

BUSINESS OF FOOD

# Cultured meat is 'a veritable suicide for a country like ours,' says Italy Minister of Agriculture Francesco Lollobrigida



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Italy has been in the news of late for its proposal to ban the production, sales, commercialisation and import of cultured meat, but the focal point of Francesco Lollobrigida's press conference in London today (28.04.2023) was the relationship between *Il Bel Paese* and the UK.

added that Italy – in partnership with the EU – is keen to promote market regulation, so that the United Kingdom has access to European products, and Italian businesses in Britain can operate in stable conditions.

On Thursday (27.04.2023) Lollobrigida met with the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Thérèse Coffey. The politicians spoke about the importance of helping Italian producers have access to the British market, and for Britons to have access to Italian produce. The Italian Minister highlighted the need to grow Italy's food sector, stressing the high quality of its products and production methods.

The Minister didn't forget the importance of the role of the Italian hospitality sector in the UK, saying that restaurateurs are like ambassadors for Italy, adding that by buying Italian products and selling them abroad they help the country's economy.

Keen to promote Italy's gastronomy heritage, Lollobrigida also announced that the government is campaigning to get the country's food on [UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List](#), adding *"I objectively believe that Italian cuisine is the best on the planet."*

## Why Italy says no to cultured meat

Today's press conference was held at Italian meat restaurant Il Macellaio (The Butcher) in London's Soho. This is perhaps no coincidence, given Italy's stance on cultured meat, often called 'synthetic' or 'artificial' in the country. The motivation behind the proposal, the government says, is to safeguard the country's food heritage and the health of the nation.

The decision to ban a product that the EU has yet to approve as a novel food might be premature. I asked Lollobrigida why such a strong stance from the Italian government on cultured meat. *"Farm and fields would disappear, this could create an environmental disaster which we've already seen in inland areas where agriculture has been abandoned,"* he told me. *"To think that the production of food no longer happens in cattle sheds, or in fields, or through [our agricultural] transformation, but in bioreactors...this needs further discussion, but in my opinion [bioreactors] don't have a positive environmental impact. Bioreactors produce standardised food using ultra processing procedures, which could, in our opinion, pose a risk to [human] health. It's the reason why we have called on a [guarantee of safety](#), which is allowed by the EU on health and environmental safety issues."*

Rather than seeing the ban on cultured meat as a backward step towards new technologies that could potentially help Europe meet its sustainability goals, Francesco Lollobrigida is proud of the move. *"Italy can be the first country not to produce, commercialise or import these 'agglomerations of cells' – I struggle to even call it meat – that could pose a health and environmental risk and would certainly wipe out our economy and business sector,"* he said, *"A veritable suicide for a country like ours, for which quality is of the utmost importance"*, adding that he doesn't think the cellular agriculture sector could ever be compatible with Italy's agribusiness.

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*techniques, to strengthen, thanks to our research, our plants, to increase yield.*

He believes cultured meat would not only pose a threat to the environment and human health, but also quality of produce. *"Food security can be achieved in two ways: food for everyone, or high quality food for everyone. For us, it's the latter."*

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