

Fresh & Produce Retail Awards: at TUTTOFOOD Milan, the European champions of fresh sections.

New initiative by Fiere di Parma to monitor and reward excellence in the fresh and ultra-fresh departments of European retail. Focus 2026: fresh produce and the deli section

The world of fresh and ultra-fresh products plays an increasingly decisive role in the performance of self-service stores and in customers' choice of where to shop. It is from this premise that the **Fresh & Produce Retail Observatory**, conceived by **TUTTOFOOD Milan**, was created to periodically and systematically measure the perception, experience, and size of fresh and ultra-fresh departments in modern European retail.

The project, which will be unveiled in the **TUTTO Fruit & Veg** special area during the next edition of the fair (May 11–14, Rho Fieramilano), aims to identify and reward best practices across the continent, helping exhibitors and visitors to guide their strategic decisions effectively.

The first edition of the observatory—dedicated to the main European markets—will focus on fresh produce and the deli sector. Fresh produce is now widely offered in a department that is evolving from a simple “fruit and vegetables” area into a broader “plant-based solutions” section. Not by chance, the fruit and vegetable offering is today one of the main drivers influencing where consumers choose to shop—not only in Italy but across Europe.

The deli section, meanwhile, has become a versatile department, with many facets and an increasing share of in-store or in-lab prepared items, offered both in self-service and assisted formats. In this first edition, the Fresh & Produce Retail Observatory will focus on the three classic categories of cured meats, cheeses, and fresh pasta, as well as on more advanced ready-to-eat meal solutions, measuring their scope and evaluating customer perception and experience.

The research examines departments from two perspectives: on one hand, the economic perimeter and performance dynamics (based on both scanner data and consumer panels); on the other, customer perception and experience within the departments. Customers will participate in a CAWI survey conducted across several target European countries, with detailed insights on individual retail chains and their consumer appeal, in order to identify Europe's best fresh departments and award them the **FrePRAwards 2026**.

The initiative benefits from the scientific coordination of the **University of Parma** and the specific expertise of **NielsenIQ**, **Agroter**, and **Toluna**, aiming to present scientifically validated results at **TUTTOFOOD** to a qualified audience of Italian and European retail representatives. These stakeholders will take part in a dedicated afternoon session at the fair to present the observatory and recognize the chains with the highest-performing fresh departments across the analyzed geographies.

Three months ahead of the fair, around one-third of pre-registered buyers in the incoming program (organized by TUTTOFOOD in collaboration with **ICE-Agenzia**) have already expressed interest in

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the fresh produce category. Participation from European markets is particularly notable, with representatives from 43 of the 100 target European countries confirmed.



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