**Olive farming: the path less trodden.**

*Knowledge, insight and commitment: the key ingredients of businessman Moreno Barel's success*

*Although 150 million olive trees are grown in Italy, there is a significant division in the knowledge about olive grove care. Two years ago, entrepreneur Moreno Barel entered the olive growing scene, creating a unique approach to olive farming in a sector that is traditionally inherited, rather than acquired through sharing knowledge.*

The facts speak for themselves: in Italy, agriculture as a whole is worth an estimated 59.6 billion¹ euros. This statistic reflects the fact that this sector contributes significantly not only to the Italian economy, but it also accounts for a large share of jobs. Agriculture is even taught in school, with schools of agricultural, agri-food and agri-industrial sciences providing students with the opportunity to explore how to care for and harvest crops, and how to process agricultural, agri-food and agri-industrial products, combining traditional methods with advanced technology*².*

With an astonishing 150 million olive trees³ grown in Italy, many of which are centuries old, olive oil is a flagship product of Italian agriculture. Nonetheless, olive growing remains a 'specialty' passed down through generations with there being hardly any formal training.

This division of knowledge makes it difficult for innovation to spread and for new growers to enter the scene. One of them, businessman Moreno Barel, began his journey to become an olive farmer in 2020, motivated by overwhelming passion and a desire to take on a new challenge, despite having no specific expertise in the industry. The years spent as CEO of his company, PET Engineering, based in San Vendemiano, northern Italy, have taught him what it takes to be a successful businessman, how to strive for excellence and acquire the necessary skills, but not how to care for 3 hectares of olive groves, which are the backbone of his *Il Mercante d’Olio* olive oil business.

To lay a solid foundation from which to grow his olive empire, over the past two years Moreno Barel has attended numerous courses and seminars with experts, learning how best to care for his olive trees, from pruning to routine maintenance. Unlike the winemaking sector, which has dedicated schools, training courses and a strong country-wide focus; olive farming continues to rely solely on individual farmers' expertise and experiments.

This special mix of skills can be handed down over generations, can be acquired from training courses, or even stem from personal intuition. For his *Il Mercante d’Olio* oil business, Moreno Barel has developed his personal, special blend of skills, drawing from Giorgio Pannelli's pruning fundamentals, precious cooperation with Cappella Maggiore's oil mill and a thorough understanding of the interaction between soil and oil. Last but not least, essential input from Girolamo Martignago, a professional expert of all-natural treatments attentive to the biorhythms of nature has oiled the wheels of this fledgling business.

To be an olive grower is a path that is rarely followed, and it is a job that is greatly influenced by the distinctive approach of every single grower. Just as every type of soil and every drop of water is different, so is the approach to each olive plant and its unique characteristics.

Moreno Barel has promised that his olive groves will soon be opened to the public, with the ultimate aim of letting olive trees be discovered and appreciated by the entire community rather than being seen as a private resource accessible by few.

¹ *[Source: Italian Institute of Statistics]*

*² [Source: Ministry of Education]*

³ *[Source: Frantoionline]*

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*All the olive trees grow on the hills between Anzano and Montaner in the heart of Veneto, a region in Northern Italy, and are treated exclusively with a mix of essential oils.*

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