



ASSOCALZATURIFICI

ASSOCALZATURIFICI: INDUSTRY RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY, EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Milan, 7 July 2021

Assocalzaturifici held its Annual Meeting the past few days in Bologna. The meeting had to be held behind closed doors due to the pandemic, but the issues discussed will be the focus of an event to be attended in person at the end of the year.

At the meeting, Chair Siro Badon emphasised the impact of Covid-19 on the footwear industry, one of the hardest-hit sectors of production, along with other components of the Italian Textiles, Fashion and Accessories sector.

In 2020 the sector lost about 1/4 of its total turnover (with the final balance being 10.72 billion euro, -25.2% compared to 2019) and national production. There were sharp reductions in both foreign trade and domestic consumption. After the collapse in levels of business during the first part of the year, as a result of the lockdown, there was just some respite in the severity of the decline in the next two quarters (although this still remained in double-digit territory), as opposed to a V-shaped recovery.

At this time of crisis, Assocalzaturifici has come up with plenty of challenging new projects for its members.

"Sustainability is definitely one of our top priorities," explains Badon. *"We have come up with a project supporting our members and other companies in the process of accreditation and commercial positioning of their businesses as sustainable and therefore highly competitive companies on Italian and international markets".* Assocalzaturifici has registered its own Sustainability trademark (**VCS – Verified & Certified Steps**), which may be granted to companies capable of achieving a quality standard based on certain requirements. The project will begin with a self-assessment which companies can conduct independently; we will then have reference benchmarks that tell us what the minimum criteria are to be considered a sustainable enterprise. Companies ranking above the bar will then be eligible for certification by the institute we appoint. Companies that do not meet the minimum requirements will be able to rely on the professional assistance of **CIMAC**, the Assocalzaturifici laboratory that has been conducting testing and certification to guarantee the quality and safety of fashion products for more than 30 years. CIMAC can help businesses begin, continue or improve internal processes aimed at meeting the requirements for sustainability certification.

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The financial sustainability of the industry also plays a large part in determining its future. This is the gist of the agreement signed by **Assocalzaturifici** and **Unicredit**. Under the FinDynamic project for Assocalzaturifici, agreements will be set up all along the supply chain to ensure that the cash flow of the head of the supply chain is put to work to support virtuous suppliers through a dynamic discount system. Supply chain management will be automatically entrusted to a high-tech platform. This innovative approach responds to two needs, protecting the footwear industry while innovating business processes.

"Another issue is reorganisation of know-how within companies," emphasises Badon. *"The important agreement signed with the President of **Umana**, Maria Raffaella Caprioglio, will allow us to redefine how people are organised in companies as they get going again after the crisis. Umana will allow us to encourage development of the profiles that are least appropriate, locate and train people who have the new skills required to respond to the challenges of industry and commerce today, and promote inclusion of new employees with the skills required in the post-pandemic market. Training, a theme of great importance to **Assocalzaturifici** ,"* continues Badon, *"will be based on company's real needs".*

Another important agreement was signed with one of the world's most prominent startup accelerators: **Startup Boot Camp Fashion Tech**. As Badon explains, *"With them, the Association will be able to count on an international organisation that helps us select, incubate and accelerate two start-ups a year which technologically promote and facilitate sustainability in our own specific industry and help MICAM through the long process of digitalisation".*

In addition, the Association looks toward the future with **three innovative projects** for **Assocalzaturifici**'s 550 or more member companies: one for creating a digital match between global demand for Italian know-how and industries and artisans capable of offering the immense added value of this unique know-how; one for building a true marketplace for consumers open to companies ideally representing the excellence of Italian manufacturing; and one using blockchain technology to ensure product traceability, on which the **Association** is working with a leading Italian consortium that has already completed a number of projects for the luxury sector.

Last, but by no means least in importance, is the study commissioned of **Università Ca Foscari in Venice** in partnership with **M&C Saatchi**. *"Recognition of the prestigious label 'Made in Italy' is of critical importance for our economy,"* notes Badon. *"I'm very proud to say that I am working on this area with Professor Carlo Bagnoli, professor of strategic innovation at Università Ca Foscari in Venice and founder of strategy innovation srl.*

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*They will conduct a study of the 'Made in Italy' label for **Assocalzaturifici**, with the support of communications agency M&C Saatchi, in order to understand what challenges face us in the future, how companies are positioned, and how they can concentrate their efforts, by analysing the qualities major world markets attribute to Italian-made shoes".*

The study will be the key theme of a convention which **Assocalzaturifici** will hold at the end of the year.

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