

Grenoble Isère Report



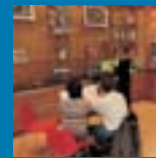
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Interview with Tony Alemani, Head of Caterpillar Logistics

Caterpillar opens its new logistics centre

The logistics subsidiary of the world's leading manufacturer of earth-moving and civil engineering machinery (€20bn revenue in 2002) has just opened a new logistics platform at Le Versoud, in Grenoble-Isère, near its main production unit in France. This strategic decision consolidates Caterpillar's position in the area.

What is Caterpillar Logistics?

We are a subsidiary of Caterpillar Inc, operating quite separately from Caterpillar France. Our firm works in 24 countries with 75 distribution centres and a workforce of 7,500 people.

Why did you choose Grenoble-Isère?

The components for our machines come from all over the world. With us setting

up an advance base just near our plants, production units will be able to supply their customers just in time three weeks after receiving an order for a Caterpillar machine. That will help to enhance the competitive position of Caterpillar France units in Grenoble. But the other advantage with Grenoble-Isère is we are well placed to serve other group production units and suppliers, notably in Italy.

What are your targets for growth?

To start with we invested €10m (funded by the company itself or by investors) and recruited about 40 employees who are now operational. Between now and the end of the year the workforce will double. The next step, scheduled for next year, is to put up a second building at the same location enabling us to develop an activity adding the final coat of paint to components. As a result

we will be able to supply our factories with fully finished parts, just as in the automotive industry, giving us even greater flexibility. Ultimately, by the end of 2006, the logistics centre will have a workforce of 150. And, I should point out, these are not jobs transferred from our production units. It is part of a long-term strategy which will make Grenoble-Isère a model for what we want to develop pretty well everywhere else in the world.



UPDATES

Rossignol consolidating its position in Asia



Rossignol, the world market leader for winter sports equipment, is headquartered in Voiron at the foot of the Chartreuse hills (€478.6m revenue for fiscal 2003-4 with a workforce of 2,900). It has just announced plans to set up its own subsidiary in Japan to consolidate its leadership position in this market. For 25 years it has been represented by its importer Mitsui but is now determined to make the most of the burgeoning economic upturn. In the meantime Rossignol continues its careful but steady exploration of the Chinese market, which is gradually waking up to the idea of skiing. Sales have doubled every year for the last four years and ski resorts are springing up on all sides. Further proof that products made in Europe also have their place in Asia!

Air Liquide in San Francisco

More than 227,000 tonnes of liquid nitrogen: that is the amount of coolant gas supplied in record time by Air Liquide, which operates in the Grenoble area, to cool concrete for the foundations of the future bridge between San Francisco and Oakland Bay, California. The bridge will open in 2008.

SPOTLIGHT

Giga, a machine for testing the resistance of concrete to extreme stress



With production of one cubic metre per year per inhabitant, concrete is the most commonly used construction material in the world today, particularly for buildings, bridges, dams and industrial facilities. However, its very complex mechanical behaviour is still poorly understood, particularly in violent situations involving shocks, impact, vibrations, strong winds, etc. But to determine its behaviour exactly it is better not to wait till disasters actually happen, which is where Giga comes in. The test machine, the only one in the world this large, has just been set up on the Grenoble university campus, in the premises of the Soils, Solids and Structures (3S) laboratory. Giga was commissioned by France's Defence Procurement Agency (DGA) but it will also be accessible to scientists from CNRS, Université Joseph Fourier and Grenoble's National Polytechnical Institute (INPG). This massive,

computer-controlled machine subjects large samples of concrete (10 cm in diameter by 20 cm high) to extreme stress. The data obtained will prove very useful developing tougher concretes, and repairing or reinforcing damaged concrete structures. Giga represents a €1.3m investment.

Major agreement in nanotechnology

CEA-Leti, in Grenoble, the leading European microelectronics R&D laboratory, has just signed a strategic agreement with three of world's top companies in this sector – STMicroelectronics, Philips and Motorola – which together form the Crolles 2 Alliance. Over the next four years Leti will give the Alliance priority access to its work developing nanometric devices on 300mm wafers. The transfer process will then continue at the joint development centre operated by the

Alliance at the Crolles 2 fabrication facility, in the valley upstream from Grenoble.

Work at Leti will be concentrated at the Nanotec 300 platform in Grenoble. It represents a €300m investment funded by the French government, industry and local authorities (Rhône-Alpes region, Isère department, Grenoble city council and the Greater Grenoble council) as part of the larger framework of the Minatec micro and nanotechnology centre.



Ever since Vicat first produced artificial cement Grenoble-Isère has exploited its reserves of "grey gold" and contributed to developing concrete and building materials for tomorrow.

Grenoble-Isère a solid player in concrete

Overlooking the motorway as you drive into Grenoble, the Casamaures, an extravagant oriental-style villa stands out with its intricate spiral columns, cement imitations of stone. Almost 200 years after Louis Vicat produced his first artificial cement, in 1817, the company of the same name, now France's third largest cement manufacturer, was among sponsors of the restoration of the historic villa, with its spectacular demonstration of the architectural possibilities of cement, or grey gold as they call it locally. The cement industry in Grenoble-Isère, which dates back to the middle of the 19th century, boasts some 1,000 employees, with two large private research centres, a talent pool of 2,000 students in relevant subjects, a unique centre for testing construction techniques and materials, and several quarries and cement works.

Vicat was incorporated in 1853 when Joseph Vicat opened the first cement works in the Grenoble area. Since then the firm has prospered and grown, but it still has solid local roots. Out of a dozen cement works worldwide, half of which are located abroad, three are in Grenoble-Isère. The Montalieu works, in the north of the department, an area once famous for its stonemasons, is the largest of all and certainly the most advanced in Europe. Its furnace has an annual production capacity of two million tonnes and is fully automated. In the Grenoble area Vicat produces its exclusive quick-setting cement – a natural cement made using stone mined in the Chartreuse hills. Not only is it quick-setting, it also has a particularly fine colour. Highly appreciated in Italy Vicat quick-setting cement is exported all over the world. Twelve years ago Vicat added to its Grenoble-Isère power base by setting up a technical resource and training centre and its main research laboratory (300 employees in all) on the industrial



Ciments Vicat (above) and Lafarge research facilities near Isle d'Abeau.

estate at Isle d'Abeau, in the north of Isère. It is here that it develops new binding agents, high-performance concretes, particularly for civil engineering, and its various special concretes.

Lafarge, the world market leader in construction materials with top-ranking positions in cement and concrete (accounting for 36% of total revenue, at €13.6m, and half its 75,000 strong global workforce) started life in neighbouring Ardèche (south-western extremity of Rhône-Alpes). In 1990 Lafarge chose the Isle d'Abeau area as the location for its global technology resource centre. From its beginnings with staff of 50 people it has grown to 500 employees, half of whom are involved in research. Drawn from 20 different nationalities they work with laboratories and customers all over the world. Their know-how covers a vast range of subjects including mineralogy, chemistry, geology, rheology, hydration and micromechanics. The prime objective is to improve the mechanical

resistance, environmental performance, appearance and service life of building materials. One particularly successful innovation, that originated in Grenoble-Isère, is the Agilia line of self-placing concrete. It does not need heavy-duty vibration equipment, cures more quickly and requires less water than conventional concrete. Five years after its market launch it already accounts for 7% to 8% of Lafarge sales. Lafarge spokesperson Pierre Juston explains the move to Isle d'Abeau: « Our lab used to be in Ardèche. Here we are close to two major urban centres, with their universities and airports. » In 2002 Grenoble-Isère gained an additional asset with the arrival of the Grands Ateliers de l'Isle d'Abeau, a centre of teaching and experimentation unique in France. It brings together schools specializing in construction engineering, art and architecture from all over Europe. Working in close partnership with industry the centre's students and researchers carry out full-scale experiments on tomorrow's materials. Some of their more futuristic prototypes are on show outside the building. Here again Grenoble-Isère is contributing to the future of materials.

WIDE-ANGLE



Grenoble–Isère showcase in Paris

In 1976 the Maison de l'Isère opened in Paris to showcase the area's economic, cultural and leisure assets. It is ideally situated close to the Louvre and the Comédie Française. Now, following a complete facelift supervised by the Isère Tourist Board, it has gained a new vocation. Anyone from Grenoble-Isère visiting Paris for professional reasons – business people, obviously, but also athletes, artists and anyone else who contributes to promoting our image in the capital – can use office space and a meeting room. There is even a fully equipped seminar room and a large space for exhibitions and receptions. Maison de l'Isère thus hopes to play an active part in promoting the area in Paris, home to our largest customer base, outside Rhône-Alpes. When next in Paris, do not forget to drop in at 2 Place André-Malraux, in the first arrondissement, telephone +33 (0)1 42 96 08 43, www.isere-tourisme.com



Festival season in Grenoble–Isère

From Jazz in Vienne to the International Festival of Magic at Oz-en-Oisans, the Grésivaudan Blues Festival, between Grenoble and Chambéry or the Festival of Chimes at Châtenay, nestling in the hills and plains of central Dauphiné, about 50 festivals will be brightening Grenoble-Isère nights this summer. There will be something to suit all tastes, even the most exotic, with chamber music, traditional French songs, rock music, jazz, blues, electronic music, film, dance, readings, theatre and circus. The event that enjoys the biggest international reputation is undoubtedly the Vienne jazz festival (30 June to 13 July). Last year it notched up 82,000 spectators. This year artists include Chuck Berry, Herbie Hancock, Didier Lockwood and Dee Dee

Bridgewater, so its 23rd edition in the splendid setting of Vienne's Roman amphitheatre will no doubt be another huge success. But other events are also beginning to draw increasingly large audiences. Of particular note are the fifth Grésivaudan Blues Festival (3 to 10 July), featuring Michael Jones and Little Bob, and the Jacques Brel festival of French song at Saint Pierre de Chartreuse (20 to 25 July) with guests including Cali, Sanseverino and Maurane. Plenty of other more unusual gatherings deserve a visit too, in particular the "Fermades", with its farm cooking displays on the Vercors plateau.



Agence d'Etudes et de Promotion de l'Isère

1, place Firmin Gautier - 38027 Grenoble Cedex 1 - Coordination: Sophie de Leiris
Tel.: 33 (0)4 76 70 97 13 - Fax: 33 (0)4 76 70 97 19

Site web: <http://www.grenoble-isere.com> - E-mail: s.deleiris@grenoble-isere.com

Head of publication: Jean-Marie Bernard, AEPi President

USA: Sharon Reh binder

Tel.: (1) 310 473 2818 - Fax: (1) 310 388 5382
E-mail: sharon@france.com

Germany: Armin Eckert

Tel.: (49) 6831 76 84 53 - Fax: (49) 6831 76 84 15
E-mail: AEPI@industrie-fr.de

Japan: Takato Suzuki

Tel.: (81) 3 3288 9621-ext 143 - Fax: (81) 3 3288 9558
E-mail: aepi@ccifj.or.jp

Italy: Consulenti & Partners

Tel.: (39) 0422 43 08 45
E-mail: info@consulpartners.it

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