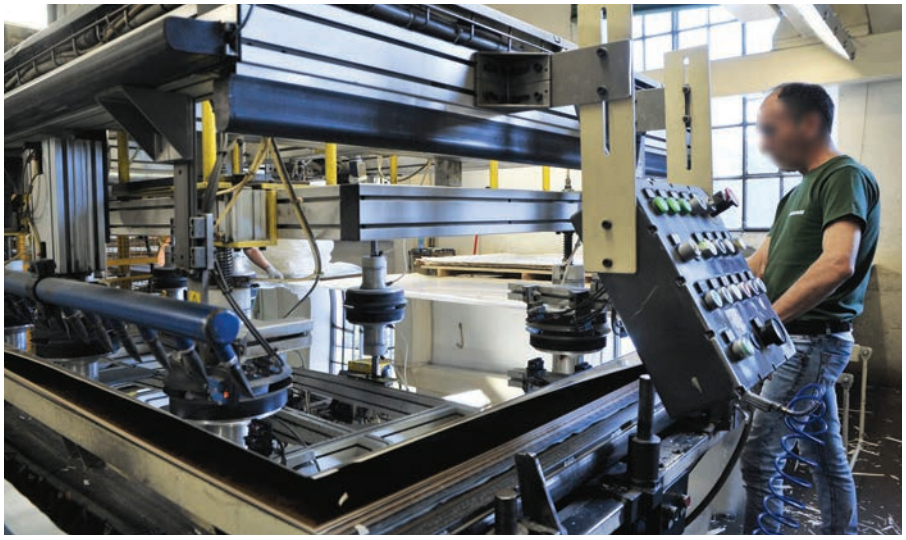
Performance and good taste

Working in the supply of high-pressure laminates (HPL), Lamicolor is celebrating its first 50 years with growth in double digits, a result made possible thank to the continuous investments to improve product quality, always keep pace with style trends and ensure a varied offering.

Words and photo Enrico Bona

Half a century of history is no mean feat for a medium-sized enterprise: having reached this desired milestone, Lamicolor is looking to the future with confidence, supported by continuous growth in the last five years. Investments to update the factory and production lines was of fundamental importance, accompanied by a significant staff increase. All this has enabled Lamicolor to assume a leading position in a precise and strategic sector of operations, of high-pressure laminates, sold by the company under the trade name of Lamco HPL. They are made using sheets of kraft paper, layered and impregnated with phenolic resins, with the addition of a sheet of decorative paper impregnated with melamine resin. The production process involves the use of hot presses (90 kg/cm³ of pressure at 150 °C) in which the resins are polymerised. Despite having great mechanical and chemical resistance qualities, Lamco HPL is easy to work.

"The market is rewarding the choices that we've made," explains Roberto Gandino, MD of Lamicolor, *"because there's ever greater demand for high-quality, high-performance materials, like our HPLs. In the last two years we've experienced a truly remarkable increase in production, with 20% growth: this isn't due merely to the growth of the market in the post-crisis period, but also to the ever greater appreciation of the products that we deal with. Of course, success doesn't come out of nowhere: it's founded on a great deal*



of research and there are big investments".
Lamicolor's HPLs are intended mainly for horizontal furnishing surfaces, so tables and the tops of kitchen modules, to which are added shelves and surfaces in bathrooms, the kitchen and the sleeping area.
In the last two years the new trend establishing itself in interior design and layout has involved ever greater entry of our products in the RV sector, with reference to walls, partitions and doors in the kitchen.
So this means a significant presence in vehicle passenger compartments. The characteristics of laminate make it extremely sought-after: resistant to abrasion and impact, it ensures hygiene and easy cleaning, but is at the same time visually appealing and pleasing to the touch, in line with the modern trends of the furnishing sector.
"The quality and style levels of ten-fifteen years ago have been abundantly exceeded," affirms Pierre Cibrario, Lamicolor's sales manager, *"and increasing attention is being paid to home furniture in the recreational vehicle sector. Our laminates have an ever higher level of quality and finish, and continuous research is essential, in order to keep pace with the times, anticipating the style trends of the moment".*
In the recreational vehicle sector, Lamicolor is one of the few companies that deals in high-pressure laminate: it commands at least 70% of the European market in this area. Despite not supplying RV makers directly, Lamicolor's HPLs make an appearance on a great number of vehicles produced by the biggest European, Italian, French, German and English groups, joined by supply for Australian manufacturers. In the field of design, aesthetic research must always be supported by high quality standards: this explains the continuous investment.
"There are 130 employees on site at Lamicolor, whereas there were around 90 ten years ago," continues Roberto Gandino, *"so we're talking about a 40% staff increase. As far as structures are concerned, growth has been even bigger; over just a few years we've expanded from 10,000 to 15,000 m² of covered surface. We've also implemented industrial modernisation thanks to automation of a part of the production lines. Where manual labour is still necessary, irreplaceable, we've tried to help workers through modern machinery for handling the panels".*
Lamicolor laminates are produced in five standard measurements, with maximum dimensions of 420 cm in length and 160 cm in width. Clients then cut to the set measurements independently. For the decorations, that is, shade of colour and user interface designs, the company has production which is standard yet simultaneously provides great scope for customisation thanks to the extreme flexibility that sets it apart. Certainly, many resources are expended in decorative research, to offer clients a product which is always contemporary, in keeping with the most advanced style trends.
"Lamicolor has always tried to provide continuity in its way of working in the industrial sector," concludes Roberto Gandino, MD of Lamicolor, *"a continuity effected in two ways: on one hand research into new style trends, thanks to a dedicated team which has given us great satisfaction in these years, on the other a constant development of the company in terms of product quality".*

Company Profile

An Italian company with a 50-year history, Lamicolor works in the field of producing laminates for the furnishing sector. The key product is Lamco HPL, produced through high-pressure, high-temperature pressing. More than 1.5 million laminate panels come off Lamicolor production lines each year. The factory, located in lower Piedmont, can count on an area of 27,000 m², 15,000 of which is covered. 130 employees work there and the company's turnover exceeds 27 million euros. The RV sector represents about 20% of activity and involves the supply of laminates for furnishing (see the table and kitchen tops) to the biggest carpenters working in supply to European groups, joined by collaboration with Australian companies. The first product collection for the sector dates to 1998: since then, specific ranges of laminates for the sector are created every year. Lamicolor production is guaranteed by various European and international certifications, including FSC and PEFC with reference to the use of products sourced from sustainably managed forests.

Roberto Gandino and Pierre Cibrario