

Food, territories, and a shared future: the WFF Italian Chapter meets Rural Hack at the Naples Technological Center.

July 22, 2025 · Redazione



A bright, warm, and intense day. A crossroads of stories, knowledge, and territories. A meeting between those who study the future and those who, every day, strive to build it in practice. It's difficult to summarize everything that happened during the **WFF Italian Chapter's** visit to the Technological Center of the **Federico II University of Naples**, but we'll try. We understand that certain encounters, rather than being recounted, should be experienced.

Where Cirio once was

The first moment of the day had a sense of roots. **Professor Domenico Accardo**, director of CeSMA (Advanced Metrological Services Center), welcomed the **30 young international scholars** (from Vietnam, Africa, China, Iran, Sri Lanka, and other countries) with enthusiasm and great empathy. He went beyond an institutional greeting, tracing a true **territorial genealogy of innovation**.

The San Giovanni a Teduccio Technology Pole stands on the site of the former **Cirio** factory, one of the most iconic industries in Italian agri-food and Mediterranean exports. That site once produced tomatoes destined for markets around the world: a production chain that spoke not only of food, but also of local identity, work, the economy, and **collective dreams**.



Transforming that area into an advanced center for technological research and development means not breaking a thread, but **weaving it in new directions**. It means recognizing that engaging in situated **science**—which begins in the local area and produces impact—is one of the most radical and necessary actions today.

A thirst-quenching research

The tour then continued through the CeSMA laboratories, starting with that of **Professor Marco Trifuoggi**, the **Chemical Laboratory for Environmental Measurements (ACE)**. Among the many activities presented, the **UNINACQUAM** project, an advanced platform for the sustainable management of water resources, was particularly impressive.



The concreteness of this project was perfectly coherent—and poetic—with a **symbolic and playful gesture: a human chain, orchestrated by researcher Angela Belletti, to distribute glasses of water directly from the bathroom faucet**. A small ritual that quenched thirst, refreshed, and made people laugh. But above all, it **reconnected water to the body, to play, to healing**.

Drones, aviaries, and sustainable agriculture

From micro to macro. In the **LIFT Laboratory**, **Professor Giancarlo Rufino** demonstrated the most advanced flight technologies to participants, with a particular focus on projects using drones to monitor and **reduce the environmental impact of agriculture**.



The **large aviary for testing drones** inspired wonder and amazement. The young people wanted to immortalize that moment with a group photo. Not just as a souvenir, **but as a testament to the fact that innovation can (and must) also be sustainable, accessible, and rooted in the real needs of the earth.**

Hands, silicone and ethical imagination

At **MarteLab** – Advanced Measurements in Virtual Reality Laboratory, attention shifted to another frontier: **soft robotics** and human interfaces. Researchers **Roberta Flauto** and **Federica Resto**, both young and highly skilled, presented several **soft robotics prototypes**, including a silicone hand that can also function as a **SoftGripper for agricultural harvesting**.



An innovation that raises **profound ethical questions**: who designs these tools? What relationships do they embody? What forms of human labor do they replace or enhance? What impact will they have on the age-old practices of sowing and harvesting? In an age of artificial intelligence and ecological scarcity, even the most technical objects become **cultural actors**. And they require **responsible design imagination**.

Apple Academy's Digital Humanism

Thanks to the generosity of **Professor Giorgio Ventre** and the talented **Matilde Cotroneo**, we also visited the **Apple Developer Academy**, an international training center for digital developers. The spaces, the methods, the communities: everything speaks of a **technological humanism** that invests in people, ideas, and the ability to transform them into prototypes useful to the world.

Rural Hack and FoodSystem 5.0: from technique to vision

The morning concluded in the heart of our **Societing** Lab, a joint laboratory with CeSMA and the operational headquarters of the **Rural Hack** project.



Here, **Professor Alex Giordano** shared with those present his vision of **FoodSystem 5.0**, a paradigm that transcends the Industry 4.0 approach (focused on automation and data) to embrace a relational, sympoietic, and regenerative dimension of **food**. In this model, food is a cultural infrastructure, a symbolic language, and a space for co-evolution between the human, natural, and **technological**.

Our researcher **Peju Sokunle** demonstrated how advanced technologies—from AI to blockchain—can be **harnessed**, that is, put to work for a just and inclusive agroecological **transition**. And **Alessia Cicarelli**, laboratory coordinator, explained how all this can be translated into facilitation and **dissemination** tools capable of increasing the potential of technology transfer.

The Map Game: geography of Emotions

One of the most intense moments of the day was the one curated by **Annette Gitau**, head of the international network of **Rural Hack Alumni**, and by researchers **Lamiaa Chab** and **Peju Sokunle**: a large map of the world on which participants placed three dots:

- one for the place of origin
- one for the place they would like to visit;
- one for the world cuisine that best represents them.

All facilitated with delicacy and depth by Professor Giordano and Annette Gitau.



A simple gesture, yet one charged with **meaning**. Because it allowed us to reflect on what it means to talk about **food** today in the Anthropocene.

Not as a static heritage or an identity to be **defended**, but as a fluid space for contamination, listening, and transformation. A **Mediterranean diet** that isn't a touristic simulacrum, but a bridge between cultures, a dynamic tale of wind, coasts, seasons, and hybridizations seen from an evolutionary, not a museum, perspective.

In times marked by climate crisis, political instability, and symbolic impoverishment, food can still be our **common grammar**. But only if we are willing to question ourselves, to allow ourselves to be contaminated, to invent new rituals. In a world of potential **catastrophes**, what we eat also becomes a form of resistance, a laboratory of **possibility**.

It's not about **choosing** between local and global. It's about inhabiting a dynamic balance between roots and routes, between memory and invention, between biodiversity and biotechnology, between age-old stories and open-source software.

In this sense, food isn't just what **nourishes us**. It's how we build communities, heal wounds, celebrate differences. It's the code through which we can still imagine a worthy, shared, and fertile **future**.

And that's why Rural Hack will continue to sow relationships, cultivate possibilities, and cultivate dreams. Starting today, we'll do so with new and valuable travel companions.

Fonte: <https://www.ruralhack.org/en/food-territories-and-a-shared-future-the-wff-italian-chapter-meets-rural-hack-at-the-naples-technological-center/>