



SUSTAINABILITY

Camera della Moda President Defends Made in Italy Ethics

- Carlo Capasa strongly defended the country's high-end fashion supply chain from claims of widespread wrongdoings.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

MILAN - Carlo Capasa is pushing back on the narrative that Made in Italy lacks ethics.

The president of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana got vocal on Wednesday defending the country's high-end fashion supply chain against ongoing claims describing it as failing to fulfill the principles of quality, work ethics and sustainability that the sector has long prided itself on.

Such allegations that have swirled in media reports and on social media follow recent cases of alleged workers' exploitation, abuse and sweatshop schemes in the Italian fashion supply chain.

The most recent links Loro Piana to sweatshop subcontractors that the brand failed to properly audit and follows earlier similar incidents for Dior, Giorgio Armani, Valentino and Alviero Martini. All brands have been put under judicial administration, with the former two brands' probes fully resolved and the judicial administration procedures lifted.

"The message trickling down is wrong and dangerous. It conveys the idea that fashion equals labor exploitation and luxury is unethical," Capasa said at the end of a press conference here to unveil the 2025 edition of the CNMI Sustainable Fashion Awards to be held in September.

"As much as it shouldn't exist entirely, the illegal supply chain is confined to a small portion," he said, noting how according to reports from the National Institute for Statistics, or ISTAT, the sector allegedly employs illegally about 30,000 workers, compared to a total workforce of 600,000 people across its industrial operations. The tally, Capasa said, is far below other industries.

"According to our estimates, irregular suppliers contribute to just 2 to 3 percent of the fashion production in the country," he added. "Brands are an injured party in these incidents. Compliant brands and supply chain players are negatively impacted by this," he offered.

"How can it be in a brand's economical interest if it covers only 2 to 3 percent of production," he continued.

"So who does have the best interest to portray this phenomenon as widespread?" Capasa questioned rhetorically. He suggested that bad publicity fueled by competitors – which he didn't name – has been ramping up as of late, aimed at denting Made in Italy's global recognition.

The executive also refuted the assumption that discrepancy between manufacturing costs and related retail prices is proof of work abuse practices, as widely suggested in reports about the Loro Piana case, said to sell cashmere jackets with a price tag of 3,000 euros, which, through its subcontractors, would allegedly actually cost only 100 euros. As reported, the luxury label has denied this claim.

"It's a strategy to hit Made in Italy as the first global producer of high-end and luxury fashion," Capasa opined.

As reported, Camera Della Moda has not been taking these issues lightly.

The fashion governing body is among signatories of the memorandum of understanding issued last May to tackle worker exploitation, undeclared work, tax evasion, and unfair contractual practices in the fashion supply chain.

Promoted alongside the Milan Prefecture, Confindustria Moda and Confindustria Accessori Moda, among other entities, the non-legally binding memorandum entails an action plan to tackle those issues. Its scope is currently limited to the Lombardy region, which observers have described as one of its weaknesses.

To this end, in a separate fashion roundtable held on Tuesday at the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, the same fashion associations and trade unions addressed the issue, urging the government to define a country-wide mandatory protocol to ensure the sector complies with fair work standards.

"Regular employment, traceability,



and compliance must become systemic standards for the sector in order to safeguard our most valuable brand: Made in Italy," said Confindustria Moda president Luca Sburlati. "A unified national auditing protocol is not only desirable but also necessary and urgent. We may not fully realize it, but we are facing attacks even from abroad," he offered.

"It is baffling that institutional players are unable to establish a mandatory nationwide system for certifying legality across the supply chain – one that ensures decent jobs and wages; compliance with the National Collective Labor Agreements signed by the most representative trade unions and employer associations; health and safety conditions, and measures to fight unfair competition. Such a system is essential to safeguard the entire manufacturing sector," echoed unions Filctem Cgil, Femca Cisl and Uiltec Uil in a joint statement.

"The survival of the entire supply chain is at stake," concurred Capasa on Wednesday.

In keeping with its mission to support the sustainable development of Italian fashion, Camera della Moda has earmarked Sept. 27 for the 2025 edition of the CNMI Sustainable Fashion Awards.

Organized in collaboration with the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, the seventh edition of the awards will be held at Teatro alla Scala during Milan Fashion Week, which runs Sept. 23 to 29.

The event will hand out 10 awards including for Craft and Artisanship; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Circular Economy; Biodiversity and Water, as well as the Groundbreaker and Visionary awards, among other prizes.

A special award – the Bicester Collection Award for Emerging Designers, promoted by the Value Retail-owned shopping destinations operator – will reward three up-and-coming designer brands.

The finalists include Institution by Galib Gassanoff; Sake, the regenerative fashion project established by Colombian designer and textile researcher Ana Tafur, and Simon Cracker founded by Simone Botte and helmed alongside Filippo Biraghi since 2019.

All three brands will enjoy a business-oriented mentorship program powered by The Bicester Collection, while the winner will have the opportunity to present its collection at The Apartment, the by-invitation-only space for private client experiences located at the Fidenza Village shopping destination or at one of the other Bicester villages.

"This marks our sixth year collaborating on this award... but our commitment to innovative design and creativity has been going on for the past 30 years, it's part of our DNA," said Desirée Bollier, chair and global chief merchant for Value Retail Management. "We have mentored more than 100 designers, and some have gone on to create amazing careers. What we do is offer them a platform to be visible across three continents – the U.S., Asia, and Europe and U.K. – where we welcome 50 million guests a year, and a mentorship program. Combining talent and visibility will allow these designers to flourish in their business acumen," she offered.

An independent jury chaired by Paola Deda, chairperson of the U.N. Alliance for Sustainable Fashion and director at UNECE, will assign all the awards. The jury panel includes artist Michelangelo Pistoletto; Federico Marchetti, chairman of The Sustainable Markets Initiative's Fashion Task Force; Chloe Mukai, head of the Ethical Fashion Initiative, and Xenya Scanlon, lead of the U.N. Fashion4Land Initiative and chief of communications, external relations and partnerships at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, among others.

"The message trickling down is wrong and dangerous. It conveys the idea that fashion equals labor exploitation and luxury is unethical."

CARLO CAPASA



