

ITALY

## Governor Kemp's Next International Mission: Italy



Gov. Kemp laid out thinking behind international investment recruitment during a World Affairs Council of Atlanta event in May. Credit: Gov. Brian Kemp's Office

The country's prime minister may be named **Giorgia**, but that's not the reason **Brian Kemp** is headed to **Italy** next week.

The **Georgia** governor will lead a weeklong mission to the country to thank existing Italian investors and uncover "new partnerships," his office announced Friday.

The partial itinerary seems designed to show how Italian firms — large and small — are creating jobs across the entire state, a key point for a governor who has sought to drive economic activity outside Atlanta, especially in rural areas. The **Georgia Department of Economic Development** estimates 5,000 jobs in the state are tied to Italian firms.

“For decades, Georgia has enjoyed close economic and cultural ties to Italy,” Mr. Kemp said in a release announcing his trip, where he will be accompanied by the First Lady. “**Marty** and I look forward to building on that foundation of success during this trip and bringing our message of the Georgia Way to job creators looking to locate or potentially expand operations in the No. 1 state for business.”

The state had no shortage of targets to choose from on the first gubernatorial mission to the **European** nation since 2017.

About 90 Italian companies operate in Georgia with the largest concentration located in **Gwinnett County**. Their industries span from tomatoes to transformers and many in between.

**Luxottica**, the maker of **Ray-Ban** and **Oakley** sunglasses with a warehouse and manufacturing operation in Henry County, is perhaps the largest single Italian employer, having **announced an expansion in 2017** that brought its total jobs to more than 1,000.

The company had set up shop more than two decades before, making it one of many Italian firms that have contributed to the state’s economy for decades.

Other household names like **Pirelli Tire** (located in **Rome, Ga.**), firearm maker **Beretta (Savannah)**, and grout manufacturer **Mapei (Calhoun and Dalton)** are on the governor’s list.

“Most Italians know their names; but what strikes me more is that together with those larger companies, Georgia hosts many other Italian manufacturers of excellence, such as **Aquafil, Epta, Elemaster, La Regina, TMC Transformers**,” said **Filiberto Calascibetta**, honorary consul of Italy in Georgia, rattling off companies the governor will see during the trip. “Those types of companies are less known to the public; however they really represent an essential and very important part of the Italian manufacturing backbone.”

The honorary consul, who is also a partner at accounting firm **Roedl & Partner** working with Italian investors in the U.S., said the mission will “certainly attract further Italian Investments in Georgia and enhance business and industrial relations between Georgia and Italy.”

The governor will be joined by state officials including economic development Commissioner **Pat Wilson**.

“The governor’s decision to personally visit Italy is an acknowledgment of the quality and diversity of the Italian market and the Italians’ strong attraction to the state of Georgia and the business-friendly environment created by Governor Kemp and Pat Wilson,” said **Ryan Kurtz**, an attorney with **Miller & Martin PLLC** who also works frequently with Italian firms.

Having recently returned from a trip to **South Korea**, the governor **told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in an interview** that the Italy mission is an effort to meet “pent-up demand” after COVID-19, which delayed some planned international trips.

Georgia exported \$592 million worth of products to Italy in 2023, led by pulp and paper, while the state imported \$2.5 billion in goods, led by medical equipment, machinery and vehicles.

**Deven Cason**, vice president of economic development for **Partnership Gwinnett**, who just returned from a business mission to Japan, said the governor’s trip will add value for the county’s recruitment efforts.

“Gwinnett leads Georgia in the number of Italian companies with operations in the state, all of which create jobs for our county and infuse our local economy,” Ms. Cason said. “We are grateful that the state of Georgia recognizes the value of maintaining these global partnerships and appreciate their commitment to fostering global connections and the potential economic impact they can have on local Georgian communities.”

### **See the full existing-investor itinerary provided by the governor’s office (with Global Atlanta stories about the companies linked):**

**La Regina di San Marzano** In 2020, the company announced they would locate its first U.S. processing facility in Alma, Georgia, to manufacture pasta sauce from its world-famous San Marzano tomatoes, creating 250 jobs and investing \$20 million.

**Beretta Holding S.A.** Founded in 1526 in Italy by the Beretta Family, who has been leading the company for 15 generations, Fabbrica d’Armi Pietro Beretta S.p.A. is today an international manufacturer of commercial firearms, military weapons, and products designed for outdoor sports such as hunting, competition, and tactical shooting. The company currently operates a facility in Chatham County.

**Elemaster** Elemaster is an electronic manufacturing services (EMS) provider that has been in operation since 1978. Elemaster U.S. is headquartered in Duluth, Georgia. This production facility is dedicated to the manufacturing of printed circuit board assemblies and turn-key products destined for rail, transit, medical, and industrial sectors.

**Pirelli** In 2002, Pirelli relocated its U.S. headquarters and manufacturing facility from Connecticut, to Rome, Georgia, where it manufactures high-end tires for the automotive industry. In 2008, Pirelli added a new production line to its Rome facility, investing \$15 million. The expansion provided an approximately 25% boost in manufacturing output.

**Luxottica** Luxottica is a leader in the design, manufacture, and distribution of fashion, luxury, and sports eyewear. Its portfolio includes proprietary brands such as Ray-Ban and Oakley, as well as licensed brands including Giorgio Armani, Burberry, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, Tiffany & Co., Valentino, and Versace. Luxottica first opened its Henry County location in 1996 and announced an expansion in March 2017, adding 1,000 new jobs to the McDonough distribution and manufacturing center. The company is one of the largest private employers in the county. The company also invested \$78 million in facilities and equipment and hired positions in administration, production, and distribution.

**TMC Transformers** TMC Transformers is a multinational, Italian-based industrial group. It produces medium and low voltage dry-type transformers and reactors. In 2023, TMC Transformers established its U.S. headquarters in **Waynesboro, Georgia**.

**Aquafil** Founded in Italy in 1969, Aquafil has been one of the leading global players in the production of fibers, nylon, and polymers used in yarn for carpets and textiles. Aquafil USA Inc was established in Cartersville in 1999, and its two plants have created approximately 270 jobs within the Cartersville community. In 2014, Aquafil invested \$25 million to create its second plant and a solar installation expansion that has saved more than three million KWh of energy. Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. at the time visited Cartersville to celebrate this expansion.

**Epta** Kysor Warren Epta US Corp is an Epta Group company headquartered in Columbus, Georgia. A leading manufacturer of refrigerated display cases and refrigeration systems, Kysor Warren partners with customers to bring complete commercial refrigeration solutions to supermarkets, grocers, and other retailers across North America. They announced an investment of \$27 million and creation of 200 jobs in their Columbus facility in 2020.

**MAPEI Group** MAPEI Group is one of the world's leading manufacturers of chemical products for the building industry, such as mortars, adhesives, grouts, sealants, water proofing agents, additives for concrete, and specialty products. The company also offers concrete restoration systems, products for structural strengthening, various flooring installation product systems, and products for underground construction. Mapei maintains multiple facilities in Georgia for manufacturing, R&D, and training, including a training facility in Calhoun and a manufacturing facility in Dalton. In November 2023, the company announced an expansion of their Calhoun facility with additional space to increase their production.