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RadiciGroup invests EUR 15 million in a new production line for meltblown nonwoven, the filtering material used in protective face masks

A strategic decision aimed at more independent Italian production of personal protective equipment

RadiciGroup has taken the next step in its commitment to the health emergency response, by making a **sizeable investment** for the purchase of a **new production line for meltblown nonwoven**, the material used for manufacturing **protective face masks** and other personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Group has been at the forefront in the **fight against the spread of Covid-19** from the very beginning of the pandemic, above all by rapidly setting up a production chain involving local factories for the manufacture of **spunbond nonwoven** for medical gowns and other personal protective equipment. As a result, the Group quickly came to the decision to produce **meltblown nonwoven**, a type of nonwoven not readily available in the Italian market, but indispensable in the manufacture of surgical masks.

*"In the midst of the pandemic crisis," said **Maurizio Radici, vice president and COO of RadiciGroup**, "the lack of meltblown nonwoven became evident. We kept receiving tens of requests from potential customers. A very small quantity of meltblown material is produced in Europe, which is certainly not sufficient to meet demand in a health emergency. Given our extensive experience in the field of nonwovens, we swiftly began figuring out how to set up a chain for the production of PPE in Italy. And, as soon as the opportunity arose to take concrete action, we had no hesitation to jump on it".*

The investment made by RadiciGroup for the meltblown nonwoven production line is EUR 15 million. Presently being installed, the large new line is extremely sophisticated and technologically advanced. It has a high production capacity and can also realize products with special technical characteristics, not only made of polypropylene, but also other polymers, such as polyester, polyamide and TPU. The new line is being set up at Tessiture Pietro Radici SpA, a Group company based in Gandino (Bergamo), where work was previously carried out to ready the site.

Enrico Buriani, CEO of Tessiture Pietro Radici, added: *“With this new line installed in the Seriana Valley – among the areas in Italy that have been hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, RadiciGroup will become one of the few European manufacturers able to offer both spunbond nonwoven – a well-known product already produced by Tessiture Pietro Radici for many years and used in protective face masks as both the outer layer of fabric and the inner one in direct contact with the face – and meltblown, which is the real filtering and protective component of all types of masks, including surgical and FFP2 or FFP3 protective masks. In terms of production capacity, the new line will be able to produce about 120 tons/month of meltblown nonwoven, or enough material to make about 170 million surgical masks per month.*

The objective is to reduce the dependence on imports from non-European countries – indeed, during the pandemic, there have been long slowdowns in deliveries of imports – and **to bring back to Italy the production of essential products for health protection** needed during health emergencies. Suffice it to say that, from February to August 2020, Italy imported EUR 2.66 billion worth of masks, 92% of which came from China (source: Assosistema – Confindustria).

*“We believe it is vital for Italy not to be caught unprepared in future health emergencies,” **Mr. Radici** continued. “Our country must have its own production of essential goods, and our purchase of the new line for the production of meltblown nonwoven is a step in that direction. At the same time, the production line is an investment for our Group, because we must also consider the fact that other technical applications will be found for this material, such as filtration, thus presenting prospects for economic sustainability in the medium term.”*

On the technical side, meltblown fabric is a continuous filament nonwoven (from 1 to 5 microns in diameter), has excellent **filtering capability** even for particles of microscopic size, such as viruses, and ensures **breathability** and **protection**.

The installation of the machinery will be completed in January 2021, after which the line will start operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

RADICIGROUP – With approximately 3,100 employees, sales revenue of EUR 1,092 million in 2019 and a network of production and sales sites located throughout Europe, North America, South America and Asia, RadiciGroup is one of the world’s leading producers of a wide range of chemical intermediates, polyamide polymers, high performance engineering polymers and advanced textile solutions, including nylon yarn, polyester yarn, yarn made from recovered and bio-source materials, nonwovens and personal protective equipment for the healthcare field. These products are the result of the Group’s outstanding chemical expertise and vertically integrated polyamide production chain and have been developed for use in a variety of industrial sectors, such as: automotive – electrical and electronics – consumer goods – apparel – furnishings – construction – household appliances – sports. The basis of the Group’s strategy is a strong focus on innovation, quality, customer satisfaction and social and environmental sustainability. With its business areas – Specialty Chemicals, High Performance Polymers and Advanced Textile Solutions –, RadiciGroup is part of a larger industrial group that also includes textile machinery (ITEMA), energy (GEOGREEN) and hotel (SAN MARCO) businesses.

RADICIGROUP PRESS OFFICE

Marisa Carrara

marisa.carrara@radicigroup.com

+ 39 345 9148892

WWW.RADICIGROUP.COM

