

# Exploring Opportunities and Challenges in the Nonwoven Industry

## An Interview with Roberto Degrandi

In a world where industries are navigating through geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainties, and technological advancements, the nonwoven sector stands at a crossroads. To gain insights into this dynamic industry, TVC Media Team sat down with **Roberto Degrandi**, Regional Sales Director for Woollen, Worsted, and Nonwovens Technology at AUTEFA Solutions. With over three decades of experience in B2B sales and machinery for diverse markets, Degrandi provides a seasoned perspective on market dynamics, challenges, and opportunities.



**Roberto Degrandi (Ing.)**  
Regional Sales Director Woollen  
Worsted and Nonwovens Technology  
AUTEFA Solutions Italy S.r.l.



### Strategic Expansion in India: The Batliboi Partnership

AUTEFA Solutions' recent partnership with Batliboi marks a strategic move to enhance its presence in the Indian market. While AUTEFA has been present in India for several years, the vastness of the Indian market necessitates broader coverage. Degrandi emphasised that India is akin to a continent, requiring a robust marketing effort to capture its full potential. Batliboi's established presence in key industrial hubs such as Ludhiana, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Tirupur, combined with their marketing expertise, complements their technical skills. This synergy aims to create a "win-win solution," expanding AUTEFA's reach and ensuring comprehensive market coverage. The goal is to leverage Batliboi's marketing prowess to open doors and identify projects, and understand specific customer requirements.

### Second-Hand Machinery: A Stepping Stone to New Equipment

Degradandi acknowledged the significant presence of second-hand AUTEFA machines in India, viewing it as a common trend in emerging markets. He noted that businesses often start with second-hand

machinery when exploring new production avenues. However, he pointed out the inherent limitations in productivity compared to new machines. New lines can produce three times more output than older lines while consuming fewer resources. As the Indian market matures, Degrandi anticipates a shift towards brand-new machinery to enhance efficiency and output.

### India's Potential as a Safe Haven for Investment

Amid global uncertainties, Degrandi highlighted India's unique position as a politically stable and economically resilient market. While regions such as Europe grapple with the Ukraine-Russia war and others face economic devaluation or conflicts, India remains a safe and attractive destination for investments. The Indian government's focus on infrastructure and industrial growth further solidifies its potential as a promising market for AUTEFA's solutions.

### Competitive Edge: Quality, Price, and Strategic Manufacturing

In a competitive landscape that includes established European players such as Dilo and Andritz, AUTEFA distinguishes itself through a combination of



quality, competitive pricing, and strategic manufacturing. Degrandi stated that AUTEFA's quality and price levels are on par with those of its competitors. However, to cater to price-sensitive markets like India, AUTEFA offers a line engineered in Europe but manufactured in China using European components such as Siemens. This approach reduces production costs by 35-40% without compromising quality, making it an ideal solution for customers seeking high performance at a medium budget.



### Global Challenges and the Nonwoven Industry

Degradini addressed the significant challenges facing the global nonwoven industry, largely due to global instability. The automotive sector, a major consumer of nonwoven materials, is experiencing a slowdown, impacting demand for products used in car interiors, insulation, and filters. With companies like Volkswagen closing factories and uncertainty surrounding the future of electric vehicles, the nonwoven industry faces considerable headwinds.

### Innovation and Adaptation

Despite current market stagnation, AUTEFA remains committed to research and innovation.

Degradini affirmed that technical teams across Italy, Austria, and other locations are continuously working on reducing costs, enhancing performance, and developing new opportunities. This proactive approach ensures

that AUTEFA is well-prepared to meet future demands when the market eventually recovers.

### Outlook and Future Prospects

Degradini expressed a cautious outlook, noting that the world is currently "standing still" to an extent not seen even during the 2008 financial crisis. However, he remains optimistic that once geopolitical tensions ease and economic stability returns, there will be a surge in demand across industries. AUTEFA is positioning itself to capitalise on this recovery by ensuring its solutions are ready to meet the evolving needs of its customers.

In conclusion, Roberto Degrandini's insights paint a picture of an industry navigating significant challenges while preparing for future opportunities. AUTEFA Solutions' strategic initiatives, particularly its focus on the Indian market and its commitment to innovation, underscore its resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing global landscape. ■ ■