



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

For more than 50 years Cantoni & Cordero has specialised in the production of tipper bodies and dump trucks. Ross Davies reports on how the company has coped with the global recession.





Cantoni & Cordero was literally born out of ruins and destruction in the wake of the Second World War. Having suffered heavy bombings, Italy found many of its cities in complete disrepair which also included a scattering of partially damaged Allied trucks that had been left by American and British forces. Recognising the business potential in the nation's renovation efforts, Marco Cantoni discovered that the chassis of the abandoned trucks could be used to create

Italy's first tipper truck and soon after founded the company in 1953. In 2001, it acquired its sister company Cordero.

Traditional values

Over 50 years on, Cantoni & Cordero, whose production figures reached a total of 2262 units in 2008, remains very much a tight-knit family business as Andreas Cantoni, sales director and son of the company's namesake explains: "It is still a typical Italian family-run business. I work in

the commercial department, my father still works in the technical production division with my brother as responsible of production and technical dept, and my sister deals with advertising and marketing."

The company's headquarters are situated in the quiet and historic village of Boffalora, approximately 20km from Milan. Despite its growth it retains a relatively small workforce. "As of November 2009, we have 130 employees, 90 of whom work in Boffalora with the other 40 situated at >



our Cordero plant, just south of Turin," Mr Cantoni clarifies.

In addition to its main headquarters, in 2006, Cantoni & Cordero inaugurated new premises, close to the motorway near Boffalora, that are dedicated to modifying steel plates for tipper production. Has the company made any further investments? "Due to the current economic crisis, we have not made any further investments and do not plan to make any in the near future. At the time of the construction of our last facility, the markets were incredibly strong and we needed to increase our production capacity," says Mr Cantoni.

Innovation and creativity

Primarily serving truck producing companies, Cantoni & Cordero lists Astra-Iveco, Mercedes, Renault, MAN, DAF, Scania and Volvo as some of its notable clients, with Italian company Astra-Iveco taking 60-70% of its output. Mr Cantoni also emphasises the importance of retaining good relations with the whole supply chain: "We also like to be in contact with truck dealers and the big contractors - not so much private customers that buy two or three trucks a year - but instead established international companies."

Cantoni & Cordero is now looking to North Africa, with Libya being its primary

focus. In the wake of the 2008 treaty between Prime Minister Berlusconi and Colonel Gaddafi, Italy has agreed to aid in a 750-mile motorway construction project along Libya's coastline. "Where there is construction, there are always tippers," says Mr Cantoni, "so that's an opportunity for us."

Cantoni & Cordero's research and development activities are also essential to its future. "R&D is paramount for us, especially in the current financial climate. When you have problems with the market, you have to react quickly by improving and renovating the product in order to fight off competitors. This is what we have aimed to do - find new solutions whilst





never jeopardizing the product," explains Mr Cantoni.

So what innovative and original measures has Cantoni & Cordero implemented regarding new technology? "The tipper is a low technology product so it would be very hard to invent something totally different but the market is always looking for a tipper with more scope. For example, over the last year we have introduced hydraulic devices to our tippers as clients want products that will

save labour costs. With our small tippers, we are also developing an electric version instead of the usual power take-off system which will be able to run independently of the vehicle's engine," says Mr Cantoni.

Rebuilding for the future

On reflecting upon where the company's future growth will lie, Mr Cantoni is keen to stress Cantoni & Cordero's ambitions to resume stronger trade with eastern

Europe as well as developing relations with North Africa. "I am sure that very soon, our market areas in countries such as Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and all the Balkan areas will return to prosperity. Projects will always need construction machinery but producers simply cannot afford it at this moment. I hope that perhaps during the second half of next year, things will start happening again," explains Mr Cantoni. □



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