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THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE WATER MANAGEMENT DURING THE MILLING PROCESS

by Eloisa Martino, communications manager at OCRIM

On November 4, 2016 OCRIM S.p.A. organised an important technical meeting, at the Il Cicalino estate in Massa Marittima (Grosseto), to discuss about the importance of water and its management in the milling process.

Addressing the audience, Alberto Antolini, CEO of OCRIM, stated that “the aim of congressional events is to create a unified spirit and therefore to share skill and knowledge”. The purpose of the event, explained by Antolini, was to bring together, in a single location and for an entire weekend, mill owners, technologists and experts in the milling sector from across Italy.

It was not, therefore, simply a four-hour conference on a specific topic, rather, the meeting of ideas belonging to people who do not normally cross paths in their day-to-day lives or at least not frequently, each one with his/her specific background of experience and points of view to share with the others.

In his opening speech at the convention, Stefano Mazzini, commercial director at OCRIM, referred to the concept, mentioned several times at the previous edition “Grano, Farina e...” (Wheat, Flour and...), of the importance of the raw material, wheat. He explained that OCRIM no longer intends to be a plant-engineering/mechanical company but, thanks to its partnership with Bonifiche Ferraresi S.p.A., to actually set the standards in terms of the entire production chain as well, confirming a new forward-looking trend. This is a challenge that OCRIM has recently taken on, and that it strongly believes in.

Marco Galli, technological director at OCRIM and Maurizio Monti, founder of Miller’s Mastery, were the two expert speakers of the technical day. Both presented theories and arguments based on their personal instruction and experience.

Marco Galli focused particularly on grain preparation before processing, how to manage it in the conditioning phase, which, as per the procedure, changes depending on the type of wheat. Galli states that “the entire conditioning phase is extremely important because, once the grain is being processed there is no turning back”. Therefore the wheat will retain any errors made during conditioning.

On the other hand, correct conditioning can balance and correct any limits over the course of grinding. The technology being used is of primary importance, states OCRIM’s technology director, since mechanical solutions, together with a careful study and analysis of how grain behaves during pre-soaking and conditioning, are crucial for achieving the right results. Automatic soaking with OCRIM’s “MGA” system makes it possible to monitor, correct and change the amount of water that is delivered. The real technological revolution of this system consists in the

possibility of its installation and use in the second conditioning phase (on top of the first).

This is possible thanks to its unique reading technology. The “MGA” “NIR” system also detects the protein content of the grain, upstream, thereby also making it possible to automatically manage wheat mixes based on protein, thereby achieving complete traceability of the conditioning phases. It nonetheless remains necessary to set the final humidity of the wheat beforehand, depending on the needs and values that you wish to obtain with grinding.

Marco Galli gave an extensive presentation of both problems and solutions, also replying to questions from the various mill owners in the audience.

With his presentation, Maurizio Monti focused on the importance of grain hardness and the impact this has on the absorption of water in the flours. As one can imagine, grain hardness depends on many factors: the soil and therefore the geographical area as well, climatic conditions and type of crop.

Monti also spoke about the issue of moulds in flours, due to the addition of water. He stated that controls need to be conducted to offer suitable prevention to avoid the formation and/or future occurrences of contamination. This entails a sampling logic, as well as correct monitoring of the incoming product so as to observe the parameters required by law. Indications were also provided on what to do if the legal limits are exceeded.

Maurizio Monti is a technologist/miller with a long-standing and considerable experience in the national milling industry. He is known far and wide for his professional skills and pragmatic approach to his job, but also for his people skills and charisma. In fact his book “*Appunti Di Un Mugnaio – La macinazione non è arte, ma scienza e tecnologia*” (Notes from a Miller - Grinding is not an art, it is science and technology) was published this year.

Over the course of the convention Marino Scarlino, former professor at the Istituto Arte Bianca in Turin (Institute for the Art of Baking), felt compelled to express his opinion on Maurizio Monti’s book, considering the work not only a container of information, but “a book that offers knowledge to millers but also to the entire second converting category: companies and tradesmen”.

Scarlino, thanking OCRIM for this highly productive opportunity to gather the industry together, underlined the importance and strong suits of the company’s milling school, a project that has done and given a lot for/to the industry for many years, and for the creation and consolidation of the skills of those who attend/have attended it.

Initiatives such as this provide the awareness of how important it is to share concepts because this experience can only lead to the development of great projects. ●