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# MIP

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ITALIAN MACHINERY - ALL INDICATORS ARE GOOD FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR ■ GREEN TECHNOLOGIES ON DISPLAY IN 2022 ■ UPCYCLING IN THE MOST COMPLETE SENSE ■ THE NEW FRONTIERS OF MEDICAL TPE

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Managing director of the Datwyler healthcare plants and activities in Italy, the new president of Assogomma, Livio Beghini, has spent his entire professional life in the rubber world, to which he is linked by consolidated professional relationships with local companies

INTERVIEW WITH LIVIO BEGHINI

# PROGRAMME AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW PRESIDENT OF ASSOGOMMA

CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND LEARNING, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT, TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CERISIE'S LABORATORIES AND MAXIMIZATION OF RECYCLABILITY OF RUBBER SCRAPS AND WASTE ARE THE FIVE FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES OF LIVIO BEGHINI'S PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME

**O**n June 30, during the annual assembly of Assogomma (Italian Rubber, Cables, Wires and Similar Manufacturers' Association), Livio Beghini was elected president for the four-year period 2021-2025. Beghini, who takes over from Matteo Battaini (Pirelli), thus continues his journey in Assogomma and Confindustria during which, for two consecutive terms, he was a member of the General Council of Assogomma and is still a member of the Rubber-Plastic material groups of Assolombarda and Confindustria Vicenza.

For many years, Beghini has been managing director of the Datwyler healthcare plants and activities in Italy. With more than 7000 employees, Datwyler is a leading provider of high-quality, system-critical elastomer components for attractive global markets such as healthcare, mobility, food & beverage and

general industry. Livio Beghini has spent his working life in the rubber sector and, in particular, in companies that manufacture technical articles. For many years he has actively contributed with a spirit of enterprise to industrial associations, but also through educational initiatives in higher education institutes and universities.

On the occasion of its annual assembly, the association asked the new president some questions to find out what he thinks about the situation of the sector and his plans for the newly inaugurated four-year period.

**FIRST OF ALL, CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW ROLE. BEING PRESIDENT OF AN ASSOCIATION LIKE ASSOGOMMA, THAT REPRESENTS A STRATEGIC MANUFACTURING SECTOR, IS CERTAINLY ALWAYS CHALLENGING BUT**

**IT IS EVEN MORE SO TODAY IN THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISIS THAT IS PROFOUNDLY IMPACTING NOT ONLY ITALY BUT THE WORLD AS A WHOLE, BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE ITALIAN RUBBER SECTOR? WHAT ARE TODAY'S MAIN ISSUES?**

"Thank you very much for the well wishes and yes, I agree that being president of Assogomma is certainly a challenge. A challenge that I gladly accept, hoping to do my best for a manufacturing sector in which I have grown professionally and which I consider an Italian treasure that we should all be proud of.

The rubber sector has certainly gone through a critical phase with the pandemic which, unfortunately, we cannot say is behind us yet. Production was brought to a halt in early 2020

because it was considered a non-essential sector, and only the commitment and effort of companies and the association enabled us to turn this decision around. The year 2020 ended with a significant reduction in production, -17%, to which technical and pneumatic articles contributed equally and which was substantially in line with the trend of other European rubber manufacturers, but was actually better than the German and French markets.

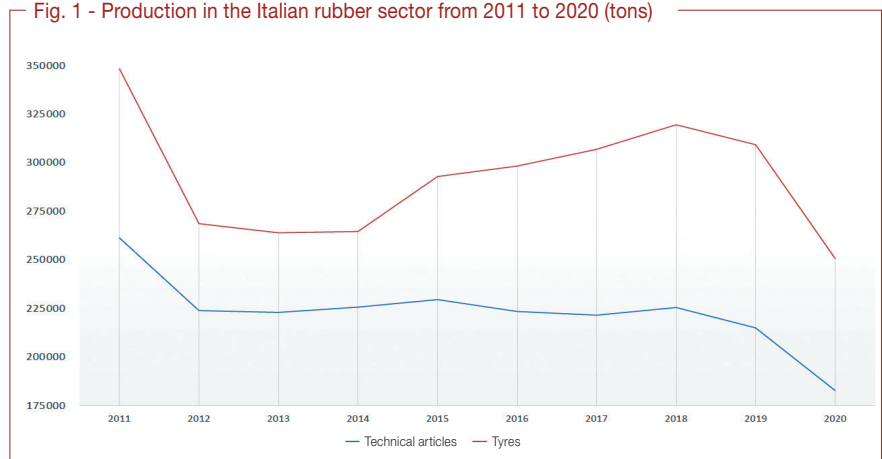
Of course, since rubber has so many uses, the type of product and the market served lie behind the difference in the accounts at the end of the year. Today, the situation has changed for the better; at the beginning of the new year, we saw the first signs of a recovery both in Italy and globally. Our sector has responded well but it has been strongly penalised by the steep rise in the cost of the raw materials. In these difficult months there was a concentration of low availability of inputs, price increases, increases in transport costs, but also an increase in demand for intermediate goods as a result of the restart of the international production chains. All this translates into companies struggling to cope with the recovery and that are often forced to reduce their profit margin to maintain their market share.

The question, today, is therefore that of dealing with the contingent situation, albeit holding a new vision of the future which also embraces the opportunities arriving from the European Union that aspires to spur civil society and industry towards concepts of sustainability, digitisation and upskilling to become less polluting, more technological and informed countries and, consequently, more competitive globally”.



Manufacturer of caps and rubber seals for pharmaceutical packaging, Datwyler is a Swiss company, but with two production plants in Italy (in Pregnana Milanese, Milan, and in Montegaldella, Vicenza)

Fig. 1 - Production in the Italian rubber sector from 2011 to 2020 (tons)



**BEARING THIS IN MIND, WHAT ARE YOUR OBJECTIVES AND PLANS FOR YOUR TIME AS PRESIDENT?**

“In my programme, I have pinpointed five fundamental precepts that reflect my idea on what I have already said, namely: continuous learning, digital transformation, international spirit, technical development of Cerisie’s laboratories and maximization of recyclability of rubber scraps and waste.

By addressing these precepts one by one, the association will be able to offer its companies new tools to make product development faster and more effective, reduce their production costs, grow by developing internal skills and, ultimately, improve their ability to do business in an increasingly competitive world”.

**CERTAINLY CHALLENGING GOALS! BUT LET’S TRY TO ANALYSE IN MORE DETAIL THE PRECEPTS PROPOSED; LET’S START FROM LEARNING. CONTINUOUS TECHNOLOGICAL UPGRADING IS EXPANDING EXPONENTIALLY FROM THE IT AND WEB SECTORS TO THE ENTIRE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL WORLD. THE TRAINING AND UPSKILLING OF WORKERS IS THEREFORE NO LONGER MERELY DESIRABLE, BUT NECESSARY, FOR COMPANIES IN A TRADITIONAL SECTOR SUCH AS THE RUBBER SECTOR. HOW DO YOU INTEND TO ADDRESS THESE NEEDS THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION?**

“Thank you for the question, because the issue of learning is a subject that is particularly close to my heart, to which I am personally committed and for which I have also received specific powers from the Italian Plastic Rubber Federation as vice president. Companies in the rubber sector have suffered for a long time from the lack of technical and technological expertise, mainly due to the fact that schools and

universities have not produced enough specialists in the sector. Assogomma has had its own training programme and has been close to the Foundation of Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) for many years, and I would like to strengthen this bond, further expanding the ITS model throughout Italy, promoting new contacts with universities and, in general, moving towards a model of lifelong learning.

Companies in the sector will have the chance to take part in the training courses, as some already do, as well as welcome students who will be tomorrow’s technology experts. For sure, we will have to overcome some initial scepticism of those who see all of this as a burden rather than an opportunity, but, in this respect, I believe that I can use my personal experience to dispel doubts.

These will be the cornerstones for launching the idea of an “Assogomma Academy” that, with the right “teaching” resources and with its students, will have to make use of modern technologies for the dissemination of knowledge. I am thinking, for example, of MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and e-learning in general, consolidating a model of lifelong training for the entire Italian rubber sector”.

**LET’S MOVE NOW TOWARDS THE THEME OF “DIGITIZATION”. THE NEW EUROPEAN AND ITALIAN GROWTH AND FUNDING PROGRAMMES PAY GROWING ATTENTION TO THIS ISSUE. WHAT CAN DIGITISATION MEAN FOR A SECTOR IN WHICH MANY SMEs OPERATE? HOW DO YOU THINK BUSINESSES SHOULD INTERPRET THE TERM “DIGITISATION”, TRANSFORMING GENERIC CONCEPTS INTO CONCRETE PROJECTS? WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATION’S ROLE?**

“Digitisation, digital revolution and digital

transformation are different, but similar, ways of describing what could be called a paradigm shift. The times we are living in see the increasingly pervasive presence of technology in our daily life, and certainly in our way of doing business. In this context, being a large, medium or small company certainly means that this change has to be scaled but it does not eliminate the need to embrace a new way of thinking and acting, a new language. Issues such as the development of new business models based on Big Data analysis are now on the agenda and, even more so, analysis of production processes and development of event prediction algorithms. All these tools can be made available to members eager to learn the digital language through the association, that must be able to interpret the changes and act as an intermediary between the members and the institutions/sectors of maximum innovation, such as universities and start-ups”.

**LET'S NOW COME TO ONE OF THE MOST TOPICAL ISSUES, THE PNRR (NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN) WHICH HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND WILL GUARANTEE THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST BATCH OF FUNDS FOR ITALY. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES, SUSTAINABILITY AND CIRCULARITY BECOME "PILLARS", KEY CONCEPTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO DESIGN OUR FUTURE. RUBBER CERTAINLY HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A MATERIAL THAT EXISTS IN NATURE, BUT ITS GREEN CHARACTERISTIC IS NOT SO WELL KNOWN. WHICH POSSIBILITIES DO YOU**

**SEE FOR THE SECTOR AND HOW DO YOU INTEND TO PROMOTE THEM?**

“The question couldn't be more apropos! It is true that rubber has natural origins and, as such, sustainable. Just think that natural rubber now represents just under 50% of the world's rubber consumption for the production of tyres and technical articles. But today this strength must be further enhanced in terms of material recovery and circularity. While much has been done in the world of tyres from this point of view (a perfect example of a circular economy thanks to end-of-life reconstruction and reuse techniques), much remains to be done in the production of technical articles. I am thinking, above all, about the recovery, reuse and recycling of rubber production waste. There are two fronts on which action has to be taken: giving companies clear operational instructions to apply the regulations and identify all the recoverable material; improving existing technologies to treat waste material, so that they are sustainable also from an economic point of view. The really ambitious goal to aim for is to eventually eliminate landfill disposal, with a huge environmental and economic benefit for the sector!”

**LASTLY, WE CANNOT FAIL TO MENTION THAT ASSOGOMMA HAS ITS OWN NETWORK WITH A UNIQUE LABORATORY IN TERMS OF SKILLS AND CUSTOMISATION, THAT IS CERISIE. FOR SOME YEARS, THE PRESIDENT OF ASSOGOMMA AND OF CERISIE HAVE BEEN THE SAME PERSON AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS INCLUDES THE TWO RESPECTIVE DIRECTORS, ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE TYRE**

The development of ITS training courses is one of the objectives of the new Assogomma presidency



**INDUSTRY AND THE OTHER FROM THE TECHNICAL ARTICLES' INDUSTRY. A TEAM READY TO TAKE ON BOARD ALL THE NEEDS OF THE RUBBER SECTOR. WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR CERISIE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE?**

“As the new president of Cerisie, I have set myself the goal of maximising the laboratory's ability to meet the needs of customers by giving even more added value to companies in the sector. Companies need an advanced technical partner able to support them in their business needs, especially when these translate into the development of joint research projects with the world of universities. Cerisie has the skills needed to be the link between these two worlds, industry and research. But not only. Cerisie has both the skills and the technological equipment to further develop the field of technical advice and support, essential for companies to be able to address the problems of research and development, as well as those of technical litigation. In other words, my vision is that of a Cerisie which, with the support of the entire governance team, is committed to further growth that allows it to be not only known, but even more widely recognised both nationally and internationally”.

**PRESIDENT, THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND WE CAN ONLY WISH YOU ALL THE BEST FOR THE COMING FOUR YEARS.**

“My thanks go to the companies in the sector for the trust they have placed in me and that I hope to repay with the maximum personal commitment, backed by the structure of Assogomma, always at the service of the companies. Finally, allow me to thank my predecessor Matteo Battaini, from whom I take over a system that is already prepared and accustomed to change”. ■

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As the new president of Assogomma, Beghini will also take on the role of president of Cerisie and, therefore, has set himself the goal of maximising the laboratory's capabilities to meet customer needs, giving even more added value to companies in the elastomers sector