



COLDIRETTI



A EUROPEAN DELEGATION VISITS THE MATRICA BIOREFINERY IN PORTO TORRES

Novamont's bioeconomy model, the setting up of agro-industrial value chains with low environmental impact and the agreement with Coldiretti at the centre of a two days' workshop organised by the European Commission - Directorate-General of Agriculture on Sardinian soil

Novara-Porto Torres, 28 May 2015 – “An extraordinary opportunity to disseminate the concept of bioeconomy, understood as territorial regeneration, that we are creating in Sardinia. Our goal is to get industry, agriculture, the research world and local institutions working together in a complex, but concrete, project of a biorefinery integrated into the local area. This biorefinery will be dedicated to the production of bioplastics, biochemicals and proteins for animal feed from dry crops, and will see new technologies being applied and no-longer competitive industrial sites rehabilitated”, commented Catia Bastioli, CEO of Novamont and Matrìca, when hosting a 100-strong delegation of workshop's participants from all over Europe. Matrìca is the Versalis-Novamont joint venture set up in 2011 to reconvert the disused Porto Torres chemical plant to a biorefinery, implementing pioneering technologies developed by the Novamont research department.

The delegation's two-day stint in Sardinia began yesterday at the Research Centre of Porto Conte (Alghero) with the workshop “Building New Biomass Supply Chains for the Bio-Based Economy”, organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General of Agriculture.

The overall objective of the workshop was to help set up and foster co-operation mechanisms between agriculture/forestry and industry to guarantee a steady and reliable supply of renewable raw materials for the industry without compromising sustainability; and a fair income for the farmer and forest holders. More specifically:

- to engage relevant actors including farmers, forest holders, cooperatives, industries, national/regional public authorities, advisers and innovation support services;
- to identify and address technical, economic, regulatory and social barriers for the setting up of new biomass supply chains,
- to ensure sustainability of the biomass supply chain.

Participants include farmers, forest holders, cooperatives, national/regional public authorities, advisers and innovation support services, representatives from different industry sectors and clusters.

In this context, the partnership set up between Novamont and Coldiretti in Sardinia for the cultivation of thistle was chosen by the European Commission - Directorate-General of Agriculture to show a concrete business case of new biomass supply chain. The project also demonstrates the validity of a bioeconomy model based on territorial regeneration and the promotion of integrated industries in local areas while maintaining their biodiversity, with a cascade approach in the use of biomass.

All the parts of the thistle, a low-input dry crop suited to the Mediterranean climate and which grows on wild, abandoned land, are in fact used: the seeds are pressed to obtain oil, which is the raw material used to supply the Matrìca biorefinery, a protein meal which can replace the soya currently imported to produce animal feed, and a range of interesting molecules with very high antioxidant power. The vegetable scraps from the conversion process is also useful to produce the energy needed for the entire industrial process, potentially making it self-sufficient and, with a view to the future, as a raw material for new initiatives currently in the experimentation phase.

In the afternoon of 27 May, the hundred plus workshop's participants were given the opportunity to visit some local farms and see with their own eyes the results of the partnership between Novamont and Coldiretti: from the thistle fields to experimentation with the protein meal for sheep feed and the use of biodegradable products developed by Novamont, such as mulch films made of Mater-Bi and Matrol-Bi biolubricants for agricultural machinery, in accordance with a sustainable and integrated approach to agriculture.

“The involvement of local areas and farmers is the keystone for the creation and development of eco-compatible value chains which, using technological and multidisciplinary innovation, are able to sustain a new type of industrial investment while at the same time guaranteeing agricultural income,

especially in marginal areas. These are local projects with huge potential because they are able to interconnect sectors that are otherwise unconnected, increasing collaboration and respect among the various stakeholders, without which any solid construction is impossible”, concluded Bastioli.

“Sardinia cannot miss out on this chance to try to close the value chain”, declared Battista Cualbu, president of Coldiretti Sardinia. “The Matrìca project is a great opportunity for Porto Torres, for the environment, and for new jobs. As this is a plant that is already operational and Novamont has shown a real willingness to involve the agricultural sector, we feel it is our responsibility to tackle the subject of experimentation together, by actively pursuing what has already been going on for some years with the cultivation of thistle and by finding out whether we can get certification for all Sardinian production using non-GMO protein meal, giving Sardinia an exceptional outlook for the future”.

Novamont is the leading company in the development and production of bio-based materials through the integration of chemistry, the environment and agriculture. With 370 employees and a turnover of €136 million in 2013, it made constant investments in research and development activities (6.2% of its turnover). The main fields of application of Novamont's biochemicals are packaging, separate organic waste collection, retail purchasing, disposable tableware, farming, personal hygiene and cosmetics, automotive, animal accessories and gift items. In Italy, where traditional plastic shoppers are banned, all carrier bags distributed by major retailers (Coop, Esselunga, Carrefour, Conad-Leclerc, Auchan and Despar) are made from Novamont's Mater-Bi®, a bioplastic fully biodegradable and compostable according to EU standard EN 13432. The company produced biodegradable tableware and food packaging for the 2012 Olympic Games and already works with major EU retailers (among which Co-op in the UK) and many local councils (including the city of Milan and some London boroughs) engaged in the separate collection of bio-waste for organic recycling. The company has a portfolio of around 1,000 patents. It has its headquarters in Novara (Italy), commercial offices in Germany, France and the United States and operates through its own distributors in Benelux, Scandinavia, Denmark, the United Kingdom, China, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

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