

## A thousand-year identity and international propensity

New business prospects in Brazil, China, United Arab Emirates and South-east Asia for Asiago Dop, with the commitment of Consorzio di Tutela Formaggio Asiago

A thousand-year story, a marked territorial identity and a growing propensity for export, these are the cornerstones for the expansion and success of Asiago Dop in Italia and throughout the world; the Veneto-Trentino Protected Designation of Origin, exclusive prerogative of European quality food production, created in 1979.

This story comes from afar. They were already producing cheese in the Altopiano di Asiago mountain area in the year 1000. Developments in dairy production technique in the early years of the 18th century, led to extending the production zone to the neighbouring ones and, later on, to start making the two kinds of Asiago we know today: Fresh Asiago and Mature Asiago.

The two "milk brothers" are produced in a different way: Fresh Dop Asiago is made from transforming whole cow's milk, is put on sale after at least 20 days of ripening and has a distinctive, unmistakable taste of milk. Whilst mature Asiago Dop Stagionato is produced with skimmed milk, has a more full-bodied, stronger flavour and is ripened from 3 to 15 months before being



President Roberto Gasparini

put on the market.

Be It Dop Fresco or Stagionato, this gourmet cheese is made to strict rules covering all the steps in the work process, from the raw material to marketing each wheel produced in the exclusively Dop zone, comprising the provinces of Trento and Vicenza and part of those of Padova and Treviso.

A territory, its cheese. The story of Asiago Dop is for ever bound to the

mountains and to that genius loci made up of handed down expertise and environment with specific agronomic characteristics, rendering it unique and matchless and producing a tangible economic value for the entire territory. And it is precisely the Coop, with its 1,562 farm businesses that supply the milk, 41 cheese makers, 9 for ripening, 4 for portioning and 44 for packaging, to guarantee a sustainable product, correlated to production cycles and natural rearing, a precious asset for the local production fabric, employing an estimated eight thousand workers in the entire chain. Right from 2010, this patrimony of history and tradition was linked by the Consorzio di Tutela Formaggio Asiago (Asiago Cheese Protection Consortium) ([www.formaggioasiago.it](http://www.formaggioasiago.it)) with a long-term development plan to enhance the product and increase its presence on foreign markets. Many steps have been taken in this direction. For example, in 2006 it was awarded the EU Pdo Asiago label 'as mountain product' marking in recognition of the typical cheese of the Altopiano di Asiago mountainous area, produced entirely at altitudes exceeding 600 metres and exclusively using Italian milk from the mountains. An original sensorial analysis process was introduced for the first time in Italia in 2012, with new, severe organoleptic parameters to test the product and is used for the entire production before being put on the market.

A keen attention addressed to the market has been confirmed of late. From here, firstly applying the Eu parliament 1151/2012 food regulation known as the "Quality Package", this year the Coop introduced the programmed growth plan. "We have reached a historic result – states Roberto Gasparini, the Coop's president – because for the first time we find ourselves in the position of being able to



Forms of cheese



Ripening



Step in the working process

determine, going by our own decisions, a greater balance between production and market. All within the perspective of a balanced growth, compatible with the market itself to absorb the product and, therefore, assure producers with a satisfactory remuneration and consumers with a continual, prime quality". In this way for 2014 the Coop foresees a production of over 1,400,000 wheels of Asiago Fresco and 268,000 wheels of Asiago Stagionato, for a total of over 22 thousand tons of product sold in what are now over 50 countries. These figures are everlastingly correlated with the success of the Veneto-Trentina Dop in Italia and abroad: 14, 35 million the families who consumed Asiago Dop on the domestic market in 2013 (+7.1% as against the year before), whilst export marks up an over 50% growth from 2009 to the present day.

Diversify is the Asiago Dop key word for the years to come. "Over the last few years we decided to link up North American and European markets – explains President Gasparini – traditionally interested in Veneto-Trentina Dop like Switzerland, Germany and France, with emergent mar-

kets, now opening to dairy produce consumption and marketing. This is a medium to long-term decision, permitting us to look toward the future with optimism". The Protection Coop is now aimed at opening new business prospects and opportunities for its members in the United Arab Emirates, Brazil and, more recently, in China and South-East Asia. A commitment earning great interest, particularly for those incomparable characteristics of typicality, quality and healthiness guaranteed to consumer and market by Asiago Dop which, in the future, will increasingly

make the difference of this ambassador of Made in Italy dairy produce throughout the world.

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