

# THE FIRST SELF-MANAGED SUPERMARKET CAMILLA IN ITALY

In February 2019, the first self-managed supermarket [Camilla Emporio di Comunità](#) was opened in the city of Bologna (Italy).

Managed by a cooperative where the partners are at the same time customers, owners and managers, the *Emporio Camilla* is inspired by the experience of the pioneer [Park Slope Food Coop](#) created in the 1970s in New York (United States) and by the successes of the other self-managed supermarkets that operate in France and Belgium

The direct participation of the members/clients in the operations of management, storage and sale of the products guarantees a reduction of the costs and, above all, it responds to a growing demand from consumers to have access to quality products, coming from organic agriculture, from local and sustainable production chains, and that recognize and respect the work of farmers.

Following the common operational principles of these practices, the Camilla Cooperative Community Emporium works thanks to the active participation of its members, who contribute with their work and according to their abilities. The Cooperative currently has 488 members and each member commits to work 3 hours per month in the supermarket, ensuring most of the necessary tasks (management of the purchasing, development of the facilities, research of products, recruitment of members, labelling, delivery, services associated with the store). Only members of the Cooperative can buy at the supermarket. To register for the Cooperative, each member contributes a membership fee of 125 Euro.

The products for sale in the supermarket are already more than 1000. The progressive increase of the members of the Cooperative will allow to diversify the products and decrease the prices, which are already lower than in the other stores in the city.

The idea of creating the first participatory supermarket in the city of Bologna arose in 2016 in the framework of the [GAS Alquemilla](#) (*Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale* that manages direct sales between producers and consumers) with the Campi Aperti Association of farmers and biological producers of the territory. In 2018 the first 56 members





signed the Constitution Act of the Camilla Cooperative and the store managed to open its doors on February 9, 2019.

More than 1000 products offered by the Camilla supermarket are biological, sustainable, seasonal, local and fair traded. 90% of fruits and vegetables come from the network of organic producers of the Campi Aperti Association. In the supermarket website [a file presenting the relative producers for each product is available](#).

The supermarket also offers fair trade products, such as the coffee produced by a community of farmers in San Pedro Polho, in the State of Chiapas (Mexico), supported by the [Tatawelo](#) project and the coffee produced by the Kivu farmers, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by the [Kyondo Coffee](#) project.

The quality, sustainability and ethical nature of the products are certified on the basis of a regulation accepted by all suppliers and through a participatory guarantee mechanism. Suppliers fill out the questionnaires and provide information on the product, the source supply chain, the type of company and the relationship with the workers, ensuring that the products for sale have the required and agreed characteristics.

By adopting a management model based on the direct contribution of the members, a broad social base of the cooperative makes it possible to achieve in practice the objective of reducing the costs of goods on sale and the Camilla Cooperative continues to implement initiatives to involve new participants.

[The network of more than 30 participatory supermarkets](#) implemented in France shows the great potential of this innovative way of managing the distribution of food and basic consumers goods. In particular, by developing short commercial chains with local producers, these participatory supermarkets represent a solution of great relevance to strengthen territorial development processes. Furthermore, the continuous increase of the partners in the ongoing practices has shown that the commitment of members to work directly for 3 consecutive hours per month at the supermarket is compatible with the work shift of most people

The management system adopted by these innovative supermarkets can be replicated in all cities and countries where the cooperative movement is already developed and where the cooperatives have access to funds for the initial investments of the projects.

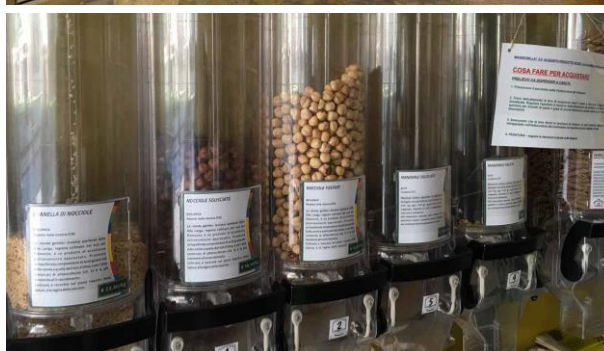
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