



Via Selice Prov.le, 17/a
40026 Imola (Bo) Italy
Tel. +39 0542 607111
Fax +39 0542 642354
e-mail: sacmi@sacmi.it
www.sacmi.com

SACMI IMOLA S.C.
Albo Nazionale Società Cooperative n. A129509
Reg. Imp. BO e Codice Fiscale N. 00287010375
P. IVA N. IT00498321207
R.E.A. Bologna N. 8924
"Azienda certificata: ISO 9001, ISO 14001 e OHSAS 18001"

Sacmi takes over Defranceschi. And launches the idea of the "turnkey winery"

Long-standing international wine-making machine and plant manufacturing brand with production facilities in Mordano (BO, Italy) purchased by auction.

On the horizon, then, a new "Wine&Spirits" Division and the interfacing of all those skills Sacmi already possesses in the bottling, labelling and end-of-line sectors.

The **Sacmi** brand "turnkey" winery will soon be a reality. This is the outlook following the purchase of the **Defranceschi Spa** brand (a historic oenology machine/plant designer and marketer) with headquarters in **Laives (Bolzano)** and production facilities in **Mordano (Bologna)**, just 5 km from Sacmi Imola, its new parent company and that of the world-leading Sacmi industrial engineering group.

Until yesterday Defranceschi was the symbol of another piece of Italian industrial history swept away by the economic crisis (Defranceschi had filed for bankruptcy in January). But now, thanks to the Sacmi Group, the company has been put back on its feet in record time: the Sacmi Group, in fact, is already a leading force in the wine-making industry (and a provider of labellers, filling and end-of-line solutions). "Already, for some years now", explains **Vezio Bernardi**, General Manager of **Sacmi Beverage** and 'director' of the entire operation, "we've been developing and consolidating complete bottling lines for soft drinks, traditionally referred to as 'the PET world'. The outstanding competitiveness and maturity of this market has led to the development of top-flight technical and logistical know-how which is particularly suitable for transfer to allied industries".

Wine, in fact, is a sector with one of the highest global market development and growth potentials, from China to the USA, from South Africa to Europe. With consumption growing steadily and now set to break the **250,000,000 hectolitre barrier by 2019** (output value already exceeds **200 billion euro**) the industry is dominated by 10 countries which account for 80% of global production, with France, Italy and Spain leading the way and the United States playing an ever-larger role (in terms of both production and consumption). A market with enormous potential, then: however, tapping into that potential requires know-how and, indispensably, **established brands** with good market visibility. And this is why – after development and marketing, with better than expected results, of individual technological solutions across the entire KUBE labeller range – Sacmi has decided to grasp the opportunity of taking over Defranceschi. "Above all", points out Vezio Bernardi, "the operation proved to be extremely smooth from a financial standpoint. The purchase of the property in Mordano (the auction closed at just under **2.7 million euro**) and the adjoining land suitable for building was, in itself, more than worth the price, without even taking into account the equipment, which was in excellent condition and immediately made available to us". However, the point of the takeover goes much further: "On the one hand, to **interface those industry-related skills and solutions already developed by Sacmi** (from BAG-IN-BOX to labellers, from filling to labelling) with this new acquisition and, on the other, to **extend the product range to provide fully comprehensive wine-making solutions**, from grape presses to stalk removers, from storage tanks to raw material and finished product quality control equipment".

This means that advanced prototypes - such as NIR units and all the **advanced sensor feedback** systems - developed by Sacmi over the last few years now have new applicative potential in a future in which individual grapes could undergo automated organoleptic analysis; the same goes for advanced end-of-line systems (label production and application, case packers, palletizers) which could become an indispensable part of the new Sacmi-Defranceschi turnkey winery, providing added value that is a must on a modern market based on real-time production and sales.

The ambition? To create a true **Wine&Spirits Division**, via which Sacmi - continues Sacmi Beverage's General Manager - will provide to the industry by 'cherry-picking' the best technology and skills developed within both the Group (Beverage-Packaging Divisions *in primis*, yet also Automation) and Defranceschi itself. "The situation brought about following the collapse of Defranceschi", explains Vezio Bernardi, "allows us to choose the staff and skills within the company that bring the highest added value to the project. Indeed, in the past, several Defranceschi staff members had joined Sacmi and they are now in a position to help us achieve this new strategic goal".

Remember, the wine world is, to say the least, a peculiar one: more and more, the **winery** is changing from mere **place of production** to object of design, **status symbol** (for the producer) and **tourist attraction** (for the potential customer). "This", underlines Vezio Bernardi, "involves an array of challenges regarding the design of the machines and the tanks. The winery needs to be a 'beautiful' place that the customer leaves after having had a **complex sensorial experience** that stems both from the goodness of the product and, often more importantly, the layout of the production environment". Hence, to put this project into practice, Sacmi has established a partnership with a prestigious **international oenology lab** in Piedmont, Italy. A partnership with a dual purpose: to allow Sacmi to identify and develop the **core competences** (at technological, product and process level) needed to face the challenge posed by this industry and, secondly, to launch a process of technological innovation in the sector.

"One of the areas on which we're focusing, and already making the first prototypes, is that of ceramic barrels which could, potentially, replace both traditional wooden barrels and steel ones". This because the goals of the "new" Defranceschi – one of the few companies in the world **certified by French Champagne producers** – also includes



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that of identifying innovative wine-making solutions capable of providing not only aesthetic but also practical advantages (e.g. the well-known microporosity of wood, which preserves the wine from oxidation and contributes to its maturation, often involves side effects such as the passage of undesired substances into the wine). "And this is just one", concludes Vezio Bernardi, "of the scenarios that still needs to be explored, with that humility and determination that has brought the Sacmi Group so much success and allowed us to be a leader in several industries for over 95 years".

Lastly, it should be pointed out that this takeover also marks a 'return' to one of the Imola area's more historic industries. "The fact that it was Sacmi and not an outside company to save this piece of national wine-making history", points out the Group's General Manager, **Pietro Cassani**, "has, I believe, a dual significance. Both for Defranceschi, which is again an integral part of a strong local economy based on vine growing and grape processing, and for Sacmi, which, through this takeover, is investing not just in the future of a business but also the potential of the territory where we ourselves started out, a place that will continue to be the hub of our concept of growth and development in the years to come".