

## SWITZERLAND'S EXPERIENCE



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### Andrea Arcidiacono

Head of the Italy/Expo 2015 Programme,  
Swiss Pavilion

### What were Switzerland's objectives going into the Expo and how have these evolved?

Switzerland was the first country to announce in 2011 it would take part and the first to sign its participation agreement. On the one hand, Switzerland would like to strengthen its bilateral relationship with Italy. On the other, we are aiming to showcase Switzerland as an attractive country with a strong sense of solidarity and responsibility in terms of food security. The Pavilion's towers are the heart of the Swiss pavilion. They consist of four floors with four products: coffee, apples, salt and water. The towers were supplied only once at the beginning of the Expo. Visitors can take as much as they wish of the four food products located in each tower. The decreasing level of each product is thus set by the visitors' behaviour. The visitor's experience is both emotional and rational, as they find themselves in either an empty or abundant space and are confronted to the reality of abundance and scarcity. We constantly adapt our communication with visitors to the evolution of the towers, while keeping in mind the main messages of education and responsible consumption.

### What have you learned in the past six months?

I have been working on Switzerland's participation at Expo Milano 2015 since 2011 when I was engaged as the Head of Italy/Expo 2015 Programme by *Presence Switzerland*, a unit of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). In the past four years I have learned a lot in terms of project management. The preparatory work was the hardest stage. As a representative of an Italian part of Switzerland, I was able to act as a mediator and facilitate communications. The Expo is a place where people from all parts of the world can come together and share important values, like solidarity, responsibility and openness. This is a unique experience that gave me a chance to grow personally and professionally.

### What image of Switzerland are you hoping to leave the visitor with?

**Switzerland is a country that shares the values of openness, solidarity and responsibility with other countries and people.** This is our key message that we would like to get across. Our objective is that visitors will recall the many different facets of the Swiss Confederation, the cantons, the towns and cities, small-holder farmers, the agri-food industry, research, culture and tourism. The Swiss Pavilion hosted different debates on food security, food safety, water management and the right to food. Within a universal exhibition which is also touristic and entertainment-oriented, the Swiss Pavilion has stood out as it raises awareness among the public and the media on the theme of responsible consumption.

### How is Switzerland's participation in the Expo perceived?

According to an initial survey conducted among a sample of visitors to the Swiss pavilion, 98% would recommend a visit. 20% said their perception of Switzerland had changed positively after their visit to



### Swiss Pavilion

the Swiss Pavilion, citing as reasons the reception they received from the staff of the pavilion, the general content and in particular the concept and the message of the towers. The Swiss Pavilion also enjoys a high media presence due to its political and educational facets.

### What was your personal highlight of the Expo?

On 22<sup>th</sup> September the Swiss Pavilion welcomed a group of homeless people of Milan. We visited together the Zero Pavilion, the Holy See and our Pavilion. This initiative was born after a meeting at the beginning of June in the apple tower: the street artists, Luca and Luis Miguel, wanted to take four bags full of apples to the homeless people in Milan. We invited them to come back with a group of homeless people to visit the Expo 2015. It was a deep and enriching experience that summarises the essence of Expo 2015: we are part of the same world and we can work together for a better future. This is the legacy of Expo Milano 2015. ■

Interviews conducted by Lia Beyeler,  
Expo Milano, 9-11 September 2015