



TILE INDUSTRY SETS IT SIGHTS ON INNOVATION

(July 2009). Prioritizing technological innovation to overcome the economic crisis and remain the world's market leader: this is the strategy laid down by the Italian ceramics and tile industry, whose €5.7 billion production is predominantly (80%) concentrated in the district of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

Spurred by the current global financial crisis and a desire to continue offering high-quality products to customers, tile companies are now prioritizing the development of high-tech and eco-compatible materials. As Franco Manfredini, Confindustria Ceramica Chairman, explains: "When it comes to innovation in ceramics, Italy is the global leader. Our very own *single-fire* process, invented in Modena, has ended up being replicated all over the world."

For tile companies there has inevitably been a slight downturn this year with regards to projected investments: €278 million in 2009 compared with €303 million in 2008. This figure is nevertheless higher than the amount invested in 2006 (€256 million), confirming the general consensus that companies should not turn their backs on strategic investments in plant efficiency, technological innovation and research and development. In fact, this might be just the ticket for companies to emerge from the current financial crisis, which only poses a real threat to businesses that do not innovate.

New collections brought to us by the ceramics industry will be showcased at **Cersaie 2009**, the 27th edition of the International Exhibition of Ceramic Tile and Bathroom Furnishings. Held in Bologna from September 29th to October 3rd, more than 700 of the 900 exhibitors taking part are Italian companies, each of which will be setting out to show off new lines in ground-breaking, aesthetically-relevant and Italian-made ceramics, emphasizing Italy's status as global leader in this field.

One of the exhibition's most eagerly-awaited arrivals is the ultra-thin (its thickness is an impressive 4.8mm) porcelain stoneware collection brought to us by **Refin**. Flying the flag for the new format at Cersaie 2009 will be the "Artech" and "Velvet Ground" collections. A material that boasts all the technical features and strength of conventional porcelain stoneware (12mm thick), Refin's ultra-thin range also lends itself particularly well to renovations where the laying of a new floor without removing existing floor finishes is required.

Tagina Ceramiche d'Arte shall also be debuting new products in Bologna, starting with the "Joe" collection: available in 11 colors and in many formats, this product line sees white paste annealing accompanied by a "blur" finishing, obtained through a production process that involves three firing stages. Designed for those who love experimenting, the "Joe" Lochness project is a series of special pieces, including tiles with concave and convex surfaces, for people who are looking to design and cover walls with curvilinear forms.

Also making an appearance at Cersaie 2009 is one of the district's longest-standing companies: **Novabell**. With its brand new line of environmentally-friendly porcelain stoneware and LEED-

certified products made from at least 40% recycled material, Novabell confirms its increasingly "green" vision. LEED is an international certification scheme - promoted by the U.S. Green Building Council (operating in the U.S. and in over 40 countries) - that assesses energy efficiency and environmental quality in the development of "green" buildings.

Finally, Modena firm **Impronta Ceramiche** - a company that makes 70% of its turnover abroad - is also set to reveal an all-new, LEED-certified product line, joining the range of tiles made from 45% natural raw and recycled materials that has been on the market since the beginning of 2009.