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Coveme - innovating insulation materials

MONICA MANARA, Chief Commercial Officer

60 years of know-how

Coveme is a manufacturer of insulation materials for different applications, including for dry-type and oil-filled transformers. Our headquarters are located in Bologna, Italy. We are a privately owned business with 60 years of know-how in converting films. The company operates two production sites in Italy and China with 14 production lines equipped with leading edge lamination and coating technologies such as UV and Ebeam, and three high tech R&D labs in Italy, Germany and China. We employ nearly 300 people and generate more than €100 million p.a. The business is organized in eight business units, targeting fast evolving and highly demanding markets such as automotive, renewable energies and printed electronics, with own global commercial and logistic network.

In Europe we are one of the leading suppliers of insulation materials. Our plan is also to globally expand our business. Recently, we have had a launch in China, Zhangjiagang, where we have a production plant with four lamination and six slitting lines. The main application for production there is insulation materials for photovoltaics, but with the technology and available capacity we now started to supply the transformers and motor market, and we plan to develop this business in China.

On the transformers market, we cooperate with major customers such as Hitachi ABB, Siemens Energy, SEA, and many others. We are supplying mainly European facilities and, as already said, we would also like to expand this business

in Asia, offering local distribution and service with multinational groups with production sites in China and for Chinese manufacturers looking for a high-quality product.

Materials for transformers

The part of business relating to transformers and motors insulation makes up 20 % of our operations, and our plan is to double that percentage. There is a strong competition on the market, but we are always prepared to work hard, and in all markets. The market is growing, that is a fact, and I believe there is a place there for high quality suppliers such as we are.

We are official laminators for DuPont's Nomex materials. For transformers, we also supply non-woven laminates and resin-impregnated, high-temperature resistant materials. Furthermore, we have insulation with high-temperature pre-preg, as well as with polyimide and Kapton film. Although this material is mainly intended for motors, it can be used in some cases for transformers.

Transformer OEMs require high temperature materials with specific permeability and they request high quality and recyclable materials. Therefore, we have to study particular resins in order to improve on characteristics, such as mechanical properties of the products. We are working on two important projects within which we are developing a strong resin to fulfil requests of some large customers.

We also have joint projects for development of new products with some trans-

former OEMs, despite the fact that we are not the sole supplier for any of these customers. However, we are open to cooperation and we have the strong drive to develop the right product and maintain the high quality that they request.



Monica Manara is Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of Coveme Electrical Insulation Division since 2019, responsible for the company's global business of electrical insulation materials for transformers and motors. She joined Coveme almost 40 years ago, in 1984, as a purchasing manager and has since built up a remarkable career within the company, which culminated in the appointment as member of the Coveme Group Board in 2017. Besides the Electrical Insulation Division, Monica Manara is also CCO for Coveme's Photovoltaic Division.



Sustainability

The idea of a circular economy is to recycle as many materials as possible when a product reaches its end of life. I want to underline that circular economy is something we believe in. After the end of life of a transformer, it is very important that we can recycle all the components. I think we are at the beginning of this process in this field, but we want to be among the first ones who are able to do that.

We have significant experience in this area with photovoltaic modules. After 20 years now, there is a problem of recycling these modules. It is important that each component can be recycled in some way. We are in a good position, because our polyester can be recycled. Not every technology permits that. Building on that experience, our idea is to expand that on all the parts of our business. And as you see, the philosophy is the same with transformers. What happens at the end of life of a transformer, after 30 years operation? How will people be able to recycle these materials then? I think that a

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kind of certification, a testing that proves that those materials are recyclable is really important. When speaking of resin, you know very well that many components of resin are not so easy to recycle. So, we are investing a lot into all these parameters.

So far, the solution was to separate different layers of the insulation. The copper is recyclable, for example, as well as aluminium. Nomex is not so easy to recycle, so it is important to separate the polyester. We are open for projects on that matter, and I have heard of some projects that have shown results.

It is very clear that we are highly active in developing the technology, taking the recycling into account. We are working with our suppliers in order to use as much recycled raw material as possible. This is really important for us, because we want to focus our operation on being environmentally conscious. Our plants are ISO-certified for environmental management, but our actions go even further than requirements of this certificate. The energy recovery setup of our production lines and management of solvents are stricter than required by the certifications. All our suppliers are re-

quired to follow these regulations, from materials to the packaging. We work with a very large group of suppliers and selection is very important. Normally, we start a project with them and work continuously in order to achieve the same results, which also includes sustainability.

Demand is increasing

Last year the pandemic had a significant impact on the business, for sure, but we are now recovering. We have noticed a great advancement in electrical motors, electrical vehicles, alternative energy such as wind, all over the world. The demand is increasing, including the demand for quality and we are confident that we will achieve our objectives. We are very flexible in our production and being a company with a lean organisation, we can make fast decisions on each level of our supply chain. For example, in March we doubled the production because we put into operation a new production line within two days. We are really well positioned with our ability to follow the market.

Strong relationships we have formed with our suppliers make it possible for us to have the raw material readily available.

Focus on long-term business

We entered the market of electrical insulation for motors and transformers in 1965, therefore we have a very long experience. This business has been continuously running ever since. We also plan to introduce this new change concerning the green economy and electrical insulation and we believe in that. We believe the innovation is the way to keep on going.

I do not believe in short-term growth strategies - it is not in our nature. We are focused mainly on mid and short-term solutions and we need our strategies to be built on a strong supply chain, strong products and long-term relations with our customers.

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THE VALUE OF INNOVATION

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