

press release

Bologna, 25 October 2018

Biomethane, the road to green energy now passes through Sant'Agata Bolognese

The Hera Group's top management and regional alderwoman Gazzolo inaugurated today, just outside Bologna, the first biomethane-from-organic-waste plant created by a multi-utility. Investments totalling 37 million euro have thus given new impetus to the future of renewable energies on an industrial scale, with 7.5 million cubic metres of biomethane and 20 thousand tonnes of compost sustainably fuelling, each year, a range of sectors including motor vehicle transport and agriculture.

How can energy amounting to 6 thousand tonnes of oil equivalent be obtained each year, without consuming a single drop of crude oil and thus avoiding 14,600 tonnes of CO₂ emissions? As of today, the answer can be found in Sant'Agata Bolognese, just outside the capital city of the Emilia-Romagna region, where the Hera Group has inaugurated a major plant producing biomethane from the organic portion of waste, designed and created on the basis of the most advanced precedents seen in this sector internationally.

The opening ceremony – that saw the participation of the region's alderwoman Paola Gazzolo, Hera's top management and the main local and sector institutions – ushered in a new phase in the decarbonisation of energy production, giving further impetus to the circular economy towards which the region has been moving for some time now. Thanks to this plant, indeed, sorted organic waste coming from our houses will serve the community under the form of gas. Once injected into the network, this gas will fuel public and private transportation vehicles running on natural gas, aiding a sector that is increasingly exposed to the issue of carbon dioxide emission.

In line with policies adopted by the Region, the National Energy Strategy and the European Union, the Sant'Agata Bolognese plant will now begin extracting value from this 37 million euro investment. The plant furthermore represents an enrichment of the range of plants belonging to Herambiente, the national leader in waste treatment that has been active for years in biogas production for renewable electricity.

A 100% renewable combustible from organic waste

In terms of volume, the plant is capable of treating 100 thousand tonnes of sorted organic waste each year, in addition to 35 thousand tonnes resulting from plant clipping and pruning. Thanks to the implementation of new and improved technologies in anaerobic digestion and upgrading, in particular, these resources will allow 7.5 million cubic metres of biomethane, a 100% renewable combustible, to be obtained along with 20 thousand tonnes of compost, a bio-fertiliser mainly intended for agriculture.

An architectural project conceived to bring the plant and the area served into harmony, minimising its environmental impact

With no combustion plants whatsoever, the plant is located within a pre-existing composting site, with no additional land use required for its construction. Planned with an eye to minimising its acoustic and odoriferous impact, the structure furthermore meets architectonic criteria aimed at harmonising it with the

surrounding area. Even its outer covering, which will be added over the next few months, will be dense with themes and motifs that relay the sense of what goes on inside: in particular, images will portray vegetation blossoming out of an arid and cracked ground, calling to mind the transformations undergone by the organic product within the plant.

Lastly, a redevelopment of the surrounding green areas will be accompanied by the creation of a path intended to welcome those visiting the plant itself.

“We have been working with biomethane for some time now”, comments **Tomaso Tommasi di Vignano, Executive Chairman of the Hera Group**. “Today’s inauguration, in particular, is a crowning achievement that represents years of work. Our community will now be served by a plant born out of research, studies and European tenders that allowed us to choose the best of what is currently available on the market. What’s more, renewable energies must necessarily become part of industrialisation processes capable of expressing their potential on a large scale. In this sense the Sant’Agata plant is an excellent example that can be replicated elsewhere, above all in light of a regulatory framework that is finally favourable and provides fundamental added value for sector development.”

“The ribbon has been cut in front of a highly innovative construction project that moves towards an energy transition, pointing in the direction of a low carbon economy: biomethane presents a significant opportunity for reducing the use of fossil fuels and lessening our region’s energy footprint, with an eye to a circular economy”, **states the alderwoman of the Emilia-Romagna Region, Paola Gazzolo**. “Renewable energy is a fundamental part of the green turn supported by the Emilia-Romagna government with the policies implemented since the beginning of its mandate. This change of pace is intended to offset the effects of climate change as currently seen and reduce the use of raw materials, promoting recovery and reuse. Precisely because these products and materials are available in limited quantities, we must save them and preserve their value: the project realised by Hera in Sant’Agata is headed in exactly this direction”.

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