

Good evening everyone.

I'm Davide Zarri from the International Relations Unit of the Municipality of Bologna, speaking on behalf of Deputy Mayor Daniele Ara, who unfortunately couldn't be here tonight. Thank you to Camilla Laureti for hosting us, to Claudio for the invitation, to Maurizio for moderating the panel, and thanks to all of you for the inspiring contributions so far. It's great to see so many familiar faces, including many I met recently at the MUFPP Global Forum in Milan. We're really happy to be part of this event, because our work on food systems is an ongoing journey, and moments like this are essential to exchange experiences with other cities and strengthen our direction. In recent years, Bologna has been working to rethink its food system and rebuild stronger connections between the city, the Apennines, and the surrounding plains. Food has always been part of our identity, but today it's also a tool to tackle key challenges such as sustainability, public health, social justice and territorial resilience. The 2024 floods reminded us how important rural economies and local agriculture are: they care for the land, reduce environmental risks, and keep our communities alive. That's why we're working to tighten the relationship between urban and rural areas and to ensure access to healthy, local food for everyone, supporting farmers, short supply chains, and the landscapes that define who we are. Another crucial element is awareness. The choices we make as citizens — and especially as public institutions — directly affect local production and the future of our environment. This is why food education plays such a central role in Bologna. A key example is our school meal system, one of the largest in Italy: about 20,000 meals per day, 90% organic and over 80% sourced within 200 km. School canteens are not just a service: they are strategic spaces to educate younger generations, support the local economy, and, above all, promote equality. Since joining the MUFPP in 2015, we've developed a wide range of initiatives: from urban gardens and ecological networks, to fighting food waste across the supply chain, recovering surplus food for social purposes, and supporting local producers and short supply chains. To coordinate all this, in 2023 we created the Food Democracy Council, bringing together institutions, private actors, farmers and civil society. And in 2024, we introduced the right to food into the Statute of the Municipality and the Metropolitan City — a clear political statement that access to quality food is a right for everyone. To conclude, Bologna — like many other cities — is exploring how food can drive innovation, social cohesion and environmental resilience. We are here to share our experience, yes, but above all to learn from yours. Food may look simple, but it has enormous power to shape the future of our communities.

Thank you very much.