

IMAS AEROMECCANICA, SINCE 1975 HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

For almost fifty years, **Imas Aeromeccanica** has been designing, building and installing air suction, filtering and purification systems, aimed at improving the quality of air inside working facilities and reducing the impact of industrial production on the environment. The company is rooted in the Seventies, when they adopted a pioneering approach to **sustainability**. Then they specialized in air purification and filtration plants, first in the wood industry and then in mechanical engineering, followed by painting booths and complete installations for the execution of entire processes, from chip recycling to heat generation. It's a long story since **Claudio Paravidino** decided to leverage his own experience and business skills to create the company where he is still a key technical reference, as well as an excellent salesman. His role is very clear to about **one hundred people** working with him in the 18-thousand-square-meter headquarters in Ozzano nell'Emilia (Bologna) and in the branch office in Caronno Pertusella, near Milan, generating revenues of approximately **10 million euro** in 2019, with a growing export share.

"As years went by and market conditions changed, we have committed to transferring our experience and skills to several production industries", said **Luca Biscione**, marketing and communication manager at Imas Aeromeccanica. "Our original business is woodworking, we have achieved a significant export share on our production. The events of recent years have driven us to a transformation/evolution, turning into a company with cross-industry and skills and a market-oriented approach. So, woodworking equipment has been complemented with plants for different industries: from mechanical engineering to foundries, from plastic and rubber to inert and composite materials, from glass to food... Without false modesty, I can claim that the "**circular economy**" concept has been part of our business for a long time. What used to be a cost for woodworking shops, i.e. waste chips, we have turned it into a raw material for the so-called "**heat cycle**", a process designed to generate heat and offer significant savings on gas and electricity for the heating of working environments..."

What's the plus of Imas Aeromeccanica and the key differentiation from competitors?

"It's easy to say: **we make everything in house**. Process management and a 95 percent share of in-house production enable us to manage all sorts of requests, with full control on all workflow stages: from order acquisition to project development, from the construction of all components to mounting and logistics... We have operations in several European and extra-European countries, where we have signed agreements with resellers in different segments".

Let's talk about your portfolio...

"From laser cutting to bending and welding, from carpentry to piping and coating, from assembling to logistic management, over the years we have equipped our production sites with new machinery and IoT technology. Our production is geared to the design and construction



of **air suction, filtering and purification plants** that capture polluting substances from all types of operations. In recent years our production has been expanded with standalone solutions that help us meet specific requests with compact dust extractors and purification systems".

... you were saying that wood is no longer your core business.

"That's true, but we are still a key player in the woodworking industry in Italy and abroad, thanks to our decade-long experience. We have also become experts in different mechanical operations, as well as in sheet metal finishing or in "harsh" environments like foundries. We experiment, we test, we constantly search for new techniques and procedures to acquire a significant competitive edge on our competitors. We were the first to apply **coalescence** in some mechanical operations, namely those that use whole and emulsified oil".

Is explosion still a major risk factor?

"We invest huge resources, executing several tests in house and with accredited agencies. A key factor that Imas Aeromeccanica has focused on is the safety systems for our plants, which are guaranteed and certified to the latest technical directives".

And what happens in the rest of the world? Are there different needs and regulations

"We export a significant share of our production, even if new manufacturers are emerging in many countries and we have to deal with this competition, although their plants do not really compare with ours. This means we have to be more aggressive in the sales phase, invest more resources, develop our organization, add new branch offices and agencies to be closer to the market. We have opened subsidiaries in Spain and Russia, and a sales agency in Colombia".

Mr. Biscione, what are you expecting from the wood industry in the future?

"We cannot hide that the situation has changed a lot compared to just ten years ago. We are seeing positive signs in **wood constructions**, while in other segments – basically furniture and windows most of all – the trend goes up and down, alternating light and shade. In Italy, unfortunately, even the **automotive** industry is showing increasing signs of suffering. We will face the coming seasons with our usual confidence, knowing that the technology, research and development skills we have built and deployed for almost fifty years will make us a reference for all customers looking for effective and performing solutions. We know regulations and standards in all countries very well, we have people dedicated to this topic. We have been certified for a long time and our procedures comply with strict standards that result into excellent products. We are good and we must be good at everything, this differentiates our company from others, we have full control on our quality, our lead times and the priorities of our customers". (I.r.)

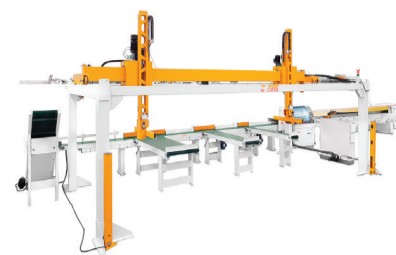
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CURSAL, TALKING ABOUT GROWTH...



The high-speed cross-cut saw "Trv 2700Eb" with optimization and quality selection, integrated transfer system and unloader.



Push-feed saw with automatic gripper unloader.

Recent years have been a positive period for Cursal, doubling their revenues: this proves that cross-cutting and optimization technology still offers good margins for growth. Approximately twenty employees, close to 4 million euro revenues in 2019 and significant export volumes, "...because the Italian market has been supported by Industry 4.0 measures, but we achieve the best results

across the border", said **Giuseppe Curtolo**, founder and ceo of **Cursal** in San Fior (Treviso), as we met him in his office. "The trends of different markets are a significant indicator, but I want to add that our machines are "useful", they are used each and every day, uninterruptedly, because cutting is a basic operation. Our machines are necessary, companies cannot do without them if they want to process wood effectively and safely. It's an investment where financial considerations are secondary, to such an extent that incentives have certainly supported sales on the Italian market, but they have not really boosted demand. In recent times, satisfaction has been driven by the fact that our cross-cut saws, our cutting lines were already "aligned" with Industry 4.0 requirements". Nevertheless, we did not miss the opportunity to carry on the progress of our technology: we increased the efficiency of the air intake system, for instance, implementing a sophisticated sensor that notifies the operator in case of abnormal operation. I'll give you another example: virtually all woodworking machines have a pneumatic system, normally lubricated with oil mist which is released into the atmosphere, into the air that workers breathe. Well, even if this is not a significant source of pollution, we have adopted an oil filter to remove all residues from the air released into the environment".

Mr. Curtolo, you mentioned Industry 4.0: what does it mean for a "basic" technology like yours? "It was really no magic stick, especially for machines like ours which are dedicated to a basic operation like cutting. I can tell you how we approached the segment of **pallet** manufacturers, where technological standards are not so high. We collaborated with an IT company to help even small and medium businesses adopted the enterprise and IT tools that are required to get access to Industry 4.0 incentives".

Your portfolio also includes advanced equipment... "Sure. Cutting is a basic operation, but it has several variants and applications according to the business scope. The manufacturers of sofa frameworks, for instance, use much more complex cross-cut saws, equipped with a pushing bar and drilling aggregates, possibly with the possibility to execute angular cuts, so that they can get real semifinished materials, ready to be assembled, in few moves. In a recent project in this field, we installed a head with as many as 19 drills, virtually turning our cutting line into something very similar to a numerical control center! Also for **window manufacturers** we have advanced solutions: we constantly respond to their requirements, up to developing ad-hoc cross-cut saws and loaders-unloaders. The same applies to **caravan manufacturers**:

among our customers, we have the biggest European company, and many of their factories are equipped with **our machines specifically designed** for this segment..."

A wide range...

"I believe that today cross-cut saws can be included in the category of highly configurable machines, with a wide range of accessories and options... The same

machine can be expanded significantly, adding chains, loaders, printers, readers, drilling aggregates, vision systems, angle cutting aggregates or additional operating groups..."

You mentioned vision systems...

"...it's a key element for advanced applications, and if you want to get rid of a defect, you have to see it first! Just think that in 1998 we built a **scanner** in house, but in the end it was too challenging for a company of our size. And so, like many other "peers", today we rely on third-party software, so that the product is always updated and reliable. We have focused on what we call "part logistics", i.e. serial components that enable us to make automated transfer systems, or aggregates that can perform the operation requested by the customer unattended. For us, automation, handling and logistics are complementary to the cross-cut saw. We have also investigated the use of **cobots**, collaborative robots, which can be used in different cross-cutting operations, where we are still relying on conventional articulated robots".

What can you tell about this segment?

"Many things have changed, no doubt. Ancient furniture, **solid wood** are less and less popular, so our skills are less demanded in interior decorations. We have to deal with multilayer products, glulam timber... these materials really belong to us, it's all about cutting before anything else. There is significant market demand in this area, and we are also noticing a strong demand for scanners and systems to select the quality of wood parts... Today, machinery and production cycles can be monitored and managed from a smartphone, and also our machines offer this capability, because this is the future..."

And what about the future?

"There is so much to do: first of all, it is difficult to integrate cross-cutting systems in large plants, as these machines are somehow the origin of the final product, they have to identify and eliminate defects, delivering perfect semifinished materials. These machines can be very fast, achieving feed speed up to 300 meters a minute, and they have to understand the signals coming from very sophisticated software and vision systems. The **future** will be focused on the elimination of basic jobs, people working next to machines. We still have a lot to do, and fortunately, two of my three children, Consuelo and Samuele, have joined the company; my third child, Diana, is attending a master in psychology and we will see which direction she takes. Next to them, there is an enterprise management engineer. As you can see, we have energy and skills to carry on!". (I.r.)

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