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**Food safety:**

**Kenya focuses on agricultural mechanisation**

***The population of the African country has gone from 16 to 55 million in just 40 years, with a cultivable surface area of no more than 20% of the national territory. The acquisition of mechanical technologies to improve land productivity and make better use of the few available water resources is crucial. Italian-Kenyan cooperation in the sector is growing. Presentation of the 45th edition of EIMA International, the exhibition of agricultural machinery that offers the most suitable technologies for the country's needs.***

The 45th edition of EIMA International - the great exhibition of agricultural machinery to be held at the Bologna Fairgrounds from November 9 to 13 - was presented this morning in the Kenyan capital Nairobi at a press conference promoted by ICE – Italian Trade Agency and the Italian federation of agricultural machinery manufacturers FederUnacoma. The meeting - which saw as speakers the Director of ICE in Addis Ababa (responsible for Kenya) Riccardo Zucconi, the First Secretary Commercial of Embassy of Italy in Nairobi Giacomo Montemarani, the President of FederUnacoma Alessandro Malavolti, and the Deputy Director General of FederUnacoma Fabio Ricci - was an opportunity to focus on the technology needs of a country like Kenya, which aims to increase agricultural productivity to ensure food security and develop trade, but which must come to terms with an unfavourable environmental and geographical context. Most of the country's territory, it was noted during the conference, consists of arid and semi-arid soils, while only 20 per cent of the land presents good conditions for agricultural production. The yield of the primary sector is conditioned by the pedological characteristics of the soils, and by weather and climate variables. The Central East African country, one of the most affected by the consequences of global warming, is facing repeated and prolonged periods of drought, which weaken the productive capacity of a sector that is all the more strategic because it is called upon to satisfy a rapidly growing demand for food. Between 1980 and 2020, Kenya experienced a very substantial increase in population, from just over 16 million to about 55 million, and this, ICE Director Zucconi explained at the press conference, represents a major critical issue for local agriculture. The need to guarantee the sustenance of an increasingly large population has favoured not only the parcelling out of land with the highest agricultural potential - Zucconi added - but also the cultivation of the driest, and therefore most “at risk”, marginal land. In the coming years, the demographic growth trend is expected to continue (in 2039 the population will reach 81 million), causing food consumption to increase even more, and it is precisely to tackle this situation that in 2019 the Kenyan government launched a wide-ranging multi-year programme (from 2019 to 2029), aimed at strengthening agriculture. Among the lines of action identified as priorities are the adoption of irrigation systems that guarantee the necessary water supply for crops by optimising the use of water, and the implementation of the agricultural machinery fleet with latest-generation vehicles that enable optimal management of production factors.

For the specific characteristics and needs of the Kenyan agricultural sector - said the president of FederUnacoma, Alessandro Malavolti - an exhibition such as EIMA International, the first in the world in terms of international calibre and breadth of range, can represent a fundamental rendez-vous, since it can offer models and systems perfectly suited to local realities. To date about 1,500 exhibiting companies have confirmed their participation, with a total presence of about 50 thousand models including mechanical equipment and components, guaranteeing almost total product coverage. The Bologna exhibition is divided into 14 specialised sectors and 5 theme shows, respectively dedicated to components (EIMA Components), advanced electronic and information technologies (Digital), gardening and landscaping (Green), bioenergy supply chains (Energy) and irrigation systems (Idrotech). Kenyan operators will be particularly interested in the Idrotech exhibition where, continued the president of FederUnacoma, more than 200 Italian and foreign companies present the best technologies in terms of plants, machinery, equipment and components that are well suited to the conditions of African countries. In Bologna, Kenyan businesspeople and buyers can find the most suitable mechanical equipment for crops such as maize, wheat, potatoes and sugar cane, which are particularly widespread in the country. Moreover, Italian-Kenyan cooperation in the field of agricultural mechanisation is already particularly solid. For Kenya - noted FederUnacoma Deputy Director General Fabio Ricci - Italy is the sixth largest supplier of agricultural machinery, after India, China, Brazil, Israel, and Turkey, with a value of exports that has increased significantly in the 2019-2021 three-year period, reaching 5 million euro. In the first three months of 2022 - continued Ricci - the growth of our exports was even more conspicuous, reaching a value of 3.3 million euro, which is more than half of what was achieved over the entire 2021 period (+220% increase in comparison to the first quarter of 2022 and 2021). According to Export Planning analysts' forecasts, agricultural machinery imports are expected to grow further, at an average annual rate of 7% between 2022 and 2025. This trend foreshadows new possibilities for strengthening Italian-Kenyan cooperation in the field of agricultural mechanisation, which never before has seemed so fundamental for the economic and social growth of this great African country.

**Nairobi, 15 July 2022**