

Il Sole 24 Ore – Wednesday, 13 May 2020

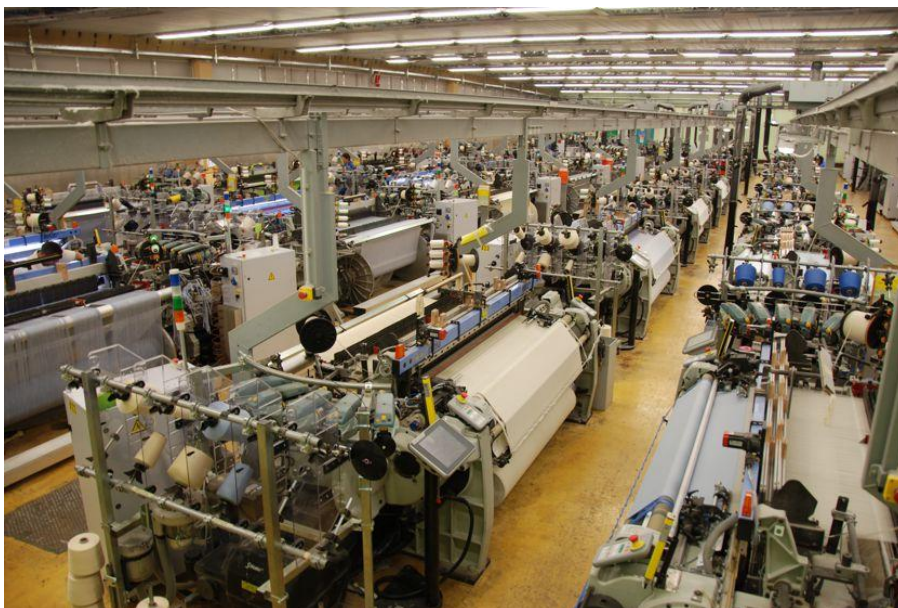
## **Albini: «The Anti-viral fabric is ready, encouraging results»**

**Stefano Albini, President of the historic company located in Val Seriana: "This technology has proven to ensure active protection from viruses and bacteria"**

Those were the days of the pandemic that hit the Val Seriana really hard. Stefano Albini was also locked in his home in Bergamo. A little to suffer from what was happening, a little to think. To ask questions about the future and organize the emergency of his Cotton Mill, one of the most important European fabric manufacturers.

*«We never completely stopped. And between one phone call and another there was also the one of a supplier who proposed to develop an idea together". "In that moment - Albini says - we realized that innovation and fabric chemical treatment could give great results in the fight against Covid-19." Something in this area had already been tested during Sars' experience, but it was not enough. It had to be applied to the new Coronavirus.*

*«What we have developed is a finishing formula that we have called ViroFormula. A technology that has proven to be able to provide active protection from viruses and bacteria". A result that is obtained through a combination of silver-based elements, which generates an antiviral and antibacterial effect. "Practically speaking - Albini continues – the liposomes are used as accelerators to destroy viruses in a few moments". Liposomes are the vectors that serve to transport the active substance into the fabrics.*



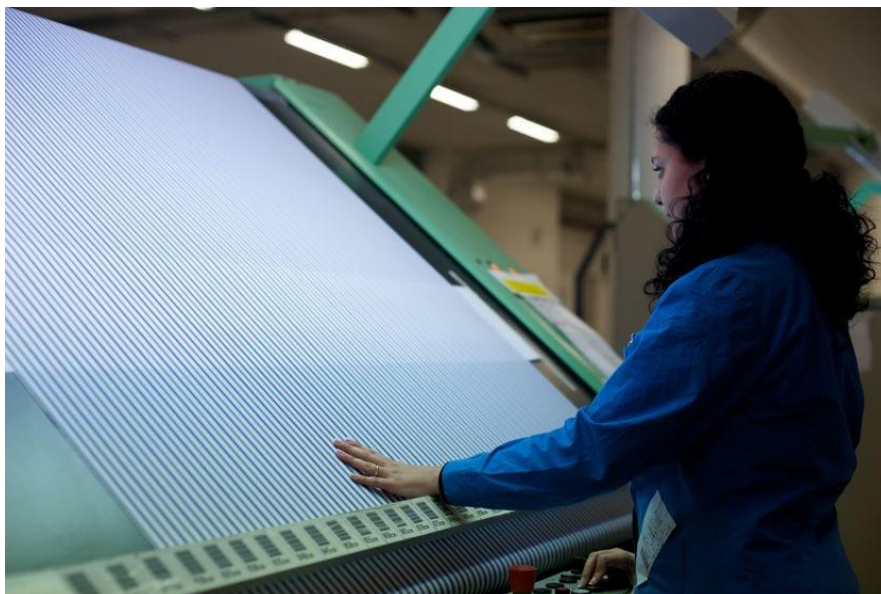
### **“Certified fabric”**

According to the company, ViroFormula is a certified and totally safe treatment for people and the environment, developed in collaboration with a company specialized in technologically advanced chemical-textile auxiliaries. *«At the moment we have produced several fabrics with this technology and - Albini says - we are completing the latest tests. The first results are very positive both in terms of performance and duration».*

The fabrics treated with the ViroFormula patent could be used for the production of masks, coats, shirts, jackets, trousers and any other type of garment. Furthermore, the fixing process is not unlike the most common one of waterproofing.

A possible industrial and product turnaround that comes precisely from the areas that have paid the most for this pandemic, both in terms of victims and social and economic losses.

Research has been the productive and competitive key of this company for years: Albini Next has recently been inaugurated, a Think Tank created to guide the change in textiles, based on the evolution of know-how and industrial and academic partnerships. The goal, in fact, is to create new materials and applied technologies, such as new natural dyes, recycling in various forms or traceability processes. To this path is now added this latest project on anti-viral tissues.



Will all this be enough to get out of the emergency? *«At the moment - Stefano Albini whispers - the solace comes from the solidarity emails of the many employees who write to us to hold on. The important thing is that everyone still feels part of a community, a wounded community that has the strength to start again».*

## **At the service of the luxury giants**

This in Albino is the shirt fabric factory where the giants of world luxury are served. From Kering to Lvmh, with the Gucci and Hermes brands. Among the Italians Armani, Cucinelli, Zegna. And despite this, today there are more questions than certainties. How to rethink work in the company, the future of orders, the recovery in consumption, the fate of markets like the United States and Asia.

The looms started working again after the closing of March 16th. Now about 30% of employees are operating, even if proximity is not a requirement to deal with these large textile machines. Here the spacing and social distancing were applied even before the Coronavirus.

## **The Group's numbers**

Albini Group today has seven plants (four of which in Italy), for a total of over 1,300 employees and is the largest European producer in the sector. The group had already closed 2019 with consolidated sales of 142 million, down 6% from the previous year due to the international restructuring of the fashion context.

Investments are among the unknowns. Will the whole challenge of sustainability of the textile product have a future or will the pandemic question this as well? Because the Cotton Mill over the years has focused entirely on direct control of the entire production chain, from the Egyptian or Caribbean cotton field to the finishing of the fabric. An essential condition to be able to trace, check and make each passage transparent, ensuring maximum sustainability of each meter of fabric.

## **What fate for the supply chain?**

Stefano Albini represents the fifth generation of the family that has been the soul of the textile industry in this valley for 144 years. *«We are not yet able to understand what the future will be, because in the fashion system many companies are stuck or in layoff. As far as we are concerned I can even imagine a halving of turnover for this 2020»*. And much will depend on the reopening of the shops and the resumption of international tourism, which is one of the main driving factors for the luxury sector. But the real alarm cry is the one related to fate of the supply chain, especially of small Italian companies that risk ending up even more into the orbit of large groups.



*«We have to save the Made in Italy, which is at risk of dying - Albinì concludes -. This crisis risks being unsustainable from a financial and dimensional point of view". Without too many words, the post-tsunami virus scenario leads to a forced path. One way. «Perhaps we will have to overcome old mistrust and open a season of new mergers or acquisitions between small and medium-sized companies. Otherwise, climbing the world markets in the coming years will be very difficult.»*