

Made in Italy

As more and more sectors of Italian industry come under threat from external competitors, the country has seen a move towards promoting the concept of Made in Italy. When Michael Schumacher won this year's Formula 1 Championship, congratulatory advertisements appeared in major international newspapers which really focused on his Ferrari. And, just in case readers missed the point, large type beneath the photograph of the instantly recognisable red racing car proudly proclaimed MADE IN ITALY.

But what is Made in Italy in terms of production and how can it be protected against aggressive foreign competitors? A new decree signed by the industry minister of the Italian government, Antonio Marzano, attempts to provide an answer to these vexed questions. The new law introduces rules on the labelling of origin, and a quality brand whose logo is the Vitruvian man designed by Leonardo da Vinci in the XV Century. Beyond this, a new committee against counterfeiting has been created as well as some new offices to provide legal assistance to Italian companies operating abroad, to be located at the headquarters of the Italian foreign trade institute, ICE, and at Italian embassies worldwide. Another part of the project includes an information campaign addressed to consumers, which should explain the damage caused to the national economy by the parallel market where counterfeited goods are on sale.

This programme has been developed because of powerful requests coming from the national associations of producers of fashionable goods, such as footwear. Currently, when the fall in Italian shoe production is becoming alarming, the manufacturers are trying to increase the defence of "made in Italy" goods, and

Quintessentially Italian, da Vinci's drawing based on the theory of Marcus Vitruvius, the 1st century BC Roman architect and author of the famous treatise 'De architectura'.

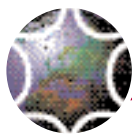
consequently of the "Made in Italy" brand, considered a real patrimony belonging to national production. It is seen as a brand that all over the world is associated with elegance and quality, but that is often counterfeited or abused, causing great damage to the Italian manufacturers. This abuse of the label has been so wide that some companies prefer to use the definition "really made in Italy", as could be seen at the most recent September Micam and Mipel presentations, the Italian fairs for footwear and leathers. However ANCI, the association of the Italian footwear producers, and AIMPES, the association of the Italian leathers goods producers, believe that minister Marzano's intent

will mainly result in a new financial cost for the Italian companies and won't really improve and clarify the situation.

In fact, one of the basic problems yet to be solved is the precise definition of what "Made in Italy" really means. This matter was discussed at a symposium organised in Vigevano in mid September, when the new production plant of Moreschi Spa was officially opened. Moreschi Spa is a footwear company which has been in the business for almost 60 years, and is a widely recognised international brand with about 40 shops and 'corner's around the world—some of them located in major Chinese cities. The family running the company decided to keep the manufacture of its shoes entirely in Italy, inside the new plant. During the meeting none of the manufacturers asked to discuss this problem, and many of whom have been involved in defending national quality production, could give the same answer ►

Fall/Winter designs by Moreschi





Country Commentary: Italy

to the question "what made in Italy really is".

Let's not forget that Italy is principally a convertor country, which has limited raw material resources, but whose prosperity comes directly from the ability to convert local and imported materials into quality fashionable goods. Hence the difficulty to fix precisely the limits to the definition of what is made in Italy, particularly for footwear. For some companies, Made in Italy means those items simply styled in Italy, while for others it means those completely manufactured in the country.

Different ideas from different production philosophies

According to ANCI, the defence of national production is based on the imposition in Europe of a compulsory label of origin for products imported from outside the European Union. This proposal will be examined in a few weeks by the EU, but is not supported by all countries. "The worries of Italian footwear companies are for the slowness and complexity of the instrument which should defend European industry," ANCI declares, "and in some cases, the absence of laws able to contrast the unfair competition of Asian countries, and



While the arguments may continue as to just what constitutes 'Made in Italy', there is no doubting the intention of the Italian leather industry to promote its products, its presence and its brands. At Milan's Malpensa airport, this poster site urges domestic and international travellers to buy Italian shoes, part of an international campaign currently being run by ANCI, the Italian footwear association. Within a matter of a few metres of the sign the well-heeled shopper can also revel in the delights of duty-free shopping for leather clothing, bags, belts, shoes and other leathersgoods by Trussardi, Bulgari, I Santi, Gucci, Versace, Etro, Salvatore Ferragamo, Ferrari, Bric's, Ermenegildo Zegna, Malo and Moreschi.

particularly of China." ANCI chairman Rossano Soldini speaks about "the existence of strong and contrasting interests within EU, and this translates

into a lack of defence of the European manufacturing industry by the Commission. It is a situation which we can no longer stand, and one which will not allow us to exploit the opportunities of the international economic revival when it arrives." ●