



## Expo FoodTech 2026 announces Italy as Guest Country Partner, featuring Barilla, Amadori, Loacker and Molino Casillo

**Italy's agrifood innovation ecosystem, which attracted €121.6 million in investment in 2025, will take center stage at an edition focused on innovation, sustainability, and collaboration between industry leaders, startups, and investors**

**Madrid, May 8, 2026** – The new edition of [Expo FoodTech 2026](#) will return from **May 27 to 28** in Bilbao, Spain with **Italy as the guest country partner**. Over 8,000 professionals attending the leading tech fair for the food industry, held simultaneously with [Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#), will have the opportunity to explore firsthand the Italian agrifood ecosystem, which blends the strength of a well-established industry with growing activity in agrifoodtech innovation. According to the report *The State of Agrifoodtech in Italy in 2025*, prepared by Eatable Adventures, the Italian agrifood chain accounts for more than 15% of the national GDP and employs over 3.6 million workers, according to data from ISMEA included in the study.

This dynamism is also reflected in the innovation sector. The Italian agrifoodtech ecosystem attracted 121.6 million euros in investment in 2025, an 18% increase compared to the previous year. This growth highlights the direction the industry is taking in Italy, especially in a global context where investment has declined by 12%. These topics will be addressed by prominent speakers such as Laurette de Franco, Head of Open Innovation at **Barilla**; Alessandro Schena, Open Innovation Manager at **Loacker**; Graziano Stasi, Director of Ingredients and Retail at **Molino Casillo**; and Jacopo Alberti, Innovation Expert at **Amadori**. They will share their insights on how Italian family-owned companies and large food groups are adopting new open innovation models to enhance competitiveness, efficiency, and sustainability within their value chains.

The agenda will also feature perspectives from Italian startups that are part of the country's foodtech innovation ecosystem. In this regard, the collaboration with **Eatable Adventures, a leader in agrifood acceleration and innovation in Italy through FoodSeed and the Verona Agrifood Innovation Hub**, has strengthened the connection with the Italian ecosystem, facilitating the participation of speakers and startups from the country. These include internationally recognized companies such as NOIET, Asteasier, Hypesound, NOUS, Aflabox, Agreenet, PeelPack, and Alma Serum, which will showcase the role of entrepreneurship in transforming the Italian food industry and its connection with major companies, investors, and institutions. Furthermore, Italy's participation will allow attendees to learn about an innovation model based on public-private collaboration and technology transfer to the industrial sector.

With Italy as the guest country partner, Expo FoodTech 2026 reinforces its role as an international platform to anticipate the major trends that will shape the future of food. The event will bring together **250 exhibitors and more than 300 leaders and experts** from the food industry, technology centers, startups, investors, and public administrations in Bilbao to discuss how digitalization, sustainability, automation, new ingredients, and open innovation are redefining the global competitiveness of the sector.

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[About Expo FoodTech](#) (May 27 and 28, 2026, BEC-Bilbao): this is the leading innovation event for professionals across the entire value chain of the food and beverage sector. Over two days, F4F – Expo Foodtech will bring together food industry professionals at the Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC) to learn about the latest solutions in foodtech, robotics and automation, processing and packaging machinery for different segments of the food industry, as well as food safety and science. It will also host the Food 4 Future World Summit, the largest European congress where you can discover the latest trends, success stories, and tools to transform the food and beverage industry. F4F - Expo Foodtech, organized by NEBEXT and AZTI, will be held simultaneously with [Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#), the only event in Spain specializing in packaging and logistics solutions for the food industry.

[About NEBEXT](#): Next Business Exhibitions (NEBEXT) is Spain's largest private organizer of professional events specializing in technology, innovation, and sustainability for various industries.

[About AZTI](#): AZTI is a science and technology center that develops high-impact transformation projects and businesses with organizations aligned with the 2030 SDGs. Specializing in the marine environment and food, it provides cutting-edge, value-added products and technologies based on solid science and research.