



By Mike Knowles

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Italian apple suppliers are virtually there



Photo: VIP Val Venosta

Leading names including Melinda, La Trentina, Rivoira, VIP and VOG will use Macfrut Digital's online exhibition platform

Italian apple companies are planning to use the online networking opportunities provided by virtual trade event Macfrut Digital in mid-September as the new European season gets into full swing. Key players including Melinda, La Trentino, Rivoira, VIP and VOG are understood to be taking part, joining other major Italian produce marketers for the Rimini-based event's first ever virtual exhibition.

With new markets like Thailand and Vietnam opening to Italian apples in the past few years, the importance of maintaining close contact with trading partners remains as great as ever during the present coronavirus pandemic. And with Macfrut unable to open its doors to real visitors in 2020, the decision to take the trade fair online instead on 8-10 September has been welcomed by Italy's apple companies, who rely heavily on cultivating commercial contacts around the world.

"For our group, exporting has always been a key market strategy based on establishing close and long-lasting relationships with our customers all over the world," explains Marco Rivoira, chief executive of Gruppo Rivoira. "The Covid-19 emergency has prompted us to reinvent ourselves from a commercial standpoint; it has been a major challenge, but we gladly accepted it and were willing to get involved in a new way, that is online business meetings, web conferences and, last but not least, by participating in a virtual or digital trade fair such as Macfrut 2020."

He adds: "The world is changing and so is our strategic sector: as a result, we are renewing ourselves so that we can grow and improve as professionals and as a company."

Emergency measures

Understanding the challenges ahead will be one key priority for those taking part, says Andrea Fedrizzi, marketing and

communications manager at Melinda. "For many years now, Macfrut has been a benchmark event for professionals working in the Italian and European fruit and vegetable industry, as well as being an occasion for us to meet some of our major customers, our production partners and other sector specialists. Although it was impossible to host a physical event this year, it is still extremely important for us to participate.

"First of all, it will help us to examine the situation and better understand how it will evolve and to assess the impact that this health emergency has had on our sector, since it has inevitably changed and will continue to change the way we live and work. I believe our participation also somehow demonstrates how resilient our companies are, as they are always ready to adapt to new situations and work together in a cohesive way."

Fabio Zanesco, commercial manager of VIP, says having a meeting place – even

just a virtual one – will help companies

together with our customers, partners and

our consortium: these two aspects are

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develops their plans for the season ahead. "As apple producers, we have been working intensively to be able to guarantee supplies during the most critical stages of the crisis," he comments. "The time has come to look ahead to the coming season and adopt a more creative approach so that we can tackle changes

suppliers. Exchanging ideas is essential so that we do not keep repeating what we have always done."

Walter Pardatscher, general manager of VOG, says the company was "delighted" when Macfrut announced it would host a digital event. "Innovation and flexibility have always been the core values of

essential for us to be able to respond to market changes," he says. "And this year especially, because of the pandemic, they have proved to be crucial."