SaMoTer: on the rebound

Concerted efforts by organisers and equipment manufacturers amid a recovering Italian market assured the 30th edition of SaMoTer in Verona was a success. David Arminas reports

Italy’s construction equipment fair SaMoTer faced a make or break situation this year after an acknowledged downer in 2014, the previous show, visitor numbers in 2014 were half those of 2013. Attendance in 2014 plummeted to 40,000 from the 94,000 seen in 2011. The event’s future hung in the balance, according to some manufacturers.

But by all accounts, the four-day event at the Veronafiere in Verona, northern Italy in February, was a resounding success (see box). Attendance is quoted to nearly double that of 2014, listing the three shows together.

This is a good idea, says CASE Construction Equipment’s business director for Italy, Enrico Oddone. “Every time we have customers in common to all three shows. Combining the events has meant a one-stop shop for all things construction equipment related.”

This is especially important as Italy emerges slowly from the financial crisis that hit the European sector so badly. CASE sales started to rise in late 2014 and continued through 2016, a trend that is likely to continue.

But cautious optimism by the end user is matched by cautious buying. “They want to do more with less machines, meaning equipment must be more versatile. A project may take longer to complete but there is less investment risk in machinery by the customer. This is simply being prudent,” says Oddone.

CASE sales to dealers did well in 2016, he says, after the brand was split off from New Holland. CASE is seeing more interest in Europe for its 30-Serie crawler excavator units, produced by the Japanese group Sumitomo in Japan since the early 1990s. Sales have been helped by CASE offering an extended warranty from one year to three years and production has started at its Italian facility in Trento. Micro excavator accounts for around 6,000 of the 11,000 units of all types of construction equipment sold. CASE is chasing the market aggressively not just in Italy but all across Europe, with the recent launch of its C-series, on show at SaMoTer.

Optimism surrounding sustained growth in the Italian construction equipment market is buoyed by two government policies. There are now financing packages for companies that are looking to upgrade construction equipment.

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To stimulate sales the government is introducing a major incentive plan for companies looking to buy new equipment, says Oddone. In the first part – commonly referred to as super depreciation – companies can now amortise 14% of the cost of the equipment, and not simply 10%. But a whopping 20% can be amortised under the so-called hyper depreciation initiative, which is about to come into force.

Government initiative

Davide Cipolla, chief executive of concrete machinery manufacturer CPA, firmly believes that some sales have been as a result of the super depreciation package. However, hyper depreciation is not just for construction equipment. It covers all machinery in many sectors and includes equipment purchased by original equipment makers such as CPA in manufacturing goods, for example.

“We are still waiting for the government to clarify under what conditions a company is eligible for hyper depreciation, says Cipolla. “The focus is on efficiency. Equipment must be “smart” equipment, meaning it is connected to a larger data collection network that allows the owner to boost efficiencies. Importantly however, the

Back from the brink

Strong attendance has been seen at the 30th SaMoTer exhibition, that also included AsphaltLive and Transportation Logistics events - held together for the first time. Upwards of 14,000 visitors from 85 countries passed through the laminate over the four-day event at the Verona Exhibition Centre.
Plant hire in Italy: a new beginning

Italy’s rental market is showing signs of better times ahead, but there is a danger that old habits will return to the sector. Deals in the past were often less than transparent or regulated; according to ASSODIM, the Italian construction equipment rental association.

The challenge is to raise the profile and the professionalism of the rental sector in a country without a strong tradition of renting equipment, says Silvio Tottoli, head of Italian operations for Dutch rental firm Boots since 2011 - and who sits on the board of ASSODIM.

Tottoli has seen how rental firms operate in the UK, one of Europe’s most professional rental markets and believes Italy now needs to move in that direction as the construction market picks up. But in Italy, much equipment rental is done by one person with one machine and one attachment, and who sticks a notice in their front window that a digger is for rent, he explains. “It is all about educating the sector to change the culture of renting equipment as the construction sector moves increasingly out of the financial crisis,” says Marco Prosperi, president of ASSODIM, whose 300 members include some of the country’s biggest and smallest rental businesses.

This summer ASSODIM will launch a major series of training programmes for its members, says Prosperi. Topics covered include contract types, service options, legal rights, transparent procedures for renting equipment.

Rental firms will have the right to display an assurance kite mark - a “Quality Rental” sticker - to assure customers, contracted and potential, that a level of service and protection for their rental investment is given.

> The D475 is an excellently designed and manufactured excavator. It has been developed for a market where performance and stability are crucial for customers. The D475 comes with an innovative engine management system that ensures efficient fuel consumption and reduces noise levels, while providing high performance and low emissions.

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one because of the recent creation of Kato Inner. Japanese heavy equipment maker Kato is best known in the far east, especially for its heavy excavators. But the firm departed Europe in 2012, explains Venot, because of increasingly stringent environment emissions rules.

Kato inner used SaMoTer to launch four new small-size models and the larger group has plans to start production of excavators in Europe, most likely next year, says Venot, who is also president of the Italian Construction Equipment Association, UNACE.

The market for batching plants is also looking up after more than half of Italy’s 2,900 sites fell into disuse during financial crises, notes Alessandro Schicato, area sales manager for ORU (Le Orchette Rustico), the concrete machinery division of Inner Group. However, it remains to be seen how many of the batching plants that have lain idle will be restored. Around 40% were dry batching plants and don’t want to invest as fast as wet batching plants; these dry plants are more easily switched on and off, he says.

Companies such as ORU have had to adjust their sales relationships with end users. There is much more selling direct to them and not through agents. As well, end users are asking many more questions about environmental aspects of plants as they seek to lower their business’ carbon footprint, he says.

Tito Midda, who has been at Komatsu for 14 years, agrees. “The Italian market is now very different,” says Midda, vice president for European distribution of construction and utility products. “End users are much more sophisticated in their product knowledge and what they want. Intelligent machine control is fast becoming essential on big-ticket items such as automatic excavators and large dozers.”

Business Intelligence Modelling (BIM) is not as common in Italy as it is in other European countries, such as in the UK. But, it’s coming, he says. Thanks to the government’s hyper depreciation policy of 246% on machines with intelligent control, automation looks to only provide the end user can prove that the business has the computing power to make the best use of the machine and data collected. Inputting information into digital modelling for a project, as in BIM, is the eventual goal of having intelligent machine control.

Komatsu has invested around 6.5 million modernising its European plant, including the installation of new automated assembly lines and improved painting facilities.

Rebeloc is another major manufacturer which has invested its dealership network, as Midda Kato, managing director of Rebeloc Construction Machinery, explains: “We are more carefully selecting our dealers and it is in much more emphasis on customer after-sales service. End users are also demanding much more help from dealers and Komatsu to determine their needs,” says Kato, based in the Netherlands, who also spent five years heading up Komatsu’s Italian operations.

Italy is re-moving back into the top five for heavy crawler excavator sales in Europe and the mini excavator market remains highly competitive. Expect to see Rebeloc offering much more options choices in the near future, as being requested by end users.

**CASE Construction Equipment**
www.csees.com

**CIFA**
www.cifa.com

**Indeco**
www.indeco.it

**Katainer**
www.katainer.com

**Kobelco Construction Machinery Europe**
www.kobelco-europe.com

**Komatsu**
www.komatsu.eu

**ORU Inner Metal**
www.oru.it

**Simex**
www.simek.it

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**SaMoTer SHOW**
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**SaMoTer, Asphaltica and Transpave 2017**
- Visitors: 84,000 from 16 countries
- Exhibitors: 810 from 25 countries
- Area: 84,000m²

**SaMoTer and Asphaltica 2014**
- Visitors: 40,000 from 55 countries
- Exhibitors: 465 from 27 countries
- Area: 56,000m²

**SaMoTer 2011**
- Visitors: 90,000 from 110 countries
- Exhibitors: 900 from 37 countries
- Area: 105,000m²

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