

10/11/18

Diffusione: stampa e web



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## 'If you strike one, you strike all. The fact that we are in it together gives us more strength'

Annalisa Fiorenza, member of the Goel farm co-operative



Annalisa Fiorenza at Rome's Esquilino market

**T**he Mafia's infiltration of the food chain seems depressingly comprehensive, but there are pockets of resistance. In some areas, farmers have banded together in consortiums. In Calabria, one of the poorest regions in Europe, activist Vincenzo Linarello founded Goel, an association of 30 organic Mafia-free farms in 2003. Its produce sells at a premium but many of its members have since been targeted by the local 'Ndrangheta. "The Mafia want to discourage us, to stop us from showing that you can be free and disobedient," says Linarello. "They want to send a message that in Calabria nothing is possible without the 'Ndrangheta." He explains how the Mob tends to approach farmers: "They will ask you in exchange for a small favour, to employ someone, to buy your new tractor from so and so. In this way, little by little you lose control of your land and then you give up."

In an idyllic location on the Ionian coast, a farm, A Lanterna, produces chillies, olives and lemons. The business has suffered seven arson attacks in seven years, one of which caused €200,000 of damage. The constant aggressions leave you "beaten down", says owner Annalisa Fiorenza. "You begin to think, 'Is it worth it?'" The 39-year-old, who grew up in the next village and is a lawyer for the ministry of agriculture, bought the farm as a passion project with friends in 2003, when she found out it was abandoned. Attacks are never preceded by any message or demand, she says. "No one tells you who they are or what they want. They want you to seek out protection, to choose to submit."

Since joining the Goel co-operative in 2012, Fiorenza has learnt to defend herself, using the attacks to create publicity and collect funds to restore the damage. "Then we throw a huge party to show that it's useless to attack us," she says. "If you strike one, you strike all. The fact that we are in it together gives us more strength."