovation hub dedicated to peri-urban agriculture will be a living lab for promoting open innovation on the different dimensions of the policy challenge;

**Integration**: Food is an emergent multidimensional policy challenge, encompassing several aspects of ecological, social and public health, economics, spatial and city planning strategies.

*Moreover*, the project’s approach is dynamic and flexible, in order to accommodate the partners’ contributions and is designed to be an open innovation approach applied to cities. The partners’ different backgrounds push the project forward to include different perceptions of the change that OpenAgri should bring to the city, in a virtuous circle that starts and ends with people, as pictured below:
The aim is to promote social interaction in the heart of the Open (and Smart) city model, in which infrastructures and services are jointly and dynamically discovered by providers and users alike, and to create open “citizen-developer” communities or firms, building new collaborations and networks so cities can understand innovation, innovators can understand cities, citizens can become effectively engaged and users can become content providers, service producers and deliverers.

As such, the open innovation hub envisaged by the project should become a specific urban setting, or an “innovation playground”, which combines innovation and social and commercial activities, to enable open innovation and showcase the benefits that may be reaped by localities through growing smarter and in a more sustainable manner.

**The following diagram summarises the project’s approach:**

![Diagram](image)

*Source: OpenAgri partnership.*

### 3.3 The site of intervention (Cascina Nosedo)

Few places in Milan are affected by so many active subjects, projects and actions, that converge towards the care of historic sites and the construction of the landscape as the Valle della Vettabbia (Vettabbia valley), where Cascina Nosedo is located.
This area establishes a link between the city centre (its only 8km from Milan’s Duomo) with Chiaravalle Abbey and its ancient lands and buildings, along the line marked by the waters of Nosedo, and it constitutes an ancient and historic landscape heritage. On the other hand, few places such as the regions of Nosedo and Chiaravalle have witnessed so many projects, uncontrolled transformations, and phenomena of abandonment and degradation, in some cases resulting in destructive and injurious conditions for both the soil and citizens’ quality of life.

Over the years, this area has witnessed numerous informal activities, many highly polluting, some of which have been linked to illegal activities, that went hand in hand with the impoverishment of local farms and agricultural area, with deterioration of the quality of the local water. Over time, the entire district has assumed the negative image of a place of social malaise, urban degradation, abandonment and stigma.

Things only began to change in the first half of the 1990s, in the wake of a series of studies and research results that originated environmental rehabilitation projects of the basin of the rivers Lambro, Seveso and Olona (initially funded by the Ministry of the Environment and later by the Lombardy Region). These projects were further extended by a series of European projects (the first was Loto - Landscape Opportunities 2002-5).

The awareness raised by these initiatives, triggered a process of redevelopment and genuine revival of this area, which went well beyond the initial objective of cleaning Milan’s drainage system, and added a new sense of purpose to the landscape of the south-eastern zone of the city.

This process included construction of a Water Refilling (purifier) Station that allowed the ancient river Vettabbia to return to the landscape - the artificial waterway that exists on the southern part of the Seveso basin. It also led to construction of new urban and agricultural areas and activation of networks of local agents, as well as birth of a general feeling of care and affection towards the area.

The UIA Open Agri project found its focus of activity in this process of rebirth and recovery, which has substantially contributed to Cascina Nosedo being once again accessible to the general public.
3.3.1 The landscape and local context

The landscape of OpenAgri is complex, different and fascinating. It consists of farmsteads, agricultural land and an innovative purifier, that interprets the true identity of the site - where waste is transformed into resources. Understanding of the landscape in terms of its catchment areas, main electricity lines, hydrography and principal access routes, is important in order to integrate the OpenAgri project in the area. The landscape, in this sense, guides a path of reorganization and redemption of the south eastern periphery of Milan. The OpenAgri project represents a fresh start for this zone, based on the ability to collaborate around a common strategic vision. The landscape makes key infrastructures available to users, such as road, metro and train access, access to water, by optimizing the use of a rich water and resource system. linked to the purifier, and a power grid network with high voltage electricity lines, as can be seen in the images below:

Besides the infrastructures, the Vettabbia valley harbours many recognised situations, spanning different areas – education, training, hospitality, production and agricultural transformation, cultural production, social inclusion, all of which share a strong social vocation.
The networks of local agents that have grown in the region include 4 main types of organizations:

- **Anchors** organisations that preside over a place and develop agricultural, social and cultural activities;
- **Disseminators** organisations distributed around the territory, which carry out artistic, cultural and technical-environmental activities;
- **Under-transformation** organisations that operate in places that are undergoing transformations - such as building yards, funding sites, and hybrid spaces dedicated to innovation;
- **Projects, information groups or organisations** that operate in the territory during a limited period of time with a specific project focus (e.g. sustainable development, environmental enhancement and collaborative economy). These include integrated projects that combine social aspects, agri-food and valorisation of the social dimension of historical heritage, and also art projects and awareness-raising projects associated to themes such as “Art to eat and eat art” which consists of artistic projects associated to nutrition. There are also projects such as “farm Nosedo” that provides services to farmers, training laboratories to develop skills, agri-food seminars and didactic laboratories for children. *This would represent one step further towards the OpenAgri vision!*

### 3.3.2 The buildings

The project’s most immediate impact is renovation of the existent buildings. Once renovated, these buildings will host the *OpenAgri* activities. The following image is a map of Cascina Nosedo (red: collapsed buildings; green: existing buildings; **blue: buildings (9 and 10), to be refurbished by OpenAgri project**) and a photo that represents the present state of conservation of the buildings.
The renovated building will serve the following functions, within the framework of *OpenAgri*:

- Coworking space for startup and agricultural entrepreneurs with fully-equipped meeting rooms and associated services (wi-fi, printer and fax, surveillance and concierge, cleaning service, ICT technical support, server space, etc.);
- Spaces for thematic events to host moments of discussion and confrontation (eg hackathon, innovation lab);
- Analysis centre and prototyping laboratory: with Padano Technological Park and the Politecnico Foundation;
- “Officucina” (Future Food Institute): a multifunctional lab, halfway between a workshop and a kitchen, equipped with different tools (3d printers, etc.) that provides prototyping and training services (design and collaborative design, cooking courses, etc.);
- Co-design services and activities (and policies);
- Greenhouses for aquaculture: greenhouses that occupy about 1.000 square metres for teaching and demonstration purposes, that will alternate between different typologies of vegetables (Agriculture 2.0);
- Incubation and development of new businesses that can strengthen the food chain and propose innovative solutions for production, transformation, distribution;
- Think thank and R&D activities associated to environmental and social issues, both private, and in collaboration with universities in Milan;
- Support for capacity building in order to foster cultural change and hybridization between the worlds of research, agriculture and agri-food businesses, cooperatives and the non-profit world, the PA;
- Services to support projects that will be set up with the call of the 30 hectares: To be defined by the process and workshops.

### 3.4 Integrated approach

During the meetings and site visits, the partnership’s objective to promote intersections between the major flows that characterise the metabolism of the area, its efficiency, sufficiency, and resilience, was made absolutely clear. The buildings of Cascina Nosedo and the overall context of the Valley are indeed an interesting place for the intersection of demand and supply, especially in terms of the following approaches:

**Energy and Consumption** managing the relationship between production and consumption, the water cycle (output and input), as well as the nature of agricultural (greenhouses) and wooded areas, that affect production and management of locally available resources and energy, are all relevant components of the project.
Circular approach to accomplish the transition from a linear resource management to a more virtuous, circular approach. The Nosedo purifier is a central element in optimising the metabolism of the area. The nutrient-rich sludge could be used experimentally in some portions of the soils of the Vaiano Valley. This would certainly represent a sound achievement in terms of the circular economy!

### 3.5 The partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Role in the project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAMERA DI COMMERCIO MILANO</td>
<td>Main tasks: Communication (Ad-hoc communication campaigns) and Feasibility Study, Value Model and Proposition Design for Open Innovation Hub (SMEs selected for co-creation of development projects, P2P initiatives - Hackathons, SMEs pilot project implementation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ImpattoZero srl</td>
<td>Main tasks: On-demand farming – Healthy Food by Aquaponics (Analysis existing infrastructures, Aquaponics system project and implementation); and Aquaponics full operative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan Polytechnic University</td>
<td>Main tasks: Communication (Publications) and State of the art, criticalities and potentialities (Atlas and interactive database, working paper and graphical representation). Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering Department (ABC) – Politecnico di Milano for analysis of the energy characteristics of the area and Guidelines for low energy (low carbon) and efficient settlement. Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU) - Politecnico di Milano for the development of a “vision” as a special and territorial outcome of the project, focused on urban-rural landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Strada Social Cooperative</td>
<td>Main tasks: Vettabbia Farm-Lab (Stazione Chiaravalle: inhabiting the Vettabbia Farm-Lab; Mill Farm-Lab; Permanent workshop of maintenance of orchard/green; Cascina San Bernardo: seeds multiplication and training); training and social inclusion (trainings of fields, work-study rotation, agro food work for women in situation of fragility); information and awareness (co-planning, landscape theatres, video clip, ending waste strategies in local communities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunugal</td>
<td>Main tasks: Community agricultural experiences (regenerative plant for environmental restoration, mixed orchard plantation, greenhouse for the growing vegetable); training and social inclusion (trainings of fields, work-study rotation); Information and awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILAN POLYTECHNIC FOUNDATION</td>
<td>Main tasks: Communication (“On field events” – Public events); Experimenting Open Innovation; and Development of agriculture technology prototypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Main tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Milan (UniMI)</td>
<td>Communication (Publications); Analysis of the farming activities and the main flows related to urban food consumption; Definition, testing and modelling of agro-ecological, socio-economic and sustainability indicators; Optimization of the matching between food supply and demand creating a Local Agro-food System (LAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avanzi srl</td>
<td>Feasibility Study, Value Model and Proposition Design for Open Innovation Hub (study, call for pilot project and ideas, “streams of innovation” identified); and experimenting Open Innovation (High Density Start-up Acceleration Programme Implementation, Start up business plans, Impact assessment report).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cineca</td>
<td>Communication (Digital activity, Open Innovation through Open Badges BESTR); and empowering capacities (Open Badges Playlist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Food Institute</td>
<td>Feeding the future - OffiCucina for food innovators (definition, work plan, implementation of Officucina); and definition of a new professional profile - the Food Innovator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poliedra</td>
<td>E-bike logistics service (e-bike plan); and OpenAgri advanced ICT management platform (Design of platform, OpenAgri APP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFOA Training Institute for Enterprises Operators</td>
<td>Experimenting Open Innovation (Job shadowing); and empowering capacities (Project based Internship Evaluation Report)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare s.r.l social enterprise</td>
<td>Communication (Awareness and outreach strategy – public meetings to promoting a city-wide debate of the future of project area); and experimenting Open Innovation (High Density Acceleration Programme Implementation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Partners srl</td>
<td>Communication (Interactive Storytelling and community engagement actions – Plan for “Urban Activations” events); Pilot branding; and Feasibility Study, Value Model and Proposition Design for Open Innovation Hub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 OpenAgri implementation challenges

The implementation challenges at this stage are in line with the level of innovation and degree of risk taken with an UIA project. The implementation challenges faced by Milan can be plotted through a framework established by the UIA:

1. **Leadership for implementation;** political support for OpenAgri is evident and derives from a broader plan for the area.

2. **(Smart) Public Procurement** (using public spending to leverage more local innovation); Schedule delays on infrastructure and buildings renovation are a common story. The most common explanations for such delays are technical challenges, over-optimism, and strategic misrepresentations. These three factors can be summarised as delays in decision-making that leads to a poor public procurement process and time constraints. The OpenAgri team is
aware of the importance of reconstructing the building by October 2019. If that doesn’t happen, a contingency plan is prepared, consisting of temporarily hosting the hub functionalities in the premises of the partnership members.

3. Organisational arrangements within the urban authorities to deliver integrated innovative projects (cross-department working); OpenAgri is a cross-sector and cross-department way of thinking and acting, at all administrative levels, together with mixed and integrated funding. The OpenAgri team has invested significant time in building bridges between various sectors and departments, but establishing better communication and promoting collaboration will be an ongoing challenging for the project’s implementation.

4. Participative approach for co-implementation (incl. private partners); Actions of urban transformation involving different situations such as; education-training, hospitality, production and agricultural transformation, cultural production and social inclusion, can generate resistance to change. The OpenAgri partnership is a good example of a participative approach, since it brings local stakeholders from these different situations. However actions should be taken to guarantee active participation of all stakeholders.

5. Monitoring & evaluation (measurement); Starting from the reflections emerging from meetings with the project partners, there is a clear need to develop a model that can combine the aspect of social inclusion and cultural promotion, closely linked to the territory and the need to create a complex system of activities and services that can be sustainable from an economic and financial perspective. Ensuring precise measurement of the impact of OpenAgri in such different dimensions presents various technical challenges.

6. Communicating with target beneficiaries; The communication strategy, the audience of the project and the tools to be used are well defined. There is also an established expertise in the city in terms of communication. At this stage of the project, this challenge has a low impact on the project’s implementation.

7. Upscaling (incl. resizing/re-planning interventions). The upscaling strategy is clear and is based on a management plan shared by the partners and stakeholders, planning a mid-term scenario in which the owner (City of Milan) will give the opportunity of managing the building by a third party, by means of a public tender. However, to make this plan realistic it’s important to bring potential investors or big corporations, on an annual basis, that in the future can explore the hub, with the goal of making it sustainable for the city of Milano.

In future editions of the OpenAgri journal we will revisit the UIA challenges and assess the progress made and lessons learned.
5 Progress and Key Learning Points

5.1 OpenAgri Survey

The OpenAgri team launched a survey, from March to June 2017, to existing SMEs in the food/horticulture supply chain, in order to identify the main innovation streams in the sector. The emerging streams were the basis for the call for pilot projects and ideas (see section 5.2), which will select 5 SMEs and 10 startups to be installed in the open Innovation Hub in Cascina Nosedo, to develop product and process solutions able to satisfy the needs identified in the report.

5.1.1 Activities carried out

1. An online survey with 40 specific questions addressed to various players of the agri-food sector was specifically delivered to companies, SMEs, startups, public administrations, foundations, organizations and professionals. The survey was structured to tackle each segment in the value chain, by addressing production, transformation, trade, distribution, waste management in agriculture and consumption, focusing in all stages on environmental sustainability.

   The respondents were largely: micro-enterprises (67% of respondents); with fewer than 4 years of trading (41.5%) or more than 10 years (46.3%); not involved in consortiums or business networks. The respondents underlined their dissatisfaction with the Milanese production segment (71.4%).

2. Public discussion carried out via two distinct initiatives. The first was in the form of focus group involving several subjects among partners and various stakeholders (Lombardy Region, agricultural districts, associations, scientific institutes). The discussion was primarily engaged around three topics:

   How is Milan positioned in the agri-food sector?

   What are the specific innovation needs throughout the agricultural value chain in the Milanese area?

   Which limits and opportunities are related to the creation of an open innovation hub?

   The second initiative was a public meeting organised by the Municipality of Milan during the Milan Food Festival (May 2017), in the form of a round table which allowed some of the projects’ partners to engage in public debate with civil society, prompting discussion on relevant matters such as the power of food, both in everyday life and to ensure a successful result for the project itself.

3. Qualified interviews with prominent actors of the value chain (approximately 22), among MNEs, SMEs, sector experts, technicians, environmental associations. The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and by phone, with a wide range of results. Each subject was prominent in his/her field of activity and provided consistent inputs for the purpose of the research survey. The main topics tackled during the interviews were: a) innovation needs (strengths and weaknesses in the value chain, what is missing, specific tools, etc.), b) education and training, c) services provided in the Hub.
5.1.2 Learning points

The results from analysis of the survey and feedback from the interviews confirmed the urgent need for innovation and renovation throughout the value chain, considering a sustainable approach at all project stages.

The city has a specific food culture and orientation of consumers, who are highly aware of quality levels and purchase selection, and a profitable economic environment that is able to boost the sector. However the city lacks a creative and courageous distribution system and logistics plan, and is still affected by an inadequate infrastructural strategy and fragmentation/disorganization among the actors involved. Although this shortfall represents a constraint, it also leaves space for many opportunities to develop smart and impactful urbanistic initiatives, involving the Public Administration, experts in the sector and civil society.

The outcomes from the survey and interviews highlighted what OpenAgri should and should not be:

The OpenAgri approach...should be:
- connected and integrated with the surrounding cultural (academic, formation, etc.), traditional and economic realities of the Vettabbia valley (also known as the Valley of the Monks);
- a centre for research and qualitative innovation and development;
- a physical incubator for startups already active in the market, to be rapidly selected and matched with big companies and investors, and thus inserted in a wider network of incubators;
- a replicable example of good practices, exportable also in developing regions of the world;
- a centre for employment and a place for on-the-job training;
- a gathering place for producers and consumers;
- a logistics centre for food production in the metropolitan area of Milan;
- energetically self-sufficient, due to the use of clean energy production (solar panel, biomass, etc.) and able to lower resource waste (of water, land, etc.);
- an agri-ecologist centre in the territory, seen as a bridge with the PA and the local community;
- sustainable after the project’s 3-year funding.

...should not be:
- a misuse of project funds, by replicating existing realities of the territory around Cascina Nosedo and elsewhere;
- a playfield, with no-added-value games and attractions in terms of food and agri-production.

The results confirmed an urgent need of innovation and renovation throughout the value chain.
5.2 Open call for pilot projects and ideas

A two-stage public notice to host projects within an "Experimentation Laboratory" was launched in August 2017 and can be consulted on the City of Milan’s website.

This open call is for projects that interpret agriculture as a sustainable/biological system as a motor of ecosystem services, which generate new knowledge and skills, and which thereby act as an impetus for innovation and are functional and/or integrated within the value chain or the agri-food system (production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management) in a circularity.

The target is active or aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs, companies and/or startups and other organized parties who intend to develop innovative ideas and projects with implications for the agro-food industry (production and processing, distribution and eventually ending life) and of significant impact on the territory.

The call closed on 30 September and the evaluation process is currently in progress. More to come soon, on this!!

5.3 Feasibility study

The feasibility study details the identity of OpenAgri as a technological and collaborative space where everyone can work on the development and experimentation of new ideas, products and technologies in a rich and active ecosystem that can provide technical and material support to emerging projects and initiatives in the field of agriculture and food. A space that will host various activities in the field of training, capacity building and enterprise development, but at the same time acts as a stimulus for social cohesion processes, production and diffusion of culture.

The main targets identified to date are:
- Existing agricultural enterprises and the agricultural sector;
- Farmers, innovators and local producers;
- Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
- Graduates and university students;
- Consumers/Citizens;
- Public Administration;
- Agricultural districts;
- Large corporations.

OpenAgri will also be a place of training and education not only for professional students (academy) but also for young people and children, with environmental education courses and didactic workshops. For start-ups in the agri-food sector as well as local producers, the space
will enable them to develop and experiment with innovative products by providing them with an appropriate ecosystem to grow and validate their products/services. At the same time, it will be a place that can promote meetings, partnerships and new business collaboration.

6 Conclusion and Next Steps

The city of Milan certainly views OpenAgri as a great opportunity! The proximity and the points of tangency with the Sharing Cities project (which focuses on energy redevelopment and sustainable mobility) endows it with critical mass and potential for significant social and economic value for the territory of Milan. My first visit to the OpenAgri area aimed to build a network of relationships with the various actors in the territory, and develop a shared vision, a clear understanding of the landscape and assess the potentialities that the project can bring to the city. The OpenAgri project, moreover, represents the most fundamental and possible declination of the theme of the new urban economies, which have long been of great interest to the city.

The main steps over the next 6 months are:

- **Renovation works (permanent activity)** - The renovation of the buildings is the main action of the project. There is a need to speed up the works to catch up with the original planning timetable to rebuild the buildings at Cascina Nosedo;

- **High density start-up acceleration programme implementation (30/10/17)** - Select, organise training sessions and provide coaching and mentoring to at least 10 start-ups, supported by business plans on peri-urban agriculture and related circular economy, in order to promote innovation in the agri-food sector;

- **Jobs awareness (30/11/17)** - Organisation of visits, work experiences or job shadowing for both managers of the hub and new entrepreneurs. The objective is to complement the training phase through the opportunity for practical learning experiences, exchanges of good practice, acquire key competences and build long-term partnerships;

  - **International Road-Show (02/02/18)** – Participate with an OpenAgri delegation in the next transnational meeting of the Urbact Agri-Urban project ([http://urbact.eu/agri-urban](http://urbact.eu/agri-urban)) to be held in Mouans-Sartoux, France on February 2018. The objective of this participation is to share knowledge and experiences with the 11 cities of the Agri-Urban project;

  - **Kick the pilots (1/01/18)** – In this period OpenAgri will kick start 3 pilot projects on: New products and new technologies for agricultural production based on a) the AQUAPONIC SYSTEM, b) an “OFFICUCINA” for transformation and processing of food and c) new LOGISTIC SOLUTIONS for last mile transportation and waste management;

  - **Awareness and communication (permanent activity)** - continue with the awareness and communication activities at the local, national and EU level, as planned in the project’s communication plan.

I am looking forward to the next six months and the journey ahead with OpenAgri! I will keep you posted in the next issue of this journal.
Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.

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