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Passionate about Packaging

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Italians are known for their passions. They are passionate about their food, their wine, their art, their design, and in Bologna, they are passionate about their packaging industry. And well they should be. In a time of economic crisis, Italy's packing industry seems extremely healthy, based on the statistics offered last week by Dr. Guido Corbella, at the Pharmintech exhibition.

This year, noted Corbella, CEO of Ipak-Ima, the exhibition's organizer, the exhibition was host to 350 exhibitors, as opposed to 263 when the event was last held three years ago, and the number of attendees was double that of the last exhibition. What is the secret, especially during this period of extreme economic crisis? "Specialization and flexibility," Corbella offered.

Indeed, while many other trade shows are enlarging their content focus—expanding session selections to include, for example, biotechnology and/or nanotechnology, and provide floor space on exhibition halls for equipment geared towards those industry sectors, Pharmintech remains staunchly focused on pharmaceutical packaging. The event, Corbella explained, "is highly exclusive, a niche event...targeted to the needs of the relevant business community."

So important is the event and the industry to Italy's economy, that a press conference kicking off the event featured Pier Luigi Bersani, Chairman of Italy's Democratic Party and leader of the opposition to the Berlusconi government. In his speech, Bersani, a former Italian Minister of Economic Development, focused on Europe's current economic woes. "If we are to have a single currency," said Bersani, "we need a coordinated economic policy. You cannot have a single currency and then have 15 different economic policies." Europe, said Bersani, needed imagine the economic landscape of 2015 and institute "policies to cope with technological challenges. We need to promote a new industrial policy." Such policies, said Bersani, include "networking of small enterprises. It is no longer about territorial vicinities." Bersani also called for a "permanent system of tax relief for research embedded within the Italian tax system."

Examples of international consortium building were in evidence on the show floor at Pharmintech, where German equipment suppliers—long seen as competitive to the Italian industry—formed a large contingent of exhibitors. The attendee roster was also very international and included delegations from regions as far flung as China and South America. All in all, an impressive showing—and another reason to be passionate—in case the food, the wine, the architecture aren't enough—about Bologna.

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