

press release

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Hera Group receives almost 10 million euro from the NRRP for agrivoltaics

This funding will make it possible to accelerate the Group's strategic investments for developing innovative initiatives aimed at producing renewable energy without further land consumption, thus promoting the energy transition and decarbonisation in Emilia-Romagna. These projects, which are expected to produce almost 30 GWh per year, are part of the Hera Group's Climate Transition Plan with a Net Zero target to 2050.

The Hera Group has been awarded 9.4 million euro to finance two pioneering projects in the development of advanced agrivoltaic systems. This funding falls within the measures of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), as Investment 1.1 "Agrivoltaic Development", under Mission 2 "Green Revolution and Ecological Transition", Component 2, "Renewable Energy, Hydrogen, Grid and Sustainable Mobility". The plants will make an important contribution to the energy transition in Emilia-Romagna thanks to their total peak power coming to over 19 MW, equivalent to the consumption of approximately 11,000 Italian households, with savings amounting to 7,700 tonnes of CO₂ per year, equal to the absorption capacity of 830 hectares of forest, corresponding to about 1,200 football pitches.

More specifically, 6.6 million euro have been allocated to the Hera Group's project for developing an Energy Park in Faenza, while 2.8 million euros will go to the Cesena project of Horowatt, a newco established by Hera and Orogel, an agricultural cooperative company.

These NRRP grants will reinforce the Hera Group's investments in the renewable energy sector and the installation of agrivoltaic plants, and give further recognition to Hera's commitment in the field of energy transition and decarbonisation in favour of the areas served. Agrivoltaic development projects are part of the strategy outlined in the Group's Business Plan, which includes numerous initiatives and investments to achieve carbon neutrality, reduce emissions and increase the production of green energy. These initiatives also fall under the Group's Climate Transition Plan, which aims to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050.

In particular, the Faenza Energy Park project obtained the largest contribution among the projects admitted to the Centre-North and came tenth in the overall Italian ranking. To promote the construction of these agriculture-energy hybrid systems, the NRRP call for tenders provides an incentive consisting of a capital contribution, coming to a maximum of 40% of the expenses incurred to build the plant, and a fixed and predetermined incentive tariff for 20 years, applied to the production of net electricity fed into the grid. The predetermined tariff set by the GSE allows the Hera Group to eliminate the risks associated with fluctuations in commodity prices during the life of the plant.

Horowatt: Orogel's green agriculture 4.0 revolution

Horowatt will construct an innovative agrivoltaic plant at the Cesena facility of the Orogel Group, capable of producing roughly 8 GWh each year, more than 80% of which will be self-consumed energy used by the agricultural cooperative's own plants. The agrivoltaic plant will be built and managed by Horowatt and will

integrate with the existing cogeneration plant built and managed by Hera Servizi Energia, the Hera Group's ESCo. This is a highly important work, both for reducing Orogel's energy costs and for its environmental benefits. In fact, it is estimated that the plant will lead to an annual saving of about 2,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted.

This project is also aimed at experimenting with a virtuous coexistence between agrivoltaic technology and agricultural crops, without consuming soil and creating synergies with the crops, which will be protected from excessive temperatures and will benefit from more moisture in the soil. The photovoltaic panels will be mounted on metal structures at a height of about 3 metres, high enough to allow all agricultural activities to be carried out underneath. Moreover, thanks to sophisticated automation integrated with sensors on the ground, the panels will be able to be oriented not only to follow the sun's rotation, guaranteeing maximum production efficiency, but also to meet specific agricultural needs, to the benefit of the crops below (agriculture 4.0).

The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

Faenza Energy Park: an urban forest with renewable energy production

The Faenza Energy Park will be built on a vast area, covering about 70 hectares to the west of the city. This new plant will consist of over 22,000 double-sided panels with a total power of about 14 MW and is estimated to produce 21.5 GWh of electricity per year, equivalent to the consumption of about 7,500 families, with an annual carbon dioxide saving of over 5,700 tonnes. The electricity produced will be directly fed into the grid, significantly reducing Faenza's carbon footprint and increasing the city's energy self-sufficiency.

The protagonists of this project – the Municipality of Faenza, the Hera Group with Studio LBLA, Unione della Romagna Faentina and the Società Agricola Le Cicogne, whose shareholders include Crédit Agricole and the Fondazione Banca del Monte e Cassa di Risparmio di Faenza – have imagined allocating approximately one third of the surface area to energy production alongside agricultural cultivation, one third to open-field agriculture and one third to the urban forest. In this new green infrastructure, agrivoltaics linked to precision agriculture will use digital techniques to monitor and optimise agricultural production processes, reducing their environmental impact. The system will consist of photovoltaic panel support structures positioned at a height from the ground that allows the agricultural vehicles used for cultivation to pass. These systems minimise soil occupation, allowing 90-95% of the land on which they are installed to be cultivated. To function, these systems also use solar tracking: an automatic mechanical device orients the photovoltaic panels towards the sun's rays. The photovoltaic panels that will be installed will also be double-sided, allowing radiation to be utilised on both sides of the module, with the aim of maximising electricity generation. Appropriate monitoring systems are also expected to be installed, to verify the impact of the plants on agricultural production.

The construction of the plant is planned to begin in 2025 and be completed in early 2026.