

Assocarboni comments on Italian steam coal imports

In 2013, Italy will import 19 million t of steam coal, stable compared to last year, with the bulk coming by sea from the US, South Africa and Indonesia. These countries account for 80% of Italy's steam coal imports.

Speaking at the 2013 Coal Industry Advisory Board plenary meeting in Paris, Andrea Clavarino, chairman of the Italian Coal Association (Assocarboni), expressed his concern over the increasing impoverishment of Italy's industrial base, which is directly linked to the country's uncompetitive and unsustainable electricity prices.

"Italy is the second biggest manufacturing country in Europe, but it also holds the negative record for having the highest electricity bill", explained Clavarino.

"Italian companies are forced to cope with prices 50% higher than the European average, as the country depends on natural gas and renewables for electricity production for more than 70% of its energy mix. If Italy continues to ignore the contribution of coal to the production of competitive electricity, its envied industrial base will soon be at risk", Clavarino added.

"In our country there are three oil-to-coal conversion projects waiting for authorisation: in Porto Tolle, Vado Ligure and Saline Joniche", continued Clavarino. "If all implemented, these highly efficient, state of the art projects would increase the coal share in the nation's energy mix to 16% from current 12%".

In recent years, Italian coal producers have shown a determined ability to focus on innovation, and have fostered significant investments in new clean coal technologies totalling more than €7 billion.

"Our plants have obtained all the stringent European environmental certifications (EMAS) and boast an average efficiency of 39%, with peaks of 46% in the case of the Torrevaldaliga North and for the prospective oil to coal conversion at Porto Tolle, Vado Ligure and SEI power plants, compared to the European average of 35%. This, per se, should lead to a greater exploitation of our coal-fired plants", Clavarino concluded.