

Welcome address by H.E. Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona

Bilateral workshop on:

“Sustainability in the Food Chain”

Italian Cultural Institute - London
29-30 November 2007

Minister Shaw,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to be here today and to be given the opportunity of welcoming this qualified audience.

I witness a numerous and motivated participation by representatives of government departments, industry and academia of the two countries.

This workshop is the result of a successful collaboration between our Embassy and Defra, which, among others, has produced a similar event on Organic Food last year, and more recently a Round Table on Biofuels attended by the Secretary of State the Rt. Hon Hilary Benn and by the Italian Minister for Agricultural Policies, Professor Paolo De Castro.

As everybody knows, the world faces challenges on a global scale that are linked to the development of human kind itself, and to the continuous technological progress. This is something that we should warmly welcome, being the proof of a successful attempt at improving the living conditions of man on Earth. However, this should also be monitored and adjusted in such a way that the material improvements do not turn out to be a damaging process, in some cases irreversible.

Climate change, acknowledged to be the result of man's action in the recent past, is the most alarming signal. Environmental sustainability is one of the key parameters to be used in designing and applying human interventions. It should be kept as a guiding criterion in all the developments, since the effects of a misguided progress can be hardly reversed, given the complexity of the Earth-environment system.

Achieving sustainability in all the domains of the human activity is one of the answers to the climate change challenge, but not only that: it is a way of maintaining, even better of improving, our overall quality of life. And this is a must in every place of the world, be it a developed nation already profiting of an advanced market and of high standards of life, or a developing country striving to improve the living conditions of its people.

Food is the fuel for our survival, and an appropriate approach to the production, process and distribution of food is a key element to guarantee sustainability. This workshop aims at investigating these aspects comparing the best practices in our two countries.

In particular, the United Kingdom is one of the most sensible and active countries in the evaluation of the impact of food production and consumption on the environment.

Italy is widely recognized as one of the strongest producers, especially of quality food. Matching the quality of the food we produce with a correct approach to sustainability is a challenge that can and must be won.

The issues at stake involve technological, marketing and social aspects, like consumer behaviour. A regulatory framework must be put in place, which ensures the successful achievement of these goals. And here I am happy to witness the participation of representatives of the European Commission, which has a prominent role in setting the rules.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that the outcome of this workshop will be positive and that it will contribute to strengthen the collaboration between institutions and companies of our two countries. I wish you a successful work.