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PARTNERSHIPS DEEPEN IN LIFE SCIENCES AND INNOVATION

Marking 160 years of diplomatic relations this year, Italy and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to closer cooperation when Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni met with her counterpart Sanae Takaichi in Tokyo last month, with the signing of various agreements, including those covering defense and aerospace.

In economic development, Italy moved beyond the renowned 3Fs — fashion, food and Ferrari — and has begun promoting its leadership in life sciences and its edge in innovation. Tapping Japan's extensive capital resources, the bilateral partnership has become highly successful and profitable.

Italy's active pharmaceutical ingredient ecosystem has established deep roots, with executives pointing out that staying competitive today relies on disciplined reinvestment and stable ownership.

"To stay ahead of the competition, you must invest a lot financially. Scale and modernization are prerequisites to becoming top innovators," said Procos CEO Enrico Zodio, who has led the Japanese-owned company for more than 15 years.

In line with those objectives, Procos has announced a multi-phased construction of a new production unit, dubbed R11, which will be rolled out "harmonically, organically and sustainably."

The first phase, according to Zodio, represents more than \$70 million in fresh investment and will raise production capacity by 15%, while increasing services for innovators. It also plans



At their facility in Novara in northern Italy, Procos uses cutting-edge equipment for pharmaceutical production and research and development.

to establish a new research and development center to expand its research activities and attract more talent.

However, capital expenditure is only half the story. For Zodio, the other half is nurturing workers and attracting young talent.

"Everything has been possible thanks to people, finding the right people at the right moment," said Zodio, who shared that the company is open to hire graduates who have no previous experience but are willing to learn.

He also pointed out that the average age of workers at the company is 38 and recognized that younger teams bring "a lot of positive energy," which can benefit any business committed to continuous innovation.

On the discovery side of

pharmaceuticals, Milan-based Axxam is positioning itself as an ideal partner for Japan's drug development ecosystem and a reliable bridge between European science and global commercialization.

CEO Ciriaco Maraschiello said the company opened a subsidiary in Boston to strengthen commercial operations and create a foothold for future acquisitions in line with its goal to become a global leader in drug discovery.

Committed to formalizing quality systems, Axxam secured its ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001, ISO 27001 and ISO 45001 certifications in less than three years, according to Maraschiello.

Axxam has also integrated generative artificial intelligence into research workflows to

identify new therapeutic targets, which addresses an industry-wide shortage of novelty in early-stage pipelines, according to Maraschiello.

To further consolidate its global growth, Maraschiello has signed plans to expand to Japan, increase its visibility in the country and collaborate with its industry counterparts.

Across Italy, business groups foresee the relationship with Japan broadening further as long as supply chains become more regional and adjust for unexpected disruptions.

Davide Fantoni, general manager of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, hopes to see collaboration spread outside consumer goods and extend into the industrial sector. ■

PROCOS: CELEBRATING A STRONG TEAM AND PARTNERSHIP



Procos CEO Enrico Zodio

This year, Italian company Procos marks two important milestones: 80 years since its establishment and 20 years since its acquisition by CBC Group, a Japanese global trading company.

"I'm proud of what we have done in these last 20 years, but everything was only possible thanks to our people," said CEO Enrico Zodio, who has led Procos since 2010 and was named CEO of the Year at the Convention on Pharmaceutical Ingredients Pharma Awards in 2023.

To ensure its sustained growth, Procos laid out a 10-year plan anchored on a two-phase R11 project, a new facility that will boost its production capacity and strengthen its technological capabilities.

The first phase, which cost more than \$70

million, is complete and will increase output by about 15%.

"We want to grow harmonically, organically and sustainably," said Zodio, who believes the R11 project will lead to higher-value services. He added that new investments will also include the third expansion of the HPAPI (highly potent active pharmaceutical ingredients) Department, and a new research and development center.

Since the CBC acquisition, Procos has more than doubled its workforce to around 550 people.

Zodio credits CBC's long-term commitment to life sciences for supporting capital-intensive projects that keep the Italian site globally competitive. ■

www.procos.it



AXXAM: A DRIVER OF DISCOVERY IN ITALY'S BIOTECH HUB

Milan-based Axxam celebrates its 25th anniversary as a pioneer in the field of life sciences, providing early discovery services and solutions to support innovation in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, agrochemicals and animal health.

As a contract research organization, it remains steadfast in its mission — to harness biology to empower discovery and transform ideas into actionable breakthroughs that improve human health and daily life.

Through Axxsense, its proprietary research platform, Axxam shares its expertise beyond drug discovery by developing new bioactive compounds for various industries, including food and beverages, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, flavors and fragrances, pet food and perfumery.

To stay ahead of the industry, Axxam adopts the latest technology. It uses artificial intelligence and machine learning, among other technologies, for target identification, compound design and the creation of advanced nonanimal disease models, including

cells derived from induced pluripotent stem cells.

"Axxam is a biology powerhouse positioned in the 'target-to-lead' segment within the R&D (research and development) value chain operating under ISO (International Organization for Standardization) quality standards. We aspire to become a global leader in early drug discovery to better serve the pharmaceutical industry," CEO Ciriaco Maraschiello said.

"Axxam provides solutions to reduce the translational gap by incorporating generative artificial intelligence and investing in NAMs (new approach methods). Our mission is to enhance confidence in the target and the molecule at early drug discovery stages, maximizing the probability of success in progressing to later drug development stages," Maraschiello added.

He also stressed that Axxam's passion for innovation mirrored Japan's openness to creativity and its commitment to science, sustainability and meaningful progress. ■ <https://axxam.com>



Axxam CEO Ciriaco Maraschiello

