

CMC TEXPAN PRESENTS ITSELF

In an Alpine valley, an engineering company has been quietly transforming its image. CMC TEXPAN has been co-operating with Siempelkamp since the 1980s. Now wholly owned by that group, it sells both to Siempelkamp and independently to others. And it feels that it is time to start telling the world

Much of northern Italy is a plain, the great plain of the river Po. It is agricultural – rice and maize are widely grown, and the local wine is excellent – but it is also where Italian industry, and in particular Italian engineering, has its home. IMAL, PAL, Longoni and the other companies we have covered so far in this Focus on Italy are all based in this wide expanse.

Go north a very few miles, though, as WBPI did, and you are in the Alps. The first Alpine valley north of Bergamo is the steep-sided narrow valley of the Serio river. A fast-flowing stream – indeed the name means ‘serious’ – its flow in the early days of industry gave power to factories, particularly textile mills. Every inch of the valley floor is filled with factory buildings, many from that era. Some have adapted to the present-day and CMC TEXPAN is one.

Established in 1962 to produce parts for textile mills – hence the ‘Tex’ in its name – within ten years it was working with Siempelkamp representatives on vibrating screens and after-press lines.

The co-operation grew – since 2013 it has been fully owned by Siempelkamp, making forming systems, chip screening and cleaners, glue blenders and the like. Until now, though, it has been something of a Cinderella, keeping itself to itself and not greatly shouting about its wares. That, though, is changing. It is due, in part, to the influence of what Paolo Gattesco, chairman of the board, calls its new ‘mother company’, Siempelkamp.

“In the past year there has been a revamping of the company,” says Mr Gattesco. “We have been working very hard. The first step was to convert an artisan manufacturing style to an investor-led one. Then we began generating a better presentation to the world.

“Our Internet site is new. At Ligna we presented a new catalogue, a re-designed logo, and announced our credo. It is ‘Machinery and Technology.’ We created it last year. Technology is at a high level in our machines.

It has already had results. “We increased our direct sales last year. Siempelkamp is our owner and we supply machines for

them; we also sell directly to the rest of the world. So we are increasing our sales department for more visibility.

“For example, China has put in many new MDF lines over the past few years. The result has been over-production. Prices have fallen; at least one MDF line is being converted to produce particleboard. We are producing a new forming line for it. That was a significant direct sale,” said Mr Gattesco, proudly.

“Last year, 50% of our sales were direct, 50% were through Siempelkamp. That is highly important to us, because on our own we are not a large company. But the Siempelkamp ownership gives us the advantage of smallness; and the advantage of size.

“Last year, our expected turnover was €19m. I say ‘expected’ because the machines cost around one million Euros or so per plant, so a sale happening in January rather than December can easily make a big apparent difference.”

And 2017 is already exceeding expectations, says the chairman.

“For 2017, the plan was for expected turnover of €22m, but already, in June, we have €11m sales and the same on the order book. The workshop is totally full to the end of the year!”

We have already mentioned the space limitations of the valley. A few years ago CMC TEXPAN bought extra premises some half a kilometre from its main factory; assembly takes place in the main factory, testing in the offshoot.

“We have 81 staff,” says Mr Gattesco. “We cannot employ more people because of space limitations. The intention is therefore to use external suppliers, and to assemble and check and test for quality here to avoid mistakes and problems. We use small suppliers, good suppliers, from here in the valley. That benefits the area and the local economy.” This is clearly something he feels strongly about as he goes on to say: “Together we still have Italian quality”.

Products include Extraction systems for storage silos, cleaners, magnetic and roller and gravimetric separators, classifying equipment (oscillating screen separators) and mat-forming systems.



Drone view of CMS TEXPAN

During WBPI's visit, a large oscillating screening machine was being put through its paces, prior to dispatch to a customer. “We have had excellent results with the machines we brought to market last year,” says Mr Gattesco. “After the first idea, we focus on checking these new innovations, to optimise the concepts and also the results. And when we have got to the higher level, in performance and reliability and excellence, we add other innovations. We finish one, then start the next one.”

Speed of progress from concept to product is becoming ever more important. It seems something that CMS TEXPAN can handle.

“Ligna runs for four days. Some South American customers came to us there and asked what they could do to reduce the impact of possible explosions. We had some ideas; we looked at them with a specialist, showed the clients some sketches we were working on; and before the end of the show they came back to us wanting an immediate quotation! That, I think, is very fast. Already we have a prototype in the workshop.”

Before we leave we visit the CAD design office, where 13 of the 81 staff members are at work. “Seven are on drawings, six are designers. But the designers are also technologists. They go to the customers and see their projects through.” All 13 seem alarmingly young. “We have invested a lot in young guys. The future is theirs. We want to build up the company for the future, not just for next year.”

This would seem to fit nicely with the company's mission statement, as proudly presented on its new website: “Keep one foot in the past, your head in the present, and your eyes on the future.” ●