

# Italian farmers defend mozzarella cheese

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An Italian farmers' union is trying to quell fears that Italy's famed mozzarella cheese may be tainted with dioxin.

The Italian Confederation of Farmers said it welcomes safety checks on herds in the Naples area, where some grazing fields are believed to be contaminated by toxic waste but urged officials to be cautious about how the information is managed, the Italian news agency ANSA reported Wednesday.

"We intend to protect and promote buffalo mozzarella because we are convinced of the extraordinary quality of this product and we want to avoid an unjustified commercial panic, which in a very short time could provoke wide-scale unemployment and losses of millions of euros," the farmers' union said.

Mozzarella producers said only a fraction of the country's 2,000 mozzarella makers are in the Naples area.

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