



Ortolab – an innovative proposal

Changes in lifestyle demand a re-think of the retail offering.
Consider the merger of freshness and technology and...hey presto!
Here is a new shopping concept.

Supermarket and Retailer joins its contributing partner, Retail Watch from Italy, in sharing a new concept that may interest retailers who wish to take part in a new retail concept that could easily be rolled out in major urban centres.



The by-line of the business is "Fresh, selected, cut and ready to eat." The major component parts are:

- The premises are strategically located in high foot traffic areas with large windows to allow full visibility of the displays
- The range is focused on fresh produce (fruit and vegetables in their various formats for convenience shopping)
- Two self-checkouts with scales and automated payment facilities for the shopper to exit the store quickly
- A 'green box' area where produce is cut, sliced and packed for ready-to-eat or ready-to-cook purposes
 - An in-store pause area, where an iPad allows the consumer to select the products required for on-site/off-site consumption
 - Refrigerated displays of take-away containers covering a wide range of fruit and vegetables
 - Dried fruit, pulses and dried herbs on self-service dispensers
- An aeroponic greenhouse, where various products are planted, grown and finally sold fresh (with roots on) without fertilizers or chemical aids, but merely watered by clouds of moisture (the water is continuously recycled).
- Digital signage throughout the store to assist the consumer to make the best choices and shop without hindrance. This medium is also used to advise about the produce source, details about supplying farmers, nutritional information, and the fact that the majority of the produce does not travel long distances to get to the store.

Contribution by Antonello Vilardi
Adapted by Hippo Zourides

Two Italian academics, Maria Antonia Ferrari and Sara Finetto, are the authors of the concept as they completed a Masters in Retail Brand and Sales Management at the University of Milan. Their thesis follows basic modern trends in consumer preferences, such as convenience, healthy living, low carbon footprint and technology.

Located in heavily populated areas in major cities (in flatland or in office nodes), their concept store is called Ortolab and the small layout has been optimally designed to produce a high yield per square metre, while keeping expenses down to a minimum.

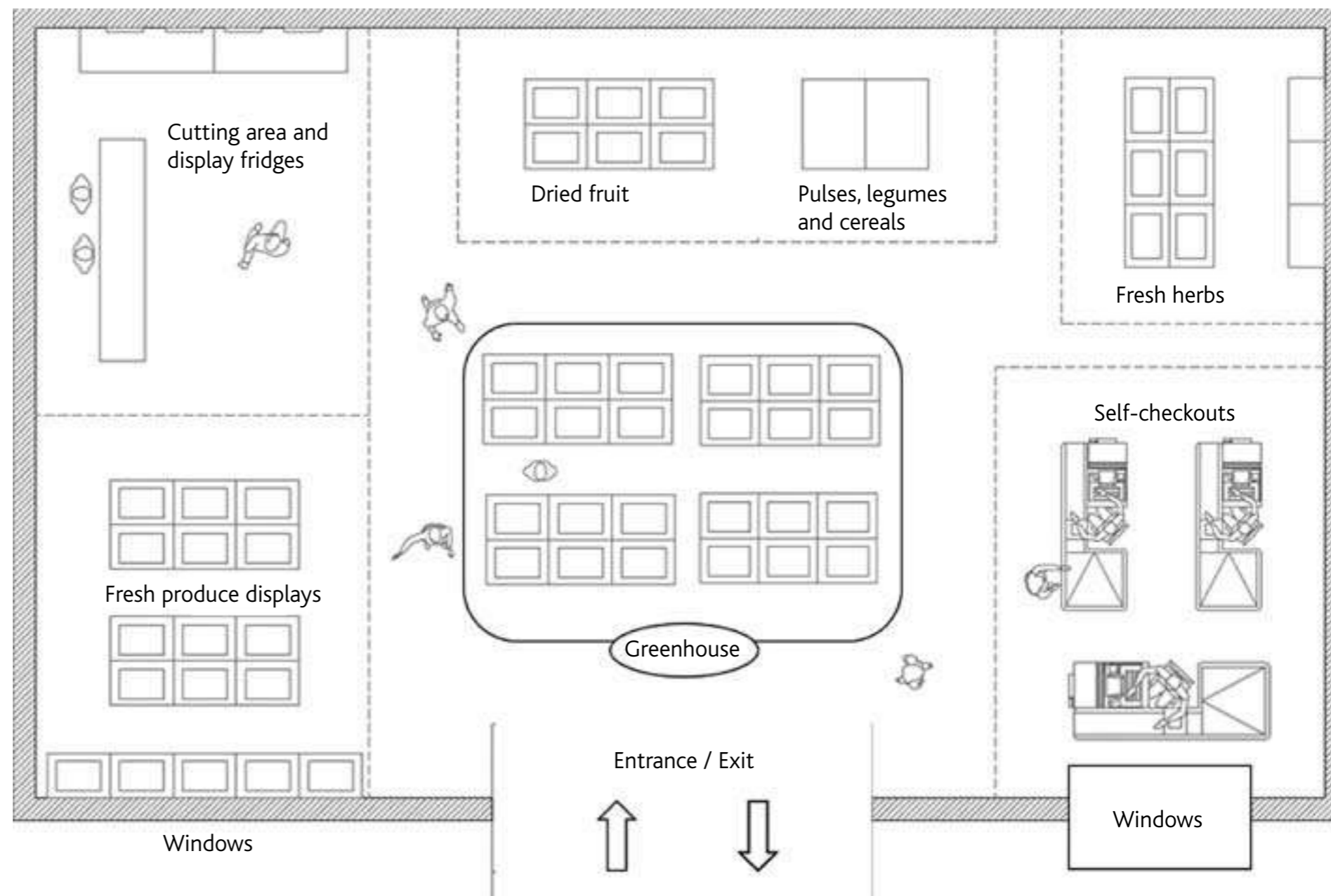
Farmers supplying these stores are fully involved in the process to the extent that any unsold or wasted product is returned for full credit, as they have means to dispose of this stock in an eco-friendly manner. No plastic is used in the store.

All organic produce is suitably identified, and consumers are made aware that the origin and production processes abide by the definition of 'organic produce'.

Seasonal produce is encouraged and the regular promotional activity, not only talks about price, but also educates the consumer on the benefits of the fresh offering.

The store is manned by only seven employees and, other than the supervisor, who has also some administration duties, every single staff member has an agronomy degree and is able to converse with authority on the products on display.

The store has a loyalty programme based on two aspects. The first is a paper board with 10 boxes. Each box is ticked with every shopping trip. As the tenth box is ticked, the consumer is entitled to either a discount voucher or a free eco-friendly shopping bag.



The second aspect is a virtual loyalty card on the customer's mobile device that records each purchase and allows the accumulation of virtual points based on the value of the purchase. These points can be exchanged

exclusively in these stores during future shopping trips. The loyalty card analyses all purchases and, based on the shopper's preferences, creates virtual discounts tailor-made for each shopper.

The concept is novel and concentrates on a very specialised niche. This ensures that it will be a profitable model that is a 'win win' solution for farmers, the retailer and the consumer alike. **SR**