

Costanza Michelini di San Martino: Hands-on innovation in agriculture



Costanza Michelini di San Martino is an agronomist and entrepreneur working as a freelancer in agricultural land management, agricultural assessments and certifications. She is particularly passionate about the restoration and maintenance of historic rural buildings, their parks and agricultural land, promoting the repopulation of rural areas. She is also the co-founder of BioVerdissimo, a start-up specialising in the sustainable aeroponic cultivation of raw materials for the cosmetics industry. After completing an internship at ELO several years ago as part of the EU-funded FARMELDER project, she has continued to support ELO periodically in the development of EU project proposals.

Costanza Michelini di San Martino

Agronomist

What is one misconception you would like to challenge, about your work or about women's place in the agrifood sector?

One of the most common one is that agricultural work is monotonous, reserved for older men with a low level of education, and based exclusively on physical strength. In reality, agriculture offers countless career paths: some require strategic thinking and long-term vision, others involve manual labour that demands precision and delicacy. There are roles where you will never sit at a desk, others where you may never walk in a field, and some where you get to do both. My favourite!

The key is to find your own path and give it your best shot, without being intimidated by the fact that you are in the minority. Workers are always needed, and being part of a minority can, in some cases, be an advantage: it allows you to stand out more for your technical and soft skills, thus becoming a recognizable and indispensable professional.

Has a person, failure, or pivotal moment ever changed your path or perspective? What did it teach you?

A crucial moment in my journey was the transition from working as an agronomist in close contact with farmers in the fields to an office job at the European Parliament. I believed that the biggest changes were happening in Brussels. However, I realised that to help the agricultural sector, it was better to stay with my hands in the soil and with a few good contacts in Brussels.

My past has taught me the importance of never losing touch with reality, keeping my feet firmly on the ground and constantly learning from the people who have lived and worked in the fields for generations.

Policies and strategies are fundamental, but can only be written if you have a deep and concrete knowledge of the territory. Agriculture is first and foremost knowledge of the nature and then regulated on paper.

In one sentence: What very concrete issue in agriculture is most on your mind at the moment, and why?

What matters most to me right now is the social aspect of agriculture. I would like to find a way to address the shortage of agricultural labour by supporting homeless people, providing them with accommodation, helping them to integrate into the community and involving them in jobs that bring them into contact with nature. In my opinion, this exchange of help could have a positive impact on individuals, on the community, on health and on the economy, while also helping to revitalise rural areas.



From LinkedIn: Costanza with her colleagues at BioVerdissimo