



by **Elena Marzorati**

VISIT TO A BUSINESS

State of the art in the chocolate sector



ICAM, the historical chocolate company - chocolate makers since 1945 - introduces the new factory in Orsenigo, a jewel of technology and innovative solutions able to obtain an infinitely varied product, getting better all the time

For the Agostoni family, founders and still the heart and soul of ICAM, chocolate has always been a passion as well as a mission: that is why, from the very beginning, the company has always focused its activity on the will to experiment and on the ability to make choices that are often courageous and go against the trends. ICAM has followed the difficult path of autonomous production from the very beginning, purchasing prime materials directly from the source, collaborating with the producers of the machinery to develop innovative production plants and cocoa paste presses to obtain cocoa powder and butter, and organizing the distribution network to supply shops directly with their products. The intuitions of Silvio Agostoni-unfortunately deceased in 1962-have proved to be winning ones. The company, still owned by the Agostoni-Vanini family today-with the second generation active and the third generation already integrated-has remained true to the founder's values and is recognized at the international level as one of the most authoritative companies in the world of chocolate. The ethical engagement, that has accompanied the activities of the company and the Agostoni family for more than three decades, translates into important commercial partnerships built on respect, dialog and transparency: ICAM assures coopera-

tive of small local producers equitable purchase prices for the cocoa and long-term contracts intended to create a stable trade, based on a just distribution of earnings without speculation or taking advantage. Sustaining and promoting an ethical approach to business means offering better trade conditions and ensuring social and economic justice that respects people's work and protects the environment.

Among the most recent decisions that bear witness to the tendency to innovate and to the maximum efficiency of the company, there is the decision to move production from Lecco to Orsenigo. We visited the futuristic plant in Orsenigo in the company of the engineer Antonello Ercole, Industrial Director, and Elena Gaggion, Food Service Marketing. A productive unit that is striking at first glance for the strong, harmonious architecture of the building.

At the moment the ICAM has about 350 workers and a yearly turnover of 110 million euros, but the goal is ambitious: to keep on growing. For this reason the new plant has risen up, still rooted in the Como territory, not far from the place of origin. A factory that was born in the name of high technology and superior product quality. "Today ICAM is one of very few companies in the world that guarantee the control of the entire production line," states the engineer Mr. Ercole. "It's a challenging industrial approach, that allows us to reach and maintain the high-

est quality standards at every step of production. The ICAM commitment to quality starts far away, in the plantations of Central America, Peru, Ecuador, Dominican Republic and Madagascar, where the cocoa beans undergo a very accurate quality control in the hands of the growers, and continues in this modern plant, where the complex processing phases are completed, each of which requires cutting edge technology and highly specialized know-how." The new factory in Orsenigo is in fact able to offer infinite varieties of excellent quality chocolate and semi-finished products, extremely secure foods, completely traceable." In addition to ICAM and Vanini chocolate products, top of the range, and those proposed for private labels, we produce ingredients and semi-finished products both for artisans and for large industries, guaranteeing a wide range of personalization," specifies Ercole. "With this factory we plan to double the production capacity." Covering an area of 50,000 square meters, with annual production of 30,000 tons, the factory at Orsenigo guarantees the absence of cross contamination among the products, and foreign bodies (absence of glass in the industrial area, metal detectors on the line, filters, sifters and magnets in the process passages), maximum traceability ensured by an automatic, inviolable, remote-controlled system (Siematic Batch PC S7 by Siemens), in short, the most complete security. "The unit was designed



Engineer Antonello Ercole, Facility Manager

in blocks, with a zone layout," explains the engineer. "For example the first block is the warehouse: since we produce limitless types of chocolate and semi-finished cocoa products, we start from different kinds of cocoa beans, which are stored by purchase lot; furthermore, the stocking area for raw materials, totally detached from the other areas, guarantees maximum hygiene. The attention to the processing of the whole beans is one of those details that make a difference in the final quality: it allows us to obtain a more "pure" cocoa because it is free of microscopic hull residues, and thus a more authentic-tasting cocoa paste and chocolate."

Aside from the layout that separates areas with different hygiene risks, in the planning of the structure great attention was paid to environ-



ICAM'S PRESENCE ON THE MARKET

TARGET 1: Professional pastry chefs, artisans and industries

BRANDS: Icam Linea Professionale, Agostoni, Icam Cioccolatieri, Business to Business suppliers

TARGET 2: Consumers, Gourmet

BRANDS: Icam, Vanini, Licencing, Private Labels

mental impact and energy efficiency: a post-combustion system eliminates the aromas from the air, while the methane-powered trigeneration AB Energy plant guarantees an excellent result for producing electricity, steam, hot and cold water. "In this way the energy balance is in our favor, and guarantees what we need. In addition, we chose cutting-edge materials and solutions for this production unit, to ensure the contain-

ment of economic and environmental costs," declares Mr. Ercole. Visiting the factory, one is struck by the scrupulous norms that guarantee maximum hygiene, calling for continual washing and changes of clothing for the staff. The checks are constant as well, along with laboratory and sensory tests, present all along the production line in order to verify the key parameters. The production lines are designed as a

function of allergenic profiles, and all the production processes are highly automated. "The suppliers of our machinery are carefully chosen to guarantee top efficiency and functionality. These are names that represent excellence in the field: Buhler Barth machinery for the roasting phase, for the presses a 16-pot Vitali e Caucia and an 18-pot Duyvis press. In the conch room we find a Buhler Petrin mixer, Buhler 2500 refiner, and Buhler ELK conch. Heading over to the enrobing line, the brand is Sollich, while the temperers are from Sollich and Aasted. The wrapping machines are Sig, Loesch and Bosch, and the packaging machines are provided by Cama Group and Zambelli," explains Mr. Ercole. "But the second, recently added enrobing line, is an ICAM brand project all the way." Thus greater ability to compete for the new Orsenigo site, compared to the historic Lecco site.

"The new structure was planned to deal with the growing demand for products with specific characteristics," continues the manager. That is: products, both semi-finished and finished, allergen free, ever more secure and responsive to international food standards, with high level taste profiles and certifications from the most authoritative international bodies. "Our products can be personalized even for small and medium sized suppliers and our range is truly vast, including conventional, organic, fairtrade and organic-fairtrade, even sugarless and gluten-free," specifies Elena Gaggion, from the marketing division. ICAM boasts of an elevated level of personalization, with more than 100 covering recipes for dark chocolate, about 80 for milk chocolate, 25 for white chocolate and 11 gianduia, not to mention more than 3000 recipes for finished products. "It's exactly the capacity to manage any type of order, from small pastry shops to large industries, that is ICAM's strong point, offering every client the possibility of personalized aroma profiles, and more: we take care of the technical behaviour of the chocolate couverture, or the shape, the packaging...in short, we are a one-stop-shop and we count on maintaining this name even in the future, in fact if possible, thanks to our new factory, even improving it!" concludes the engineer Ercole.

