

# ATLANTE, AN AGRIFOOD BRIDGE between Italy and Europe

By

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*Switzerland is one of the reference markets for Atlante, the consulting firm based in Bologna that has deployed a managing team for Covid-19 related difficulties.*

Little Italy is a pre-Covid project that hosts Italian food excellences in Swiss supermarkets. It has been developed by Migros, first supermarket chain in Switzerland, in collaboration with Atlante. Atlante is the strategic partner that works with the main Italian and foreign large-scale organized distribution chains to create highly visible thematic sections in the stores.

The partnership between Atlante and Migros dates back to 2011, when the collaboration agreement that led to a strategic alliance to market Swiss products in Italy and export Italian products on the Helvetic territory was signed. This partnership keeps growing and sees the launch of Little



Migros and Atlante have signed a partnership to exchange Italian and Swiss products

Italy at the end of 2019 as the beginning of a new phase. Atlante has selected the Italian products, based on the quality and the regional traditions of the most typical products, and has ensured they meet the qualitative and logistic standards required by their Swiss partner. In normal conditions, Switzerland is the sixth largest export market of Italy. However, it has the potentiality to become the fourth. In the previous financial years, Italy delivered more than 22 billion euros of exports to Switzerland, with a

nearly two-fold increase compared to 2017. The most exported product categories are (according to the Italian Institute for Statistics): chemicals, textiles and clothing, all with a similar value of around 3 billion euros each. Food and beverages are worth around 1 billion euros, recording a five-point growth. As usual partner of the main Italian and foreign food chains, for the import and export of wine and food products, Atlante has created an international team to highlight the significant logistic difficulties brought

## Protagonists&strategies

about by the global emergency. The team has proved active, from the start, providing a series of measures to support the transportation of goods on a European level. Specifically, the members of the team have underlined the need of a European plan to guarantee the free movement of essential goods such as food products. Atlante is the spokesperson of this task force, whose aim is working as a team to find tangible actions and provide all the necessary tools to guarantee the free movement of essential goods and ensuring suitable production and stocking. The problem of correct handling can create large gaps between the production sector, which is required by the retail demand to significantly increase the delivery time, and logistic centres, whose supplies are sometimes blocked precisely because they cannot be transported when planned. On the retail side, the different European regions saw different levels of food stocking. This is due to the fact that, as an ad-hoc investigation carried out by Atlante showed, the level of food stocking (calculated per stocked calorie) in northern-European households is close to zero. Therefore, European families found themselves to be in different conditions, when facing the emergency, and their cultural reactions were different too. Finding a manageable compromise during a continental lockdown was not easy and mediators like Atlante were positively reconsidered.



Natasha Linhart,  
CEO of Atlante

### The British situation.

The UK is certainly an excellent example: at the beginning of the lockdown, local families found themselves to have empty fridges as usual. This situation created growing anxiety, with families rushing to stock up on food, more drastically than in Italy. Uncertainty grew. Covid-19 added to a two-year legal void related to a desperate Brexit. “Atlante has worked side by side with our main client, which is Sainsbury’s, to guarantee a constant flow of supply from Italy”. This motivation is shared by the majority of the European retailers, which enabled a quick identification of a logistic green corridor for the European food sector.

Especially regarding international product supply. “In Switzerland – Natasha Linhart, Atlante’s CEO underlines – the average price of food purchases is considerably higher if compared to all the bordering countries (Italy, France, Germany and Austria). This means that Helvetic citizens are generally used to doing cross-border shopping. This possibility has vanished with the covid-19 outbreak, which is why local retailers saw an increase of 25% in sales. This is a structural incremental flow, less dictated by panic, and not simply a transfer. What is more, it happened in a country that feels wealthy and confident about positively dealing with the crisis”.

87 Migros stores all over the Helvetic territory and not only in the cantons bordering Italy adopted the initiative of Made in Italy appreciation, supervised by Atlante. After all, according to Lorence Weiss, sales director of the food department in Migros, “Swiss citizens appreciate Italian food and are especially willing to take into consideration the food specialties that have been selected for them with the collaboration of Atlante. Our teamwork has allowed us to identify small producers, standing out for high standards of quality and safety, and contribute to their growth. Natasha Linhart states “Little Italy is able to create win-win situations for Italian producers, because it matches precisely the need of foreign large-scale organized distribution chain.