

The Atlante-Sainsbury's partnership

by Sabino Cirulli

Atlante has attained the goal of landing the best Italian-made wine and food products on the shelves of international retailers. Atlante, established in Casalecchio di Reno (Bologna) in the mid-90s, now employs a staff of 68, with a turnover of 150mln euros and a range of 988 products. All this has been made possible thanks to an efficient logistical network comprised of six partners operating in 11 Western countries and 6 Far East countries, 6 warehouses and 95 production sites handling 6,000 complete loads shipped on more than 200,000 pallets and generating in excess of 45,000 deliveries per year. The partnership with Sainsbury's, the UK's second largest food retailer, catering to 29mln customers each week, has gone from strength to strength since 2014. It should be pointed out that Italy is the third-largest food exporter to the UK.

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«Sainsbury's – Natasha Linhart Atlante's CEO explains – is a key market for our firm.

Our business model hinges on a simple principle: things must work well. We don't necessarily need to sell. Our role is to be the ears and eyes of retailers wishing to efficiently source and sell Italian products.

Creating PL lines, allowing opportunities to small and little-known companies, thus also contributing to the economy of their regions:

ATLANTE IN FIGURES

Staff: 68

Turnover: 150 million euros

Deliveries per year: 45.000

Logistic network: 12 warehouses and 118 production sites

Operating in: 11 Western countries and 6 in the Far East

Source: company data **Largo Consumo**

there is an obvious ethical significance to all of this. Italy is full of excellent firms, but I often find that they struggle to build relations or venture out of their local dimension. Here's where we come into play.

We started out as a food importer. It was an important business, but I could not see any long-term prospects, because it lacked real focus on the product and did not allow the chance to build a narrative around it. Furthermore, it was not supported by a logistical structure capable to effectively address the requirements of the retail market. Quality and safety are the values upon which we build our offer, although organoleptic performance comes first: if the taste is poor or comes across as a sort of punishment, then there is no chance of the product going down well with the public. Our relation with Sainsbury's is so strong that, really, it is hard to believe it only dates back to 5 years ago. The key is total trust and ongoing dialogue. Our team members speak fluent English and discuss with their counterparts on a daily basis. We have succeeded, in such a short time, in identifying the products that consumers need. Among the best-selling categories we supply to Sainsbury's there are staples like Ambient

Pasta and Canned Tomatoes and specialities like *Grana Padano* and *Pesto alla Genovese*».

A recipe for the future.

«Brexite has certainly cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future – Natasha continues - bureaucracy will increase, as will the prices of most products. We can also expect a devaluation of the Pound, likely to lead to a trough in consumption. England might indeed become off-limits for certain categories of goods. On the other hand, though, we must remember that we are talking about a 60-million-people market, passionate about Italian food.

Italian cuisine is famous and loved the world over for its healthy, simple and quick recipes: just think of pasta with tomato sauce. Price should not be overlooked: some of the most popular staples of Italian cuisine are as inexpensive as they are delectable. This is the inherent advantage of Italian specialities – and in Atlante we are proud of our ever-expanding basket, brimming with delicious treasures of Italy's culinary tradition. Over the past 20-odd years we have operated as a strategic partner of the main Italian and international food retail chains. The partnership with Sainsbury's was a challenge, because it meant tackling a market – the UK - where consumers are increasingly cognizant of all aspects pertaining to sustainability and quality. We are Sainsbury's, main

partner for the assessment and selection of the best Italian food products to be sold in its stores across the UK. We adopt the same approach also in the rest of the world. Our focus is on Europe, primarily the UK and Switzerland, and on the USA, but we also expect to grow in other markets such as Japan, Australia and Germany. In spite of the global crisis, we haven't stopped dreaming. We live in a world where price is a very important element, all the more so at this difficult juncture: nonetheless, we shall not compromise on quality, as this would tarnish the reputation of our products.

In a context where shopping habits evince high transaction frequency and low brand loyalty, food has to be delivered fresh and on time: this is one of the advantages we offer, in addition to smart shopping to be done directly from your smartphone, cashless points of sale and pick&collect services. The world is increasingly aware of the need to eat better, waste less and know the origins of the products. Traceability and PDO, therefore, are not simply a guarantee of genuineness, but also a key to a more complete understanding of the production chain. A further new trend is the quest for alternative sources of proteins. In 2050 the world population will reach 10 billion people and there won't be enough proteins for all.

Italian cuisine, particularly in the South, is packed with pulse- and vegetable-based recipes and pasta, which can really be the solution».