



International Agricultural
Machinery Exhibition

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EIMA 2008, Italy's farm equipment fair, opened by Minister for Agricultural Policies Luca Zaia

EIMA, the Bologna-based industrial fair devoted to farm equipment, got under way today — “an important resource for one of Italy's most vivacious sectors of production with turnover of €8 billion a year,” said Luca Zaia, the Italian minister for agricultural policies, in opening the event. In the afternoon, given the club's sponsorship deal with New Holland, players from the Juventus football team visited the company's stand.

Italy's Minister for Forestry, Food and Agricultural Policies Luca Zaia opened the EIMA International 2008 farm equipment fair today and toured the exhibition halls at the event promoted by UNACOMA, the Italian farm machinery makers' association, and organised by UNACOMA Service.

“EIMA is an important resource for one of Italy's most vivacious sectors of production, which earns €8 billion turnover a year,” he said in a key note speech. “It is our intention to defend Italian agriculture, even if the difficulties linked to the present economic situation do not allow us to make any precise commitments on the demolition of farm machines,” a reference to plans for plans to encourage replacement of obsolete machinery with government incentives.

But he did announce a government commitment on ‘agro-energy’, crops and biomass for energy. “All that's missing are the ministerial decrees needed for application of our proposals;” he disclosed. “With them, we intend to give impetus to what I consider to be a real revolution for the agricultural sector. I have great confidence in the role of the Italian enterprises. I have been struck by their commitment to research and innovation, but also their great urge to grow.”

The protagonists of the fair's opening day were the tractors. The giant 370 HP Massey Ferguson 8690 received the Tractor of the Year 2009 award, and there were also meetings on the safe use of agricultural machines. One meeting organised by Emilia Romagna's regional administration was on how ‘old type’ tractors can be modified against the risk of overturning. Then, in cooperation with UNIMA, Il Sole-24 Ore Business Media, part of the Milanese financial daily's wide-ranging media interests, held a seminar to look at programmed and periodical maintenance of agricultural machines.

The afternoon saw the presentation of a new data bank, Cercatrattore (Tractor Search), set up by L'Informatore Agrario Edizioni as a guide in tracking down the equipment most adapted to a farmer's needs. The afternoon was also marked by an event in which RAI's regional director Fabrizio Binacchi and Gianni Borghi, the managing-director of Lombardini, reviewed the 75-year history of this leading maker of propulsion units for agriculture and many other uses, at a photo show on the company's long-running industrial evolution.

Another important celebration today was the 90th anniversary of tractors made by the Fiat auto company, now included in the activities of the Turin multinational's farm and earth-moving equipment arm, New Holland. In one touch of nostalgia, stewardesses at the New Holland stand were dressed as *mondine*, the women who used to weed and harvest the Piedmontese rice paddies before machines took over. Juventus players Jonathan Zebina, Hasan Salihamidzie and Cristiano Zanetti were also on hand at the stand, in recognition of New Holland's sponsorship of the club, another item in the Fiat empire.

Innovation and new technology were on the agenda at a conference on mechanisation and water saving in the Mediterranean. Star turns were the Water Rover, a robot designed to ensure the selective irrigation of areas with low rainfall, and the BITES Project on opportunities for biofuels in the EU and Italy, BITES being the EU's programme to encourage biofuel production in the EU countries.

On the world stage, there was also a ‘dating session’ at which official foreign delegations met exhibitors and a meeting organised by the Italian Chambers of Commerce Abroad on the DEMETRA Project for the promotion of business opportunities between Italy and the countries of the Mercosur area — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. There were also seminars organised by EimaEnergy, the section of the fair specialised in energy issues, which will continue with a wide-ranging programme for the duration of the event.

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PRESS RELEASE