



ORTOEMPORIO

1 Employee

Overview

Ortoemporio is a neighborhood store located in a city council building in Crescenzago district, serving as a showcase for local food excellences from micro-producers. It focuses on organic, seasonal, and sustainably sourced products at affordable prices, emphasizing "chilometro vero" (true kilometer) agriculture to connect consumers with suppliers who prioritize environmental care, product quality, and workers' rights. The store promotes responsible consumption, offering fruits, vegetables, and artisanal preserves while fostering community ties through collaborative models. Situated in a deprived area, it addresses food sustainability by serving low-income families who cannot afford organic food, countering issues like children consuming junk food. Ortoemporio acts as an entry point for food provision, sourcing from small and family farmers outside the city and local organizations, and includes food sharing space. It is part of the broader Fuori e Dentro project, which aims to drive food transition in Milan's peripheral neighborhoods (Quarto Oggiaro, Niguarda, Crescenzago) by integrating production, distribution, and sustainable eating habits.

History and Inspiration

Ortoemporio emerged as part of the Fuori e Dentro initiative, launched around 2023 by Vitality Social cooperative in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan under the "Quartieri Connessi" program, funded by PON Metro 2014-2020 React EU. The project addresses food transition in three peripheral neighborhoods, making residents protagonists in sustainable production and consumption. Originally conceived as a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, it shifted focus due to soil contamination issues preventing urban production, instead emphasizing sourcing from external small farmers. Inspired by the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it tackles poverty, hunger, and climate change through non-speculative food models, circular economy principles, and community inclusion. The Housing Department invited local association to renovate run-down areas, integrating gastronomy to promote food sustainability in deprived zones. Ortoemporio specifically draws from the need to valorize micro-producers' stories and territorial care, creating a "vetrina del contadino" (farmer's showcase) to bridge urban consumers with rural excellence.

How It Operates

The store is open to the public without membership requirements, allowing in-store purchases, booking of seasonal boxes, or joining reserved group purchases. It sources products directly from selected micro-producers, offering fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables (e.g., organic melons, kiwis, apples, lemons), pantry staples (e.g., legumes, cereals, juices, confettures, honey), dairy, cheeses, cured meats, and gift packages. Run by Genoveva, a Romanian woman, the shop transforms excess vegetables into dishes like minestrone soup, dried veggies with spices (one-year shelf life), and other zero-waste preparations, educating visitors on waste prevention and cooking without formal licenses. Operations emphasize sustainability, with daily fresh juices and centrifuges available. As part of FED, it integrates with community spaces like Ortobar (a bar for social gatherings), Ideificio (a co-working hub), and Ortocucina (a gastronomy for ready-to-eat sustainable meals). Beyond food, it offers activities such as using an old-style weaving machine for rugs and clothes, two sewing machines, and serves as a safe space for women.

Costs

Ortoemporio incurs costs for sourcing organic products from micro-producers, including transportation and handling fees to maintain fresh supply chains. Renovation of run-down city council premises involved initial investments in infrastructure, such as kitchen equipment for gastronomy and processing (e.g., drying machines for vegetables). Operational expenses include utilities for the store and community spaces, maintenance of weaving and sewing machines, and materials for educational workshops on zero-waste cooking. As a social cooperative, it faces challenges with affordable premises for commercial activities in deprived areas, with ongoing costs for community events and women's hub activities.

Funding Sources

The project is primarily funded through the PON Metro 2014-2020 React EU program under "Quartieri Connessi," with contributions from the Municipality of Milan for urban regeneration in peripheral areas. Additional support comes from EU initiatives like FOODRUS (Horizon 2020) and Food Trails, which provide grants for food waste reduction and sustainable hubs. Vitality Social Cooperative leverages regional funds for social enterprises, including in-kind support like discounted premises from the Housing Department. Private donations and partnerships with local organisations supplement costs, with the model replicated in three Milan women's hubs through combined public-private funding.

Revenue Generation

Revenue is generated through sales of fresh and processed products, including transformed items like minestrone soup, dried vegetables, and spices, which extend shelf life and reduce waste. The store facilitates direct purchases, seasonal boxes, and group buys, with gastronomy services offering ready-to-eat meals. Educational workshops on cooking and zero-waste practices charge nominal fees, while community activities (e.g., weaving, sewing) may include small donations or sales of handmade items. As a non-profit social cooperative, profits are reinvested into community support.

Cost categories

Assets	Operational costs	Personnel costs	Administration and management
Premises (city council building, renovated run-down areas)	Sourcing and transportation of products from micro-producers	Salaries	Community event organisation (workshops, meetings)
Kitchen equipment (for product transformation, drying machines)	Utilities (electricity, water for store and gastronomy) Maintenance (equipment repair, cleaning) Packaging and processing materials (spices, drying supplies)		Marketing and supplier selection Administrative handling for group purchases and boxes