



SPECIMEN



HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRAIGHT FROM THE TUSCAN HILLS



A total awareness of the relationship between nature and human health is at the basis of ABOCA's success, alongside a focus on research, innovation and product quality. Skilled members of staff prepare its herbal medicine remedies in an environmentally friendly way and with the health and wellbeing of people in mind, writes Barbara Rossi. Industry Europe speaks to the company's general director, Mr Massimo Mercati.

With a presence in 15 countries, 16 families of international patents, 500 employees, 3 sites in Italy (with production facilities occupying a total of 27,000sqm), 1000 hectares of cultivated land on which 70 different types of plants are grown, and 2300 tonnes of fresh produce which is dried every

year, ABOCA is a forerunner, as well as an Italian leader and an international benchmark, with regard to medicinal and hygienic herb based products for health and well-being.

The location of the company is very much part of its essence, as its very name derives from the ancient Tuscan dialect name for

ground pine. Furthermore, the place where the main site of the company is situated, Sansepolcro (on the hills of the Tuscan Valtiberina), is an area which was already specialised in producing medicinal herbs in the 13th century. As well as this facility, where the company started out and where the head office is still based, ABOCA can also avail itself of a site in Pistrino Citerna, on the opposite side of the same valley, which belongs to the neighbouring Umbria region. Here is where processing and production take place, as well as R&D and Quality Control activities. The company also has a museum, situated in the historical centre of Sansepolcro and dedicated to the history and culture of herbs.

ABOCA makes effective products for many health needs and for the most widespread ailments, such as coughs, constipation related gastrointestinal problems, haemorrhoids, gut bacteria and stomach ache, as well as for insomnia, excessive weight and obesity, among others.

"Our production capacity is growing, as the company is experiencing an expansion phase, but growth is not only implemented in quantitative terms, but also with regard to quality and production efficiency" Mr Mercati explains. Product quality is in fact guaranteed at every stage of the process, thanks to effective monitoring from seed to finished product.

"There are several products on which we significantly rely for strategic purposes. One of these is Grintuss, a range of dry and wet cough syrups for both adults and children; Bionacid for stomach pain; and Libramed, the latest solution in the fight against excessive weight and obesity. These are complex natural matrix based products which are the result of significant investments at both technological and scientific research levels. Furthermore, we are on a constant quest in terms of research. We never stop at what we achieve, as we see it as a further starting point. We really try to carry out research and innovation on a continuous basis." As well as carrying out internal research, the company also avails itself of external cutting-edge research centres and collaborates with the most prestigious Italian and foreign universities.

Breaking ground

Investments are also carried out on a continuous basis and from its start the company has always channelled an important part of turnover into research and innovation, so as to improve the quality and efficacy of its products. An example is the plant dedicated to the making of medical products, which is typified by a very advanced high grade pharmaceutical technology and which makes ABOCA a leader on the national market, not only at a commer-





cial level, but also with regard to technological and scientific know-how. "Today we are an important benchmark globally in terms of scientific medical herbal therapy research."

In terms of geographical markets, Mr Mercati says, "Our main market is still Italy, but we are also growing a lot in Spain and are present in other important markets, such as Poland, Romania and France. Overall we are present in more than 15 countries. We are continuously searching for new geographical markets. I have to say that in our sector each geographical market represents a different world with different legal, cultural and social requirements and - exactly for this reason - we have to carefully study each individual market before deciding whether to enter it."

"The drivers of our growth are our continuous scientific research, constant innovation and professional training of our staff. Our aim is therefore that of growing through acquiring new market segments in Italy, promoting new products for new needs and, at the same time, conquering and strengthening new foreign markets. Forecasting the future is always hard, but I believe that ABOCA will develop as it has always done, pursuing a long term vision centred around product quality, safety and efficacy, investing in research and technology, and trying to always be competitive, also thanks to an environmentally sustainable production process." □