



Oil&noil: bringing together the leading players in a changing network

The thirteenth Oil&noil-S&TC exhibition, taking place at the Veronafiere fairgrounds from 9th to 11th October, will be getting under way on a positive note, with 15% more exhibition spaces taken, and 10% more exhibiting companies taking part, compared with the figures recorded in 2016. These results are an indication of the high level of activity currently being seen among Italian fuel distribution industry operators.

For several years now, it has been clear that the fuel retail network has been changing look: the large international groups have gradually abandoned the downstream sector, where they have been replaced, to an extent, by independent entrepreneurs running small networks that often operate within a single region.

The downstream oil business in Italy is shared by four oil companies (Eni, Kuwait, Api-IP and Tamoil) and an unspecified number of private entrepreneurs who together own at least 10,500 filling stations.

These new entrepreneurs see Oil&noil-S&TC as a “date” with technology, innovation and new businesses, but also as an opportunity to “swap notes” as they seek to identify formulas for achieving a cost-effective management of their businesses, which may even necessitate sharing purchasing services and solutions.

It is tough managing a small fuel retail company, as you do not have the supply structures and the weight of the big companies, yet your problems are the same.

One of the twenty-five conferences enriching this event plans to try and clarify the situation and provide some answers. Its title refers to “tools and strategies for growth”, as one of its aims is to indicate what technical solutions are available for making the management of these concerns simpler and more efficient; however, the speakers will also be trying to encourage reflection upon the organisational choices that can give companies more stability in the long term.

The event will also be the stage for the unveiling of the “Anagrafe della rete” (network registry), an initiative launched by the Italian Economic Development Ministry in collaboration with the country’s regional administrations, which aims to provide a clear snapshot of the network, and also to identify the stations that, for various reasons, need to be closed, because they are “incompatible” with road safety regulations.

The results of this initiative are anxiously awaited, because the closure of even just one or two fuel stations can change the whole balance within a given basin.

The Italian network, where non-oil activities struggle to generate 10% of the total turnover (and in some cases fail to achieve this), is starting to look for solutions in order to improve service stations generally. A real boost, in this sense, is coming from Eurogarages, the company that has purchased 1,170 service stations from Esso and is now preparing to implement choices that will lead to the adoption the same organisation as the other thousands of stations that they run in Europe, where a considerable proportion of the earnings are generated by the non-oil sector.

This year's Oil&nonoil exhibition will also see the return of the car wash industry after a difficult five years for this sector. Car wash services are the main non-oil activity offered in Italian service stations, which is where a remarkable 63% of these facilities are installed.

Finally, there has been a very good response on the part of the market segment linked to fuel transport, which will be offering new vehicles that respond, above all, to the growing needs for safety and traceability in transport.