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**Manlio Di Stefano: export boom in the first half of 2021**

***Italian exports returned to growth in the first six months of the year, exceeding an overall value of 300 billion Euros. Behind this surge is not only the ability of Italian companies to propose highly innovative solutions, but also the new strategy for promoting Italian products, with a stronger role for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Asean and Asia are the most interesting markets for our companies.***

In the first six months of the year, Made in Italy is on the up and up. The overall value of our exports reached 300 billion euros, exceeding the levels reached in 2019, a year not yet marked by the health emergency. The excellent performance of Italian companies on foreign markets, especially those in the agro-mechanical sector, was highlighted by Manlio di Stefano, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who spoke this morning at the inauguration of EIMA International 2021, the world exhibition of agricultural machinery and gardening technologies being held in Bologna until 23 October.

The strong growth in Italian exports is due not only to the resilience of our companies, which have made heavy investments in R&D to develop often cutting-edge technologies, but also to a new strategy to promote Italian products, which began with the transfer to the Farnesina of the competences on internationalisation previously held by the Ministry of Economic Development. Between 2019 and 2020 the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this item of expenditure have increased more than tenfold, rising from 300 million to 5.4 billion - Di Stefano noted during a meeting with the foreign press held in the EIMA setting. Italian embassies abroad have thus become the pivot of internationalisation activities, also thanks to synergies with the ICE Agency and Simest.

"Public-private interaction is crucial. In 2020 we became aware that the only thing we could do to recover from the consequences of the pandemic was to listen to those who work. During the first lockdown - said Di Stefano - we held 14 meetings with over 140 trade associations. This led to the 'Pact for Export', which made new tools available for internationalisation. We are reconvening these meetings to take stock of this experience".

The initiatives to support exports and promote Italian products are aimed at mature markets, where the strategy being pursued is to consolidate the positions of our companies, but above all the Asean area (South East Asia and the Pacific) and the rest of the Asian continent. Italy signed a strategic partnership agreement with the ASEAN member states in 2020. The undersecretary went on to say that Italy is one of the few countries in the world that can boast very close cooperation in this area of the world, which is so important from an economic and production standpoint. Made in Italy is also looking at Africa where, however, the penetration of Italian companies faces political and financial barriers.

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