



Loris Zanasi.

Let us tell you: the company we are going to talk about has been waving the Italian banner up high in the panel production business. In an industry where our country has gradually lost market shares, they decided to expand business, starting a challenging "virtuous circle" that shuffled all cards on the table. Here's the story...

No big investments, much creativity and the right knowledge at the right time, generating successful synergy. From the original production of **glue mixers** (and later on, gluing machines, scales and other gluing equipment), in 38 years Imal and Pal have developed some **eighty industrial patents** and a diversified core business through a strategy of acquisitions that has finally involved also Globus, specializing in wood grinding and refining machinery.

The industrial story of **Group Imal Pal Globus** – respectively based in San Damaso (Modena), Ponte di Piave (Treviso) and Galliate (Novara) – arouses curiosity for its combination of several decades of experience in chip preparation and gluing technology, inline equipment for quality control, process control, panel handling and new expansion visions that supported an effective aggregation strategy. In recent years, the group has developed and invested in **continuous forming and pressing** technology, complementing its product portfolio for the supply of turnkey plants for particleboard, mdf and osb production, as well as insulating panels, pellets, pallet blocks, waste treatment and management.

The holding company, **Imal** (an acronym for "Impianti macchine automatiche legno"), founded by Paolo Benedetti in 1970, is a model of "made in Italy" business, born in a garage like many others.



A view of the Imal factory in San Damaso (Modena).

Today, the group is run by the Benedetti, Zanasi and Dal Ben families, with 350 employees and total revenues above 100 million Euros, mostly generated by export that account for close to 90 percent of production.

*“The history of our group is closely related to Paolo Benedetti”, says **Loris Zanasi**, managing director and Ceo at Imal. “A genius, and a hard-working man, who started his career as electrical chief engineer in a particleboard plant, setting up his own business after many jobs. The turning point was the invention of the first automatic machine for glue mixture preparation. That’s how Imal, Impianti macchine automatiche legno, was born in 1969.*

Water kept flowing and the product range expanded gradually. Today the company offers all it takes to manufacture mdf, particleboard and osb, with solutions built within the group or as contractor. This mission is supported by tighter and tighter collaboration with **Pal**, resulting into a merger in 1998, and **Globus**, a manufacturer of chipping machines, enabling Imal-Pal to “close the loop” and handle virtually all process stages with their own technology.

Producing different plants to produce panels requires a wide spectrum of expertise...
*“We have excellent staff”, Zanasi says. “A company is great if they have great people. Our staff have been with us for decades, their loyalty is amazing. This adds to continuity at management level, with different generations of our families running the companies... a unique value...
 For all these years, we have been able to work in a changing world, always expressing what we are, what we can do, often contributing with our experience in **processing waste management**, also in industries other than wood.
 We have built and delivered plants for different products all over the world! Just to give you a clear example of what we can do, we also make “cubes” for pallets from woodworking scraps, without cutting a single tree!*



A few pictures illustrating the variegated expertise of Group Imal Pal Globus”.

Pal is a global leader in wood cleaning and recycling.

What’s the secret of a good panel?
*“Raw material is definitely on top, with the right grain size to press fiber and strands efficiently and achieve a consistent layer. This is **Globus**’ specialty, they manufacture the world’s biggest knife cutting machine for chip refining. It’s the only one with 690 millimeter knife, an effective patented system that executes a uniform distribution of material, all along the knife, achieving an hourly capacity of 18 tons”.*

Why are Italians so good in panel processing, but you are virtually the only specialist in panel production technology?
“It’s a strange business, difficult, small... many Italian panel manufacturers have closed down, the “big ones” are fighting hard. German competitors can rely on a “country system” and government support, especially for export and easy credit to customers. Here



in Italy, we have no support, and we are even burdened by the heavy bureaucracy of our country.

One of your latest creations is the production plant for poplar osb installed at IPan of Group Bonzano... "OsB is increasingly popular and its applications are expanding, mostly in **constructions** and **packaging**, which is trying to replace plywood. OsB production from poplar is an important project for Italy, as we have imported 100 percent of osb from abroad until few months ago. Once up and running, the **IPan** plant will deliver 500 cubic meters per day, a high

quality product made of a raw material grown with sustainable methods and very lightweight. This is a major achievement, not only from a technical standpoint, as the product offers high added value".

Do you think osb is the panel of the future?

"We see different destinations for each type of panel: a certain type of osb panel might also penetrate the furniture sector, subtracting market shares to particleboard and mdf, but clearly each panel has specific destinations based on its physical and mechanical properties.

*We can say that, with IPan, we have invented a new opportunity for a panel that is stronger than particleboard and can be laminated, coated or veneered to make lighter **kitchen and office furniture**.*

Mr Zanasi, it seems you are growing against the general market trend: the Imal Pal Globus does not seem to know what crisis means....

*"We are working hard: that's the only way to stay in business in the global market and keep growing. We are not afraid of working in a mature industry and we try to exploit all niches. Take the example of plywood, we supply dedicated machinery for **quality control**, having focused the resources of our electronic department on this segment; we have a few dozens of highly skilled engineers and technicians. Or **panel measurement** with ultrasound devices to identify possible separations, non homogeneous areas or air pockets inside the panel.*

*Last year we developed a system to inject steam into the mat before the press, which helps increase productivity by 10 to 25 percent as a result of an additional "cooking" phase for the bottom layer. I can also mention our **X-ray detectors** for foreign bodies in panels, or another Xray system to measure mdf panel density inline, or again our solutions to measure formaldehyde emissions, a digital camera shooting **one million pictures per minute** to check the grain size of mdf or particleboard chips, and "turnkey" laboratories to measure all panel properties.*

How do we manage? We listen to customers and put together our expertise to give a successful answer". ■