

# A word with...

**Jacopo Marzolla (Product Manager HC-I&I)**  
**Silvana Manzoni (Product Manager Personal Care)**

ZSCHIMMER & SCHWARTZ



**Q: Can you enter into details of the latest facts and numbers on what Zschimmer & Schwarz is today?**

**Silvana Manzoni (Product Manager Personal Care):** The history of the Zschimmer & Schwarz group spans over three centuries: the group was founded on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1894 when Max Schwarz and Otto Zschimmer transcribed their shop selling chemicals and colours as a trading company in the commercial register of Chemnitz, Germany. Since then, in over a century of activity, Zschimmer & Schwarz has become a major multinational group, which owns around 20 companies and employs more than 1,000 employees among Europe, Asia and America. The sector dealing with surfactants was established in 1931 with the sulfation of fatty alcohols. This technology has since then rapidly developed and expanded, especially at the Zschimmer & Schwarz Italiana SpA (ZSI) located in Tricerro (VC). In 1969 ZSI SpA has become one of the leading companies in the field of detergents and personal care both in Italy and abroad.

The ZSI plant currently extends over an area of about 100,000 sqm. Something like 15,000 sqm are under a roof where highly innovative and automated systems for the production of surfactants allow us to produce high purity grade products. The Italian production consists of five production units: two plants for the continuous sulfation, two units for the esterification and a mixing plant. The sulfation plants use as raw materials ethoxylated and non ethoxylated fatty alcohols, sulfur, and different types of neutralisers to obtain a wide range of alkyl / alkylether sulfates. The whole process is computerized and operators are under continuous monitoring for the chemical and physical parameters of the whole production cycle. The two esterification plants produce amphoteric, anionic and nonionic surfactants. They are also dedicated to the production of innovative anionic surfactants of vegetal origin having interesting multifunctional properties (Protelan line).

**Q: What's about R&D?**

**Jacopo Marzolla (Product Manager HC-I&I):** ZSI has always combined the research and development activity of innovative products with the inputs coming from the market, thus becoming a reference point for its customers. In order to better address the challenges that the globalization of markets poses on a daily basis to production chains, ZSI has decided to invest into a new application and marketing lab, providing customers with technical assistance during both the development and the use of a new product. The mission of Zschimmer & Schwarz Italiana is to help its customers to develop new ideas for their products thanks to the use of its customizable surfactants. The mission consists in a constant engagement in order to identify and develop custom tailored solutions for customers. To achieve this, ZSI proactively and closely works together with its customers to develop together the

best solution for both the field of cosmetics and of domestic and industrial detergents.

**Q: How is the research on surfactants evolving? Which are the main issues? Which are the hottest developments today?**

**S. M.:** The guidelines of our R&D are driven by the continuous discussion with our customers and by current market trends, which increasingly are moving towards formulations being both "green" and "sustainable". Competitive prices, highly natural characteristics, functional performance great attention to environmental protection: these are the current focal points. Concrete examples of this philosophy are the products of the Lumorol range, such as the ECO Lumorol K, for cosmetic applications or Lumorol EM and AP Lumorol for the sector of household detergents.

**Q: Z & S is an important partner for the personal care sector and detergents. What is your offer?**

**J. M.:** Thanks for the question! We really like the definition of "partner", because that is exactly what we want to be for our customers! In fact, besides being recognized for our product portfolio, which allows us to offer innovative solutions for both the detergent and personal care, we want to carry on our philosophy of combining our products with the technical and formulation support, which should greatly simplify life to our customer. In this regard, as mentioned in the previous question we pose our attention on multifunctional products able to minimize the critical phase of production and enabling significant savings in terms of time and costs.

In addition, ZSI is very sensitive to the call of "green" concepts and "eco-sustainability". For this reason ZSI offers a range of products that allows us to meet the needs of those customers who care about these issues as we do.

**Q: Let's speak more specifically about detergency. What are the products and the technologies Zschimmer & Schwarz is pointing on?**

**J. M.:** As already mentioned, ZSI is characterized by being not only a simple producer of "commodities", but also for being able to provide a comprehensive package of products that meet the specific needs of customers operating in different sectors and markets.

One of our strengths resides undoubtedly in our production flexibility and in the service we offer to our customers with a view to mutual satisfaction. In this perspective, we are proud to be able to communicate the signing of an agreement with WheatOleo, a well-known brand in the field of "green" detergency, for the distribution of alkyl poly pentosides with differential compositions (Appyclean) and of sophorolipi (Sophoclean). The sophorolipi are the first true "green" co-surfactants as they are eco-friendly products from local, non-GMO and "palm-free" raw materials. Sophoclean allows a high cleaning power combined with low foam, so it's easier to

rinse and thus allows a lower water consumption. This partnership allows us to further expand our portfolio with a class of products having a low environmental impact, which perfectly fits with our development guidelines.

**Q: How has the international market changed in the last ten years? What does it look like in this cloudy moment?**

**S.M.:** We can divide the last ten years into two distinct phases: a first phase of development, between 2003 and 2007, followed by a second phase of uncertainty due to increasing prices of raw materials, the economic crisis and the several hopes in a recovery: a situation which makes our life like a rollercoaster. This harsh climate made up of concerns and of uncertainty affects with no distinction all levels of the supply chain of the cleaning and the cosmetics sectors. On the other side some companies have been able to face the challenges by investing in innovation and new technologies, allowing them to "defend themselves" and indeed to gain positions on the market. A market, which, wants to recover, to come back to a real and solid growth phase.

**Q: What about the Italian market?**

**J. M.:** To answer this question we have to look at Italy in a broad picture frame: the Italian market suffers a lot in nearly all sectors, as reported on a daily basis by mass media. Nevertheless, despite all odds, during our visits to our customers, we realize that this period could be a great time for opportunities and that it is worth investing now in new technologies and in new market segments, in order to be ready when the situation will cool down.

The vision of ZSI is perfectly tuned with this viewpoint, as we can affirm to represent a reliable partner in supporting our clients in identifying and focusing on new potentials and grow opportunities, together, on a medium and/or long term basis.

**Q: What are detergents manufacturers asking to ZSI?**

**J. M.:** There has been a change in the general attitude. The "traditional" supplier doesn't exist anymore. Today market players look for partners being able to work together on joint projects. In many countries, we got requests to develop solutions combining efficiency and innovation: these are the two key elements of a product driving the choice of consumers.

Moreover, the added value of ecological/antibacterial functionalities influence greatly new product launches providing an added value beyond going the primary cleaning functions of a cleaning product. This is the scenario in which we develop products aimed for the formulation of liquidcaps: a good opportunity to conjugate convenience and sustainability.

**Q: Sustainability, an evolving concept: What is the vision of Zschimmer & Schwartz?**

**S. M.:** From our point of view the concept of sustainability is in a development meeting today's needs, a concept paving the way for the needs of

forthcoming generations. We always care to use raw materials derived from biodegradable sources having a low environmental impact, such as natural, organic, green raw materials in a broader sense. Moreover, today we have learned to focus on issues like the preservation of natural resources, eco-design and green-chemistry starting from the harvest of raw materials, passing through the development stages, up to the finished product and its impact on the environment: from cradle to cradle.

That's why we privilege in our production chain concentrated products being more effective in reducing water consumption. In addition we try, thanks to the increasing use of solar energy to reduce the use of not sustainably sourced energy. We develop production solutions for our plants allowing us to recover and optimize energy consumption. As far as the logistic are concerned we optimized our transportation system by optimizing cargoes during transport. From the general point of view we can affirm that that the concept of sustainability is facing an increasing demand from the side of our customers, especially if we are speaking about cosmetics. Look good, feel good, do good corresponds to a novel approach to the concept of beauty where appearance and wellbeing conjugate with the respect of our environment.

GIULIO FEZZARDINI  
**H&PC Today (TKS Publisher)**



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