



OCRIM's 6th technical conference

"Wheat, Flour and..."

On the 26 October this year, Milling and Grain magazine attended OCRIM's 6th technical conference "Wheat, Flour and..." at its headquarters located in Cremona, home to violin extraordinaire Antonio Stradivari and arguably one of Northern Italy's most picturesque historical cities. The annual event was aimed at clients, local residents, and friends in the worlds of industry, academia and politics.

The day began with more than one hundred millers and industry professionals from around the globe greeting one another over a tantalizing, Ocrim-style Italian breakfast buffet. With just one

bite it was definitive that when it came to the finest of foods, we were in the finest of hands. Indeed, having celebrated its 70th anniversary last year, Ocrim is a family-run global leader in specialized milling plants, feed mills and general cereals processing in over 150 countries. From the outset, Ocrim has specialized in turnkey projects and offers an oversight of the entire process, for example from plant construction to specialist staff training and continual client-specific after-sales assistance.

Walking the Italian Way, we were ushered along a red carpet into the conference room, which happened to be the first International School of Milling Technology founded by Ocrim in 1965. Known throughout the world for its excellence and considered one of the company's flagships, the school organizes training courses for the milling sector run by Ocrim staff as well as lecturers and experts from the American headquarters of the International Association of Operative Millers (IAOM).

The audience were warmly welcomed by Ocrim's CEO Alberto Antolini, who credited the company's Italian DNA and remarked upon the importance Ocrim places on the knowledge and culture of the origins of food "Origin is key – original products, training and skills." He bridged Italian originality with the success of the company's future "We have a strong cultural background and we are future-centric."

Stefano Mazzini, Ocrim's Commercial Director further welcomed guests, to what he described as a "special conference". Ocrim's vision was to connect continents, by presenting the second half of its conference via video in both Italy and one of the world's fastest growing economic countries boasting an average annual GDP growth rate of more than 10% for the last decade, Ethiopia.

Stone mills and alternative flours

The morning's debate on 'Stone mills and alternative flours: nutritional pros and cons and food trends' was chaired by Lorenzo Cavalli, President of the Italian association of milling industry technicians and boasted the following panel of industry experts:



- Marco Galli, Technological manager in Ocrim
- Alberto Figna, Owner of Molini Agugiaro & Figna of Parma
- Filippo Drago, Owner of Molini Del Ponte
- Simona Digiuni, Nutrition and biogenetics University of Parma
- Marco Tesini, Nutritionist specialized in food science, Bologna

The opening speech was given by Stefano Ravaglia, Head of research and development at Società Italiana Sementi, a leading supplier of seeds, who reminded the audience of the importance of correct breeding and the need for dynamism “given the challenges of mother nature.” He assured us that SIS are constantly researching the genetics of wheat such as its specific protein content and what the ramifications of gluten free wheat are, concluding, “In modern breeding, we haven’t lost anything.”

Lorenzo linked this to the influence of consumers within the industry, stating that “consumers are more and more demanding, asking for healthy, top quality food.” He then steered the grounds for the lively debate that was to follow, to the fact that today we have two ways of milling flour– stone ground and industrial.

Questions were put forward such as: although stone milling produces significantly less flour per hour than roller milling, does the flour taste better? Similarly, another key question emerged: which is healthier – whole meal or refined white flour?

Without confirming either method as superior, Marco Galli commented on the common misconception that suggests because industrial flour goes through a number of different stages, it is being mistreated, whereas in stone milling, there is only “one path” so it is better. He corrected this by saying that “In industrial milling, wheat has time to cool down between stages which is not possible in a stone mill.”

He further highlighted the potential dangers of repeating what



our ancestors did because of the many risks wheat has and how they can be avoided thanks to modern machinery such as the use of industrial optical screening.

Owner of Molini Del Ponte, Filippo Drago, said that his company aims to “combine tradition and technology” and does so by controlling the quality of wheat with cutting-edge Ocrim machinery but using only the stone-milling method for grinding because “we like the taste more.”

Nevertheless, based on her pioneering research on processing systems and food safety guarantee, nutrition and biogenetics researcher from the University of Parma, Simona Digiuni injected the concept that “We need to understand how to remove toxins such



as pesticides and heavy metals before making the flour.” Simona continued to say that based on her analysis, she did not find it to be true that stone milled flour was higher in fibre content and even suggested “It depends on personal taste and not nutritional value.”

It was further contended by members of the panel that although stone milling is extremely useful in terms of flexibility, its incredibly slower production rate would mean that we’d have 3.5 billion hungry people if only ancient mills were used, whilst hardly anyone would be able to afford it. Similarly, for the sake of consistency, which the industry demands, it was suggested that stone milling could never provide this and would therefore only remain to be a niche market.

Further to this, nutritionist specializing in food science, Marco Tesini, stated “I cannot recommend whole meal products necessarily – I think it is a combination of lifestyle choices that improves health.” He added that it is “hard to tell” what the effects on children’s health from organic products would be because “effects occur over years.”

Using pasta as an example, he added that it’s not enough to rely on eating whole meal pasta, and that instead we must also consider what we are adding to the pasta and the order in which we are consuming different types of foods in a meal, because these things have just as much effect on whether the nutrients are being used in the pasta itself, such as the release of glycerol in the bloodstream. Stefano Ravaglia further criticized organic products suggesting that “they are much more exposed to seasonal events and do not guarantee absence of heavy metals.”

Finally, consumer reliance upon marketing in today’s world was addressed by expert miller, Maurizio Monti who stated, “Consumers today must be informed, in order to make an informed choice” because as Lorenzo observed “I think consumers are now led by marketing, in fact I am certain.” Marco Tesini further added that whilst “At school there is a lack of food education, for it presents only calories”, “It is also hard to change peoples’ beliefs from what they think is right already.”

As the morning’s animated and thought-provoking debate drew to a close, Ocrim’s guests were treated to a world-class, four-course selection of delectable Italian pastas, salads, deserts and popular polenta served with succulent braised beef. The food was complimented with the finest of Italian wines and creatively served in Ocrim’s warehouse itself.

Conversations around the table turned to the history of Italian techniques for making food that have been passed on and improved from generation to generation. Such passion for Italian food seemed to fill the room and it reflected Ocrim’s constant drive to ensure that the best food that Italy has to offer the world is being created and shared.

Italian Food DNA: Italy – Ethiopia

After lunch, thoughts turned to precisely how Ocrim is working to ensure that its expertise Italian products are utilized and shared with the world and more specifically, within Ethiopia. Dialogue between the countries began in 2011 with Italian initiatives focusing on durum wheat and pasta production and companies focusing on Ethiopia, as a country offering ample opportunities and work.

Reaching an audience of hundreds in Addis Ababa and Cremona, the main focus of this conference, was the food of tomorrow given the earth’s limited resources of the future. It centered upon ‘High quality production for the growth of the agricultural sector and customer health’.

Among the authorities invited to the summit in Addis Ababa were Mebrahtu Meles, Deputy Minister for Industry in Ethiopia, Endalkachew Sime, General Manager of the Chamber of Commerce in Addis Ababa, and H. E. Giuseppe Mistretta, Italian Ambassador in Ethiopia.

Ocrim’s vision is to continue to become an observatory on the wheat and flour value chain, as well as on industrial and commercial partnership opportunities between Italy and Ethiopia in the agrifood industry.

Alberto Antolini announced in Cremona that “Ocrim are looking at the world in a new way” and that “returning to the origins is the only way we can achieve a shorter supply chain.” He added that Ethiopia is “a chance for Ocrim to share its products.” Meanwhile, his brother and Vice President of Ocrim, Sergio Antolini, announced in Addis Ababa that Ocrim “seeks quality in a place of the world considered to be the cradle of humanity.”

Observing that African agriculture needs to be modernized, Giuseppe Mistretta commented, “Agriculture is one the greatest assets of this country (Italy)” and that “Ethiopia is a very important land of opportunity that we want to make fresh investment into the agro industry sector.”

Chaired by Alessandro Milan from Il Sole 24Ore, the Italian event saw the participation of world-class figures from the industry such as the President of Federalimentare, Luigi Scordamaglia and CEO of Bonifiche Ferraresi, Federico Vecchioni. A Q&A on the ‘Opportunities for industrial and commercial partnerships in the agrifood industry between Italy and Ethiopia’ took place with top ranking speakers from businesses in both countries.

Tiberio Chiari, Head of Agricultural Value Chains Project of AICS in Florence also spoke about the ‘Quality and safety of agricultural supply chain and food value in Ethiopia’, whereas Andrea Ghione, Senior economist from AICS in Addis Ababa analyzed the financial instruments for partnership development. General Secretary of Coldiretti, Vincenzo Gesmundo supported Federico Vecchioni’s speech and praised the Antolini brother’s foresight since it has put Ocrim inside a chain.

In Ethiopia, the President of Ethiopian Millers’ Association, Taha Hassen Mohammed discussed key issues and development goals of the milling industry in Ethiopia, whilst Sergio Antolini focused on the advanced milling technologies of Ocrim and the company’s experience in Ethiopia.

To conclude, when considering that the future of entire communities is at stake, Ocrim’s aim is to therefore integrate Italian technology within Ethiopian agriculture, with the greater longer-term objective of increasing agricultural independence within African countries at large.

Italy and Ethiopia 2016 First Captains of the Year awards

Following the live video-conference between Cremona in Italy and Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia, and armed with the intention of promoting Ethiopia and its captains of industry, Ocrim set out to recognise the commitment of Italians and others who have not only made themselves highly regarded for their entrepreneurship in food processing, but also for their creativity and taste.

Presented at the Hilton Hotel Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, 'The Captains of the Year' awards were given in recognition of a plethora of qualities indicative of excellent business acumen.

This initiative was created to strengthen mutual esteem and cooperation between these two countries as an initiative regarding the staples of Italian food.

The men and women who took to the stand included top managers of organisations who persevere and strive daily to steer their company on the correct course and subsequently sustain the careers and livelihoods of many others.

Featuring both Italian and Ethiopian leaders and businessmen and women, who were not only selected from those who have recently focussed on Ethiopia, but who have lived in and loved the country in the past decades. Inspired by a heady mixture of professionalism and commitment, the speakers shared their experiences with the assembled audience; with each anecdote characterised by a certain

something that makes them both unique and unequalled in their profession.

The 'Captains of the year – Italy-Ethiopia 2016' awards serve to provide a proud example of the levels of recognition that has come to embody the qualities displayed throughout high-level entrepreneurship in Italy for the past 21 years. Based on journalist and editor Fabio Raffaelli's idea, the award in Ethiopia aims to strengthen the great understanding between two countries that clearly have a great deal in common.

Strongly supported and sustained by the Italian Ambassador in Ethiopia, his excellency Giuseppe Mistretta (who thus renews his commitment to the growth of local agriculture and the improvement of consumers' health), the first edition of 'Captains of the Year – Italy-Ethiopia 2016' focused also and foremost on the role of Italy and its companies in the wheat supply chain in Africa.

In fact, along with the local awarded people in the name of excellence, like Taha Hussen Mohammed, the President of EMA the Ethiopian Millers Association and Abeba Tesfaye Meteku, a brilliant female entrepreneur from the Girum Food Complex.

Set amongst the awards for native Ethiopians, were those presented to Italians who have successfully created companies that still exist in Ethiopia today. Paolo De Francisci, captain of the fresh pasta in his Pastificio Bottega Italia and Adalberto Frezza, who launched the Novis supermarket chain which specialises in Italian food products, as well as Gaetano Cristiano, who is currently the Director of the Ethiopian Airlines Catering Service all received awards that recognise their contribution to the forging of Ethiopian-Italian relations.

We must also not forget Linda Marchetti who offers a favourite place to eat for Italian food lovers for the past 35 years in Ethiopia. Following the success of restaurants conceived as a crossroad of



experience and traditions, there will be Elias Ketema Sima, the prize-winning proprietor of another food temple, Gusto Ristorante.

Going back to the main topic, Agriculture and Food, the jury then turned the spotlight on another major representative of the industry, Tafa Jobie Bedanie, who is in charge of the plant research at Oromia Agricultural Research Institute (OARI), Ethiopian scientific advisor for the durum wheat cooperation project.

After, Kassa Dawit Oma, the undisputed leader of the flour production industry, spoke about his experiences within the KOJJ Food Processing Complex, a company that concentrates on, "higher production levels and quality standards."

Last but not least, the key reason behind the choice of Mohammed Umer Bati (Dire Union) for an award was that he has a proven track record of being "a strongly committed player," whilst working for the aggregation of small farmers in order to meet the industry's growing durum wheat quality demands.

A special creativity prize was also awarded to Manager of Village Industry Camillo Calamai, who is a trendsetter offering sophisticated leather items from his village's industry.

"Exemplary Italian and Ethiopian men and women," according to Fabio Rafaelli, forge "a future path that follows a future vision for these two countries. They are not only, dreamers and idealists, but also more concretely, bridges for a future made of excellent and constructive relationships between Italy and Ethiopia." ☺



Ethiopia's Minister of Industry, Mr Mebrahtu Meles, addresses the audience both in Addis Ababa and Cremona in Italy by video-link



The audience in Addis Ababa swelled to over 100 during the Italy-Ethiopia video-conference hosted by Ocrim of Cremona that included the technical conference on stone mills and alternative flours, High quality production for the growth of agricultural sector and consumer health and the award ceremony for 'Captain of the Year - Addis Ababa'



Sergio and Matteo Antolini at the video-conference in Addis Ababa



Award winners: Camilo Calamai, Aetano Cristiano, Kassa Dawit Oma, Paolo de Francisci, Adalberto Frezza, Taha Hussien Mohammed, Tafa Jobie Bedanie, Elias Ketema Sima, Linda Marchetti, Abeba Tesfaye Meteku and Mohammed Umer Bati. At centre is Minister of Industry in Ethiopia Mr Mebrahtu Meles