



A virtuous circle for the recovery of plastic waste in the ceramic industry

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The partnership between Aliplast, a company of the Hera Group specialising in the production of plastic materials and Panariagroup, a leading company in the ceramic sector is a very strong one. Some time ago the two companies established a project for the recovery and regeneration of plastic film waste, developed by Aliplast in a circular logic, that not only ensures economic benefits but also helps to significantly reduce the environmental impact of the supply chain.

The Key Players

Panariagroup is a company with an extraordinary tradition in the ceramic industry, with head office in Finale Emilia, Lower Modena. Since 1974, the company has specialised in the production and marketing of high-quality traditional laminated and porous single fired porcelain stoneware floors and coverings for indoor and outdoor use. The company is strongly committed to sustainability, with dedicated Financial Statements, that it has published since 2016. Aliplast, is a company of Herambiente (a Hera Group company), and is a leader in the production of flexible film in PE, PET Sheet and regenerated polymers. The company has many years of experience in the ceramics industry and today covers about 67% of the domestic market thanks to its portfolio of solutions for the recovery, recycling and regeneration of plastic film, a material that is also very widely used in the tile industry.

Creation and development of the project

The collaboration between the two companies started in 2005, with the first recovery and recycling pilot project at one of the five Panariagroup facilities. Waste recovery is carried out in a "closed loop" logic, a principle that ensures maximum sustainability with the recovery of plastic waste from companies that is then processed and regenerated to obtain a product of high quality, with technical characteristics on a par with those of virgin material, ready for use once again in the production cycle. After an initial start-up phase, the partnership between Aliplast and Panariagroup, was extended in 2010. This was the year in which the project became fully operational, involving all the Emilian Company's ceramic production facilities.

The Closed Loop logic in the ceramic industry: how it works

Panariagroup uses low-density polyethylene shrink wrapping film to wrap the pallets produced during the different processing phases. The process used for the production of the finished product consists of intermediate steps, during which the tiles are repeatedly packaged with different plastic films, with a procedure that entails the use and disposal of large quantities. The recovery project involves, first and foremost, the selection and volumetric reduction of this waste material; a phase that takes place directly on site, at the Panariagroup facilities. The material is then sent to the Aliplast hub in Istrana, where it is converted into granules and, then, into a new packaging film, ready to once again enter Panariagroup's production cycle.

The Results

A very high percentage of material is recovered, almost 95%. This means that the quantity of film that cannot be recycled is indeed minimal. The figures relating to the reduction of CO2 introduced into the environment are significant: with respect to the production of virgin plastic, the saving per kg of film produced using Aliplast technology is 2.03 kg. With the closed loop system, approximately 230,000 kg of polyethylene waste are collected each year, equivalent to a savings of more than 450 tons of CO2. The partnership with Aliplast has given Panariagroup excellent savings in the purchase of virgin material. A further advantage is that project falls under the PARI: a system for the autonomous management of packaging waste structured by Aliplast which is a unique of its kind. In Italy, PARI receives a reduced environmental contribution, ensuring a considerable economic savings to the end user. The contribution applied is indeed 40% less than that of other Consortia or similar systems. Through this partnership, Panariagroup further confirms its commitment to corporate responsibility, which is reported every year in the Sustainability report. The company firmly believes in economic, environmental and social responsibility, and specific initiatives and objectives are set and attained for this every year. Panariagroup is also strongly committed to responsible product innovation, and produces antibacterial materials for the safety of living spaces as well as ultra-thin ceramic slabs which ensure a reduced environmental impact.

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