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The Ocrim Milling Hub

“Not just a mill”

Constructing and operating a flour mill is an unusual, although not unique development for a flour milling equipment company to make. Named the Milling Hub, Ocrim SpA of Cremona, Italy commissioned its new joint-venture mill with the publicly listed Italian company BF SpA in the second year of the pandemic in July 2021.

And its a revolutionary concept for a milling company to adopt says Alberto Antolini the CEO of Ocrim, at the time of the opening of the mill.

“The industrial part of the mill is currently and solely aimed at sub-supplying. This revolutionary project was created to bring together the agricultural side of the industry - represented by the BF driver - and the industrial side, represented by Ocrim. The current module is the first of 10 for the Milling Hub project with a view to shortening the procedures of the supply chain.”

The project - the Milling Hub SpA, is a start-up with 51 percent owned by BF, a listed company, and 49 percent owned by Ocrim, a privately-owned company with 100 percent owned by the Antolini family – has come to fruition and lending more value to Italian-made products by combining the know-how, technology,

innovation and research of the two companies.

The strength lies in the pooling skills. Ocrim has an international track record in the production of milling plants while BF SpA is the first Italian agro-industrial group to focus on managing the entire production cycle.

The new complex represents a unique and exclusive opportunity which, as Sergio Antolini, the chairman of Ocrim points out, “allows the customer to use his own grain in a mill of his own design. It will not involve any investment, staff, maintenance or operating costs and will ensure total safety and traceability of the final product.”

BF SpA’s CEO Federico Vecchioni adds “It’s not just a mill, it’s also a competitive and winning way of promoting the value of food products on the international market ... it is a new way to forge future alliances.

“The partnership with Ocrim is not just a corporate one, it is also a partnership of skills, vertical integration, monitoring of every step of the supply chain and very high specialisation,” said Mr Vecchioni.

“No single player will be able to be sufficiently competitive in the coming years.

“Platforms, strategic alliances and size are required to win. And it is within this perspective that Ocrim and BF have agreed that their roles complement one another.”



Location

The large Milling Hub is strategically located in Cremona near the Agricultural Consortium, the main grain storage centre in the area, next to the factories of Ocrim and near the railway network and canal port.

The building is designed for two durum wheat milling lines with a capacity of 150 tonnes in a 24-hour period per line.

The project is one of a kind, created with the most advanced technologies to ensure the highest standards of quality, efficiency and food hygiene.

It is a fully automated system, capable of self-regulating with a series of sensors that constantly communicate with the control management system. 4.0 technologies are used to also control and track the progress of each batch of product.

Mr Marco Galli, Director of the Ocrim's Technology Department, says that with this evolution in mill management, "The figure of the miller will have to adapt and collaborate in the development of these technologies, offering his experience to help improve the flow of information. There will always be a need for the miller to



Visitors from the Ocrim 'Open Days 2022' visit the Hub



operate the mill and create the products.”

Other significant changes were made in the name of saving energy and sustainability, the guiding values of the project and principles on which the corporate culture of Ocrim and BF is based.

The mill is equipped with an innovative air handling unit capable of regulating the temperature and humidity inside the building, maximising the yield and quality of the final product. The air handling unit also recirculates the hot air produced by the mill itself through special filters, thereby allowing considerable energy savings.

In the interview, Mr Alberto Antolini also mentioned a number of important projects that Milling Hub has in the pipeline, such as offering the possibility of further dividing the quantity of the processed product to also serve market niches. Or the logistics relating to the receipt, transport and storage of materials, which the new complex will be able to carry out by rail, road and water thanks to its structure and geographical location.



Deadlines and the pandemic

It was not easy to meet the deadlines for delivery of the first mill.

The restrictions due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic required significant reorganisation of the work to ensure distancing between the various companies operating on site at the same time.

To speed up the work and reduce set-up times, the machines were assembled even before construction of the building was completed. This bold choice required a new organisational plan to ensure the safety of the personnel and machinery.

The work was successfully completed with the full cooperation of all the companies involved. The new complex will be put at the service of the Ghigi pasta factory. The pasta factory in Emilia Romagna will be one of few in Italy to have full control of its entire supply chain.

